

PENTECOST 24
7/11/2021
CAVES BEACH

SONG - On Eagle Wings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6E-Mw1fnzE>

NOTICES

CALL TO WORSHIP

You notice when we come to worship, O God.

Your heart is warmed by our praise.

You notice when we respond to your word, O God.

Your heart is warmed when we go your way.

You notice when we notice the downtrodden.

Your heart is warmed when we work with them for change.

You notice each one of us and know us by name.

Your heart is warmed when we bring glory to your name.

OPENING PRAYER

The simple words of children, O God,

are good enough to offer prayers to you.

The straightforward melody of an ancient hymn, O God,

is good enough to sing praise to you.

The kindly deed of a neighbour, O God,

is enough to make clear Christ's presence.

The sacrifice of one person for another, O God,

is enough to show that your love will never die. Amen

HYMN: God is Love, let Heaven Adore Him

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyYWW_P9MH4

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

We give praise and thanks to you, O Lord, that you show us the way to live. Though the world may value wealth and power, you affirm even the smallest capacity. You welcome us into your family, and make us feel significant. You surround us with love and mercy, and shape our lives to make us fully human. Thank you for the gift of salvation. Thank you for making us whole. Thank you that we have a sense of dignity as we stand in your presence. May our lives reflect our praise, and our being reflect your indwelling beauty. We offer you all praise and thanks, now and forever more.

Gracious God, you reach out to us in forgiveness and love, seeking to bring us home to that place of peace and freedom. Yet as great as your love is, we treat you glibly and take you for granted. We delight in our own achievements, boasting of our cleverness and abilities. We think that our power is something to brag about, that even when it is you working through us, we want the credit. We hold up our own knowledge and call it wisdom, and believe that there is nothing we cannot do. There are even times when we feel that we have little need of you, that science, technology and our accumulated wealth will be sufficient to secure the future.

Forgive our foolish pride and arrogance. Give us humble hearts that measure the value of life in service and in relationship to you and others. Remind us again that it is in covenant with you that life is lived most fully and purposefully. Teach us to value every person and part of life as your gift. O

God, have mercy on us and hear our confession, and now also our personal confessions we make silently

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

St John writes: If anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous", and " In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loves us and sent his Son to be the perfect offering for our sins". So then, be at peace, for God is a God of infinite love and patience. God waits for us to open ourselves to joy. We are forgiven people, we live in grace, we are loved! *Let us say together: Thanks be to God!*

READINGS

*** Ruth 3: 1-5; 4: 13-17**

Naomi her mother-in-law said to her, "My daughter, I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you. ² Now here is our kinsman Boaz, with whose young women you have been working. See, he is winnowing barley tonight at the threshing floor. ³ Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes and go down to the threshing floor; but do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. ⁴ When he lies down, observe the place where he lies; then, go and uncover his feet and lie down; and he will tell you what to do." ⁵ She said to her, "All that you tell me I will do."

¹³ So Boaz took Ruth and she became his wife. When they came together, the LORD made her conceive, and she bore a son. ¹⁴ Then the women said to Naomi, "Blessed be the LORD, who has not left you this day without next-of-kin;^[a] and may his name be renowned in Israel!" ¹⁵ He shall be to you a restorer of life and a nourisher of your old age; for your daughter-in-law who loves you, who is more to you than seven sons, has borne him." ¹⁶ Then Naomi took the child and laid him in her bosom, and became his nurse. ¹⁷ The women of the neighborhood gave him a name, saying, "A son has been born to Naomi." They named him Obed; he became the father of Jesse, the father of David.

*** Mark 12 : 38-44**

³⁸ As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, ³⁹ and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! ⁴⁰ They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

⁴¹ He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. ⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. ⁴⁴ For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

HYMN: The Steadfast Love of the Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ECWzv7DS7Es>

SERMON

As we come together today for the first time for what seems ages, we are very aware of how important community is, of how we are thankful for the support that family, relatives, friends, and our

church family gives us throughout our lives. When we have been separate from loved ones we realise even more strongly that loving relationships are so important to life.

