

LENT 2

13/2/22

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

Living God, our companion,

**We come before you on our Lenten journey of Lent.
We pause. We wait for you.**

It is a journey which will be taken reflectively.

**Our spirits long for the refreshment which God will
provide.**

It is a journey which will be taken in faith.

**Jesus: example of, our teacher and example, has gone
ahead of us.**

It is a journey which we take as Christians together.

We have so much encouragement to give to each other.

In this act of worship we are equipped for the journey.

Thanks be to you, O most generous and supporting God.

Opening Prayer

The work of Jesus: work of Christ began with his baptism;

Our baptism roots us in the community of faith.

His work continued with teaching which touched people's hearts;

**We hear the stories of Jesus: stories of and we are moved
to action.**

The healing and challenging work went on, despite opposition open and subtle;

**His refusal to bow down to rulers, religious and political,
led to a cross.**

It seemed that his work was over, but on the third day, deathdeath:deafated
was defeated;

**The rising of Jesus, his rising gives us hope and a
promise that in our work, we will have a faith companion.
Amen.**

HYMN 107 Sing praise and thanksgiving

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

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

God of grace and mercy,
the breadth of your goodness to us flabbergasts us,
the shelter you provide for us is unailing
your compassion withstands the mightiest of assaults.
When we are weary,
and need a safe haven,
we are gathered beneath your wings,
we feel your protection,
your heartbeat assuring us that all will be well.
Within the embrace of your care
we regain our strength and courage
and find the will to emerge from where we have been hiding
and stride out into the world
Mother hen God,

when we hear you sending out chortles of warning, telling us to watch out for danger and return into the shelter of your care, and go our own way regardless,

be merciful to us

God of grieving,

we know the pain of rejection, of broken promises and thwarted dreams, of being in places where we are not welcome, of being ignored or scorned, when we need you comfort and care,

open your arms to us.

God of lament,

when we face our regrets, for failed relationships, missed opportunities, broken promises and harsh judgements

lament with us.

God of freedom,

when we tie ourselves up in knots of envy, looking through perfectly choreographed pictures of other people's lives and start resenting what they have,

untie us.

God of wisdom,

when we find ourselves fooled and out foxed, living in the shadows of shame and embarrassment,

be kind to us.

God of possibility,

When we find ourselves anxious of what is to come, looking ahead with a sense of trepidation, and considering siloing ourselves away, when we need to feel the stirring of hope within us,

send your Spirit to us.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

When we fail, when we grieve, when we are full of regret and shame, when we are anxious and uncertain, Christ longs to gather us up into the warmth and shelter of his care. When we long for the shelter of God's loving kindness, we are always welcomed into God's wide embrace. This is not a false promise, it is a rock-solid guarantee on which we can rely.

READINGS

- **Philippians 3:17- 4:1**

Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. ¹⁹ Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. ²¹ He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. 4 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

- **Luke 13:31-35**

At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, "Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you." ³² He said to them, "Go and tell that fox for me, 'Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. ³³ Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.' ³⁴ Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! ³⁵ See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

HYMN 588 In heavenly love abiding

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXc04P8d654>

SERMON

I was looking back at old notes on the Gospel passage that we read today and I came across this story from Aesop's Fables.

One moonlit night a Fox was prowling about a farmer's chicken coop, and saw a Hen roosting high up beyond his reach. "Good news, good news!" he cried.

"Why, what is that?" said the Hen.

"King Lion has declared a universal truce. No beast may hurt a bird henceforth, but all shall dwell together in brotherly friendship."

"Why, that is good news," said the Hen; "and there I see someone coming, with whom we can share the good tidings." And so saying she craned her neck forward and looked far off.

"What is it you see?" said the Fox.

"It is only my master's Dog that is coming towards us.... What, going so soon?" she continued, as the Fox began to turn away. "Will you not stop and congratulate the Dog on the reign of universal peace?"

"I would gladly do so," said the Fox, "but I fear he may not have heard of King Lion's decree."

