

EPIPHANY 5

6/2/22

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

As the disciples encountering Jesus were acutely aware of their priorities,

**So we come before you, God,
ready to look at life differently.**

As the disciples were ready to tell their family and friends about Jesus,

**So we come before you, God,
refusing to keep our faith to ourselves.**

As the disciples faithfully trusted and found their trust wonderfully rewarded,

**So we come before you, God,
prepared to put our loyalty to the Christian way before all
else.**

As the disciples found that responding to Jesus' call was the most challenging event of their life,

**So we come before you, God,
and hear the words of Jesus, "Follow me!"**

OPENING PRAYER

You are with us as we encourage each other to risk new paths, O God.

**In the challenging times, your love is gracefully given and
received.**

You confront us with unforeseen opportunities, fresh avenues of service.

**In the midst of self-doubt, and when we question our own
motives, you secure us, O God.**

You challenge us with a call to faithful discipleship, O God.

In the use of our best gifts and talents, your Realm comes closer.

You identify with the troubled and the distressed, O God.

As we are aware of the lowly and serve the needy, we are caring for Christ.

You are the Good News for our times, O God:

**A note of hope amid despair,
a sense of truth when it seems that nothing can be trusted.
Amen.**

HYMN 132 Holy, holy, holy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0SHDNs7Dt5M>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

The intricacy of the world is breathtaking, God,
the dependencies that exist defy our imagination.

The tiniest fungi impact giant trees and massive boulders,
wrasse fish bring joy to manna rays with their cleaning,
flowers imitate insects to attract pollinators,
and kookaburras know how to laugh.

All this, and so much more, is laid out before us to notice and love.

Just as the interconnectedness of nature's web binds us with everything that is, so we are bound to you.

You have stepped into the boat of human life with us,
ridden the waves of all our experience and emotions,
calling us to be your people,
to bring all we have - all our skill, all our creativity, all our imagination,
to join you in transforming sadness into joy,

war into peace, and malice into beauty.

This is a rare privilege for which we are eternally grateful.

“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant⁵ or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;⁶ it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth.⁷ It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end.”

Let us confess our shortcomings in the ways of love

so we can receive the forgiveness that makes love possible.

When love invites us to have the long view in mind,

we push forward with our own short-sighted agenda.

When love invites us to express a gentle humility,

we place ourselves in the spotlight of recognition.

Forgive us, O Spirit of Christ.

(silence)

When love invites us to seek the well-being of another,

we insist on our own self-interest.

When love invites us to forgive as we are forgiven,

we cling to our hurts and nurse our resentments.

Forgive us, O Spirit of Christ.

(silence)

When love invites us to celebrate the good,

we insist on circling around the latest tragedy.

When love invites us to an eternal steadfastness,

we allow love to fade and languish.

Forgive us, O Spirit of Christ.

(silence)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

Of this we can be sure: the one who revealed perfect love extends this love to us freely and without reservation.

We are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

Love invites us to grow up in all things into Christ.

Amen, may it be so.

READINGS

- **Isaiah 6:10-13**

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. 2 Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;

the whole earth is full of his glory.”

4 The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke. 5 And I said: “Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. 7 The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: “Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out.” 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord

saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" 9 And he said, "Go and say to this people:

'Keep listening, but do not comprehend;

keep looking, but do not understand.'

10 Make the mind of this people dull,

and stop their ears,

and shut their eyes,

so that they may not look with their eyes,

and listen with their ears,

and comprehend with their minds,

and turn and be healed."

11 Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said:

"Until cities lie waste

without inhabitant,

and houses without people,

and the land is utterly desolate;

12 until the Lord sends everyone far away,

and vast is the emptiness in the midst of the land.

13 Even if a tenth part remain in it,

it will be burned again,

like a terebinth or an oak

whose stump remains standing

when it is felled."

The holy seed is its stump.

- **Luke 5:1-11**

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God,² he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets.³ He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat.⁴ When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch."⁵ Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets."⁶ When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.⁷ So they signalled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.⁸ But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!"⁹ For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken;¹⁰ and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people."¹¹ When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

HYMN 398 Come down, O love divine

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

SERMON

For the last few years I have held a Covenant Service on this Sunday each year to help us focus us on the year ahead. This year we are still in the messy middle of dealing with a pandemic and a lot of things are still up in the air about what is likely to happen over the next few months. I think that it is time to focus on what we can offer the community we serve both geographic and on-line.

We have two dramatically different scenes in our readings about connecting with God. Each can be seen to be very different.

How often have you been witness to something and been certain about what you saw but then when heard someone speak about it you wondered if it was the same event that you witnessed?

In my work as a police chaplain people would often seek my assistance to talk about events that they had been involved in. At time those events were well known and there were even videos of the situation. However, quite

often when the person started to talk about their experiences I was left wondering if it was in fact the same situation that we were talking about. This could become even more confusing when yet another person spoke about the event raising even more issues.

