

ST ANDREWS GLENBROOK UNITING CHURCH
8th Sunday in Pentecost - the Growing Time

26th July 2020 - Worship -at-home

SHARING THE PEACE

[You might like to put a piece of beautiful music on for this]

We begin by bringing our attention to our bodies. Don't worry about looking silly, just welcome this moment. Start by moving just one finger, tiny movements that you can hardly see. Enjoy this small movement.

Now let that tiny movement grow and begin to grow.... Let your whole hand dance freely in the air....let the movement grow further till....notice that the tiny movement is still present, now part of a bigger movement of your body.

Now bring the energy of this movement into a warm hug, wrapping your arms around yourself.

Just enjoy this embrace.

Let it seep into the parts of you that are hurting or holding tension

Hear the words *You are my beloved*

Now with a hand on your heart and the other hand reaching out to the screen or to the people you are with or to the whole world, send your love and Christ's peace to one another.

Bring your both your hands to your heart, receive love and peace. Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

A tiny seed planted can grow to a mighty tree.

**In small numbers we worship in our homes today,
but as part of a worldwide church.**

A tiny bit of yeast can make the loaf rise.

**Tempted to feel small and alone,
we rise to worship, part of a greater whole.**

Wondering at the worth

of our presence and praise at home,

we worship today offering what combined treasures we have.

Lets worship God.

SONG SEEK YE FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Seek ye first the Kingdom of God
And His righteousness
And all these things shall be added unto you
Allelu Alleluia
Ask and it shall be given unto you
Seek and ye shall find
Knock and it shall be opened unto you
Allelu Alleluia
Al - le - lu - ia....

PRAYER OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

God of the universe,
we thank you that you meet us here, in this corner of the world.
We thank you that we matter to you,
that we have a place in your divine economy.
And so we dare to offer you our praises.

You grace our gatherings,
large or small,
with the beauty of your presence,
embracing our clumsy attempts to honour you, Lord of all.
We thank you that you look on us with love and lift our humanity,
and that you look on the ways
we fail you and one another
in grace and forgiveness.

God, as those who know ourselves forgiven,
loved and called to serve,
may we affirm one another,
building each other up to seek to serve you,
great God of all.

And so,
may our worship here
enable us to fix our eyes on you, equipping us for your mission
in our neighbourhood
and throughout the world,
in Jesus' name.
Amen.

GOSPLE READING - Matthew:13: 31-33, 44-46

31 He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; **32** it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches."

33 He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with [a] three measures of flour until all of it was leavened."

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; **46** on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

FOCUS READING: Psalm 119:129-136

129

Your decrees are wonderful;
therefore my soul keeps them.

130

The unfolding of your words gives light;
it imparts understanding to the simple.

131

With open mouth I pant,
because I long for your commandments.

132

Turn to me and be gracious to me,
as is your custom toward those who love your name.

133

Keep my steps steady according to your promise,
and never let iniquity have dominion over me.

134

Redeem me from human oppression,
that I may keep your precepts.

135

Make your face shine upon your servant,
and teach me your statutes.

136

My eyes shed streams of tears
because your law is not kept.

SERMON by Rev. Charissa Suli (Assembly Consultant)

The Word of God is Light in the Darkness

"Do we never go on holidays overseas again?"

Government pledges to do more on youth mental illness after 13yr old girl's death

Family mourns granddads tragic virus death

Man accused of killing his 5-month-old son released on bail

Individuals losing their jobs or have had to move from full time to part time work due to economic crisis.

Not an older person's disease: children in hospital with covid-19

We'll crack this, PM urges to "look forward" as covid 19 rolls on"

These are just some of the statements within our national media I have been hearing as I turn on my TV, or pick up the newspaper or scroll through my newsfeed this week.

I don't know about you but our world feels dark, gloomy, disoriented and perplexed as we try to find our way in a time when everything feels unknown, untested, untried, and unsure and there are some evenings you just wish for the morning light to arise.

