

PENTECOST 20
10/10/21
CAVES BEACH

NOTICES

It is great to be back with you this week. I have missed our times together, even though we can't actually meet together at the moment. This week I was told that I will have my final lot of surgery on 29/10. This will mean that I will be off again for a few weeks after that recovering. After all that I hope to keep away from doctors and hospital for a long time.

The current situation with meeting again as a community here at Caves Beach is still the subject to evolving Health Directives. Once the situation becomes clearer we will give you as much warning as possible of our 'new normal.'

CALL TO WORSHIP

You will prosper our worship, O God.

Every hymn, every prayer, every word of the Word will count, if you are with us.

You will prosper our witness, O God.

Every friend cared for, every family member listened to, every faithful contact made will count, if you are with us.

You will prosper our service, O God.

Every powerless one encouraged, every downhearted person given hope, every dark deed exposed will count, if you are with us.

Opening Prayer - God: love of discipleship

Your love, O God, will not let us go!

As we stand in awe of creation, your love is "wonderful."

Your love, O God, will not let us go!

As we struggle to let go the past, your love is forgiving.

Your love, O God, will not let us go!

As we strengthen this faith community, your love binds us together.

Your love, O God, will not let us go!

As we serve as disciples, your love comes clear in the life of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN 601 O Master let me walk with thee

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoWzpjpyPaQ&t=26s>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

God, for this moment, this very moment,
when we can feel our hearts beating,
pumping our blood in the great miracle that is our life,
we remember to be thankful, thankful for breath, for blood, for life.

Thankful too that you know us through and through.

You know where we are strong and where we are weak, and you love us.

You know the games we play and still you love us.

You know the lies we tell ourselves and each other and try to tell you and

still you love us.
You know the energy we waste worrying and scheming and still you love us.
For your knowing, for your forgiving, for your loving, we give our deep
thanks.

God of all knowing, we know that nothing is hidden from you.
We know that you know us through and through.
We know this and yet we so often live as if we can be private and selective
with you.
We live as if hiding ourselves from you is worthwhile and possible.
Forgive our foolishness! Forgive us our wasted time and energy!
We crouch in the dark shadows when we could be dancing in the warm, bright
light of your welcome. We keep secrets that are no secrets at all.
We could, in any and every moment, be living in joy and wonder.
There is no need to second-guess, censor or modify with you.
You know who we are through and through and you welcome us;
not the us we think we project but the true us, your creation.
Forgive us God.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

We are known.
We are known as we are,
and we are loved.
God welcomes us to God's table
to be God's community together in God's presence.
Rejoice and be glad. Rejoice and be glad!

READINGS

* Hebrews 4:12-16

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged
sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is
able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. 13 And before him no
creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one
to whom we must render an account.

14 Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the
heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. 15 For
we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our
weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are,
yet without sin. 16 Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with
boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of
need.

* Mark 10:17-31

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and
asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 Jesus
said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. 19 You
know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery;
You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not
defraud; Honour your father and mother.'" 20 He said to him, "Teacher, I
have kept all these since my youth." 21 Jesus, looking at him, loved him and
said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the
poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me." 22 When

he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.

23 Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." 26 They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible."

28 Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." 29 Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, 30 who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last will be first."

HYMN 590 What a friend we have in Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xoWzpJpyPaQ&t=26s>

SERMON

I often wonder how you would react to me if I took some unusual actions in the course of my time with you. Would some actions make you want to terminate my services?

With that in our thoughts, I was wondering how you would react to the following scenario?

A well known and liked young lady walks into the church office one day and asks to speak with me. She is easily recognisable because of her prominent position as one of the hosts of a popular TV series. As well as that she has released some songs which are currently very popular. As she walks in it is obvious that she is very expensively dressed in the latest fashions which sets off her beauty.

Unlike so many in her industry she has a very clean and wholesome image in the eyes of the public. In the last few weeks she has finalized a new contract with her network for three more years with a guaranteed multi-million-dollar income.

