

Not for Profit

Sunday 28 February 2021

Call to Worship

Psalm 22

You who fear the LORD, praise the
Lord! Stand in awe of your
God, all you offspring of Israel!

**God does not despise the
affliction of the afflicted;
but hears when we cry out.**

From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will pay before those who fear you.

**The poor shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek God shall praise the LORD.**

May your hearts live forever!

All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
and all the families of the nations shall worship our God.

**For dominion belongs to the LORD, who rules over the nations.
future generations will be told about the Lord,
and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn.**

[Praise to the Lord](#)

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
O my soul, praise him, for he is your health and salvation!
Come, all who hear; now to his altar draw near,
Joining in glad adoration.

Praise to the Lord, above all things so wondrously reigning;
Sheltering you under his wings, and so gently sustaining!
Have you not seen all that is needful has been
Sent by his gracious ordaining?

Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work and defend us;
Surely his goodness and mercy shall daily attend us.
Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
If with his love he befriends us.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now with praises before him.



Let the Amen sound from his people again;
Gladly forever adore him.

Reading Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

The Sign of the Covenant

17 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ² And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” ³ Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴ “As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵ No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶ I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷ I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

¹⁵ God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶ I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

We awaken in our time to a Universe which is holy, to creation which is not an event in the past, but a living event of the present. We enter a new mode of human presence where we are not merely observers, but where each of us is a participant in this moment of evolution.

Like all other creatures, we carry with us Wisdom and Values, the dynamics of the Universe. But unlike other creatures, we must choose whether and how we will live in harmony within this sacred web of creation. May we be open to the Source of All Being, Our God within and among us!

We have the capacity to wonder, and to celebrate this great mystery of existence within such a magnificent Universe! In us the Universe enters into a great celebration of itself. We are part of the Dance, the Great Work, the Great liturgy which is the Universe unfolding.

Glory to You, O God, Source of All Being! Gathered here in a posture of prayerful openness, with listening hearts, loving spirits and a holy wonder. We know our failures. Our tasks undone, and hurts passed on. Our thoughts that

make us less, whether spoken or unspoken. In the stillness we bring our confessions to you.

May we know the blessed release of God's forgiveness in our lives. May the sacred web that unites us with each other, our God and all creation, ignite communities of light and hope throughout the Earth.

May we be open to the Source of All Being, Our God within and among us!
Amen

Reflection – What can you see?

Notices and Celebrations

The Peace

Amazing Grace (My chains are gone)

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Saviour has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love, amazing grace

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God, who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine

Reading Mark 8:31-38

Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

³¹ Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³² He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³ But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

³⁴ He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵ For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶ For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷ Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸ Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Message Not for Profit

Through your word, Lord, convict our hearts, and stoke our passions, that we might serve you wholeheartedly and with joy.

Who here likes winning? I know, it's not all about winning, but winning is good isn't it? They don't have to be big wins, like Lotto, or the America's Cup. Little wins are all good too. A game of cards perhaps. Or around the Monopoly board. Or getting a recipe to go just right. Or finally getting rid of those annoying weeds in the lawn. Can anyone say they just don't like winning?



I generally think I'm winning if I get my sermon written in good time, or if I get my newsletter article to Dawn before she asks. I felt like I had won when I bought my house. And it's definitely a win at the end of the day if I can look back and see a full and productive day.

Winning just feels good. There is the part that that says, ‘Yes! I’m good!’ And there is the part that says, ‘I’m better than you,’ even when the you, is yourself. And there is the part that says, ‘I got something out of this. I’ve made a profit.’

I want to zero in on the profit part today. Let’s start by asking what profit actually is. If I was to ask an accountant or a treasurer, they would likely say something along the lines of, ‘the difference between the amount earned and the amount spent in buying, operating, or producing something.’ Of course, they are talking about money, that stuff we use to buy and sell things. That stuff that makes the world go around, and is the source of all our troubles. It is so important to us that we have a multitude of names for it. Cash, notes, change, currency, legal tender, bills, roll, dough, bread, loot, moolah, scratch, lolly, readies, simoleons, bucks. The list goes on and on. We think about it so much, whether it is the making of money or the spending of it. Perhaps more when we don’t have it than when we do. It is necessary to buy the necessities of life, and essential for the luxuries.



Jesus regularly talked about money because he understood how important it was to our lives. He sent Peter fishing to get a coin, he discussed Caesar’s coin with the Pharisees, he talked about the love of money, and he influenced Zacchaeus to give all of his money away.