Try to imagine living in a world with no physical light -- no sun, moon, stars, electric lights, flashlights, or candles -- just pitch darkness. How grateful would you be for one small match to light your way?

Although it feels like there is a dark cloud over our nation, our world even because of covid 19 the psalmist this morning tells us that It is God's Word that lights the world and enlightens our hearts. God's *wonderful* (119:129) words will always give light to any dark room, heart, community or nation.

My own personal experience I have found the Word of God to speak to me in every season of life. I am a 2nd Generation Tongan Australian born in Australia raised in a traditional pacific island home where everything we did was centred around Gods word. Birthdays, Funerals, Baby Showers, Blessing of a New Home, A loved one in hospital we would break open Gods word and hear what God was saying to us in that moment in time. As a child I must confess when we had to sit down in the lounge with all the aunties and uncles to hear the word of God there were days where I thought, "do we really have to read the bible again!" ☺

For me personally the bible has been a wonderful library.

To the weary pilgrim, the Bible is a good strong staff.

To the one who sits in gloom, the Bible is a glorious light.

To those who stoop beneath heavy burdens, the Bible is sweet rest.

To him who has lost his way, the Bible is a safe guide.

To those who have been hurt by sin, the Bible is healing balm.

To the discouraged, it whispers glad messages of hope.

To those who are distressed by the storms of life, the Bible is an anchor.

To those who suffer in lonely solitude, the Bible is cool, soft hands resting on a fevered brow

As we read the words of Psalm 119 we get insight into the psalmists own personal experience of God and his understanding of Gods decrees, words, statutes, commandments, promise, and law and what the Word of God and his relationship with God means to the writer.

When you read this passage, it comes across as a triumphant passage full of praise and worship. The reality is the context of what the psalmist had experienced was quite the opposite. He was deeply stirred by the wickedness all around him. "Rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law".

Their general disobedience had taken a particular form: persecution. Men were abusing David, abusing him badly. He was being slandered and threatened and cruelly mistreated. Yet he found God's word, God's commandments, God's promises to shine light for his path and show him the way to move forward despite the pain.

David tells us what he thinks of God's word. He opens our passage today with a declaration, "your words are wonderful therefore my soul keeps them".

Because God's Word is "wonderful", David wants to obey it. Not just outwardly, mind you, but from the "soul". David realises that "The entrance of God's Word gives light; it gives understanding to the simple". To live without the Word is to go through life in darkness--missing its every joy and blundering into all its dangers.

We learn here how important it is for the Word of God to be planted in the soul for the Word to take life, to take root in one's life. The Psalmist learnt to keep the word of God in mind and heart.

When the word of God meets the soul it gives light, it gives understanding, and sheds light to the secret places of the heart that are broken, dark and need healing so that we can hear and know what is true, important and not important or essential and non-essential.

Planting the word of God for the Soul was not enough for the Psalmist. He needed to inhale the word of God and find refreshment for the soul. So, should we.

I know that life gets tedious at times, but the need is not to give up but to devote greater time to renew ourselves in the Word of God because it creates more longing for it. Just as a human body needs water to survive, the soul is sustained by God's Word. How intense is your longing for the sustenance of your soul? What are the ways are you finding refreshment in your faith journey?

If there is one thing I've learnt in this era of covid 19 we are being stripped back to the bare bone of how we live our lives, and are moved into spaces to refocus on our family units and really take stock on what is essential or non-essential. What old habits and patterns that have surfaced because of COVID 19 and suddenly are non-essential or inadequate to our lives, to our families, to our mission in the Church and needs to remain in the dark?

What are the essential shifts that we need to make individually, as a family, as a Church, so that we can truly experience the Light of God through Christ that is not about competition but building families and communities that are built on trust, cooperation, communication, connection even though we are apart and generosity – in a word, love.

We are experiencing a new normal together and although it may feel painful at times. Our Psalmist reminds us that God is right there with us amid the changes and sacrifices and adaptations we have had to make.

When we get to the last section of the psalm, we begin to understand what it is David was really looking for or what he was longing for from the word of God.