When she comes into the office she sits down and she begins to share with me. Despite all of her success, and the benefits that come with that, she feels that there is a major thing missing in her life. She now realises that she has desire for a deeper connection with God. Could she possibly join our little congregation here at Caves Beach?

We settle down and have a long discussion about her life and where she feels her faith is taking her. In the end I simply talked her out of taking this step! As much as it pained me to be a wet rag in this situation there were aspects of being an active Christian which would have left her shattered. She was not prepared to make those adjustments. Now how is my performance as your minister looking?

If this was not just a story, how would you feel about me rejecting someone who wanted to join our community?

Just about any church today almost falls over itself to attract any new member that they can find. How often do you hear people boasting about the famous people who attend their church? I think back to the time a few years ago when Hillsong almost burst its boiler boasting about how Justin Bieber, the pop singer with a wild history, joined their services in Sydney.

There is no way that I would normally want to talk anyone out of coming to church, whether or not they have a lot of publicity or even a lot of money.

In the light of this we now turn to today's Gospel story from Mark. A wealthy young man simply walks up to Jesus, then kneels at His feet asking: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" Then Jesus proceeds to talk the young man. In the process Jesus sees straight through the young man. Gently He leads the prospective disciple through a series of questions including....

Do you know the commandments? ...

You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, etc, etc.

Then Jesus comes up with the defining point which this young man could not get past. "Go and sell what you own, and give the money to the poor; then come and follow me."

At this point the young man seems to be floored by Jesus' demands. In one stroke Jesus had dissipated the young man's ardour for a religious life.

Now let's go to the reading from Hebrews. "The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart."

This does not bring me to delivering a sermon on being a wealthy Christian. The story of the rich young man does not demand that we have to give everything away just to be accepted as a disciple. After all Jesus did not write a new batch of laws. In fact, if anything, he was about abolishing human laws.

The point of the story becomes clearer in the passage from Hebrews. Let me repeat: "The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart."

Rather than making us a whole lot of new laws Jesus was in fact calling on each of us to commit our lives to following Him. **We are invited into a life-long journey seeking wholeness, holiness and developing a fullness that reflects His teaching.**

We all have things that despite our faith we are attached to. Those things keep holding us back so that we keep repeating the same self-destructive actions. If we reflect on the Gospels there are numerous stories of people being called to follow Jesus, often they just walked away from their business, family and friends. I am sure that each of us has things in our lives that we have had to change or leave behind so that we can continue on our Christian journey.

Facing up to the need to change can be a very powerful and painful experience. We can be very attached to those things which would hold us back.

At times I can feel a little jealous of people who come to the Lord with lives that are completely out of control and desperately in need of help. In these situations the simple act of leaving their old life behind them is so much easier. When our lives are more conventional it can sometimes be harder to make the changes.

Then we reflect deeply on the words: "The word of God is alive and active, sharper than any double edged sword. It cuts all the way through, to where soul and spirit meet, to where joints and marrow come together. It judges the desires and thoughts of the heart." This is when we realise that we have to make those hard decisions about our life. When we truly invite the God into our life we are soon faced with what is of real value and what we have to discard to allow ourselves to grow into a fuller faith.

How many of you have heard the old story about how they caught monkeys in some parts of Africa? They would tie an old kerosene tin to a tree and put a few peanuts in the bottom. The monkey could easily reach into the tin to grab the peanuts but the opening was so small that the monkey could not get their fist out while still holding onto the nuts. As the monkey was so fixated on the nuts it was easy to walk up to the animal and capture it.

How often is there something in our life that prevents our freedom?
How hard is it to actually let go of that problem?
Is there a treasure in our life which traps us?
What is it that stops us getting on the road to complete freedom?

In the passage we heard from Mark, Jesus refers to wealth and possessions because it is the key issue for this young man. It can be a common problem for some Christians. Throughout the Bible we hear that wealth can be a problem which can block out faith. Jesus says that it is harder for a rich person to enter the Kingdom of Heaven than for a camel to pass through a narrow gate in a city wall called the 'Eye of the Needle.'

It might be possible to outswim some Olympic champion like Emma McKeon or Kate Campbell, with shoes and socks on but that extra drag certainly holds you back from your true potential. If we are honest about following Jesus then why put roadblocks on the path ahead?

