

PENTECOST 14

3/9/23

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

Give thanks to God, and be faithful!

God provided for the people of Israel in the midst of the desert.

Give thanks to God, and be faithful!

God stood with the prophets, when everyone was against them.

Give thanks to God, and be faithful!

God was with Jesus as wholeness was restored, and evil defeated.

Give thanks to God, and be faithful!

God stands with us in the celebrations, and the testing times of life,

and will not quit when time ends.

Opening Prayer

Come with Jesus, carry your cross.

We will put self on one side and value others.

Come with Jesus, carry your cross.

Success in the eyes of the world is not what God wants.

Come with Jesus, carry your cross,

Though we are burdened, others will find freedom.

Come with Jesus, carry your cross,

The act of carrying brings light to the dark places.

Come with Jesus, carry your cross.

For in harmony with Jesus, the way of life is clear. Amen.

HYMN 589 Jesus calls us!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSM2bW0v-tw>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Awesome and great God, whose holiness is beyond our capacity even to imagine - we worship you. God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, we glorify you as our God also. Your care for your people of old is evident through the stories of your involvement and constant covenant with them. Your care for us is evident through your grace and mercy which we experience in Jesus Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit. You love us so lavishly, and empower us so mightily, that we come to see the world as a place charged

with blessing - your blessing. We realise that we stand on holy ground whenever we are in your presence O God, which is always and forever when we praise you as we ought. We offer our praise and adoration and this time of worship as our response to your extravagant initiative of entering our lives in the person of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Holy God, we've made terrible mistakes.

Sins we've run away from and tried to leave in the past.

our memories, O God, they haunt us

but now we're tired of hiding.

We're tired of pretending.

So, we confess our brokenness to you.

Forgive us our sins, God, and for all the hiddenness we've piled on top.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

God finds us in the far country,

picking us up and placing us on God's strong shoulders.

God doesn't heap shame or terror upon us.

God rejoices and throws a party –

a grace and forgiveness party,

where there is always an honoured place for you and for me.

Rejoice, for we once were lost and now are found.

Rejoice, for your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

READINGS

- **Romans 12:9–21**

9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil; hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. 11 Do not lag in zeal; be ardent in spirit; serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; persevere in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints; pursue hospitality to strangers.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another; do not be arrogant, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. 18 If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord.” 20 Instead, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink, for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

- **Matthew 16:21–28**

21 From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me, for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If any wish to come after me, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 25 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

27 "For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. 28 Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

HYMN 595 O Jesus, I have promised

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9pjAnOf_Qd4

SERMON

How many of you have ever tried to train a dog?

I was thinking about this the other day and from listening to Jan's stories Jan and Sasha are constantly training one another, even today.

Luckily my dog, Phoebe, is at the stage now where she is very placid, unless there is a chance that she can go out with us. Then she starts to skip around and dance. Ever see a greyhound dance?

One of the most difficult things I have had to do is to try to train a dog to do something that is contrary to its nature. It does not take long when you have a few treats and want them to sit, then stay and so on. When it comes to a bowl of food it is far harder for a dog just to sit there and wait for the command because eating their food immediately is a basic instinct. I was lucky that Phoebe learned very quickly that she would still get the meal if she waited for my command.

There are lots of instincts for both animals and humans. Perhaps the most basic is the 'fight or flight' reflex. I am sure that we can all relate to this. When any animal, or a human is faced with a dangerous situation there is an automatic flush of adrenaline and the next decision can be almost automatic. The result is that either you stay and fight or take advantage of any possible escape route. Normally the preferred option is to escape but when this is blocked off then, like when you are cornered, there can only be a fight response.

As Jesus is heading towards Jerusalem and inevitable suffering at the hands of the authorities His disciples were urging Him to take the flight

option. Avoiding any confrontation was preferable to tangling with the many powerful groups in Jerusalem, including the Romans who were wanting to keep the city quiet at all costs.

Peter, as the leader of this group, expresses their natural reaction to the 'fight or flight' options facing the group. They recognised that that it will be dangerous to return to Jerusalem and the group was obviously fearful of what faced them. They were not in any position to fight the powerful people who ran Jerusalem and the Temple. It was a natural instinct to look at alternatives, like not going back!

Jesus responds with His typical directness when faced with the lack of support by His followers: "Get behind me, you Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

Jesus seems to admit that this journey could be a 'stumbling block', even for the Son of God. The Greek word here for 'stumbling block' is the same word that they also used for 'scandalise.' It would have been in many ways been simple common sense that alternative ideas be explored.

However Jesus is putting forward no alternative. He going to keep His focus travelling to Jerusalem and facing up to any consequences. He was prepared for whatever happens. Jesus continues to tell His followers that they need to be able to resist their normal survival instincts as there is no other way forward. "Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it."

