

# Adopted

Sunday 30 May 2021

## Call to Worship

*Psalm 29*

Ascribe to the LORD, O heavenly beings,  
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

**Ascribe to the LORD the glory of his name;  
worship the LORD in holy splendour.**

The voice of the LORD is over the waters;  
the God of glory thunders,  
the LORD, over mighty waters.

**The voice of the LORD is powerful;  
the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.**

May the LORD give strength to his people!

**May the LORD bless his people with peace!**

## All creatures of our God and King

All creatures of our God and King,  
Lift up your voice and with us sing  
Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou burning sun with golden beam,  
Thou silver moon with softer gleam,  
O praise him, O praise him,  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Thou rushing wind that art so strong,  
Ye clouds that sail in heav'n along,  
O praise him, alleluia!

Thou rising morn, in praise rejoice,  
Ye lights of evening, find a voice,  
O praise him, O praise him,  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Let all things their Creator bless,  
And worship him in humbleness,  
O praise him, alleluia!

Praise, praise the Father, praise the Son,  
And praise the Spirit, three in one,  
O praise him, O praise him,  
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

## Reading Romans 8:12-17

<sup>12</sup> So then, brothers and sisters, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— <sup>13</sup> for if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. <sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of the autumn leaves and the chill wind and rain  
God of the muddy fields and dirty puddles  
God of empty branches and icy roads  
As we slip and slide our way through the gathering cold and gloom  
We are reminded that new beginnings require the ending of the old  
So we pause to consider what new beginnings may be ahead of us  
And the things that will end in the process  
Forgive us for those times we try so hard to hold on to the past  
That we miss the beauty of the new you have carefully prepared  
Teach us to hold the past lightly and welcome gladly  
The transformation of thinking to be more like Christ  
We bring our private confessions to the Lord  
God of fire and light  
Touch our lips with your coal  
Cleanse us and make us whole  
Send us as your people into the world  
Amen

## Reflection

## Notices

## The Peace

## 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](#) Isaiah 6:1-8

*A Vision of God in the Temple*

**6** In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. <sup>3</sup> And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

<sup>4</sup> The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!”

<sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. <sup>7</sup> The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” <sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

## Message Adopted

In our culture today adoption can often be seen as an almost dirty word. A child who has been adopted is the odd one out, the interloper, the stranger. I am certain it is not for the want of trying on the part of the parents who adopt. Yet somehow we have come to understand adoption as a last and least preferred option for those children whose other possibilities have run out. There is an entire industry tied up in reuniting adopted children with their long lost parents that can make it seem as if the best efforts of loving adopting parents are inadequate at best and damaging at worst.

Of course, we are all familiar with the horror stories of abusive adoptive parents, in it to make a buck or the opportunity to lord it over the powerless children in their care. These stories are a tiny minority of the whole, and yet they have served to jaundice our view of adoption, perhaps to the detriment of children who desperately want a family to love and care for them, but are passed from pillar to post lest they be marred and blighted by the curse of adoption.

The problem goes far beyond adoption. It casts a pall of distrust over anyone who expresses an interest in adoption. Somehow that distrust even extends to parents caring for their own children. The expectation that the parent will probably do something awful to their children becomes the norm and the voices of disgruntled children not getting their own way are heard over the frantic parent trying to raise their children with some semblance of love and discipline. All this in spite of the fact that the vast majority have healthy, albeit sometimes fractious relationships, that lead to adults who are about as well adjusted as anyone else. Which isn't really saying all that much. I don't think any of us are all that well adjusted. We're all equally weird in our own personal ways.

All of which speaks into how we are culturally wired to hear the idea that we are adopted into God's family. There is a sometimes conscious, though often unconscious resistance to being identified as adopted, even as God's children. Doesn't that make me the interloper, the stranger, the one who is less because I don't really belong? Keep in mind this is often reflex in action. It's not that we don't know better, but our gut keeps telling us that adoption is not good because the narrative we live with is overpowering what we know to be true. I think that may be why Isaiah has such a powerful experience of cleansing. He sees the Lord, sitting on a throne and it is mind-blowing. His entire life experiences up to that point tell him that he has no business being in God's presence. He doesn't belong there and there are terrible consequences for

anyone in his position. Adoption is far from his mind. He is more concerned at the possibility of ending up as a smear on the floor.

Listen to his words: Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" These are not the words of a man who is calmly observing a scene and being rightfully amazed at the sheer majesty of God. They are words of terror. It makes me think of Peter blathering on about building huts for Jesus and Moses and Elijah to sit in on the mountain. I'm terrified so I'm going to talk because it might make me feel better. Personally I would likely err on the side of saying nothing at all, but that is just a different terror response.