Those of you who viewed or read the sermon last week will remember the way Ruth was willing to give of herself to care for Naomi. It was a poignant story of grief, and also of acceptance especially of those who might be excluded from the usual circle in society. We also reflected on the teaching of our Lord recorded in Mark's gospel that we are to love God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves - and in fact that we cannot do the former (loving God) without the doing the latter (loving others as ourselves).

Today's scripture readings take us a step further on in the story of Naomi and Ruth, and we shall spend some time with the passage from the gospel as well, where we have another generous woman who gives beyond all expectation. Both the story of Ruth and Naomi, and this other woman centuries later whom Jesus spoke about, tell of women who put their own needs aside for others. We could even view them as types, or forerunners, of what Jesus himself will do sacrificially and completely for others - for us - by dying on the cross.

If you think back for a moment to last week's scriptures, you'll remember those wonderful words that Ruth the younger woman, said to Naomi, "Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge", and so on until she says, "Where you die, I will die," And now today we've heard that it is Naomi who is portrayed as the selfless person, as she now stronger in herself, gives her faithful and loving care back to her daughter-in-law, Ruth. Verse one of today's passage from chapter three, "My daughter," Naomi says, "I need to seek some security for you, so that it may be well with you." And what follows is this rather careful, tasteful, gentle - well, we could call it plain seduction! - and then eventually, marriage and a child. A child who in the course of time, becomes the grandfather of King David. And of course we know that then after more centuries have passed that one day from David's line - from Ruth's line originally - another king will be born, who will be named Jesus, and whose kingdom this time will be built on love and servanthood. Have a look at the first chapter of Matthew's gospel and you'll see the genealogy listed there.

Now I want to move our minds over to today's gospel passage in Mark. Did you notice that along with her generosity this woman, like our Old Testament friends, was also a widow? A poor widow. It is a difficult time of life for any woman, but in those days and society there was no social security. I would love to tell you how widows were cared for in the villages where I worked in PNG - even to being given their own special Christmas tree - but that's a story for another time I think! The question I would like us to consider from the passage in Mark this morning, is what is our Lord really saying here about this woman? And what is its importance in that Mark chooses to record this snippet of our Lord's conversation at the Temple that day with his disciples?

Isn't it true in conversations, that often what is *not* said is every bit as important as what *is* said? You see, here we need to tread warily as we overhear what Jesus says to the disciples as he watches what the woman is doing. Note that Jesus does not praise the widow, let alone even speak to her. He does not say to her, as we heard him say last week to an enquirer, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God." But he does say, just after she put in her two small copper coins that are worth a penny that, "Out of her poverty she has put in everything she had, all she had to live on". What do we make of that observation? What do we make of that comment?

As is always the case, the context needs to be understood. We are told in verse 41 exactly where Jesus was, and I quote: "He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury." Putting in their offerings, if you like. So why do you think Jesus placed himself so strategically and sat just there? You might recall that just a few verses earlier, Jesus had been criticising the scribes - he says: "They devour widow's houses and for the sake of appearances say long

prayers. They will receive greater condemnation." And therein is a clue: widows were very vulnerable in Jewish society, and it was the scribes who were often the mangers of deceased estates taking out for themselves what they could in fees. Figuratively, as Jesus says, "devouring widow's houses". So here we find him, now sitting in a place where he observes a woman giving all she had to survive on, and putting it into the treasury. So is his idea or purpose in this instance really to give, to show in real terms, an example of how hard these pompous men were making life for ordinary folk? Always throughout his ministry, Jesus stands for the poor, and isn't this another example of him making it clear to his disciples that following him means standing against those who were making a living unfairly from others' vulnerability?

Our Lord says, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything - all she had to live on." Is this a comment on the way the system of their formal religion had conditioned the people to even put themselves at risk of being able to survive? Is our Lord making a statement about the extent of the abuse going on, and his strategy is to show, using the example of this poor woman's actions, what was going on at the Temple? That vulnerable people were being used - that they were being ripped off? You'll remember the incident when he drove out the money changers from the Temple - he called it a den of robbers, didn't he? Mark has just recorded that in his previous chapter.

And as an aside, it is interesting to note that what follows next in Mark's gospel is Jesus' statement as they leave the Temple, that all of those great buildings will be thrown down - not one stone will be left upon another. All the efforts of the religious leaders, including the scribes, who are keeping the institution going, will end up being a total waste. It wasn't long after this that Rome did demolish it.

