

## **PENTECOST 19**

**3/10/2021**

### **CAVES BEACH**

#### **NOTICES**

Just a reminder that this morning we will be celebrating Holy Communion and if you haven't prepared your elements to help share in this part of the service now is the time to do so.

Next Sunday we will welcome Mark back to our Church as he takes the service. He is already working behind the scenes preparing and distributing the Daily Devotion.

Sometime next week, we are expected to reach the 70% double vaccination rate in NSW. This will create some freedoms for those who have been double vaccinated. We are closely monitoring what this means for us as a Church and when we may be able to reopen. So, stay tuned.

At a nice little gift for us this week. We received a grant of \$1000 from the Synod Stamp Committee. These grants were available for specific outreach/community projects. We made application for the grant back in July this year based on our investment in our audio/visual equipment to allow live streaming. So remember to save your stamps for the committee, the Churches do get some support from that project.

#### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

In our singing,

**O God, be the note of joy.**

In our praying,

**O God, be the heartfelt word.**

In our searching,

**O God, be the will to endure.**

In our need,

**O God, be the source of hope.**

In our serving,

**O God, be the hands and feet of Christ.**

#### **OPENING PRAYER**

God spoke through creation and the wonders of nature

**and we are challenged to respond with care and with responsibility.**

God spoke through prophets and wise leaders

**and we are called to respond by seeking justice and by practicing kindness**

God spoke through the teachings, the cross, death, and the rising of Jesus,

**and we are called to respond by following faithfully and by serving wholeheartedly.**

God still speaks through prayer and through humble saints

**and we are called to respond in our worship, in our care for one another, and in our concern for the poor and powerless.**

Listen for the voice of God!

**It is the voice we long to hear. Amen**

**HYMN** Now Thank We All our God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gHy8QztyZmM>

## **PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

Gracious God, hear us as we offer our thanksgiving for all that you are to us and all that you give to us. We praise you for understanding the struggles of our lives, those issues that concern us and sometimes seem to consume us. You never turn away from us, but like a gentle parent you wait patiently for us to find our way home to you. We give you thanks for the ordinary things of life; for friends and family; that we can look forward to being together again; that your presence is always with us. We thank you for food and shelter and that our basic needs of life are met. We thank and praise you O God because your love never ceases.

And yet Lord, how quick we are to blame when things go wrong. We expect that life should be calm and even easy, and when it isn't we assume that you have deserted and failed us. Forgive us for thinking we are the centre of the universe. We have been selfish, and failed to value the common good. O God, have mercy upon us, and receive the confession of our hearts which we now make in silence.....

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

God looks upon our hearts and knows our desires before we utter a word. In confession, God offers forgiveness. In repentance, God opens the way to new life. God looks upon our penitent hearts and declares we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

## **READINGS**

\* **Psalm 8**

<sup>1</sup> O LORD, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!  
You have set your glory above the heavens.  
<sup>2</sup> Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,  
to silence the enemy and the avenger.  
<sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;  
<sup>4</sup> what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?  
<sup>5</sup> Yet you have made them a little lower than God,  
and crowned them with glory and honour.  
<sup>6</sup> You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet,  
<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,  
<sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.  
<sup>9</sup> O LORD, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

**\* Hebrews 1: 1-4**

<sup>1</sup> Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son<sup>1</sup> whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. <sup>3</sup> He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, <sup>4</sup> having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

**Hebrews 2: 5-12**

<sup>5</sup> Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. <sup>6</sup> But someone has testified somewhere, "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals, that you care for them? <sup>7</sup> You have made them for a little while lower than the angels; you have crowned them with glory and honour <sup>8</sup> subjecting all things under their feet." Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, <sup>9</sup> but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

<sup>10</sup> It was fitting that God, <sup>11</sup> for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. <sup>11</sup> For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, <sup>12</sup> saying,

"I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,  
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you."

**HYMN** Christ be Our Light

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qibAAo0JiEQ>

## **SERMON**

This morning we gather together for worship which will include the participation of us all in Holy Communion. As I thought about what I might share with you this morning I've taken that into account. If it is possible I want to work with the sermon and the prayers, that we will shortly have as our Communion Service, as one united whole. What I mean is that the sermon will speak to the Holy Communion part of the service. A bit like a duet if you like. And as well, there is another underlying duet between those two readings that we have just heard. So there is a nice connectedness overall that I will try to tap into. I hope that it will flow, and not get too complicated!

