



ST ANDREWS UNITING CHURCH GLENBROOK

AT-HOME- WORSHIP

THE THIRD SUNDAY
IN THE SEASON OF PENTECOST
21 June 2020

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the sovereign First Peoples of the land and waters where our church is built, the Darug peoples of the Darug Nation.

We pay our respects to their elders, past and present, and to all descendants of this nation who have cared for this place since time immemorial.

OPENING WORDS

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Can you believe it's now 16 weeks since we found ourselves sent out into this Covid 19 wilderness. Yet we have continued to worship together in spirit and in trust and with hope.

Let's now take a deep breath together:

As you breathe in, think of the Spirit of God filling you with light and peace

And as you breathe out, letting go of any tension you feel in your body.

Breathe in....

Breathe out.....

May God worship in and through us today.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING - By Micah Elia

In March I had my 11th birthday.

It was a very strange birthday because we weren't allowed to go out or have any friends or family over to celebrate. But my friend Suzie made me a cake and my Mum organised some family and friends to sing happy birthday to me on Zoom. It was kinda embarrassing.

Birthdays are about celebrating what we are thankful for.

This week is the Uniting Church's birthday and just like my birthday, we can't get together to celebrate it.

But we can be thankful and we can have cake.

So I'm lighting some candles for all of us.

I don't have 43 candle, but I do have 11.

- 1) For the people who have taught us the faith
- 2) For the people who have challenged us to grow
- 3) For the people who make us laugh
- 4) For the people who let us cry
- 5) For the people who take risks
- 6) For the people who protect
- 7) For all the people who have gone before us
- 8) For all the people who will come after us
- 9) For the people who still need to feel welcomed
- 10) For the church in the world
- 11) For my Uniting Church in Glenbrook that cares for me.

Thank you God for all these things. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION from 'Love Makes a Way'

God of justice,

we confess to you

that we have not loved you with our whole heart,

and we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.

We have hoarded our good things.

We have closed our eyes to the poor at our gate.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

We have loved only those who love us.

We have turned away from the weak and the needy.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

We have been hungry for power and possessions.

We have lost our appetite for your justice.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy

We have sung of peace when there is no peace.

We have not cried out for those who are silenced in their suffering.

Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

We are sorry for all our sins,

and we ask you to forgive us

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

SONG: In the Darkest Night © *Julian Elia, Roxanne McLeod*

In the darkest night

Where is Your light?

In the hate that blinds

Where is Your sight?

In the deep despair
Where is Your peace?
In the stronghold's snare
Where's Your release?

Chorus:

*Saviour, help us live
As Your hands and feet
Let Your love be seen
Through each word and deed*

In the barren ground
Where is new life?
In the hostile crowd
Where's end to strife?
In the weary soul
Where's joy renewed?
In the fearful hold
Can hope break through?

Chorus:

Show Your mercy, mercy
Show Your mercy to us
Show Your mercy, mercy
Show Your mercy through us...

BIBLE READINGS

Psalm 86

○ Eternal One, lend an ear to *my prayer* and answer me,
for I am weak and wanting.
Safeguard my soul, for I remain loyal to You.
Save me, Your servant, who trusts in You, my God.
○ Lord, please be merciful to me,
as all day long I cry out to You.
Bring joy into the life of Your servant,
for it's *only* to You, O Lord, that I offer my soul.
○ Lord, You are good and ready to forgive;
Your loyal love flows generously over all who cry out to You.
○ Eternal One, lend an ear and hear my prayer;
listen to my pleading voice.
When times of trouble come, I will call to You
because *I know* You will respond to me.

O Lord, You stand alone among the other gods;
 nothing *they have done* compares to Your wonderful works.
 O Lord, *all the peoples of earth*—every nation You established—
 will come to You, bowing low to worship,
 and rightly honor Your *great* name.
 For You are great, and Your works are wondrous;
 You are the one True God.
 O Eternal One, guide me along Your path
 so that I will live in Your truth.
 Unite my *divided* heart so that I will fear Your *great* name.
 O Lord, my God! I praise You with all that I am.
 I will rightly honor Your *great* name forever.
 For Your loyal love for me is so great *it is beyond comparison*.
 You have rescued my soul from the depths of the grave.
 O True God, arrogant people are after me.
 A violent gang wants to kill me;
 they have no interest in You *or Your ways*.
 But Lord, You are a God full of compassion, generous in grace,
 slow to anger, and boundless in loyal love and truth.
 Look at me, and grant me Your favor.
 Invest Your strength in *me*, Your servant,
 and rescue *me*, Your handmaiden's child.
 Give me a sign so I may know Your goodness *rests on me*
 and so those who hate me will be *red with* shame at the sight of it.
 For You, O Eternal One, have come to my aid and offered me relief.

CHANT: Listen to the words that God has spoken,
 Listen to the One who is close at hand,
 Listen to the voice which began creation,
 Listen even if you don't understand.

Matthew 10:24-39

²⁴"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!
²⁶"So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³²"Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven;
³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.
³⁴"Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring

peace, but a sword. ³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶and one's foes will be members of one's own household. ³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

CHANT: Listen to the words that God has spoken,
 Listen to the One who is close at hand,
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SERMON: Disturbing the Peace' by Rev Ellie Elia

May the words of my mouth and meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight
 O Lord, my strength and my redeemer

Ok so, I give up.
 I've had enough.
 If you're not here to bring peace
 then what's the point?
 I thought you told us to "love one another",
 I thought you said "my peace I give to you."
 and what about "blessed are the peacemakers"
 But now you say,
 you have not come to bring peace,
 but a sword.
 And tell me, Lord,
 how am I to love you more than my own parents, or my own children?
 How would I even do that?
 How do you measure out love in such way?

