

**EASTER 7**  
**12/5/24**  
**CAVES BEACH**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

We are happy to be here, O God,

**to be with our faithful friends in our church home.**

We are happy to be here, O God,

**to share in the singing and to listen to your Word.**

We are happy to be here, O God,

**to find inspiration for our daily living and purpose in our service of others.**

We are happy to be here, O God,

**to remember your faithfulness in Jesus Christ and his death on the cross for us.**

**Opening Prayer**

Testify! Tell the world what God has done!

**God has created our world and has given us lakes and mountains, stars and wonder as we look up at the night sky.**

Testify, for God has given us more!

**God has given each of us life and breath, and has put us in families and among friends.**

Testify, for God has been faithful!

**God has given us the ancient leaders and the prophets, has spoken through the scriptures, and has formed the faith community.**

Testify, for God has held nothing back!

**God has sent Jesus Christ for us and for all people. In Christ's birth, God's care was made clear; in his baptism, God's vocation was revealed; and in his death on the cross, we understand just how far God will go.**

**HYMN 52** Let us sing to the God of salvation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KU3yTLEX6LQ>

**PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION**

Eternal God, we give thanks and praise for Jesus' preparedness to show us your true nature and your true character - for in Jesus' words we hear

the resonance of your voice, and in his deeds we see the imprint of your hands. We give thanks that Jesus' presence disclosed a new reality at work in the world - the reality of your kingdom, O God, where what was broken is mended, what was afflicted is relieved, what was bound is set free and what was excluded is included. We pray that our worship here today will enable us to catch a glimpse of your kingdom, to hear the resonance of your voice, to know the imprint of your hand on our lives and to experience the breath of your Spirit in our bodies.

**Merciful God**, Jesus' life, and the manner of his death, demonstrated that there was literally no limit to his love. Living a human life, as we do, he demonstrated how the values of your kingdom are different from the world's values and how your standards are different from the world's standards. We live in the world also, and are exposed to all the trials and temptations that the world's values and standards place on us as Christians. So we welcome Jesus' prayer for his disciples - his prayer also for us. Jesus prayed that his followers would be one as he and God are one. Forgive us when we contribute to disunity or conflict in our relationships with one another.

Jesus prayed that God would keep and protect us from the influence of evil.

Forgive us for blaming you, O God, for distressing or difficult times and for believing that we can deal with problems in our own strength.

Jesus prayed that his disciples would be made and kept holy by the truth of the gospel - the reality of God's love for all people - revealed in Jesus and experienced through the Holy Spirit. Keep us holy, O God, and empower us to be faithful witnesses of the truth of the gospel as long as we live. As Jesus' disciples and in his name we pray. Amen

## **WORDS OF ASSURANCE**

John assures us that "God gave us eternal life, and this life is in God's Son. Whoever has the Son has life...." (1 John 5: 11f.) and "God sent the Son into the world not to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him. ...Those who believe in him are not condemned." (John 3 :17, 18 )

**Thanks be to God!**

## **READINGS**

- **1 John 5:9–13**

9 If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater, for this is the testimony of God that he has testified to his Son. 10 Those who believe in the Son of God have the testimony in their hearts. Those who do not believe in God have made him a liar by not believing in the testimony that God has given concerning his Son. 11 And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. 12 Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. 13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.

- **John 17:6–19**

<sup>6</sup>“I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. <sup>7</sup> Now they know that everything you have given me is from you, <sup>8</sup> for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you, and they have believed that you sent me. <sup>9</sup> I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. <sup>10</sup> All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. <sup>11</sup> And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one. <sup>12</sup> While I was with them, I protected them in your name that you have given me. I guarded them, and not one of them was lost except the one destined to be lost, so that the scripture might be fulfilled. <sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and I speak these things in the world so that they may have my joy made complete in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>15</sup> I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

**HYMN 164** The great love of God  
*Sorry no clip for this hymn!*

**SERMON**

Does anyone have the same name as someone who is famous?

