

PENTECOST 15
5/9/21
CAVES BEACH

NOTICES

This week both Rev Mark and Marie have had hospital surgery. Rev Mark came home on Friday and is resting as he continues his recovery and Marie is recovering well in hospital and is in good spirits.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Right now is a time of thanksgiving

we rejoice that we are present.

This is a time to bring praise and prayer to God

we rejoice in this opportunity for worship.

We remember the friends who have become our church family

we rejoice that they are persons to trust and support.

It is Christ who goes ahead to challenge us

we rejoice that Christ's inspiration has been there for us and always will be.

Let us worship God!

OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, we praise you!

The beauty of the sunset, the colours of hill and harvest leave us breathless with praise.

Holy God, we adore you!

The wonder, mystery, and peace of your presence leave us in awe.

God, Our Friend, we worship you!

You are known to us in times of deepest joy and in times of hard testing.

Just and loving God, we listen to you!

We will work your purpose out when evil threatens and fear looms large.

God revealed in Jesus, we pledge our discipleship!

We will bring the peace of Christ to those who suffer and the compassion of Christ to those who need support. Amen.

HYMN

Morning has Broken

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0TInLOJuUM>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Prayers and thanks to you, our constant Friend.

For when we are fearful, you stretch out your hand to us.

When we feel different from those whom we meet, you are already in the moment.

When we feel anger, turn this energy into a power of positive practice.

You, O God, are a God of wonder.

We cannot every understand the breadth and depth of your love
that surrounds us and upholds us.

Fill us with the grace to love, the energy to give, the strength to carry,
and the faith to overcome our human frailty as we follow you.

For with you we come alive to the wonder of grace and goodness.

Praise and thanks to you, our constant Friend.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we have created community at Caves Beach and nearby places. Forgive us, God, when our faith community lacks vision or enthusiasm.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we have made the cross a symbol of healing. Forgive us, God, when we ignore the crying needs of those we don't know, those whose distress does not touch us.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we have proclaimed that the truth will make you free. Forgive us, God, when we close our minds to new ways of thinking, fresh sources of inspiration.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we believe that forgiveness may be received. Forgive us, God, when we claim your love cannot reach us.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Jesus extends his hand to us in gentle love and humility.

When we do not have the words, the Spirit sounds our groans and sighs.

God is present, beyond our knowing, and with us, at every step.

Step out of the shadows of fear and prejudice. Live out your faith with courage and hope.

Loving God goes before us. God loves us and we are forgiven in Jesus' name.

Thanks be to God!

READINGS

*** James 2: 1-10, 14-17**

2 My brothers and sisters,^[a] do you with your acts of favouritism really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?^[b] **2** For if a person with gold rings and in fine clothes comes into your assembly, and if a poor person in dirty clothes also comes in, **3** and if you take notice of the one wearing the fine clothes and say, "Have a seat here, please," while to the one who is poor you say, "Stand there," or, "Sit at my feet,"^[c] **4** have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? **5** Listen, my beloved brothers and sisters.^[d] Has not God chosen the poor in the world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom that he has promised to those who love him? **6** But you have dishonoured the poor. Is it not the rich who oppress you? Is it not they who drag you into court? **7** Is it not they who blaspheme the excellent name that was invoked over you? **8** You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."⁹ **9** But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. **10** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.

14 -17

14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters,^[a] if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? **15** If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, **16** and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? **17** So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.

*** Mark 7: 24- 37**

24 From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre.^[a] He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, **25** but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. **26** Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. **27** He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." **28** But she answered him, "Sir,^[b] even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." **29** Then he said to her, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." **30** So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone. **31** Then he returned from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis. **32** They brought to him a deaf man who had an impediment in his speech; and they begged him to lay his hand on him. **33** He took him aside in private, away from the crowd,

and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue. ³⁴ Then looking up to heaven, he sighed and said to him, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." ³⁵ And immediately his ears were opened, his tongue was released, and he spoke plainly. ³⁶ Then Jesus ^[c] ordered them to tell no one; but the more he ordered them, the more zealously they proclaimed it. ³⁷ They were astounded beyond measure, saying, "He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak."