The reason that I wish to do this, is because I am wondering how you are finding having Communion at home by yourselves? It is not the normal practice, is it? It has always been a time to celebrate the gathering together of people of the Christian faith - just as its predecessor, the Passover Meal, was, and still is of course, a time for the Jewish faith community to come together. And yet, here we are today with the service here at the empty church and you geographically distant at home. Does this create in any way, a problem for us - for you?

Well, let me start by telling you a story - one out of my kit-bag! Some years ago I taught at Willowra, which is in the Northern Territory about 300 miles as the crow flies north and west of Alice Springs, on the edge of the Tanami Desert. Willowra is a cattle station and was one of the first owned and managed by aborigines. At the time there was no church or community of faith there. So for personal worship I had to adjust to my situation and after a while I found I really missed partaking in Holy Communion. So what I did was this: I sent a request to my home church back in Sydney for a tape-recording of their Sunday service which included Communion. And also I sent off to St. Andrew's Cathedral a request because at the time they were making tapes of the sermons preached at their Wednesday Healing service - I asked if they could put me on their mailing list. If I remember rightly we had a small plane land with mail about once a fortnight. So in that way I was able to listen to the same service each week, but with a different sermon. On Saturday night I would make up some dough and bake it so that I would have my bread for the sacrament. My wine was a different matter: a friend had given me some red coloured cordial to carry in my old Wolseley in case I ever broke down on the way back from Alice Springs - so I put that to good use for Communion wine instead. (And yes, I did break-down, but that's another story!) All this was back in the 1970's, but I share it with you because it is an example of how I believe we need to be adaptable, and I'm sure that God blesses our intentions of keeping up our practise of worshipping Him in spirit and in truth - as we do today under these restrictions due to the COVID pandemic.

So is the Lord present with us in a special way as we make our communion this morning? And why is it important to us that we continue with Holy Communion given the circumstances we are in? My experience at Willowra was that even though I was the only one taking the sacrament, that never-the-less I did see myself as being part of a community of faith because this was a tangible reminder. It was important for me to be reminded of the prayers said and to let them sink in, which helped me understand that God was with me - I was not alone.

Listen to the words of the prayer near the beginning that you will hear shortly: "Be present, risen Lord Jesus, as you were with your disciples, and make yourself known to us in the breaking of the bread". This is a request that we experience the presence of Jesus with each one of us this morning. This is a prayer that we ask will be answered for each of you, just where you are now - at home. This is the greatest gift that God can offer us - that the risen Lord Jesus is with you, right where you are.

Now let me take you to the passage that we heard from the letter to the Hebrews. With that name, it sounds like it should be in the Old Testament doesn't it - not the New! It has that name because it is believed to have been addressed to a Christian community of Jewish converts. And it is very dense theological writing to be just one letter! In my Bible it takes up ten pages of small print. Almost at the end, the author (and we don't know who it was) writes, "Friends, I ask you to take these words of advice kindly; that's why I have written to you so *briefly*". That almost seems like a joke - briefly? Really?

One important thing that this letter does, is show us what was essential for the Christians at the time. In the letter we find that these early congregations were facing potential dangers probably from civil authorities, and as well they were struggling to hold the identity of their faith over against Judaism. For them, and I'd suggest, also maybe like us today, their future - that is, their very survival - mattered, and their past also mattered to them. The question for them then was, and for us now is, how to hold both past and future together in confidence and hope.

That is why the writer of this letter is so focused on who Christ is and what he did - and does. This is why the celebration of Holy Communion today has exactly that same focus - upon Jesus, who is central because it is in him where we place our confidence and hope. Right at the beginning of communion you will hear the words, "Here Christ meets you and calls you God's own".

And the author of the Hebrews letter begins by looking back to the prophets who God spoke through in the past, and then explains how God has spoken again in His Son. If the author was writing today, he might have written next, "Now see, just how good is that!" He explains how God's word through the Son is even better than any words spoken by the prophets. That even just one word from the Son, is better than all the forms of past communication from God to his people Israel.

He goes on to explain that the message of the Son of God is, however, not so much words he spoke, but what he did and was. We learn of Jesus' self-offering that we might receive forgiveness of sins, and that he continues to be the sustainer of all things. We are assured here that through Christ we are coming face to face with God, that is, we are encountering God through Christ. The writer states (in ch. 1 v.3) that, "Jesus is the reflection of God's glory and the *exact imprint* of God's very being". Exact imprint refers to the image seen in those days in a seal used to secure a letter, it was the impression that was left on the wax, and so exact imprint means in fact, the exact image. So, when we see Jesus, we see God.