It can be difficult. I can remember that as a child everyone seemed to know my father who was a local minister. No matter what I did, it soon got back to him.

Even in high school I was constantly compared with my much brighter older sister.

At the same time it can be an advantage. All sorts of doors can be opened if you, or your family, are well known.

The passage we just read from John's Gospel includes a prayer that Jesus said at the Last Supper with His disciples. Just before He was marched away to the cross. Some commentators say that this is the 'high priest prayer.' This is because it resonates with the prayer that Jesus prayed just before He Ascended. It also has some links with the prayer in the Atonement Ritual used in the Temple.

In this situation Jesus is functioning like a priest praying for His people. The emphasis is on supporting all those who had chosen to follow Him. Jesus is asking that we will take on His name so that we are identified by other people as being part of His family.

Jesus prayed that we might have His protection as God wanted to protect His family so that anyone attacking us would know that they are coming up against God. This might sound nice but we also need to remember that we carry the name of someone who was executed as a political prisoner.

Later in the reading Jesus asks us to identify as His followers as He sends us out into the world just like He went out into the wider community. This is the last Sunday of the Easter Season, next week is Pentecost. So far, since Easter, we have been recalling the time after His resurrection from the tomb. This week marks the change when Jesus moves to hand over the mission charge to each of us through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is preparing to ascend into to heaven and He prays that we are now empowered to take up the challenge.

This prayer carries with it the last instructions for mission and the promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. This is the baton which the early church took over and has been passed on the all subsequent generations.

Now let us take some time to reflect what it means for us to inherit the identity of the resurrected Jesus. If we wanted to look at all the titles and names given to Jesus we could soon fill a book and make a very long sermon for today. So I want to draw our attention to three things.

Each of them arise out of the description of Jesus as our Great High Priest. While this title is not specifically mentioned it is one which the Bible draws us into. As followers of Jesus we are called to share in that title in the Pentecost event.

One of the functions of a priest is to reconcile His followers with God. Jesus clearly tries to bring His followers closer together and unite them with God. "Protect them in this name you have given me, so that they might be one, just as you and I are one." In this way we are drawn into being a peace loving community and this title is echoed in one of His other titles, 'Prince of Peace.'

In recent years there has been a lot said throughout society about reconciliation with the First Nations people of Australia, the Aboriginal communities. Just because that dialogue has not used religious language does not mean that we can't see Jesus standing up for those who have been dispossessed. Throughout His ministry Jesus said a lot about the needs of the poor and vulnerable in the face of oppression by the rich and powerful. Having the Prime Minister stand up a few years ago and say 'Sorry' was a powerful moment.

However that single statement did not solve the entrenched social problems. We acknowledge the traditional owners of our lands each Sunday but this does not solve race relations in our nation. What Jesus calls us to do in this prayer is to live a life which spills over into the ways in which we live and to relate to those who are dispossessed. If we are inheritors of Jesus' role as a priest, the one who seeks reconciliation, we need to keep this as more than just a symbolic relationship.

Another aspect of the priestly role is that we are called on to pray for others. Our intercessory prayers should seek to bring people into a closer relationship with God. Throughout His worldly ministry Jesus prayed to His Father. He prayed for His followers to God, just as the Holy Spirit does with us today. Jesus prayed for our well-being, our protection, our equipping

and sustaining us for the tasks facing us. As the inheritors of this support we are nurtured by Jesus' ongoing support.

This priestly prayer is also reflected as we gather as a Christian community to hear the word and share in the insights that Jesus gave us. We are inheritors of Jesus' resurrection allowing His message to reach out in love to a world that has so many desperate needs. We are called as inheritors of this priestly charge to be a community of grace sharing the good news with the world around us.

The name we inherit from Jesus is both our security and our mission. We begin to grow into it right here, and we carry that identity with us as we go out into every area of our normal everyday lives. Jesus, our risen Lord, continues to pray for us, and with our faith in him we both join his prayer, and grow into the identity conveyed in his prayer.