By interpreting this passage about the "Widow's Mite" as it is known, in this way, I am not meaning to erase the idea of the woman's own selflessness. She surely stands in clear contrast to anybody whose sharing is half-hearted and grudging. Think too, of the contrast she is to that rich young ruler who met Jesus - the one who couldn't let go of his possessions (Mark 10).

So as we consider the selfless giving in the life of this poor woman, along with the lives of Naomi and Ruth, what do we then take from them regarding how we use our gifts of time, talents and material resources? How do we handle the matter of good stewardship? How do we ensure that our giving, our stewardship is appropriate in this day and age? This question takes in not only our giving to the offertory plate at church. Most of us find that through the letterbox, on our TV screens, we find many a charity asking for donations. Many are very worthwhile too, and yet at the same time we certainly don't want to be ripped off. How discerning are we? How discerning can we be?

And is stewardship only about giving cash gifts? Authentic stewardship takes in a very much wider circle than just cash that we may be able to lay aside - there is our time, our talents, our material resources. As I was jotting down my thoughts to share with you today, I received an email that particularly caught my attention. It was from one of the Australian delegates to the Climate Change conference in Glasgow. Rev'd Ray Minniecon is an aboriginal minister who is an elder and representative for indigenous people. He had just attended a church service in Glasgow where the sermon was based on our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. The Scottish minister had mentioned the verse in Matthew 6:24 where our Lord says you cannot serve two masters, you cannot serve God and mammon, or God and wealth. And Ray in this email was writing that he agreed with the minister's statement that therein is the nub of our Global climate crisis. Are we able to face the fact that greed needs addressing that others may simply live? Are we taking to heart that loving our neighbour as ourselves involves hearing the voices of those who are hurting already in this environmental crisis? That generosity and self-awareness on our part is all about caring for one another? That good stewardship requires a big brush to take in its real meaning?

So are we able to read and interpret these ancient scriptures and so decipher a Godly way of handling the issues of the 21st century? Issues of our ordinary, everyday lives, as well as the big issues that hang over us as a global community?

Quite likely you will feel that I have wandered far from the scriptures - far from the story of Ruth and Naomi and Boaz along with little Obed, and far from the widow who dropped her two coins into the treasury box. But hopefully you'll think it is alright to consider the scriptures in a framework that helps us to connect to issues that require our careful thinking and action in today's world. Doesn't loving God and loving our neighbour take in all the gifts that each of us have been endowed with by God? Are we honouring God with all the choices and decisions that we are making, given that all have consequences? A good rule of thumb is found in Proverbs 3:9, "Honour God with everything you have; give God the first and the best."

Shortly we shall share together in the celebration of Holy Communion. It is there that we will affirm that it is uniquely Jesus who has dealt with our sin, our imperfection, and who enables us to be made right before God. Giving thanks to God for Jesus (the one who is the ultimate self-giver, the one who cleanses us and renews us) enables us to have the potential to become the generous, caring and loving people that God longs for us to be.

The Lord be with you. Amen

HYMN: O Master, Let me Walk with Thee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WXwXQnsaL3A>

PRAYER FOR THE OFFERING

The Church is the community of God active and alive in this world. We are interdependent, with each other and for each other, so we live generously. Let us pray:

God of love and care, may this money and all that we have and are be used by you and your church this week to make this world more like the world as you want it to be: full of love, justice and hope.

Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE *(Prepared by Roz Denniss)*

My theme for Prayers of the People is "Jesus' Compassion "

I will begin by quoting Max Lucado's interpretation of the "Feeding of the 5000"

["Send the crowds away "the disciples demanded

"Fair request – after all "they say "you've told them — you've taught them —

you've healed them —you've accommodated them, and now —they're getting hungry —if we don't send them away, they'll want you to feed them too !"

Jesus responded with "you give them something to eat"

"Y ..y ..you 've got to be kidding!

It must be one of Jesus's jokes !

Do you know how many people are out there?"

When Jesus saw the people ...he saw an opportunity to love and affirm value.

When the disciples saw the people ...they saw thousands of problems!