HYMN

May the Mind of Christ my Saviour

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7nmPUNdfkM>

SERMON

Over this past week we have watched the tragic unfolding of the Afghanistan situation. Our hearts have gone out to the people fleeing in order to find a place where they may have hope for their future for themselves, indeed, for their families. There will be many calls upon us from various organisations to at least put our hands in our pockets to help. I myself have already received emails from Act for Peace, the organisation that also runs the Christmas Bowl Appeal - they need urgent assistance.

And so it is opportune that this Sunday morning, we find that the passages from scripture invite us to look out beyond ourselves to others, and particularly to those who are different from us. We are invited to consider to be willing to change, to shift in our attitude, to realise that every day we live needs courage to accept the wrongs of injustice and to be messengers of hope to all of God's creation. The letter of James, for instance makes it very clear, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," and then he goes on to say that we must not show partiality.

This injunction goes right back to the time of Moses (Deuteronomy 10: 17-19): "For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, who executes justice for the orphans and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them food and clothing. You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt." That is only just part of a long speech when Moses was urging his people to imitate the concern, care, impartiality and love that God shows to all people, but especially to the poor, the disadvantaged and all who have been alienated, pushed aside and forgotten. We can include all those displaced people from Afghanistan and elsewhere across the globe - people who are trying to find a place they can call home.

Given that we have this understanding, it is no wonder that we might be jarred on hearing this morning, how Jesus responds to a woman in the gospel passage from Mark. It is the story of the Syrophenician woman - in other words a Canaanite woman. Canaanite was an ancient word - and these people had been enemies of the Jews for centuries. So Jesus had travelled into hostile territory - we are told he was in the area of Tyre, which was to the north of Judea on the Mediterranean coast.

This woman approaches Jesus, begging him to cure her young daughter who was possessed by an unclean spirit. So when if you think about the passage I just read to you from Deuteronomy, what do you think of these words that Jesus says to her? Mark, verse 27: He said to her, "Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." Surely, that hardly reflects Moses' direction to the people of Israel, that says: "You shall also love the stranger....." So does Jesus not care? Is he deaf to her needs? Is Mark recording a rather odd sense of humour? Was Jesus a man of his culture and so was influenced by those around him - just as surely as we are ourselves? There are as many thoughts and explanations on his statement to this woman, as there are theologians!

But wait on - we then find that Jesus changes gear. It is the comment that the woman says to him which is the catalyst: "Sir," she says, "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." Some theologians see this moment in Jesus' ministry as very significant - believing that his self-understanding is extended by this exchange, so that in effect he comes to realise that his mission is no longer confined to Judaism. His horizons are pushed out and barriers crash. Maybe we could surmise that it shows that Jesus was open to learn and change as he went, and able even, to listen to the logic of a woman, and a foreigner to boot. This understanding will be later developed by St Paul, as he makes it clear when he writes to the early church in Galatia: "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."

Maybe from this story we are challenged to learn and change as well, to learn to listen better, to be willing to take on difference. This can happen when we ourselves stay close to Jesus. Jesus was not afraid to be close to people. The next healing recorded by Mark certainly shows that. Our Lord puts his fingers into a man's ears; he dabs spittle on his tongue; he does not shrink from a person, who because of a disability, was regarded as being contaminated in his culture. This encounter illustrates well that one of the recurring themes in Mark's Gospel is that, in the person of Jesus, God touches broken humanity, no matter how fragile, no matter how broken.

Perhaps this story of the healing of this deaf mute could be held up to us as a mirror - but we will see two faces - not just one, but two: one face will show the man as ourselves. We have become as him - he is who we are. We see him as our face because we are all broken in one way or another, we are all in the need of healing, and also, so often we are deaf to the voice of God when we don't want to hear his call upon our lives.

And the other, the second face in the mirror: I think we can be challenged to see this time, ourselves as having the face of Jesus - after all in scripture we are even challenged to have the mind of Christ! Again St Paul, this time in Philippians 2:5, "Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus." And so if we ourselves are reflecting our Lord's face, or letting our mind become as Christ, then we will be bringers of hope, healing, acceptance, compassion, and reconciliation to those who have been forgotten, discarded, scorned.

Are we being prompted today to open our ears, our minds, our hearts, and if so, how? And to do what? We might think because we are older and also because we have to be isolated during this time of pandemic, that we can do nothing. That life has no purpose for us now. Is there an antidote for this kind of thinking?