All this we will affirm shortly in the prayers that are said at Holy Communion. You will hear me say this, "Again and again, you (God) raised up men and women to speak your word, to guide, to challenge and convert. At the last, Father, you sent Jesus Christ, child of your love, God with us. Born as one of us, he lived our life and died our death, offering us, both now and forever, eternal life with you."

Are you, like me, reminded of that beautiful hymn, "Lord Jesus Christ, you have come to us, born as one of us, Mary's son; led out to die on Calvary, risen from death to set us free, living Lord Jesus, help us see you are Lord."

Because I can't see you, and I can't see any reaction on your part, I'm not sure if I'm succeeding in getting this idea across that the scriptures and the Communion part of our service which follows shortly are really all just one cohesive whole. Am I doing that, do you think? - I hope so! I suggested before that it is a bit like a duet. Or it is a bit like when Iris plays the organ - her hands play the two manuals on top and her feet play the pedals underneath and when she puts her hands and feet together then it sounds really beautiful. It comes together as one. It is this cohesion that I'm hoping you might grasp!

We didn't hear all of chapter one from Hebrews this morning. But if you do read on in your own Bibles, you'll find that the author quotes verses from Psalm 8. So here is another lovely connection you see, because Psalm 8 was Jan's first reading today. One of the verses that Hebrews quotes from is verse 4. You might recall this one - it is a question the Psalmist asks of God: "What are human beings that you are mindful of them, or mortals that you care for them?"

Now the writer of Hebrews includes that verse, because he wants to answer that question himself. He responds in this way: he assures us that God has shown his care by sending Jesus - he writes, we see Jesus, the One who was "made perfect through sufferings." Now when *we* use the word "perfect" we mean in the sense of something being complete, or needing no improvement. But Biblical writers used it to signify being able to cope with whatever challenges presented themselves - being fully flexible and adaptable to every situation. So here the writer is implying that by enduring death, Jesus demonstrated his total solidarity with humanity. In other words, there was nothing which he was not able to cope with. And in this way, he modelled for us what it means to be totally dependant on God in our dealing with all the situations of our lives. Whatever is the situation we find ourselves in, we can draw on and depend on God's help - he will graciously give us the wisdom and guidance to deal with it.

And there is another aspect to understand as well and that is, that Hebrews gives us a very high picture of who Jesus is: the one God wants crowned with glory and everything put beneath his feet. And yet, at the same time, this very human Jesus emerges. The hearers or readers of this letter, who are early Christians, can imagine Jesus being concerned about them and asking God his Father to help them, because by calling them brothers and sisters of Jesus, the writer is describing Jesus as one who is just like them - like us. This reinforces our understanding of God and of the spiritual life as not something from another world, but as something which fully enters the here and now of flesh and blood. Hence, as we take Communion, we will acknowledge in the bread - "This is my body which is given for you", and in the wine, "This is the new covenant sealed by my blood." And we go onto pray that that we may "become by grace, his body given for the sake of the world." "Let us become what we receive: the body of Christ".

I shall close by telling you about a friend of mine. A Changi Prisoner of War veteran who died two years ago aged 100. After the war, Keith was Long Bay Chaplain for 20 years - I worked with him not there, but at the Rocks in Sydney when I was doing theological studies. I learnt a great deal from Keith. One day he told me, "I think what Holy Communion means is this: we take into ourselves the bread and the wine, meaning we take into ourselves the essence of who Christ is. Then we go out and live the life of Christ".

The Lord be with you, and Amen.

**HYMN** As the Deer Pants for the Water

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UZv3jzOTE70>

### **PRAYER FOR THE OFFERING**

Loving God, we understand that all that we have, all that is, is a never ceasing, always giving, gift of life. Your nature is to give. As we learn to give, we become like you. In this giving we open ourselves to you for your blessing. And as you bless us, may we be a blessing to others. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE - (Prepared by Val Willoughby)**

We come humbly before God, bringing our thoughts and prayers, spoken and unspoken, thankful that God hears our prayers every time we pray. So we bow before him now:

Loving God, our country is still under the grip of Covid 19, we ask for the grace and ability to cope with this pandemic and pray for all those who have suffered because of this. Families have been devastated and separated. Give us the grace to accept the rules and advice by the politicians and the health department. In Hebrews 13:17 We read the that we are to: 'Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.....Obey them so that their work will be a joy.