Clearly God is going to have to do more than pat Isaiah on the shoulder and say, 'There, there, it will be OK.' The terror response is so ingrained, so deeply embedded in his psyche that a more powerful rejoinder is required. This is so much more than a bit of paper that tells him that he is now certificated to represent God in the following events. This is a much deeper acknowledgement that everything has changed. Not only has Isaiah seen God, he has been fundamentally changed in the encounter.

Notice that God does not say, "No, no, no. Don't be silly. You're don't have unclean lips, you don't live among a people of unclean lips. That's silly talk. Buck up and let's be about it.' God fronts up directly to the situation. Yes, you do have unclean lips. Yes, you live among a people of unclean lips. And I have a solution. We are going to fix this. Then the seraph flies forward and touches Isaiah's mouth with a live coal. An intensely graphic illustration of both the problem and the solution.

In the same way we come to God. We are not all spick and span, cleaned up and ready to go. We all bring our own issues and problems to God. It may be unclean lips. Or it may be broken relationships. Or indiscretions we are ashamed of. It could be any one of a long list of failings and failures. And God sees all of that. It's not simple dismissed out of hand as unfortunate, but inconsequential. It's not ignored or slid away out of sight. God adopts us exactly as we are. Crusty, broken, damaged, unsightly, weird human beings. And he sends us a coal in the form of the Holy Spirit, to touch our lives, to acknowledge our problem, and to provide the solution.

We are made children and heirs of God. Not because of what we can do, but because God has made us that way through adoption. In adopting us we are no longer the odd one out, the interloper, the stranger. Now we belong, fully and completely. Loved by the parent who longs to have a healthy relationship with us and to help us, little by little become better adjusted to ourselves and the

world around us. Quite against our gut feeling, this adoption is wholly and completely good for us. We no longer have to cry out in terror, 'Woe is me.' Instead we cry out, 'Abba, Father,' as we are gently led by the Spirit into a life of hope and safety.

### We Pray

Abba, Father. We are overwhelmed by your love for us. We know that we don't deserve your love, that we have done nothing to earn your notice. Yet you sent Jesus to point us to you and as a sign that you accept us as we are. And not stopping there, you send us your Spirit as a mark of being your children, not as interlopers, but as true heirs with Jesus. Help us to pause in that love and acceptance and truly experience what it means to who and how we are.

In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

### Everything that has breath

He is our God

Let all creation bow

The sovereign King most holy one

He sacrificed His life

Washed and cleansed within

Portioned by faith

We're destined to win

Everything that has breath praise the Lord

Everything that's in me praise the Lord

I can praise Him on the highest mountain

Praise Him in the lowest valley

Everything that's in me praise the Lord

### Offering

Holy God, above us, among us, within us: we rejoice this day that while you might have chosen to be unknown to us, you have revealed yourself in many ways. Each encounter with you calls us to return blessings with worship, compassion, and service. So, when we give this day, we do so in gratitude for all your parental care for us through your creation. When we give this day, we give because, in love, you gave us Christ, that through him we might find eternal life. When we give this day, your Spirit leads your church to reach out in compassion, mercy, and grace to all your children everywhere. In gratitude, we celebrate you, three and yet one. Amen.

## Prayer for Ourselves and Others

### Israel and the Palestinian Territories

- The civilians caught in the cross-fire
- The soldiers following the commands of their officers
- The politicians more interested in power than in peace

### Leaders around the world and in New Zealand

- To seek life rather than glory
- To promote freedom that does not come at the cost of another
- To find creative ways to bring peace to the world

### Waitaki Parish

- Open our eyes to the harvest spread out before us
- Lead us into agape love
- Teach us to be your hands and feet in our community

### Ourselves, family, friends

- For those who are unwell, struggling with their health, be it physical or mental
- For those separated by distance and pandemic
- For those who are yet to have a relationship with Jesus

We pray these things in the wonderful name of Jesus 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

## Crown him with many crowns

Crown Him with many crowns,

The Lamb upon His throne;

Hark! how the heav'nly anthem drowns

All music but its own!

Awake, my soul, and sing

Of Him who died for thee,

And hail Him as thy matchless King

Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Virgin's Son,  
The God Incarnate born,  
Whose arm those crimson trophies won  
Which now His brow adorn:  
Fruit of the mystic Tree,  
As of that Tree the Stem;  
The Root whence flows Thy mercy free,  
The Babe of Bethlehem.

Crown Him the Lord of Love:  
Behold His hands and side;  
Rich wounds yet visible above  
In beauty glorified:  
No angel in the sky  
Can fully bear that sight,  
But downward bends his burning eye  
At mysteries so bright.

Crown Him the Lord of years,  
The Potentate of time.  
Creator of the rolling spheres,  
Ineffably sublime.  
All hail, Redeemer, hail!  
For Thou hast died for me;  
Thy praise shall never, never fail  
Throughout eternity.

### [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.