



WAITAKI PRESBYTERIAN PARISH
February 6th 2022 with Bethne Dodd
Minister: Rev Andrew Scott
Cell: 0223552659 Email:andrew@waitakichurch.nz
Parish Clerk: Brenda Adams Phone: 4370625
Email:beadams@xtra.co.nz
‘BALANCE – ORDER & CHAOS’

CALL TO WORSHIP: (*GENESIS 1:1-5*)

In the beginning,

GOD CREATED HEAVEN AND EARTH.

The earth was formless and empty,

AND DARKNESS COVERED THE DEEP WATER.

The Spirit of God

WAS HOVERING OVER THE WATER.

Then God said,

“LET THERE BE LIGHT!”

So there was light.

GOD SAW THE LIGHT WAS GOOD.

So God separated the light from the darkness.

GOD NAMED THE LIGHT DAY AND THE DARKNESS HE NAMED NIGHT.

There was evening, then morning –

THE FIRST DAY.

SONG: LORD YOUR ALMIGHTY WORD (*WOV 61*)

Lord, your almighty word chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight:

hear us, we humbly pray, and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray, let there be light.

Saviour, who came to give those who in darkness live
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind, sight to the inly blind,
O now to humankind let there be light.

Spirit of truth and love, life-giving holy dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the waters’ face, bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth’s darkest place let there be light.

Holy and blessed Three, glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean’s tide rolling in fullest pride,
through the earth far and wide, let there be light.

OPENING PRAYERS

¹We struggle, we grow weary, we grow tired.

¹ *‘Short Notes From The Long History Of Happiness’ — Michael Leunig*

*We are exhausted, we are distressed, we despair.
We give up, we fall down, we let go.
We cry, we are empty, we grown calm.
We are ready.
We wait quietly.
A small shy truth arrives.
Arrives from without and within.
Arrives and is born.
Simple, steady, clear.
Like a mirror, like a bell, like a flame.
Like rain in summer.
A precious truth arrives and is born within us.
Within our emptiness.
We accept it, we observe it, we absorb it.
We surrender to our bare truth.
We are nourished, we are changed.
We are blessed.
We rise up.
For this we give thanks.'*
Amen

WELCOME, NOTICES & CELEBRATIONS

THE PEACE OF CHRIST

REFLECTION

Regularly volunteering at a local primary school has its rewards. One of them is engaging in interesting or bizarre conversations with young children. To lead us into a time of Reflection I share the encounter which began the journey toward today's Service.

Two five-year old polar-opposite personalities clashed.

"Oh for goodness sake!" barked a stickler-for-the-rules young lady, "Control yourself!"

As she stormed off in disgust, the recipient – her arch-nemesis, a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants kind of lad – turned to me and confessed,

"I'm always out of control."

"How's that working out for you?" I inquired.

The Super-hero obsessed bundle of energy's reply was candid,

"It's exhausting...but kinda fun too." He paused for breath before practically yelling at the top of his lungs, "I'm Super-chaos-kid!"

After being reminded to use our orange-level inside voices, by the ever tolerant teacher, I asked, "Do you have a special super-power then?"

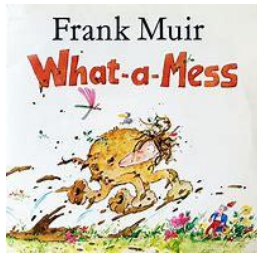
He nodded mischievously. "Making a mess."

"So I've noticed," I quipped.

"You should see my room. You can come over if you like."

I politely declined. "No thank-you."

My refusal left him somewhat downcast which prompted a second confession. "Other kids don't like me and my mess so much."

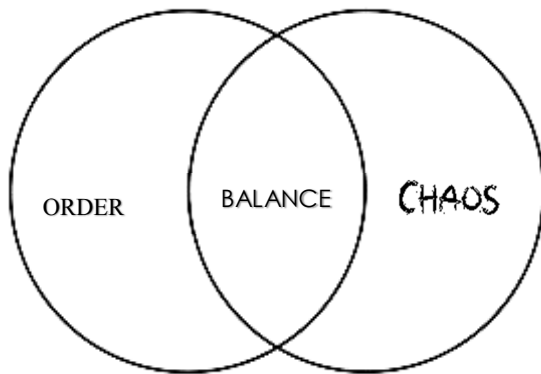


With this revelation came the desire to reassure him. "You know, when I was a kid my favourite book was about a crazy accident prone dog (Afghan hound) called 'What-a-mess'. He was always having adventures. Mess can be tough to handle but great at the same time. Just remember, you can't create or learn anything worthwhile without making a mess first."

