

PENTECOST 6

4/7/21

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

Be confident; hold your heads up high!

God's glorious presence is with us.

Be confident; rejoice in solidarity!

God's Word will strengthen us.

Be confident; face the unknown future!

God is present for us, in time and beyond.

Be confident; be ready for action!

God has entrusted us to do God's work.

Opening Prayer God: opening ourselves to

A baby opens her eyes to the world for the first time,

and we open our hearts to our loving God in worship.

A butterfly opens its wings in the sunshine for the first time,

and we open ourselves to see God's creation in a whole new light.

A young child goes through the school gates for the first time,

and we open ourselves to looking at Jesus in completely new ways.

A newly qualified nurse finds herself on the hospital ward for the first time,

and we open ourselves to serving as disciples of Jesus with an enthusiasm we had never imagined. Amen.

HYMN 215 You servants of God

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZ9j3e8_yQc&t=6s

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

In you, God of hope, there are always new beginnings,

New ministries, new companions on our missional pathways.

We who lose hope so easily, are encouraged by the gentle love
that you bring before our eyes each day.

Never harsh or aggressive, you gently reveal to us
new pathways to live in Jesus' Way.

We thank you that you draw us forward
and help us learn from what has gone before.

Ever present, ever listening,
we are thankful that you stay with us,
for we may lose our way.

Gracious One,

I recognise the misuse of your love and the cautiousness of my welcome.

Forgive me, for I am not living as a person of peace.

Where has it gone?

The unconditional welcoming hospitality for all?

When did I first let it slip

and let the dust cloud my faithful action?

Who has torn the tent?

The dwelling space of safety and warming love for all?

What has hindered my responses,

so that injustice and inequality flourish around me?

Why has your Way of being been misconstrued?
Twisted by humanity to not include all?
How can I change my ways,
to shake off the dust of conditional love and injustice
that clings deeply and stains my being and living?
Gracious Love,
heal my ways and wash me clean,
so that my thinking, doing, loving and being
is refreshed and renewed to reveal your unconditional, gracious love.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God's Warming Spirit melts our cold habits
and draws us to the fire of living justice and equity.
Brother Jesus teaches us again how to live as a peace-bringer,
who welcomes the whole people of God,
raises a voice of justice for those who are voiceless
and reaches out with healing and generous hands.
Amen.

READINGS

- **2 Corinthians 12:2-10**

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows.³ And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows—⁴ was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat.⁵ On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses.⁶ But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think

better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me,⁷ even considering the exceptional character of the revelations. Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated.⁸ Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me,⁹ but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me.¹⁰ Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

- **Mark 6:1-13**

He left that place and came to his hometown, and his disciples followed him. 2 On the Sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! 3 Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him. 4 Then Jesus said to them, “Prophets are not without honour, except in their hometown, and among their own kin, and in their own house.” 5 And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. 6 And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. 7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. 8 He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; 9 but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. 10 He said to them, “Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. 11 If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.” 12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

HYMN 562 I'm not ashamed to own my Lord

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lv1g59ipdNs>

SERMON

The last few days we have heard conflicting statements about Covid injections and how safe they are. Today I am looking at the same sort of issue when we come to prophetic preaching. It strongly comes out of Paul's statement about his ability to deliver his message.

A famous preacher quipped that one of the most difficult things about hearing God's message is the fact that God so often chooses such mundane people to deliver His message. Today I want to reflect with you on what messages we actually listen to and which ones we should follow through with.

As a minister in a congregational setting I like to think that God has some wonderful messages that I am entrusted to deliver. However, given human nature, there is no doubt that sometimes my message might come across as being a bit tame or even miss the mark. There is always a tension where we can start to package our interpretation of scripture according to the tendencies of the community where we are preaching. In making the message palatable we can all too often be accused of delivering a sugar-coated Gospel.

Sometimes I personally tend to think that God can have a perverse sense of humour. Quite often when God feels the need to deliver a world changing message He chooses someone who doesn't fit easily into our expectations of preachers.

This is certainly the impression I have of the people in Jesus' home synagogue. Jesus comes into His childhood home town from His current base in Capernaum along with His disciples. It appears to be His first visit after being Baptised by John the Baptist and calling His disciples to follow Him.

The fact is that Jesus's first big chance at preaching to His home audience sees Him fail miserably. This young man had grown up in this village. They knew Him as a child and He learned His trade as a carpenter there. They knew all the embarrassing stories from His childhood.