Here's one that might be - be an antidote I mean: let me tell you briefly a true story, and I am reminded of it because of what has happened in Afghanistan, and is repeated in so many places at present where there is great suffering. In about 1993, so around 28 years ago now, during the time when Sarajevo was being bombed by Serbian forces, 22 people were killed when a shell hit them as they were lined up at a bakery to buy bread. With shelling still a problem in the city, a cellist from the Sarajevo Opera, dressed in full formal attire, came with a plastic chair and his cello, and for 22 days in a row, and in the middle of the rubble, played the beautiful and haunting Albinoni's *Adagio*, in order to commemorate those who died on that bread line. Later, asked why he did it, he said, "I am nothing special. I am a musician. I am part of the town. Like everyone else, I do what I can." That man had a choice of what he could do, and he chose to do something not only brave, but amazingly beautiful - he chose to overcome the horror, the fear, by doing the exact opposite of what others were doing to that city and its people.

What comes to my mind is the title of a book I read long ago. Maybe some of you may have read it too. It was "Something Beautiful for God". It was either written by Mother Teresa or written about her. Actually I don't remember the content - it is the title that has always stayed with me: "Something

Beautiful for God." Might it be possible to take those four words and see if each day, or at least most days, that we can all do just that? Only you will know what that might be - it need only be a small thing. It need only be known what it is, by God and you. But it needs to be something beautiful just for God. Ask him to help you and I'm sure He will guide you what to do. And then see if maybe your day changes for the better because of it.

Today, in our scriptures we read of Jesus doing beautiful things. And he asks no less of us.

The Lord be with you.

HYMN

Kneels at the Feet of his Friends

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZjFNpoEy8mY>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Let us give with open hands and kindness of heart. Let us pray:

Generous God, teach us to share what we have, with those who have not. Lift our eyes to see those in need, and may we be never afraid to live in your Way. Amen

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Although we are separated from each other today, God is near each one of us. We come now with our prayers thankful for His presence among us.

Loving God, today we are reminded of the beauty that is your creation - both in the natural world, and in the lives of people. We pray that we may be careful in the way we treat things and people, and appreciate always all that you have given to us: both the environment of this area where we live, and the relationships that we enjoy with family and friends.

We pray for those who are struggling under the restrictions placed upon us because of the Corona-virus. We pray especially for those who live in crowded homes, for those unable to work, for children who are missing their school-mates, for mothers trying to juggle everything at once, for fathers who are wanting to work but cannot. We pray for those who are home alone, for those in aged care who haven't seen their families for ages, and for staff who are doing their best.

We pray for our own families and all those we love. There are some from our church family who have asked our prayers. We pray particularly for Mark. Lord Jesus, we pray for your healing hand to be upon him, that his recovery will be steady and sure, and that any pain will be managed well. We pray for Judy too, that her needs will be met during this time. We pray for Marie as she also recovers following surgery, and for Jack and Myra, for Maureen, George and Doreen, Elaine Roberts, for Keith, for Fiona and for Lois. Help us Lord, to be aware of those who need extra support at this time. Help us to be patient and gentle when we feel stressed, and grant to us all your peace.

There is no-one else to whom we can come when there is so much suffering in the world at present.- we can only come to you Lord, because you are gracious and loving, and offer hope. We place in your care all the suffering ones in Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Haiti; we place in your care all those who are sick and dying from Corona-virus; we place in your care all those who are anxious, who mourn and are sorrowing for loved ones.

Keep us all in your care, and be with us each one as we pray together the prayer Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us your 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 forever. Amen**

HYMN

Break Now the Bread of Life

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=djc3MUpRY6U>

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 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

Amazing Grace <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BA7pdABvpnc>

BENEDICTION & BLESSING

Walk forward without fear, for Jesus walks with you.

Listen with intent, for God's Spirit will alert you to prejudice.

Act with practical grace and sincere kindness.

We know these through God's love.

May we live and love as faith filled people.

Even though we live under COVID restrictions at present, we are renewed in courage to be God's practical hands and loving heart to the world.

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all evermore. **Amen.**

SONG May the feet of God walk with you. (You-tube: Broadview Uniting Church, S.A.)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ6RaKX4_I4x