**HYMN 573** A charge to keep I have

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vEFavnaYk28>

### **PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING**

All that we have is a gift. Everything we are is a gift from the great giver of life.

God of goodness,  
our bodies and breath,  
our seeing and knowing,  
are all gifts of life.

May what we give here,  
and what we give in other ways and places  
be gifts in your world.

Amen.

### **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

I'm hoping that as we pray this morning we shall willingly put our trust in God's wisdom and love for us all. Keep in mind that this is the last Sunday of the Easter season, and that we go forward with confidence in God's presence with us always. We will give thanks for Mothers on this their special day, and we will continue with our cycle of prayers for the congregations and ministry in the Hunter Presbytery. Today that means we will pray for the University of Newcastle Chaplaincy and the Uniting Church

chaplain there, Pastor Kim Langford. We'll take a moment now to settle ourselves in prayer..... Let us pray:

We come before you this morning O God, conscious that much is not right in the world you have created for us to enjoy. We so often want our own way, not your way. Over these Easter weeks we have been reminded of Jesus' teaching about love and forgiveness and the renewing of life and his desire for us to experience peace. But O God, the people's of the world seem so far from attaining the peace that you long for us to experience. May the leaders of the nations, all those with influence, and even those of us who are just ordinary people, desire the pursuit of justice and hence peace for all peoples. May hatred, ignorance and fear be dealt with - thrown as far as the east is from the west - so that all may follow your values, indeed, your rule of love.

God of grace, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

O God, we can see that change is not only needed beyond our own shores, but also within our own way of living in Australia. We are confused and horrified by the instances of domestic violence, and aggressive behaviour and abuse that we hear of each week across our nation. We pray for our Federal and State government leaders, for all law-makers, for all who influence policy making and rules, that people may be kept safe, especially women and children. We pray that all places of education may instil in our younger generations the need for respect and negotiation when difficulties arise in relationships, and that violence is never an option.

God of grace, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

O God, we pray that leaders of Christian churches will guide and pastor their people after the model of Jesus and be dependent on the Holy Spirit in all aspects of management. And so, may all denominations be a witness to their communities of Jesus' love and compassion. May we here today, who profess the Christian faith, hold fast to the teachings of Jesus in all aspects of our lives so that others may desire to find and experience Jesus in their lives too. May we be witnesses to our Lord both in word and action.

God of grace, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

O God, we pray especially today for the ministry of Chaplaincy at our University, and particularly for Pastor Kim Langford. We pray that she, and all the chaplains there from the various denominations and faith traditions, will work together well to enhance the well-being of both students and staff. We pray that the university will support not only academic and vocational excellence, but also encourage personal growth and hold fast to Christian values and hence will gift our country with leaders who prioritise compassion, justice and integrity.

God of grace, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God, today especially we give thanks for our mothers and all who have been as mothers to us. We thank you, and them for the nurture and love which they have given us. We pray that young mothers today will be loved, appreciated and supported adequately in their role in family and community. Bless them with patience, endurance, safety, wisdom and joy. God of grace, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

O God, we thank you that you take upon yourself our own anxieties, and our fears. Grant us the insight to treat others in this same generous way as you deal with us. And so we pray today not only for mothers, but for fathers too, indeed for all members of our family, our friends, and any who may be especially finding life difficult at present, that they may know mercy and wholeness in their lives. (We'll take time now in silent prayer for those we wish to name before God.....) Lord Jesus, watch over all whom we love, and may your Holy Spirit grant healing, wisdom, patience and gentleness, and peace to us all.

God of grace, in your mercy, hear our prayer ... and accept all these our prayers in the wonderful name of Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us the prayer we shall now sing 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 for ever. Amen.

**HYMN 228** Crown Him with many crowns

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiJYgC\\_6AFc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FiJYgC_6AFc)

**BENEDICTION**



The word of God is the word of life.  
The world of God is the world of life.  
The people of God are the people of life.  
Go now in the sure and certain knowledge  
that your life is a gift,  
that the spirit of God goes in you and with you  
and that you are holy.  
AMEN

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