

**LENT 5**  
**17/3/24**  
**CAVES BEACH**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

You will be our God, and we will be your people.

**In times of weakness, in moments of temptation, the covenant holds.**

You will be our God, and we will be your people.

**When the journey is rough, when friends let us down, the covenant holds.**

You will be our God, and we will be your people.

**In our struggle to be a faithful community, in the uncertainty of faithful endeavours, the covenant holds.**

You will be our God, and we will be your people.

**In our work for justice, in our response of worship, the covenant is proved. You will be our God, and we will be your people.**

**Opening Prayer**

You welcome us, O God, as travellers along the highway of faith.

**We have set out in hope and we believe you are with us on the way.**

The end of this Lenten season brings home the challenge of the journey.

**But you, O God, have given us the person of Jesus Christ, to trust and to follow.**

Jesus says "The hour is come," the cross stands menacingly at the end of the road.

**We will not look back; we will confront the self-serving powers of darkness.**

Love Crucified reveals a wonderful new prospect.

**Death is not the end; the Way goes on beyond the cross; Love is eternal. Amen.**

**HYMN 342** When I survey the wonderous cross

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MF9tVfTMXs&t=11s>

**PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

We praise you, O God, not only with our hearts, but with our minds - indeed - with every part of our lives. We praise you for being our God and for

claiming us as your people. As your people. Such easy words to say and yet such astounding words to own. You - great Creator of the universe - acknowledge that each person is special to you. We shake our heads in disbelief at such an unlikely action - and yet - you have proved its truth through the person of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Saviour and Lord. He even went to the length of dying to demonstrate the depth of his love for us - the intensity of divine love for all humanity. Accept our worship, gracious God, for we offer it with glad and grateful hearts, hearts energised and renewed by our relationship with you.

Based on Psalm 51

**Have** mercy on us, God of steadfast love, according to your abundant mercy blot out all our wrongdoings.

Cleanse us thoroughly from all our sins..

We know all too well, when we do sin, that we do it against you, O God.

When we do evil in your sight, O God, you are justified in your judgment of our misdeeds.

You desire truth in all we think, and do and say; therefore etch your wisdom on the innermost places of our hearts.

Wash and scrub our sins away until we are free from imperfection.

Create in us clean hearts, O God, and put a new and right spirit within us.

Do not cast us from your presence and do not take your Holy Spirit from us.

Restore to us the joy of your salvation, and sustain in us a willing spirit so that we can respond joyfully to your intention for our lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen..

## **ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS**

Hear the good news: Jesus, having been made perfect, became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him. (Hebrews 5:9) And so I declare to you: in Jesus Christ, we are renewed, we are cleansed, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

## **READINGS**

- **Hebrews 5:5–10**

5 So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son;

today I have begotten you”;

6 as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,  
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered, 9 and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, 10 having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

- **John 12:20–33**

20 Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. 21 They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” 22 Philip went and told Andrew, then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. 23 Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit. 25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. 26 Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour. 27 “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say: ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. 28 Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” 29 The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” 30 Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. 31 Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. 32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” 33 He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

**HYMN 211** Jesus lover of my soul

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvluR3KbPDs>

## **SERMON**

If we take the time to listen to people in the community we can often hear concerns about the idea that Christianity is all about self-denial. Just listen to what Jesus tells us in today’s reading: “25 Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

If that is all we heard then we could easily think that living a Christ centred life would be very unfruitful and it would cut us off from a fuller life in the world. Looking at some of the readings that we see in Lent we could easily be drawn into thinking that life was meant to be very bleak.

In Lent we can easily be drawn into trying to remove the sin from our life by trying to give up things and getting into more and more self discipline. To some this might look a lot like the concentration on discipline is an end in itself. Some might think that self-denial is an arduous path to some form of enlightenment.

If this is the case we are missing out on the promise Jesus offers us, through the Holy Spirit, for a fulfilled life with no need to be consumed by self-denial and the denial of the gifts of the world in which we live.

Perhaps the better way to approach our lives as Christians is to reflect on the part of today's reading which says: "24 Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain, but if it dies it bears much fruit."

For Jesus there is a direct link between letting go of life as we knew it and taking up the life which Jesus gifted us through His teachings and the Holy Spirit. While some of us might think that this is simply 'common sense' it is still very difficult to put this into action in our every-day lives.

In thinking about this I was reminded about my grandson, Alec. He got very upset one day. In one hand he had his 'Spiderman' outfit and in the other he had his 'Iron Man' outfit and had become so frustrated because he could not wear both at once! It is a big part of a young child's learning to realise that one of the dilemmas in life is not being able to be two things at once. Or, in this case act out two cartoon characters at the same time.

In order to achieve growth in our life we need to be able to give up those things that are holding us back. We can't be both a fighter and a peacemaker at the same time. This is where we need to connect with the Holy Spirit to allow us find the correct balance in our lives. A person cannot have a strong connection with their children and still work 80 hours a week. We can't become the person that God has shown us that we can be while

not being able to let go of the old habits which stop us from being close to God.

I am sure that all of us would like to think that we can all improve ourselves and our spiritual life. It is not a matter of despising some aspects of our approach to life. It is more a matter of appreciating the little things and being prepared not to be imposed on by what the wider world is suggesting that we should be like.

If we think back to people as they made New Year's Resolutions we can all appreciate that most people have some vision of what they would like to be. What is the stumbling block for so many of us is the challenge to make the changes and therefore allow improvements to take place.