As he brightened up considerably I pointed to the art table where haphazard pictures lay drying, amidst paint-splattered newspaper, and discoloured water-jars of tangled brushes.

Laying claim to his own artwork, his bravado returned. "That's mine, you know. Mine's the bestest messy one there."

"So I noticed."



REFLECTION

Our Reflection consists of 3 questions. We take a few moments to sit with each.

In your life, what is in order?

In your life, what is in chaos?

In your life, what is in balance?

SONG: GOD HAS SPOKEN (WOV 92)

God has spoken by his prophets, spoken his unchanging word,
each, from age to age proclaiming God, the one, the righteous Lord.
'Mid the world's despair and turmoil one firm anchor holds us fast:
God is king, his throne eternal, God the first, and God the last.

God has spoken by Christ Jesus, Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory, with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate, God from God, ere time began,
Light from Light, to earth descending, Man revealing God to man.

God is speaking by his Spirit, speaking to the hearts of men,
in the age-long word expounding God's own message, now as then,
through the rise and fall of nations one sure faith yet standing fast;
God still speaks, his word unchanging, God the first, and God the last.

INTRODUCTION

In the weeks leading up to Christmas my curiosity was piqued as practically every person I spoke to mentioned the word CHAOS. Something was brewing.

²On a whim I bought two books by the same author whose titles took my fancy. These spoke the same language. Now I was intrigued. On went the thinking cap.

This culminated at our Christmas morning Service when Andrew asked us to imagine what it would be like if everyone in NZ were compelled to travel back to their home towns, all at the same time, ready for a Census...in much the same way Mary & Joseph were, at the time leading up to Jesus' birth. There could be only one word to describe it - CHAOS.

Aha! – I thought - glorious confirmation. I was *definitely* onto something. And so it proved to be, as later that day **a sentence from Scripture** came to mind. It's contained within today's reading, which underpins our message.

READING: Revelation 10:1&2, 8-10 (*God's Word Bible Translation*)

Writing from his Patmos Island prison, John receives visions revealing what is to come. Reading from the last book of the Bible, Revelation, in chapter 10 verses 1&2 then 8-10 John explains,

"I saw another powerful angel come down from heaven. He was dressed in a cloud, and there was a rainbow over his head. His face was like the sun, and his feet were like columns of fire. He held a small, opened scroll in his hand.
He set his right foot on the sea and his left on the land."

"The voice which I had heard from heaven spoke to me again. It said, "Take the opened scroll from the hand of the angel who is standing on the sea and on the land."
I went to the angel and asked him to give me the small scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will be bitter in your stomach, but it will be as sweet as honey in your mouth."
I took the small scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It was as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, it was bitter in my stomach."



MESSAGE: 'BALANCE – ORDER & CHAOS'

The present day.

People.

Attempting to book MIQ spots.

Arranging to isolate at home.

Coordinating travel, flights, accommodation...

only to have plans thwarted at the drop of a hat due to

the next wave of Covid, the next lockdown,

the next adjustment to each country's rules and regulations.

Vaccines, passes, tests, documentation.

What's required. What isn't.

Black and white, and grey.

Who's in, out, welcomed, ostracised.

² Books by Jordan B. Peterson '12 Rules for Life – An antidote to chaos' & 'Beyond Order – 12 more Rules for Life'

People's lives and livelihoods divided.
Deaths and burials, operations and organisations disrupted.
Weddings and worship reworked.
Homes and hearts unsettled.

Extreme turmoil continues its seemingly endless roll across the world.
Tensions erupting among countries and communities, in workplaces, businesses and trades.
Surfacing within families and friendships, and our own consciences.
And change, coming at such a rapid pace, that it's no wonder we're hardly able to keep up.
It is easy to become overwhelmed. Easier still to withdraw.
How do we navigate this strange new world where the only certainty is uncertainty.
To be fair, the world has always been an uncertain place. Yet, somehow, the balance seems to have tangibly shifted during the last two years of global pandemic.
The best word to describe it all - CHAOS.
Where is balance to be found?

³From one of my recent reads, '12 Rules for Life – An antidote to chaos' Canadian author & Psychologist Jordan B. Peterson notes, *"Everyone understands order and chaos. We've been in both places, many times; sometimes by happenstance, sometimes by choice. Many things begin to fall into place when you begin to consciously understand the world in this manner."*



The Taoist path of life, referred to as The Way, this black & white symbol of yin and yang exists on the border between twin serpents.