There is an old legal saying that eyewitnesses are not always reliable. We can all interpret a given situation in such a way that we can see the same event very differently.

There is the story about some police trainees in a lecture about witness statements. In the middle of the lecture a masked person rushes in, fires off a number of blank bullets then runs out the other door. The students are asked to write a statement. Few if any can agree on what they witnessed, let alone what the person was wearing or even if it was a pistol or rifle being fired.

The same thing can happen when people talk to me about my sermons. I can't recall how many times someone comes up to me afterwards commenting that the issues I raised were just what they needed to hear. I have been left dumfounded as I know I hadn't addressed any of those things that week.

Two people hearing the same sermon will regularly come up with differing perceptions about the subjects covered. Equally the wording used by each listener asked to describe a sermon can reflect the sermon into completely different ways.

This can be equally the case when people are attempting to describe a spiritual experience. If I said that I had a dream about a subject, you might perceive what I said very differently if I said I had a 'vision.' They could be the same thing I just expressed it differently to a changing audience.

How about if I recalled having heard an inner voice speak to me compared to saying that I had a sudden insight? It might be the same thing but the choice of words can equally colour the understanding of the listener. Our life experiences can easily direct us to have different ways of understanding events.

Looking at the two different events described in today's readings we might perceive them to be very dis-similar.

Luke tells us about how Simon was going about his normal routine as a fisherman clearing up after a frustrating day's work with no fish to show for all their hard work. Then Jesus comes along. After providing his boat as a platform for Jesus to talk to the crowds Simon puts out into deeper waters

and they soon catch more fish than they could handle. To an outside observer this is a magnificent story about a massive catch of fish.

To Simon this is not about the fish, rather it is about his relationship with Jesus. He is very frightened about his shortcomings in the presence of Jesus. This is one of those situations where the different parties see different messages in the same situation.

Simon sees a holy man, possibly the incarnation of God, and he is left feeling utterly worthless and exposed. He falls on his knees and Simon is fearful of being exposed to the Holy and asks Jesus to go away and let him get back to his everyday life. While most of his fishing colleagues just see a fantastic catch of fish to sell.

Jesus simply lifts Simon to his feet and supports him as He commissions Simon as a disciple to be nurtured to bring the wonderful news of God's grace to everyone.

Now let's turn to Isaiah. This is a whole different scenario! It sounds so different and is on a much grander scale.

Isaiah describes a dream that he had as a young man. In the dream he feels the presence of God and this makes him feel unworthy because of his immaturity, failures and weaknesses.

In Old Testament terms people who came into God's presence were doomed unless they were perfect and fully prepared for the event. Even Moses only saw a glimpse of God from the back after he received the 10 Commandments. Mere humans couldn't cope with the majesty of God and would surely be killed if they came into God's presence.

Isaiah feels that being in God's presence will kill him. Instead Isaiah ends up feeling forgiven, cleansed and being commissioned as God's chosen messenger.

The basic result for both Simon and Isaiah are the same but their encounters are described in dramatically different terms. One occurs in the middle of an ordinary day and the other is in terms of a spectacular dream. As a result both had felt despair but in the interaction with the Holy they each ended up dedicating their lives to God's mission for them.

Today we could call each of these situations 'conversion experiences.'

The normal way forward in a sermon now would be to harp on about how everyone needs to have experienced some sort of conversion encounter

and how we all need to recognise our failings. However, I need to also recognise that I am actually talking to people who are already converted and seeking to grow in their faith.

The real question for us is:

“How can we as a congregation live our life together in a way that enables and encourages people we come into contact with to develop and live out their faith to the fullest extent?”

There are several points for us to consider here.

Firstly, we need to be a community that accepts people in whatever situation they may happen to be today. They might be broken and disorientated, so we need to be able to help them have space to find healing, forgiveness and a place to grow in their faith.

Secondly, we need to be a community which helps people to hear God's call to them. We need to create a place where people can stop and listen to God in whatever way.

Let's dig into this a bit deeper. We are a community who accept people who are looking for healing and wholeness regardless of their background. That is part of our mission. We are a community who can offer a safe space to find and connect with God.

This not only happens through our worship but also in the way we draw new people to us and allow the stranger a place to recuperate. Individually and as a community we need to be constantly deepening our relationship with Christ's messages for each of us.

This journey is also one of self-discovery for each of us and as we do this we can invite others to connect with the amazing grace of God. We can be realistic about our own weaknesses and the gifts which God has given each of us.

At the same time people who are only just coming to terms with their own fragility also need to have an environment where they can feel safe to understand their need for healing and forgiveness. While this healing ultimately comes from God we need to have a community which allows people to feel that we are God's supporters in this process. We need to model Christ's behaviour in our lives. It is only when we create that safe place that people can start to feel that they can continue on their journey of self-discovery.

