

PENTECOST 25
10/11/24
CAVES BEACH

Call to Worship

You notice when we come to worship, O God.

Your heart is warmed by our praise.

You notice when we respond to your word, O God.

Your heart is warmed when we go your way.

You notice when we notice the downtrodden.

Your heart is warmed when we work with them for change.

You notice each one of us and know us by name.

Your heart is warmed when we bring glory to your name.

Opening Prayer

The simple words of children, O God,

are good enough to offer prayers to you.

The straightforward melody of an ancient hymn, O God,

is good enough to sing praise to you.

The kindly deed of a neighbour, O God,

is enough to make clear Christ's presence.

The sacrifice of one person for another, O God,

is enough to show that your love will never die. Amen.

HYMN 52 Let us sing to the God of salvation

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

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Ever-present God, we know that without you, life can become a meaningless round of work and worry. We can become so absorbed in 'achieving' and 'doing' that we lose sight of simply 'being'. We praise you for taking the initiative to be there for us - in the person of Jesus - and through the power of the Holy Spirit. May our response to your gracious care for us be reflected in our worship here today and through the witness of our lives. We glorify you.

God of grace and truth, when we hear Jesus criticising the behaviour of the scribe in the gospel today, we wonder what has changed. People still exploit others, still demand preferential treatment, still abuse positions of

leadership. We are ashamed to admit that this does not only happen in society at large, it happens also within the church.

Forgive any practice of ours which glorify our self-importance rather than glorifying you.

Empowering God, forgive us when we parade our piety and insist on preferential treatment, forgetting that Jesus emptied himself of power so that he could be the servant of all and Saviour of all.

Forgive us when we care more for outward appearances rather than inner dispositions shaped by tolerance and love.

Merciful God, forgive us when our priorities and our policies outside and within the church are contaminated by a hunger for money and power, rather than graced by generosity and mercy.

Forgive us when our attitudes extol those who have much to give and put down those who have little to give.

God of justice and peace, forgive any behaviour of ours which is experienced or perceived as hypocritical - any actions which lack integrity and justice.

Renew and refresh us with the gentle and selfless Spirit of Jesus, so that we know what it is to be

his followers not only in name, but in reality.

This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

We read in Hebrews that Jesus "entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf.....He has appeared once for all...to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself." The good news is therefore, that in and through Jesus Christ our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

READINGS

- **Hebrews 9:24–28**

²⁴ For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made by human hands, a mere copy of the true one, but he entered into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵ Nor was it to offer himself again and again, as the high priest enters the holy place year after year with blood

that is not his own,²⁶ for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.²⁷ And just as it is appointed for mortals to die once and after that the judgment,²⁸ so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

- **Mark 12:38–44**

³⁸ As he taught, he said, “Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces³⁹ and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets!⁴⁰ They devour widows’ houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation.”

⁴¹ He sat down opposite the treasury and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums.⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.⁴³ Then he called his disciples and said to them, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury.⁴⁴ For all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on.”

HYMN 440 Christ from whom all blessings flow
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SvgYxnEjv0E>

SERMON

Today’s Gospel reading brings us two stories from Jesus about wealth and how it is used. This passage follows the triumphal entry by Jesus into Jerusalem in Mark’s Gospel. Once Jesus has made this grand entrance we are told of His open conflict with the religious establishment in Jerusalem.

Firstly today we hear the harsh challenge to the self-serving arrogance of the scribes. Then the comparison with the poor widow’s meagre offering.

In verses 38-40 Jesus openly attacks the scribes for their grand-standing behaviour. Mark portrays them as self-important, arrogant and only interested in building up their own public profile. Jesus here draws our attention onto His ongoing condemnation of scribes.

In Jewish scriptures scribes were often used as examples of those people needing special care and consideration. The Old Testament said that they should always consider favourably. Deuteronomy 14:29 lists people to receive special consideration. Along with widows are aliens, orphans and Levites (Scribes) are listed as those who need support. Levites in those days did not do any normal work but devoted themselves entirely to God.

By the time of Jesus they wore ostentatious robes and loudly proclaimed prayers as well as insisting at being the foremost at family and community gatherings. Donations meant that they lived a lavish lifestyle. Contrast this with the guidance given by Jesus where the first would be last and servant of all.(Mark 10:35)

Jesus confronts these opponents even more when He says that they 'devour' and 'gobble up' the houses of the widows. We are also drawn into Mark's tendency to pair up his passages for added emphasis.