First, he wants mercies from the Word, "Look upon me and be merciful to me, as Your custom is to those who love Your name". David had meditated much on God's Word and found something in it he liked: God is supremely generous. God doesn't "Deal with us after our sins or reward us according to our iniquities". The "mercies" God once gave Noah or Moses, or Joshua or Samson hadn't run dry. David wanted some for himself!

So, should we. When you think things are hopeless, that there's no way out of your problem or you find yourself going through the stages of grief—denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance—many times each day. --read the Bible and you'll find the testimonies of Gods people of how they had endured and responded to the darkness of life's travels.

You'll also find people as bad off as you are or maybe worst off. Yet the LORD was with them. Some of them God rescued with mighty power; others suffered but received grace to endure. In no case, though, did God forsake anyone who sought Him sincerely. Gods "mercies are new every morning". Gods mercy also comes to us with great "patience, comfort, and hope".

Although the context of this psalm was written in a dark period of David's life. David also recognised his own iniquities to keep the word of God close to his heart and follow in Gods ways.

David sought direction from the Word of God, "Direct my steps to Your Word". There is a Map in the Word; it won't mislead you. It will guide you in this life and the life to come. But this Map--like any other--is of no use when folded up and put away. It was meant to be read and followed and shared.

There are many good reasons to read the Bible. We can learn so much from it; we can be humbled by it; we can admire Christ more than we do; and so on. But the ultimate reason to be in the Word is this: God is there. And its careful reading will bring us into fellowship with God as we grow in our own knowledge and understanding of who Jesus Christ is for us.

In this dark world, there are many who walk in darkness because they have no desire for God's word to light their path and illumine their soul. The psalmist says it causes him to mourn (my eyes shed streams of water) when others do not keep God's law. What truths of God's Word will you share with someone this week to bring some light into their world? God's words are indeed wonderful (119:129). They give light in the darkness. Without them, people are hopelessly lost in the dark.

This week with all that is happening in our world and many will be gathering in spaces that struggle to feel the sacred or even simple connection through a

computer screen. And yet, here we are, gathering and struggling and trying to find holiness. I encourage you to break open Gods Word, find time to meditate on the word, Read it daily, read it progressively and look to be unfolded by the spirit of God as it speaks truth and shines light in any dark parts of your life.

And know that the light of Christ is always available to you to direct your steps forward and give you the understanding and the clarity you need for your life, your family, and your community. May we not depart from the word of God but maintain and adorn it by how we live in Jesus name, Amen.

SONG: 'Turn your eyes upon Jesus'

Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

Oh soul are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free

Through death into life everlasting
He passed and we follow Him there
O'er us sin no more hath dominion
For more than conquerors we are

Oh, turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

His word shall not fail you, He promised
Believe Him and all will be well
Then go to a world that is dying
His perfect salvation to tell

Oh, turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
Oh, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS AND OURSELVES

God,
in every time and season,
you are teaching us more about ourselves and about you.

May we always be open
to discovering new ways of seeing,
and new ways of serving you, God of all the ages.

May we know that nothing is hidden from you, and that nothing is foreign.
You know and embrace the ordinary times and the extraordinary times.

And what is more,
you lead us through whatever we face.

God,
in the midst of chaos and fear,
may we see you quietly at work
and calling us to follow.
May we lighten one another's burden
however we can:
by connecting,
by listening,
by being the neighbours you invite us to be.
May we bear one another's burdens
and share one another's grief.
And, in time, may we rejoice together in your love.

Lord, we may not know the way ahead,
but we do know that you are with us and will never leave us.
May that assurance help us

to face all that we must face,
and strengthen us to continue to step out in faith,
holding the Christ light for one another,
knowing that you are with us
and you go before us always.
Amen.

SENDING

Lord,
teach us we are never so small,
so insignificant,
as to be of low value to you.
Help us to know how precious we are.

As we go,
cast us into the world;
show us where to go
that we might meet the world's need,
from the abundant gifts and talents of our community,
from the person you have made each one of us to be.

Amen.