This echoes Christ's words to his disciples found in John's Gospel, *"I am the way, the truth and the life."* (John 14:6)

The same idea is expressed by Jesus. (Summing up Matthew 7:14) *The gate to life is narrow. The way that leads to it is hard. There are few people who find it.*

Peterson continues, observing,

⁴*"Chaos and order are fundamental elements because every lived situation is made up of both. Living things can be found in places they can master, surrounded by things that make them vulnerable. Order is not enough. You can't just be stable, and secure, and unchanging, because there are still vital and important new things to be learned. Nonetheless, chaos can be too much. You can't long tolerate being swamped and overwhelmed beyond your capacity to cope while you are learning what you still need to know. Thus, you need to place one foot in what you have mastered and understood and the other in which you are currently exploring and mastering."*
"That is where meaning is to be found."



There, where John's Angel of Revelation 10 stood.

³ 2018 Jordan B. Peterson '12 Rules for Life – An antidote to Chaos' pg43

⁴ 2018 Jordan B. Peterson '12 Rules for Life – An antidote to Chaos' pg44

There, with “...**his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.**”

CHAOS is unexplored territory.
It represents everything we neither know nor understand.
Much like the sea, it is fluid, unstable, unpredictable.
It is despair, disruption and devastation.
Bewilderment and betrayal.
It's where you find yourself when life falls apart.
When sickness and death come knocking.
When dreams die, relationships break down and careers end.

But it is so much more than that. It includes both risk and reward.
Physics defines chaos as the formless matter supposed to have existed before the creation of the universe. It is the potential from which God calls forth order in Genesis 1, leading to the unfolding creation of earth and humankind alike.
“In the beginning, God created heaven and earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep water. The Spirit of God was hovering over the water.” (Gen1:1&2)

Chaos encompasses challenge, curiosity and creativity.
Ideas and innovation. Novelty and discovery.
⁵*“And it is freedom, dreadful freedom.”*
As unsettling as it may seem, the unknown should not be something we dread.
Understood properly it can be welcomed as an essential part of spiritual growth.

ORDER, by contrast, is explored territory.
It incorporates everything known and familiar.
Much like the land, it is firm, stable, predictable.
It is regulation, routine and reliability.
Loyalty and continuity.
Where everything is certain and structured, and function is maintained.
It is society and tradition. The calendar and the clock.
Order is the ground beneath your feet – and feet snug in comfort's slippers.

But hidden dangers lie beneath too thick a blanket of security – stagnation, inaction, inflexibility. Over-protection and fear of failure breeds immature individuals, ill-equipped to face the often harsh realities of life.

⁶ *Peterson sums it up like this, “We eternally inhabit order, surrounded by chaos. We eternally occupy known territory, surrounded by the unknown. To straddle that fundamental duality is to be balanced: to have one foot firmly planted in order and security, and the other in chaos, possibility, growth and adventure.”*

Meaning is best found in the overlapping balance between the two.

It's how Jesus directs his twelve disciples to step into mission and ministry.

⁵ 2018 Jordan B. Peterson '12 Rules for Life – An antidote to Chaos' pg36

⁶ pg43

Saying, in Matthew's Gospel, *"I am sending you out like sheep among wolves."* (10:16) Instructing them to be as cunning and wise as snakes, but as innocent and gentle as doves. How is this possible?

By learning to occupy both worlds at the same time.

By walking that fine line.

By discerning the narrow Way.

By remaining balanced, as Jesus did.

By being aware of danger, conscious of evil, yet not allowing that to blind us to the good that exists.

By choosing to embrace the way of abundant life Jesus promised.

Abundant life – a term reminiscent of the Garden of Eden. A seemingly safe place. All needs catered for. A picture of Paradise. Created in God's own image, it's here the story of our ancestors emerge. Initially existing without a care in the world they were, in short, children. In this naïve state they came face to face with unrecognised danger and failed to follow God's only warning not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.



Surely God knew, as well as we do, that being told *not* to do something practically guarantees our disobedience. But perhaps there is more to it.

⁷ *"Did they fall or were they pushed?"* ponders another writer Dave Tomlinson, noting (in his book *'The Bad Christian's Manifesto'*) *"A grown-up kind of God could not possibly wish for human beings to remain in paradise in a state of innocence without knowledge of good and evil. In order for humans to be human – people who make messes yet who also create beauty and goodness – the fruit had to be eaten. The story of Eden is not about paradise lost but paradise outgrown, not about sin but the birth of conscience and moral responsibility."*

As it is in life, so it is in faith. Growth requires patience and practice. Testing limits. Making messes and mistakes. Honing God-given abilities. Coming to recognise, then discern, the difference between good and evil. Making informed choices. Taking responsibility for living well within the midst of either order or chaos. These are lessons we too must learn.