When Mark uses the word 'devour' in 4:4 he refers to the birds gobbling up the seeds left by the sower. At that time the connotation is that Satan has undertaken this action. By using the same word here Mark is emphasising the demonic and human powers which are opposing Jesus.

When we come to consider the text in our current times we need to consider the idea that it is our inner motivation which is being challenged. As a community we have been fortunate to receive some funds this year which we are devoting to our missional objectives once all the outstanding civil works and maintenance issues have been addressed. In this respect we are luckier than most.

When we look at Paul's writing, many years after Mark's Gospel was written, he names specific benefactors like Phoebe in Romans 12:1-2. There is also the practice of churches meeting in people's homes. This was not without some tension as we read in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

So when we come to the issues for us today, how do we judge another's intentions? Is their public prayer more about public appearance rather than a genuine outpouring of faith. This is where Mark's Gospel challenges us.

In verses 41-44 we have a scribe giving to the Temple and publicly proclaiming his giving which is seen as insignificant by Jesus when compared with the few small coins offered by a poor widow who gives everything that she has. This leaves each of us with the question of how much we give to the church, even today?

If we look back at Mark 12:13-17 we have the question of paying taxes and the old retort of giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's. I think that what Jesus is getting at is the inner decision of showing our allegiance to God. This text, to me, is not a matter of giving away all of our money.

This means that we have to evaluate our giving with full consideration of our options after careful prayer. This is more than a simple economic debate that we each need to have. What we do have to do is continually look at our needs as the world around us changes.

It is clear to me that the things which are valued in the Kingdom of God are different from those we see around us every day.

Is the money that we spend on maintaining our church a genuine gift to the Kingdom?

Should we use our generous resources to support mission which creates a future?

Bearing in mind the 'widow's mite' I also see that this congregation also supports activities which reach well beyond our community.

HYMN 745 Seek ye first the kingdom of God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFxZeY2D5tc>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

God of love and care.

May this money and all that we have and are
be used by you and your Church this week
to make this world more like the world as you want it to be;
full of love, justice and hope.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

God, your psalmist says, 'Unless the Lord builds the house,

those who build it labour in vain.'

We have done much building in our time.

We have built nations that give security to millions;

and we have built empires that dominate the earth.

We have built cities that have both given shelter to millions;

and have destroyed whole ways of life.

We have built corporations that bring services and health to whole peoples;
and grind communities into servitude.

We are hasty, short-sighted builders who too often build without wisdom.

We pray today for wisdom, courage and truthfulness as we build our future.

Truthfulness, that we will face up to our failures, our myopia and our greed;

courage to do the hard work to build for all, not just for some;

and wisdom to know that we need humility and gentleness,

patience and perseverance.

May we always remember that unless you build, we build in vain.

In the name of God, who builds, we pray.

Amen.

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 155 O lord my God

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=USM71JqV30o>

COMMUNION

Hear the words of institution of this sacrament as recorded by the apostle Paul:

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said: "This is my body which is for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, for the remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

With this bread and this cup we do as our Saviour commands: we set them apart for the holy supper to which he calls us, and we come to God with our prayers 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.

It is right that we should always offer thanks, O God, because you have created and sustained us and all things.

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 praise you, O God,
that in your mercy you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ,
that whoever believes in him
should not perish but have eternal life.

We give thanks for his humble birth,
for his life of ministry and love,
for his sufferings and death on the cross,
for his glorious resurrection and ascension,
and for the promise that he will come again.

O God, by your word and Spirit
bless and sanctify this bread and this wine,
that they may be for us
the communion of the body and blood of Christ,
and that he may ever live in us
and we in him.

God, accept us,
as we offer and present ourselves, our souls and our bodies,
to be a holy and a living sacrifice;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
to whom with you and the Holy Spirit
be all honour and glory, now and forever.
AMEN

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.
The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.
The gifts of God for the people of God.

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Receive this holy sacrament
of the body and blood of Christ,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

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DISTRIBUTION

AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray:

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 537 Let us talents and tongues employ
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYnF86ZzHH8>

BENEDICTION

God calls us to live in wholeness.
God calls us to make community.
God calls us to do justice.

Let us go, called by God,
in companionship with Jesus
and filled with the Spirit.
Amen.

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