I would suggest that for most of us money is not the primary issue. As we learned from the Hebrew's passage there is a sharp, two edged sword, or

scalpel, ready to cut us free from that thing that goes to the very heart of our problems. It might be tightly locked away in some hidden and untouchable place that we studiously avoid. We might be living in fear of it being exposed to God and therefore we become stuck in some ongoing rut.

How can we keep avoiding this issue?
How can we avoid confronting that call and being given freedom?
How can we avoid the Holy Spirit laying bare that sacred cow?

It is actually quite easy!
Don't ever read the Bible.
Completely avoid any type of silence, meditation or reflection on our life.
Every time that still small voice start to address the issue, keep talking over it and diverting your focus to something else.

However if you are really serious about the journey to freedom and fullness in your life then take to time to read bits of the Bible regularly. Take to time to let it filter through all your barriers. Let is cut right to the bone where healing is required. Ask God to open your eyes and your heart to the new potential. Forget those few peanuts clasped in your fist which are trapping you as in reality they will not sustain you for very long.

Not only will the Holy Spirit journey with you on this road to self-discovery but it will also give you the strength to reach your goal. The Hebrews reading goes on to say that when we feel vulnerable and exposed to God we can be comforted that we have Jesus as the High Priest who understands our situation.

If you are able to allow God's word to seep into your very being then you will not only find the pain which holds you back but also the healing which is the way to freedom. You will know mercy and grace which is why Jesus was sent to us.

HYMN 573 A charge to keep I have
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8w-m4JKjy4>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

God of all living,
we bring ourselves and our gifts to you,
the great giver of all life.
May we use our gifts wisely,
justly, compassionately, and joyfully.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Loving God, we give thanks Jesus has promised that when we ask in faith you will hear our prayers, so we come to you this morning with what is on our minds and upon our hearts:

We give thanks for the world you have given us for our earthly home. We pray that those we elect to positions of authority may understand their responsibility in decision-making regarding the care of earth, especially in regard to regulating carbon emissions. We pray for those representing

nations at the coming talks on climate in Glasgow, that there will be cooperation, that difficulties will be addressed, and there will be resolve to meet targets set.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We pray for a just distribution of the vaccines for Covid-19 across the globe, so that poorer nations are not disadvantaged. We pray for those who now are finding their health systems overwhelmed, and their communities traumatised with grief. We pray for doctors, nurses and all medical personnel who are endeavouring to provide relief to people in both urban and remote places. We thank you for all who under difficult circumstances are helping those who are sick, and we pray for strength for those who are feeling tired and worn out.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We thank you loving God, that your Son came into the world to live among us. We pray that we might carry light and truth of Jesus in our lives so that others may come to know and love you too. We pray that we might gladly receive and obey your word from the scriptures, and we give thanks for Mark's ministry among us praying for him as he leads us by example and teaching.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God through all this time of Covid lock-down, we have realised how important human relationships are. Thank you for family and friends who have supported us through it by giving us a call, or writing a note. Thank you for those who have helped us with jobs when we've needed help. Thank you that we have a more normal life soon to look forward to again. Help us once the time comes to be more aware of the needs of those around us, particularly of support and friendship, and help us to be ready to reciprocate where we can.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Now we will have a time of prayer for those known to us and who have asked our prayers. We pray God's continuing healing blessings for Jack and Myra, George and Doreen, Elaine Roberts, Keith, Marie, Chris, Collen Glen's brother and for Mark and Judy. We will have a time of silent prayer for personal friends and family..... We pray especially too, for those who mourn loved ones, that they in their sorrow may be comforted. And give to all who are caring those unwell or in any other trouble, patience and gentleness, and to us all your peace.

We give thanks compassionate God, that you accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord, 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 268 Joy to the world

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vZhgp97y7Q>

BENEDICTION

The Psalmist says, 'teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.'

Teach us God. we are your students.

The Psalmist says, 'Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.'

Remind us god that you fill us with good things this day and all days.
in your name we go. amen. amen.

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