God has a vision for each of us. God tells us that we are created in His image. God also knows what we are capable of becoming. God is aware of our efforts to become the best person we can be. God is eager for us to work with the Holy Spirit to help us create and grow to become that best person.

At the same time God does not impose growth on us. God does not override our life choices. God comes to us through the work of the Holy Spirit to give each of us a vision of what we can become, whatever our age and limitations. God came to us in the person of Jesus Christ to give us the guidelines to achieve love and peace and grace in our life. Christ sacrificed His life on the cross so that we can achieve peace in this life.

If we choose to work with God much of the work is already done. By allowing the Holy Spirit to work with us we can start to renew our spiritual life constantly. This then allows us to experience the potential that God has for us.

However, the Holy Spirit will not struggle with us. We must be prepared to give up holding on to areas of our life which we have hidden from God. The more we hide our true self from God, either consciously or sub-consciously, the less the Holy Spirit has to work with and the less that can be achieved.

Looking back on this we come across the reference to the grain of wheat. It is only when that grain falls into the ground and dies that it is able to regenerate and bear fruitful supplies of grain. In our baptism and

confirmation we committed to being faithful and fruitful servants of God. The question then remains as to whether we are prepared to constantly put that seed back into the fertile ground so that more and more fruit can be produced through us.

If we are willing to let go of the control of our life and place it into God's hands then we can continue to grow in our faith. However if we tenaciously hold onto our old ways we can remain locked into a limited life.

God offers us freedom but He does not force us to take advantage of this potential growth:

- Are you prepared to pay the price for a growing and fruitful life, no matter how old we are?
- How much are we prepared to change but at the same time are we ill-prepared to let go of that part of our life that is holding us back?
- Do we still hang on to our long-standing failings and neuroses?
- Is the possibility of real and meaningful growth in our lives terrifying?

We can tend to want to hang on to that broken self and it is that familiarity which holds us back.

Today's consumer orientated marketing tells us that we can have it all ... if we have the right income! You don't need to choose between things as you can possess everything that they promote. This is fact a marketing lie.

Some things automatically stop us from getting other things. In the end we can end up with no space left with which to store all those goods. While we are busy trying to control and manage all those possessions we can lose our connection with God's love and grace. We can forget to be able to sit back and appreciate the simple things in life.

If our hands are full and our lives packed with activity we need to be able to let go of some things in order to allow the fullness of God's promises to come through. After all, God will provide for our needs if we give Him the space. In a world which tells us that 'we can have it all' it can be difficult to let go of parts of our life and things which no longer have any relevance.

We need to understand that we have the ability to deny those things in our life which stifle our connection with God. It is not a matter of missing out on the good things in life, rather we need to leave our selves open to the bigger picture and potential which the Holy Spirit guides us towards. In the message given to us by Christ we can see the full price we need to pay to receive the bargain which is a life filled with God.

**HYMN 256** From heaven you came

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-lxT-2\\_jRg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-lxT-2_jRg)

### **PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING**

In giving and serving, greater life may emerge. Let's give from this place of hope.

Jesus, may our gifts bear fruit that brings glory to God. Amen.

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

**Adamstown Uniting Church** is a growing congregation with a number of children and young people. We are blessed to have an accepting and open-minded congregation, with livestreamed services and involvement of a range of leaders in worship and in the Church Council and elders. While we have had supply ministers for two years, we look forward to our new minister, Rev Greer Hudson who will join us on Easter Sunday. The congregation recently appointed a youth worker, who will work with teens and tweens on Sundays.

**Prayer:** For Rev Greer Hudson as she prepares to lead Adamstown Uniting Church. For Pearl who will be commissioned as our Youth worker. Adamstown leaders and elders as they prepare for our new minister. Give thanks for the growth of the congregation and all that has happened to bring us to this point in our life. Amen.

Give thanks that Jesus' actions were actions of the heart. Give thanks that his love for God and his love for others was so inscribed on his heart that it was inextricably woven into all his actions. That, even when he was troubled about what lay ahead, he still turned his face towards Jerusalem and the prospect of the cross, so that all people would benefit from the fruitful new life which his death would bring about.

Pray that we might be prepared to bury our personal desires and ambitions so that we can be fruitful followers of Jesus Christ. As the seed or grain has to undergo radical change before it experiences new life, pray that the Holy Spirit will transform the areas of our lives which need to undergo change so that we not only experience the new, risen life of Christ, but serve Jesus by being bearers of his life to others. We know that the way to Easter is Good Friday, that the victory of resurrection requires the vulnerability of crucifixion.

Pray that that knowledge is written on our hearts so that we too are prepared to be vulnerable, to share the pain of those who hurt, are lonely or rejected; those who are victims and have lost hope of experiencing any kind of change for the better in their lives.

We bring before you now those people we know who have problems with their health ... Pam, in Tasmania, Myra & Jack, Clarise, Val, Keith Marie & Robert ... In silence we bring before you those we also know of in need of prayerful support.....

Pray that we may be bearers of the hope of a fruitful future graced by the presence of the risen Christ.

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 602** O love that wilt not let me go  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=biHQVoAUTtU>



## **BENEDICTION**

We have held the mystery of endings,  
and now those rumours of surprising glory are taking root in our lives  
We feel something growing inside of us;  
we know that a seed buried is only the beginning.  
So, we ready ourselves to leave this place  
carrying life within us and surprising glory.  
May the brilliance of God shine through you  
in all the details of your life.  
Go in peace. Amen.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH\\_HdkWs74](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74)