It didn't take long for Jesus to be the focus of disparaging remarks.

- Does he now think that he is better than us?
- How come he is now telling us how to live?
- What can he teach us that we don't already know from far more experienced teachers?

When Luke relates this same story he allows us to hear some of the basis on which Jesus is preaching. Picking up on Isaiah, Jesus quotes that prophet: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . ." and then he says "Today this prophesy is fulfilled among you." It is at this point that Luke tells us that the audience becomes hostile and rejects His teaching.

Mark is a bit gentler on the audience in his account and he does not go into detail about Jesus message. For Mark his Gospel shows that the embodiment of Jesus teaching arises out of His actions more than His words. For Mark the message is rejected because the messenger does not match their expectations. They felt that they knew Jesus too well to be swayed by anything that He could say.

People so often build up pictures of previous ministry and outside teachers who they have only heard about in the past and tend to down-play the messages that they have received more recently. When God gives us a profound message through the words of someone we know too well we tend to down-play the impact on our own lives. Sometimes it is because we know the messenger all too well and consequently we give little respect to what we think of their personal opinions.

After all that messenger is imperfect just like me so that they can't really have any profound insights that I haven't already considered.

There is also the fact that we are not prepared to stop and reconsider a message that has been delivered all too often in the past. Sometimes it is only when we hear the same message from someone new that we might stop to reconsider what is being said.

It is not always people that we think that we already know, who fail to hold our attention. Sometimes when we know little or nothing about another person we can tend to give them little credence too. Let me quote to you an example:

A few years ago a class of trainee ministers had to do a simulation game exercise. They had to pretend that they all survived a plane crash in the desert and together they had to make group decisions about how important to survival various objects salvaged from the plane would be. Now most of the men were gung-ho young people who all fancied ourselves as tough and resourceful Aussie bushmen, even though we were really soft city boys.

There was one quietly spoken middle aged woman in the class. As they discussed the differing views, she offered her opinions

and all the would-be Crocodile Dundee's spoke over the top of her and took very little notice. What could an aging woman know compared to all the Boy Scout graduates?!

Well at the end of the day, when the individual and group answers were compared to the opinions of an Army Commando survival specialist, her individual answers beat all of those from the men. She'd been a missionary in a New Guinea jungle for over twenty years and they had all grown up in the suburbs.

One of the strengths of the Uniting Church is that we do have people prepared to speak out, even if we don't always agree. I am often brought back to the story of John Flynn who was for so many years considered a person not really suited to parish ministry. Quietly he built up the most successful rural and remote ministry model in the world and at the same time he initiated the Royal Flying Doctor system which is the template for our rescue planes and helicopters today. His ministry and message went for so many years unheard.

God does not speak through a chosen few who happen to be held in high esteem by the hierarchy of any particular church. This was certainly the case throughout the Bible. What real authority did Moses have to confront the Pharaoh of Egypt?

One of the strengths of our system is that the profound word of the prophetic among us comes out through the will of the community, not just the word of an individual. So our forebears said that the will of God is best determined by the community gathered to listen and pray, not by a single individual, no matter how respected they may be.

But it is very important to hear the subtle nuances of this teaching, because in today's social climate it can sound like mere democracy, and it is not. Democracy says the majority preference is right, or even if it isn't, it gets its way. Just assemble the people and whoever has got the numbers rules the day. As we can see from what happened that day in Nazareth, the majority is not always right. Let alone the horror of Good Friday.

Democracy simply seeks to give authority to the desires of the majority. We, as a Christian community, need to listen and pray and discern where God's will is taking us. The smallest minority voice in the meeting may actually be the voice of God speaking to us, and that the best chance of us hearing and recognising that voice is for us to gather the people, and prayerfully hear their opinions. Our primary role when we gather to make decisions is to prayerfully listen in order that together we might discern

what God is saying to us. And what God is saying to us may well be being said through those we least expect to hear it from.

God may be speaking to us through the uppity young man who we know only too well and whose scabby knees we used to put band aids on and who has grown up gaining far more knowledge than humility.

God may be speaking to us through the quietly spoken middle aged lady who is polite enough to go along with the group even when she knows better.

God may be speaking to us through the young woman who suffers schizophrenia and, like Christ, knows what it means to be broken and rejected.