We pray for the businesses who are battling because of the lockdown , Give them patience and the ability to plan for their future.

We pray for the schools and the teachers, parents and pupils all who are struggling in most difficult circumstances. We especially pray for year 12 students who are facing their final exams next month.

We pray for the ministry of our church, for Rev. Mark as he continues his recuperation and Rev. Lu and Jan as they continue the services of our church until Mark returns. We also pray for church members who are recovering from operations and those who are still facing operations. Give them peace as they face each day. Thank you that you are always there for each one of us. Hear our prayers and be with us as we sum up our love for you in the prayer Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in Heaven,**

**Hallowed be thy name,**

**Thy kingdom come, thy will be done**

**on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread,**

**and forgive us our sins, as we forgive**

**those who have sinned against us.**

**Lead us not in temptation but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, power and glory are yours,**

**now and forever. Amen**

**HYMN** Lord Jesus Christ you have come to us

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKsbd5UqKkc>

**HOLY COMMUNION**

The peace of the Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

This is the joyful feast of Jesus: bread for beloved children; a meal for those expecting scraps; and a banquet for last-minute guests! Come, your place is at the table. Here Christ meets you and calls you God's own.

Be present, risen Lord Jesus, as you were with your disciples, and make yourself known to us in the breaking of the bread, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. **Amen**

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 you thanks and praise.**

With all we are, we give you glory, Trinity of love, the one and Holy God, sovereign of all time and space.

We bless you for this wide, red land, for its rugged beauty, for its changing seasons, for its diverse peoples, and for all that lives upon this fragile earth.

You have called us to be the Church in this place, to give voice to every creature under heaven. We rejoice with all that you have made, as we join the company of heaven in their song:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,**

**heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

**Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord.**

**Hosanna in the highest.**

To Adam and Eve, children of dust, you gave the world and its wonders, but we misused your gift of freedom: we reached out rebel hands to be like you. We bless you for your mercy, for you never cease to call our restless hearts until they find their rest in you.

Again and again, you raised up men and women to speak your word, to guide, to challenge and convert. At the last, Father, you sent Jesus Christ, child of your love, God with us. Born as one of us, he lived our life and died our death, offering us, both now and forever, eternal life with you. Through him, in him, and because of him, we affirm together the Church's faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

On the night in which Jesus gave himself up to death, he took bread, gave you thanks, broke it and said: This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. When the meal was ended, he lifted the cup, and again giving you thanks, gave it to his friends and said: This cup is the new covenant sealed by my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, for the remembrance of me.

And so, in remembrance of all you have done for us, we take this bread and this cup, and offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice, made worthy by the perfect offering of Christ our great high



priest. By your Word and Holy Spirit, bless these gifts that we may truly share Christ's body and blood, and become, by grace, his body given for the sake of the world. For through your Spirit, the whole earth makes its prayer in sighs too deep for words, longing for the day of freedom: for in hope and by faith we were saved.

Christ is the bread of joy, who shares food with sinners.

Christ is the cup of life, who revives the faint-hearted.

Let us receive what we are; let us become what we receive:

### **The body of Christ.**

Jesus, Lamb of God, **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, bearer of our sins, **have mercy on us.**

Jesus, redeemer of the world, **grant us peace.**

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**

Blessed be God who calls us together.

Praise to God who makes us one people.

Blessed be God who has forgiven our sin.

Praise to God who gives hope and freedom.

Blessed be God whose Word is proclaimed.

Praise to God who is revealed as lover.

Blessed be God who alone has called us.

Therefore we offer all that we are and all we shall become.

Accept, O God, our sacrifice of praise.

Accept our thanks for all that we are.

Our hands were empty, and you filled them. **Amen**

**HYMN** And Can it Be that I Should Gain

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=29myH7xXI4M>

## **BENEDICTION & BLESSING**

Now go to be bridges of love and understanding. Let our own lives model the peace and reconciliation for which we hope. Be open to the love of God always being in your hearts.

May the grace of Christ forever keep us strong.

May the peace of the Holy Spirit be in all we do.

And the blessing of God, source of all love, Saviour and Guide be with us forever. Amen.

**SONG** May the Feet of God Walk With You

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ6RaKX4\\_I4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ6RaKX4_I4)