What do you think is the moral of Aesop's fable?

The answer: Cunning often outwits itself.

I wonder how many of you were born in another country? I do know one person was born in Germany and another in New Zealand. How many others are there today who were born in another country?

I am sure that some of our viewers online will answer this with their country of origin.

How many of you viewed the recent Winter Olympics and cheered for the Aussies?

How many have watched any part of the winter Para-Olympics?

The Olympics is a time for many people to happily wave their country's flag proudly, especially when they happen to win an event. It can be exciting when we get a medal in any event we have not been able to get a medal before in that event. It can be a matter of national pride.

National pride and citizenship have been a very mixed issues for many years. Some people who were born overseas take their first opportunity to get Australian citizenship. Others defiantly want to keep their native heritage, even when it comes into conflict with our culture here.

It can also be an issue when we travel overseas and people have taken a stance against something that Australia has been involved in, like the war in Afghanistan. There are the people who arrived in Australia on boats instead of planes who are now locked away in virtual prisons for many years.

In these situations some people might prefer to hide their nationality from others as they can personally be attacked for issues what they have no involvement in. At the same time what are your feelings about the gentle breezes blowing onto your face from the ocean here at Caves Beach on a nice summer's day compared to the cold damp winds cutting through you in the Scottish highlands? I know which I prefer!

If we really listen to what Paul and Jesus speak to us about in today's readings I need to seriously reconsider my tendency to look only at my Australian heritage rather than firstly looking at the deep heritage left for us by Christ and His apostles. Paul is writing to the faithful in Philippi saying that he is comparing their culture with his own background.

Paul doesn't just say "You've got different values", or "Your faith and lifestyle are different." What he says is that in contrast to those around them, they are citizens of a different realm. "Our citizenship is in heaven," he says, "and it is from there that we are expecting a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ."

In the weeks leading up to the Russian invasion of the Ukraine we did have some people wanting to be rescued from the tension by using their Australian citizenship to help them to get out of there. Like all disasters there are people who are caught out and they immediately look to their country of origin to be rescued. Even those people overseas caught out doing things against the local laws try to look to Australia to rescue them.

I don't know how often I have heard words to the effect that: "We are Australian citizens and we are expecting to be saved and rescued by the Australian Government."

It is this image that Paul is looking to draw to our attention. We have a citizenship in another place, not Australia. In the event of us getting into trouble we need to look to our home country for support and rescue, that is heaven. We need to live by Christ's culture.

The people that Paul is addressing didn't all come from places outside Philippi. Most of them might have been born there and raised there and probably had never travelled anywhere else. All the local authorities would acknowledge them as citizens of that city. However Paul is saying 'your citizenship is not in any particular city or nation but in heaven and the Christian family is where you should look for help and support. We are part of the heavenly nation.'

Paul is pointing out to his readers that there is something which differentiates them from other people living in Philippi. In some ways they might even be seen as strangers in their hometown. This equally applies to each of us. I know that many of you have moved here from places like Sydney and others have always lived locally. What we are being taught is that we, as citizens of heaven, can be in many ways strangers to the local community.

This might seem to be a lovely thought but what happens when we are caught out in trouble in another country. I heard the story a few years ago about tourists caught up in a land slide in Peru. They wanted the Australian government to hire helicopters specifically just to get them out of from where they were trapped. If we are citizens of Christianity, how can we call on choppers to come and rescue us?

If we are foreigners, outsiders and local misfits we are then a bit vulnerable when things go wrong. As I was doing this I thought of the people in places like Gympie, Lismore and the Hawkesbury who are struggling at the moment as so many of them needed rescuing last week. Physical help has eventually arrived on many levels but the pain lives on for many of them.

Who do we cheer for at the Olympics? There is no team from heaven. It is not listed on the Olympic medal count. Should we consider ourselves to be homeless?

I don't think so. Going back to the Gospel passage, Jesus says: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!"