This means that we need to be able to hang in there with people who might otherwise show some self-destructive and alienating behaviours. They might also not be the most pleasant company to start with. It is only as they have a safe space to reflect and, if needed, seek professional support that this person can have the foundations on which to grow to be the new person God sees in them.

As Simon and Isaiah came into the presence of God in their different ways they each were freed up to do undertake God's mission for them. We as a community equally need to support people as they discover God's calling for them.

The further we journey along the Christian path of faith the better equipped we are to respond to God's calling. As we do this we better understand our own gifts and interests. This then leads us out of the doors behind which we have been hiding into the wide world beyond.

The world we once sheltered from is now an open field for us to explore. We are not alone on this new journey, we are called to go out with one another as a community so that we best can bring God's message to those around us. Simon Peter did not operate alone; he was one of the disciples.

Part of our role is to actively work to change systems and structures which tend to isolate and bring down people. While we as a congregation might be small and older than many in the community around us we need to create spaces for everyone around us to find healing and growth.

And whether you sense that call through spectacular visions of the heavenly throne room or whether you sense that call in the midst of your everyday life, that is our call as followers of Jesus Christ. Our call is to be the people living out of that vision where God says, "Who will go for us? Whom shall I send."

HYMN 155 O Lord my God

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PdE_NKyY_o0&t=8s

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Generous God, we cast these gifts far and wide. May they land in the hands of people of good heart who know how they might best be used.

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE

Today we pray for those creative minds who build a better world.

For those who notice when injustices are being done and raise the alarm,
for those who negotiate restrictive rules and regulations to bring food and
basic supplies to people in war zones,
for those who stand up to corporate powers and demand they consider
people and the land before accruing huge profits,
for those who see the beauty of the earth and call our attention to it through
their artistry,
for those who find safer and more reliable ways to care for the injured and
ill,
for those who find goodness in the most difficult of people,
for those who call us to live peaceably with all the earth,
for those who tell stories of what is possible and urge us engage with them
in acts of transformation.

May we, too, be of such creative mind,

as we find the call on our lives that suits our gifts, stirs our imagination, and
fills us with delight.

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 540 Christians lift your hearts and voices

(Sorry no You Tube version)

COMMUNION

This is the table, not of the Church, but of the Lord. It is provided for those who love him and who want to love him more.

So, come, those who have much faith and those who have little, those who have been here often and those who have not been for a long time, those who have tried to follow and those who have failed.

Come, not because I invite you: it is our Lord. It is His will that those who follow Him should meet him here.

Now let us hear the story of how this sacrament began:

On the night when he was betrayed,

He sat at supper with his disciples.

When they were eating

He took a piece of bread,

Said the blessing, broke it

And gave it to them with the words,

“This is my body. It is broken for you.

Do this to remember me.”

Later on he took a cup of wine, saying,

“This cup is God’s new covenant,

Sealed with my blood.

Drink from it, all of you.

Do this to remember me.”

So now, following Jesus' example and command, we take this bread and this wine, the ordinary things of the world which Christ will make special. And as he said a prayer before sharing, let us to so too.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

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.

Gratitude, praise, hearts lifted high, voices strong and joyful, lives reflecting your glory... these you deserve.

For when we were nothing, you made us something; when we had no name and no faith and no future, you called us your children; when we lost our way or turned aside, you did not abandon us; when we came back to you, your arms opened wide in welcome.

And, more that, you prepare a table for us, offering not just bread, not just wine, but your very self, so that we may be filled, forgiven, healed, blessed, and made new again. You are worth all our pain and all our praise.

So we join our voices to those of the Church on earth and in heaven:

Holy, holy, holy, 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!

Prayer of Consecration

Lord Jesus Christ, present with us now, for all that you have done and all that you have promised, what have we to offer?

Our hands are empty, our voices are sometimes full of wrong things. We are not fit to gather up the crumbs from under your table. But with you is mercy and the power to change us.

So as we do in this place what you did in an upstairs room, send down your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine, that they may become for us your body, healing, forgiving, and making us whole; and that we may become for you, your body, loving and caring in the world until your Kingdom come.

Taking and Breaking the Bread

Among friends, gathered around a table,

Jesus took bread, broke it and said:

“This is my body, it is broken for you.”

Taking the Cup of Wine

Later, he took the cup of wine and said:

“This is the new relationship with God made possible because of my death. Take this—all of you.”

Our Lord is here, coming to us in bread and wine.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

The bread and wine are shared.

Prayer of Dedication

Lord Jesus Christ, you have put your life in our hands, now we put our lives in yours.

Take us, redeem us, renew us.

Irrespective of what we have been, it is what, with you, we can be, starting now. Amen.

HYMN 537 Let us talents and tongues employ

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYnF86ZzHH8&t=4s>

The Commissioning

The cross

We shall take it.

The bread

We shall break it.

The pain

We shall bear it.

The joy

We shall share it.

The Gospel

We shall live it.

The love

We shall give it.

The light

We shall cherish it.

The darkness

God shall perish it.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=liH_HdkWs74