And he knew that not all profit was found in money. In fact, the most important profit of all had nothing to do with money. And we are going to dig into that in a moment. First, I want to spend a little time with our reading from Mark, exploring what was going on for Jesus, Peter, the disciples, and everyone else who was listening in.

Those of you who are familiar with the lead up to our reading will know that immediately prior to this Peter had proclaimed, in answer to Jesus’ question of who people thought he was, that Jesus was the Messiah. It is at this point in the Markan gospel that we see a change in the story. In a sense, everything up until this moment is building the foundation for what Mark considers to be the most important part of the story. For it is at this point that Jesus turns his gaze toward Jerusalem and the cross becomes firmly fixed in his sights.

So Jesus begins to teach the disciples, and the crowd that has gathered with them about what is to come. Suffering, rejection, death and resurrection. And the opening sentence in verse 32 is revealing. Until now, Jesus had spoken

carefully about what was to come. Ideas and expectations were veiled in parables and riddles to keep everyone from understanding too much. So when Mark tells us that Jesus is speaking openly we are seeing something new and different. It's not just the disciples listening in and then getting an explanation later, this is out there for everyone to both hear and to understand.

Peter, who has just identified Jesus as the Messiah is understandably upset. He, along with the other disciples, has a rather different understanding of the term Messiah to what you and I have with 2000 years of history between us. For Peter, the Messiah was as much a political leader as he was a spiritual leader. In his eyes, Jesus was going to march up to Jerusalem, throw out all the Romans, and take his rightful place as the King of Israel. None of that includes suffering, rejection, death and resurrection. In fact it almost precludes it by definition.



So Peter takes Jesus aside and begins to rebuke him. Now understand that this rebuke is no small thing. Keep in mind that Peter is the disciple and Jesus the rabbi. This could be understood as a school pupil taking aside a teacher. And the word, 'rebuke,' is the same word used when Jesus cast demons out of people. So it is a full bodied, harsh rebuking that Peter is engaging in.

Now imagine the scene. Jesus has been talking to the disciples and a crowd of people. Peter takes him a distance away and starts to go to town on him. The other disciples and the crowd are looking on. They can see words being said, but they can't hear them. Jesus listens briefly and then responds with the words, 'get behind me Satan.' I think that while it is understandable that the translations we have put it this way, it doesn't really help us to understand what Jesus is saying to Peter. You see, the word we read as satan is not actually a proper name with a capital letter. If we were to translate it in a different context we would see that its meaning is, 'to oppose or opposer.' Jesus turns to look at the other disciples and the crowd, physically putting Peter behind him, and tells him to stop opposing the path that Jesus has set upon.

Understanding that the way of the cross is the solution that God has put in place for sin, Jesus knows that kingship in the popular sense, of political power and geographical freedom for Israel, is not the answer to the question. In fact

it doesn't even understand the question. And that's another sermon all on its own.

So Jesus has turned back to the crowd with the disciples and called them all over. The words that come next will sound both strange and quite normal. The idea of taking up a cross is echoed in Jewish and other teaching. Not the cross specifically but the bearing of a burden to follow the teacher is quite a common metaphor in those times. What makes it strange is twofold. First, the cross is a method of torture and control used by the Roman authorities to brutal effect in Palestine at that time. No teacher would expect their disciples to suffer in that way. Second, Jesus has made it quite clear that he will be leading the way in taking up the cross. It is he who will suffer and be rejected as an example to his followers. Surely no sane teacher would go to that extreme to make a point, no matter how important.

'For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?'

Mark 8:36

So the crowd, the disciples, and Peter are all scratching their heads and muttering at this point. What on earth is Jesus on about? But he doesn't stop there. The central question here is this. 'For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?'

Profit. The difference between the amount earned and the amount gained. Let's say I was to come to you and offer you \$1 000 000 for you to die. The only caveat is that no-one else can have that money once you are dead. It can't be used, can't be spent. It will just sit there. What would you say? Suppose it was \$10 000 000? Or a billion? What if I offered you the entire country of New Zealand (if I could)? No rational person would take me up on the offer. Because it is an offer with no value. You won't get to make use of the money. No-one else will be able to use it. So you would effectively end up dying for nothing. There would be no gain. To anyone. To an accountant your balance sheet would have this apparent net asset, but it has zero value. I'm not even sure how that could be accounted for.