Guidelines of how to do so are woven throughout Scripture. 2nd Timothy 3:16 & 17 reads, *"All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching the truth, rebuking error, correcting faults, and giving instructions for right living, so that the person who serves God may be fully qualified and equipped to do every kind of good deed."* This is echoed in Romans 15:4, *"Everything written in the Scriptures was written to teach us so that we might have hope through the patience and encouragement which the Scriptures give us."*

By continuing to read and feed, and reflect, upon the Word, we cultivate the kind of contentment the Apostle Paul spoke of in his letter to the Philippians where he shares, *"I have learnt to be satisfied with what I have. I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have more than enough. I have learnt this secret, so that anywhere,*

⁷ 2014 Dave Tomlinson *'The Bad Christian's Manifesto'* pg92

at any time, I am content, whether I am full or hungry, whether I have too much or too little. I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.” (Phil 4:11-13)

The Angel’s scroll of John’s vision contained palatable words, sweet to the taste, combined with hard-to-swallow but necessary pit-of-the-stomach-ache-inducing revelation. We, too, need to be equally comforted and convicted by the double-edged sword of the Spirit (*Heb4:12*) We, too, need to digest Scripture as a whole if we are to become fully qualified and equipped people of God. Aware and awake. Wise yet innocent. Mature and strong in our faith. Treading the narrow Way Christ calls us to.



I pray we each find the mixture of grace and courage necessary to master, then maintain, a state of balance and contentment in these uncertain times.



In closing, I repeat the words of author Jordan B. Peterson, “...you need to place one foot in what you have mastered and understood and the other in which you are currently exploring and mastering.”
“That is where meaning is to be found.”

There, where John’s Angel of Revelation 10 stood. There, with “...**his right foot on the sea and his left foot on the land.**” Amen

SONG: HOLY, HOLY HOLY (*WOV 65i*)

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty,
early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

Holy, holy, holy! all the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
God everlasting through eternity.

Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy, there is none beside thee
perfect in power, in love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty,
all thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy! merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

OFFERING

“God of life – we simply ask your blessing on both gift and giver.
In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen.”

PRAYERS FOR OURSELVES & OTHERS

I begin these prayers by sharing words from the now late Bishop Desmond Tutu.

⁸'Dear child of God, I write these words because we all experience sadness, we all come at times to despair, and we all lose hope that the suffering in our lives and in the world will never end. I want to share with you my faith and my understanding that this suffering can be transformed and redeemed. There is no such thing as a hopeless case. Our God is an expert at dealing with chaos, with brokenness, with all the worst that we can imagine. God created order out of disorder, cosmos out of chaos, and God can do so always, can do so now in our personal lives and in our lives as nations, globally... Indeed, God is transforming the world now – through us – because God loves us.'

And so we pray...

We uphold all those who are suffering, in sadness or despair,
who are anxious, overworked or under stress...

Leader: ⁹ Bless us and the nations with the grace of creativity

Response: Bless us and all people with the hope of new beginnings

We bring to mind the broken and hopeless,
those discouraged or disconnected,
those separated from support due to circumstances beyond their control...

Leader: Bless us and the nations with the grace of creativity

Response: Bless us and all people with the hope of new beginnings

We remember all adapting to change,
bringing a new life into the world, facing important decisions,
coming to terms with unwelcome news, dealing with the challenges of ageing,
And we offer compassion to those beginning a new year without loved ones...

Leader: Bless us and the nations with the grace of creativity

Response: Bless us and all people with the hope of new beginnings

We ask for the grace and creativity needed to partner with God in answering the prayers we pray. In doing so may we extend to one another the hope of new beginnings.

We draw our prayers to a close by sharing together in the familiar words of the prayer Jesus' taught his first disciples to pray, saying...

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,

⁸ Bishop Desmond Tutu 2004 'God Has a Dream – A Vision of Hope for Our Time'

⁹ From 2005 Book 'Celtic Treasure – Daily Scriptures & Prayers' by J. Philip Newell pg 10

now and forever. Amen

SONG: SHINE JESUS SHINE

Lord, the light of your love is shining
In the midst of the darkness, shining
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us
Set us free by the truth you now bring us
Shine on me x2

*Refrain: Shine, Jesus, shine,
Fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow, Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me x2

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
So our faces display your likeness
Ever changing from glory to glory
Mirrored here may our lives tell your story
Shine on me x2

THE GRACE:

**May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
be with us all, now and forevermore. Amen.**