These are not the words of our Lord renouncing love of His people. Underlying this lament is a strong desire to make these people His own. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings."

Underlying Jesus' words is a strong passion for us in response to the love that He has already shared. It is almost like He is seeking an equally

passionate response from His followers much like those of one-eyed nationalists the world over who proudly celebrate their nation with flags draped over their shoulders.

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!” No wonder Herod wants to kill him. Such strident internal criticism that Jesus was sharing was often regarded as treason. The people who wrap themselves in flags and sport bumper stickers that say “Australia: Love it or Leave it” don’t take kindly to any honest self-criticism like that preached by Christ.

It is this risky and unpopular approach which Jesus calls us to follow. Paul repeats it when he calls on the faithful to ‘imitate me.’ At the same time Paul is calling out the problems with idolatry and gluttony in the society in Philippi. This is why they needed to be members of a separate community.

Lent should be a time when we are aware of the costs of following Jesus. What do we have to ‘give up’ in order to follow Jesus? Is it allegiance to some worldly system that abuses its people?

Already we can see that we need to move away from only considering ‘my country.’ That sort of patriotism allows wars to be fermented against our neighbours, like in the Ukraine. At the same time as we cheer when our athletes win a medal however we must reflect on whether we are more interested in sports funding rather than our overseas aid programs.

We need to reflect on whether we need to stop and only consider Australians caught up in things like natural disasters. Should they be rescued first before we can offer aid to those in desperate need in that country. Should we allow people to only come to our country if it doesn’t interfere with Australians getting work?

These are deep and complex issues that we need to prayerfully consider as members of Christ’s family, not just Australians.

Our national sporting success at events like the Olympics should not overshadow our responsibilities as members of Christ’s family. We are called to not limit our love and compassion to only our neighbourhood. Every church community is in fact the local embassy for the heavenly family. Our oath of allegiance is to Christ and to heaven, not to some local sporting team.

I love being an Aussie and all the benefits we have as a developed nation, even in this time of natural disasters. We also live in a world in which there are inhumane wars and conflict. Our allegiance is not limited to some

geographic locality. We are part of Christ's worldwide family and we need to be prepared to respond accordingly to the needs of all of those chicks gathered under Christ's wings. This is what Jesus was talking about in today's Gospel.

HYMN 215 Ye servants of God

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wZ9j3e8_yQc&t=9s

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

May these gifts provide protection for those in peril,
nourishment for those who hunger,
peace for those in turmoil,
hope for those who fear what might come
and comfort for those in distress.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

An old Hymn written by Charles Wesley, written in the 1700's comes to mind and is applicable today. It says:

Help us to help each other Lord, each other's cross to bear,
Let each his friendly aid afford and feel his brother's care.

With this in mind we pray for people in the Ukraine, living in constant fear, for the refugees leaving their homes seeking safety in other countries,

For wisdom for world leaders to make right decisions for the good of all countries in our world.

For our own government to be wise, particularly in regard to the assistance that they need to give to all people affected by the floods that have devastated parts of our land. We also thank you for those who have volunteered their time and efforts to assist in the cleanup and care of the houses and the people affected by the floods.

Some of us would love to help but our age and position stop us from physical help but we can pray and we thank you that you hear these prayers.

We pray for wisdom for our church, our leaders, particularly Rev. Mark and Jan as they lead us into the future. We pray that we may be bold to spread your word of love and care for all people.

We pray for the staff and residents of nursing homes everywhere, particularly those facing closure, that the people will not be discarded but will be cared for in other facilities. Give their families wisdom to help them face the future. These are our prayers, said and unsaid and we pray in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

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 28 God is our strength and help

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bA0zJnW1Rr8>

BENEDICTION

We have been embraced in the loving wingspan of God, we have been sheltered and protected, nurtured, and cherished, and now we are ready to

take leave and head out into the world. But we don't go alone, the Spirit accompanies us, offering us support and encouragement in all we do. Go in peace.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wrtzej4Al2g>