Jesus, I don't know if you're just having a really bad day,
 or if the Gospel written is putting words in your mouth,
 I mean, come on, could a living, breathing, healing, Jesus,
 really speak of taking up our cross and following him?

That doesn't sound like you Jesus.
 Well not the Jesus that I love,
 not the Jesus I thought I knew.
 And not the Jesus I want.

And if you have truly come to disturb the peace;
 why now?
 Out of all the holy scriptures, why this text for this day....

when our world is burning,
 when the world seems to be pivoting toward war... or could it be restoration ?
 - I don't know.

I only know that I'm afraid:

afraid that my church can't hold together like this much longer,
 afraid of the heightened levels of anxiety and depression in my
 community,
 afraid of our constant craving for comfortable certainty, that we refuse to hear the
 voice of the spiritually hungry at our door.

And then, amidst these impossible choices and a costly calling,
 you also speak of sparrows,
 and that every single hair upon our head is known to you
 because that's how much you love us.

And you tell us not to be afraid.

But I am afraid

I'm afraid,

and I'm tired,

And I feel like giving up.

Long ago, after Jesus death and resurrection,
 around 70 AD,

after the Jewish temple had been burnt to the ground by the Roman oppressors,
 and the ancient world was in crisis,
 a small group of devoted Jews began to speak about Jesus,
 they said that he was indeed the promised Messiah, the Son of God.

And despite persecution, painful exclusion from community, and real threats of
 violence, these ordinary, faithful Jews, felt compelled to acknowledge in the bright light
 of day, what they knew in their hearts to be true.

Jesus is God with us.

This truth would eventually divide their community.

Families faced the choice between following this new emerging version of the faith
 called Christianity, or keeping to the longer, older, established traditions of Judaism.

I get the feeling that Matthew was speaking to a fragile church

A church much like ours....

Because we too are caught in a moment of transition,
 between the old ways:

the ways of our past, the traditions that have held us, anchored us,
 grown us in the faith,
 and the reality of a being new, undefined, risky, evolving, dispersed and at home,
 online church with an uncertain future.

This text alerts us to the deep discomfort we are feeling as a church right now and as a nation.

The discomfort I am feeling as your minister.

I can feel my own resistance to this text,

as it pushes my closes to the edge of my own strength, my own reasoning, and capacity,

And all I can see is the fall.

But in this darkness come a whisper - Pay attention!

Can we sit with these uncomfortable feelings long enough to uncover what's really going on for us?

That we are grieving.

We are afraid that we will never return to the ways things were.

We are caught in a moment of transition, that we did not choose,

between the church we have known and cherished,

and the church we have been forced to become.

We have been faithful and resilient, but the truth is we are struggling to learn what it looks like

to be the church in the world, beyond our familiar patterns and expectations,

beyond the defining walls of the church that keep us safe.

We are being challenged daily, to stand in solidarity with those whose truth may be different from our own.

And we are all trying to determine what ultimately matters?

When Jesus said "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword",

he is not speaking of a weapon,

or a justification for violence,

Jesus is speaking of the truth,

and of truth-telling.

They say that truth will set you free,

but sometimes the truth hurts.

Sometimes the truth disturbs the peace.

The late Rachel Held-Evans spoke of the church as a *place that is safe,*

but not comfortable.

The uncomfortable truth is,

I could never have predicted or even chosen for us to be a church worshipping online.

But I can't help wondering if this is actually where God has called us to be?

In this Covid wilderness we find ourselves in,

where the landscape is rapidly changing,

and we have lost our sense of direction,

the Spirit of truth is calling us to attend to our discomfort,

to honestly name our fears,

to examine what it is that needs to be let go of,

to feel the vulnerability and the true cost of discipleship,

to recognise the purpose of the church has always been to serve, not our own comfort, but to work for truth, reconciliation and peace in the world,
 to acknowledge and welcome the presence of hundreds of people choosing to attend our online worship - whose faces we may never see - whose name we may never know,
 to fearlessly and authentically live out our faith in public, in the light,
 to listen to the whisper in our hearts telling us that when we feel uncomfortable,
 when we feel like giving up,
 this is exactly the moment when we are ready to know ourselves
 held in the grace and mercy of God.

The truth and mystery of our faith is that we find it in the moment when we give up, when we let go....when we let ourselves be dis-orientated and de-centred, because when we follow Jesus, we do not lose ourselves, but receive our true selves.

Christ is your peace.
 In him you are made new.
 Everything old has passed away;
 see, everything has become, is becoming.... new.

Let's pray,
 God, help us to change.
 To change ourselves and to change our world.
 To know the need for it.
 To deal with the pain of it.
 To feel the joy of it.
 To undertake the journey without understanding the destination.
 The art of gentle revolution. (Leunig)
 Amen.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. What feelings of discomfort, grief and joy do you need to name and sit with?
2. What truth have you heard whisper in the darkness that needs to be said in the light?
3. What kinds of things are tugging on your heart?
4. What kinds of issues are causing you to want to make a difference?
5. What makes you hurt?
6. What gives you joy?
7. When have you last felt that peace that surpasses all understanding?

8. During this Pandemic, how has Jesus been at work deep within you, calling you out, inviting you to step away from what you have known, into some new glimpse of the kingdom of God?

SONG: 'Make me a Channel of your Peace' TiS 607

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there is hatred, let me bring Your love
Where there is injury, Your pardon Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in You

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek....

Make me a channel of Your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving of ourselves that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life

Oh Master, grant that I may never seek...

Make me a channel of Your peace
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy

BENEDICTION

May the God who loves,
Who knows every hair on your head,
every secret worry,
every act of courage and hope
bless you,
The Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace,
go in hope,
go in joy
to love and serve the Lord.

We go in Christ's name. Amen.