And that is exactly what Jesus is trying to say to people. Let's say you make lots of money in this lifetime. Then you die. And the great accountant says to you, 'What profit do you have from your life?' And you say, 'I made all this money.' And the great accountant says, 'I'm sorry, but you can't bring that with you. Do

you have anything else?’ And you say, ‘But I made all this money.’ And the great accountant says, ‘What do you have that you can spend here? Is there any love, any grace, any mercy, any peace, any joy?’ And you say, ‘But what about all my money?’

Can you see where this is going? In saving our lives, in being focused on what we can achieve, what we can earn, what we can carry, we miss the point. In fact, we not only miss the point, we lose our lives into the bargain. Will we be accepted by the great accountant? Absolutely. Will it be on the back of all our achievements? Not at all. In the end it has nothing to do with worldly wealth and everything to do with relationship. Our relationship with God is not built up with our money, but with how we invest our lives in God, in ourselves, in others. Often that brings it’s own suffering, and rejection. Ultimately it is the only eternal profit we will ever make.

Perhaps there is a reason the church is considered a not-for-profit organization.

We Pray

Gracious God of life and hope. We are so easily led astray by the cares of this world, by the desire to accumulate wealth, to hold on to what we have. We fix our eyes less on the cross of Jesus and more on the cross of paying this weeks bills, and the next and the next. Help us to learn to find our profit in you. To not merely understand your call with our minds, but to become wholehearted followers of Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Jesus, be the centre

Jesus, be the centre

Be my source, be my light, Jesus

Jesus, be the centre

Be my hope, be my song, Jesus

Be the fire in my heart

Be the wind in these sails

Be the reason that I live

Jesus, Jesus

Jesus, be my vision

Be my path, be my guide, Jesus

Open the eyes of my heart

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Open the eyes of my heart

I want to see You

I want to see You

To see You high and lifted up

Shining in the light of Your glory

Pour out Your power and love

As we sing holy, holy, holy

Holy, holy, holy

We cry holy, holy, holy

You are holy, holy, holy

I want to see you

Offering

God of all, you love us and have claimed us. As you invite us to lose our lives for your sake, you have invited us into the blessing of connection within the family of humanity whom you continue to bless. We give our tithes and offerings in celebration of the depths of our blessing and pray that they will strengthen the church across the world to bless all your children. In the holy name of Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, we pray in gratitude. Amen.

Prayer for Ourselves and Others

We bring our prayers for the country of Myanmar, with a military coup in operation and a strong military presence in the main city of Yangon and the capital, Naypyidaw. We continue to pray for the Rohingya people who have suffered genocide, displacement, and many horrors.

We pray for the people giving and training to give Covid-19 vaccinations, the staff in the MIQ, the staff at the border.

We lift up Papatoetoe High School as they deal with the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak – staff, students, parents and families.

We remember people struggling with memories of loss. Christchurch 10 years on from the earthquakes and 18 months on from the mosque shootings. Those who have lost loved ones. Other forms of loss.

We are heartened as the Great Backyard Bird Count took place this past weekend around the world. We observe the ancient great migrations, journeys

that transcend borders and boundaries and hemispheres! We take delight in our bird feeders, yet we are witnessing extinctions, habitat destruction, and the attack of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act itself. Help us to be conscious of these apparently minor things that matter and in being conscious to act in word and deed.

And amidst all these concerns there are those people and worries that are closest to us. Those who are unwell, family far away, the special concerns that come with aging and infirmity. We bring our prayers for these.

As we move through Lent we are reminded that as followers of Christ we walk the road less travelled. Grant us the ability to find our treasure in you and in each other and to discover the joy of being lost in your love.

In the wonderful name of our Lord and Saviour who taught us how to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen

When we walk with the Lord

When we walk with the Lord

In the light of His Word,

What a glory He sheds on our way;

While we do His good will,

He abides with us still,

And with all who will trust and obey.

Trust and obey, for there's no other way

To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

Not a shadow can rise,

Not a cloud in the skies,

But His smile quickly drives it away;

Not a doubt or a fear,

Not a sigh or a tear,

Can abide while we trust and obey.

But we never can prove
The delights of His love,
Until all on the altar we lay;
For the favour He shows,
And the joy He bestows,
Are for them who will trust and obey.

Then in fellowship sweet
We will sit at His feet,
Or we'll walk by His side in the way;
What He says we will do;
Where He sends, we will go,
Never fear, only trust and obey.

Benediction and Grace

May the Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.