How silly we must appear to God!

Jesus had had a "pressure -pack day "where he should have exploded!

However, he enquires "How many loaves do you have ?"

The disciples bring him a little boy's lunch – a lunchbox becomes a banquet and all are fed.!

No "I told you so "speech is delivered . The same compassion Jesus extended to the crowd is extended to his friends as well!

Somehow I was led to relate this story to a program I saw on ABC television this week called "Between Us" where it related the stories of seven unique individuals and how their problems were solved. There was a well-known actor with developing Alzheimer's disease and the unbiased love given by his family.

A Refugee couple in Australia separated from their young son in Sudan by Isis and the successful tireless efforts of an Australian couple.

A family unable to have a child by IVF and their different life without children.

A girl wanting to change into a boy and the understanding support given by a grandmother for the young Transgender.

The stigma of different colour in a young girl's life and how she helped others to overcome this problem.

An adopted child seeking the love of her real but unknown "Mummy" and the joy of finding her.

All the stories revealed the hunger of people for love and their need for the love of God in their lives just like the hungry people in the story of the feeding of the 5,000.

- Let us pray

Forgive us, Lord, for being so biased and selfish – give us faith to act – guide us in our lives and attitudes so that we will be more like Christbeing aware of the needs and heartache of others .

Teach us the full meaning of loving our neighbour as ourselves.

Oh Lord God – how wonderful it is that we are living in exciting timeswe are experiencing freedom from so many restrictions caused by the Pandemic.

We thank you that we are able to join together to worship and to participate in the Lord's Supper – things we have done many times before but it is now more meaningful and wonderful.

As we eat and drink together to celebrate the life, death and resurrection of Jesus – we remember those who are unable to be with us due to the limitations created by age, illness or recovery from operations.

Let us pray the Lord's prayer together.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed 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.

HYMN: Everyday God

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F1oNP4vaW_c

HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,
our Lord and God,
for you alone are worthy.
In time beyond our dreaming you brought forth light out of darkness,
and in the love of Christ your Son
you set men and women at the heart of your creation.
By the gift of the Spirit
you bring to completion the work of your Son.
You lead us in truth and give us power to proclaim the gospel
to the whole world.
And so we praise you with the faithful of every time and place,
joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation in the eternal hymn:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

We thank you that you called a covenant people to be a light to the nations.
Through Moses you taught us to love your law,
and in the prophets you cried out for justice.
In the fullness of your mercy you became one with us in Jesus Christ,
who gave himself up for us on the cross.
You make us alive together with him, that we may rejoice in his presence
and share his peace.
By water and the Spirit you open the kingdom to all who believe,
and welcome us to your table: for by grace we are saved, through faith.

We bless you, Lord God, king of the universe, through our Lord Jesus Christ,
who on the night of his betrayal took bread, gave thanks, broke it
and gave thanks to his disciples, saying: Take this and eat it.
This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper, he took the cup,
gave thanks, and gave it to them saying: Drink from this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for everyone
for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.

With this bread and this cup we do as our Saviour commands:
we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.
Pour out the Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine,
that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.
Make us one with him, one with each other, and one in ministry in the world,
until at last we feast with him in the kingdom.
Through your Son, Jesus Christ, in your holy church, all honour and glory is yours.
Father almighty, now and for ever. **Amen**

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.
The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.
The gifts of God for the people of God.

Receive this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ,
and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Creator of all, we give you thanks and praise that when we were still far off
you met us in your Son and brought us home.

Dying and living, he declared your love, gave us grace,
and opened the gate of glory.

May we who share Christ's body live his risen life:
we who drink his cup bring life to others;
we whom the Spirit lights give light to the world.

**Anchor us in this hope that we have grasped;
so we and all your children may be free,
and the whole earth live to praise your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

HYMN: Lead us Heavenly Father Lead Us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OpkEeXWtWg0>

BENEDICTION & BLESSING

What does the Lord require? To act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.
So let us go from this place, accompanied by the one who has shown us how to live.
Let us go, with holy hearts and loving hands, that the world may know, God is love.

And now may the blessing of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always. Amen

SONG – May the Peace of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwyyN86Z3fc>