God may be speaking to us through the visitor, the one whose vision is not hindered by knowledge of how we've always done things around here in the past. How often did Jesus appear to people as a stranger, recognised only after the conversation had begun, or even concluded?

The one thing we can be sure of is that God is speaking to us. And it sure isn't up to us to be giving God guidelines about who to use as the messengers!

HYMN 158 God has spoken by His prophets

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

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Bless these our offerings, today O God, so that they nurture a ministry to which we are all called. Help us to be generous of heart and resources, to do your work in our everyday living. We who have so much and a community of love, hope to share with those who have little and live each day longing for a better way of being.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Brother Jesus,

constant companion, listening friend,

as a church in ministry,

where do we speak into our local community space?

Speak to us, we pray.

Prayerful listening

As individual Christians,
how can we help shape our relationships
to be bringers of peace and justice?

Speak to us, we pray.

Prayerful listening

In our local community, there are people who dismiss our faith:
yet, we learn from you to persevere in humility and resilience.
What 'dust' do we need to shake off?
How do we robe ourselves in active love and peace?

Speak to us, we pray.

Prayerful listening

May we 'shake off' all the inequitable, unjust, judgemental, inhospitable
ways
that leave another isolated, vulnerable, in need and unwelcome.
May our prayerful actions and welcoming hospitality,
reflect the gracious, generous and heartfelt effort
to enfold all people of God with abundant and unconditional love and care.
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 for ever. Amen.

HYMN 601 O Master let me walk with thee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoWzpJpyPaQ&t=17s>

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 that we should give our thanks and praise.

It is right to glorify you, Father,

and to give you thanks;

for you alone are God, living and true,

dwelling in light inaccessible

from before time and for ever.

Fountain of life and source of all goodness,

you made all things
and fill them with your blessing;
you created them to rejoice
in the splendour of your radiance.

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 acclaim you, holy Lord, glorious in power;
your mighty works reveal your wisdom and love.

You formed us in your own image,
giving the whole world into our care,
so that, in obedience to you, our Creator,
we might rule and serve all your creatures.

When our disobedience took us far from you,
you did not abandon us to the power of death.

In your mercy you came to our help,
so that in seeking you we might find you.

Again and again

you called us into covenant with you,
and through the prophets
you taught us to hope for salvation.
Father, you loved the world so much
that in the fullness of time
you sent your only Son to be our Saviour.
Incarnate by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
he lived as one of us, yet without sin.
To the poor he proclaimed the good news of salvation;
to prisoners, freedom;
to the sorrowful, joy.
To fulfil your purpose
he gave himself up to death
and, rising from the grave, destroyed death
and made the whole creation new.
And that we might live no longer for ourselves,
but for him who died and rose for us,
he sent the Holy Spirit,
his own first gift for those who believe,
to complete his work in the world,
and to bring to fulfilment the sanctification of all.
We bless you, Lord God, king of the universe,
through our Lord Jesus Christ,

who on the night of his betrayal
took bread,
gave you thanks,
broke it,
and gave it 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 all people
for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, whenever you drink it,
for the remembrance of me.

Father,
we now celebrate the memorial of your redemption.

Recalling Christ's death,
and descent among the dead,
proclaiming his resurrection
and ascension to your right hand,

awaiting his coming in glory;
and offering to you,
from the gifts you have given us,
this bread and this cup,
we praise you and we bless you.

Lord,
we pray that your in goodness and mercy
your Holy Spirit might descend on us,
and upon these gifts,
sanctify them and showing them
to be holy gifts for your holy people,
the bread of life and the cup of salvation,
the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ.
Grant that all who share this bread and this cup
may become one body and one spirit,
a living sacrifice in Christ
to the praise of your name.

Through Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ,
all honour and glory are yours,
almighty God and Father,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
for ever and ever.

AMEN

DISTRIBUTION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We thank you, God our Father,
that through word and sacrament
you have given us your Son
who is the true bread of heaven
and food of eternal life.

So strengthen us in your service
that our daily living may show our thanks;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

HYMN 573 A charge to keep I have

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w-m4JlKjy4>

BENEDICTION

Our God surrounds us and supports us.
The Spirit's voice is spoken in unexpected ways,
So, take time to listen each day.
Jesus' call is to all of us who follow the Way.
Let us then step forward,
surrounded in love,
spoken to with grace
while following a call that can bring peace and unity
to our local community
and radiate to the world.

Go in peace to love and serve in the Way of Christ.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rw1sjc3JVrw>