If we look at Paul's letter to the Romans we find an echo of the determination that Jesus is showing. In our reading today Paul says: "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ... Do not repay anyone evil for evil ... Never avenge yourselves ... If your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

As we can see both Jesus and Paul are leading us in the same direction. We are called to resist our basic instinct to run away and avoid conflict which is our most basic survival instinct. Pushing beyond our 'flight reflex' we are guided to be open to the path that Jesus opens up for us, that is 'The Way of the Cross.'

Jesus chose not to flee but to face up to the violent hostility with His body. Jesus didn't lay down and allow injustice and violence to go ahead unchallenged, this is a common misconception.

Fleeing would have allowed the injustice to continue unchallenged. His non-violence stance unmasked any supposed legitimacy that there may have previously been of those evil ways and exposed it for everyone to see.

Had Jesus bowed down to those in power they could have kept on with the illusion that their position legitimised violence in the name of their laws and their own self-interest. By standing up to them in a non-violent response Jesus not only exposes their aggression for what it is, but also starts to neutralise it by absorbing their assault. If Jesus had not done that the blood lust of the mob would have sought out other victims perhaps even us. Consequently he stopped that deadly spiral into chaos.

In our faith we hear the call to resist those trying to legitimise greed, selfishness, infidelity, violence and exploitation. It is precisely this approach which can provoke a backlash from those who have no regard for humanity. We are all called to be ambassadors for the One who 'Walked the Way of the Cross.'

This is not some simplistic objective but it is a call to be counter-intuitive like trying to get a dog to resist the urge to jump in and eat a bowl of meat.

It is the Holy Spirit which helps us to learn to go against those basic instincts and scandals that go against justice and decency. We need to be able to trust that God will support us when we feel unable to continue. While some may think that the 'Way of the Cross' leads only to death we need to recognise that Jesus saw beyond this and said: "Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. What will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?"

Peter heard Jesus speak only of the suffering and death that awaited him in Jerusalem, but Jesus didn't only say that. Peter didn't fully comprehend all that Jesus said. Jesus had also said that he would be raised to life on the third day.

Jesus saw through the reflex to fight or flee and beyond that to the way that leads not only to the cross, but through the salvation of the cross to the new life in the wide-open spaces of God's love and grace.

I know that I can train a dog to refuse a bowl of raw meat more easily than I can myself be trained to turn the other cheek to hostility and violence, but it is only the “Way of the Cross” that leads to life. Let us hear the call and together allow the Holy Spirit to train us, despite our instincts, in the ways of life.

HYMN 618 What does the Lord require

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMPL6bRUFzE>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Our lives are touched by grace. We respond now with generosity and gratitude in giving our offerings.

Lord Jesus, take all that we bring and work it into your dream for the world.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Peace-making God, Reconciling God,

Be with those on the frontline of danger and conflict,

all those working for a just and loving world –

peacekeepers and community organisers,

activists and social workers –

all those giving their all to bind people together

in places where tensions are strong.

Bless the peacemakers, God,

may they know their honoured place in the family business.

In these places where hurts are deep, and complexity is high, we ask that you help to meet needs, encourage understanding, offer wisdom

and enable a way for people to meet each other with grace.

Raise the odds of forgiveness and help people, where possible and where safe,

to return to each other as brothers and sisters once more.

Bless the peacemakers, God,

may they know their honoured place in the family business.

In our own community, may we do our best to bring our hurts to one another

in the name of reconciliation and friendship.

Help us to be non-defensive with each other, willing to hear each other's concerns,

with as much grace as we can muster on both sides.

If talks break down, help us to be peace-making communities for each other,

communities of grace, transparency, honesty, and collective wisdom,

trusting that you, Christ Jesus, are present in our midst, willing the good in all circumstances.

Bless the peacemakers, God,

may they know their honoured place in the family business.

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 540 Christians lift your hearts and voices

SORRY NO YOU TUBE ON THIS ONE

COMMUNION

Christ our Lord invites to his table
all who love him,
who earnestly repent of their sin
and seek to live in peace with one another.

PRAYER OF APPROACH

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.

GREAT PRAYER 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.

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,

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, 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.

Narrative

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 for the 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.

Accept our thanks and praise, good Father,
through your Son, our Redeemer, Jesus Christ,
with whom and in whom,

and by the Spirit who dwells in us,
we worship you in joyful song.

The minister takes the bread and breaks it in full view of the people, in silence or saying:

Christ is the bread of joy,
who shares food with sinners

The minister lifts the cup in full view of the people, in silence or saying:

Christ is the cup of life,
who revives the faint-hearted.

The minister holds out the bread and the cup to the people and says:

Let us receive what we are;
let us become what we receive.

The body of Christ.

LAMB OF GOD

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 m

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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.

HYMN 315 Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_lc4w_UEpCQ

BENEDICTION

Go into this week,
blessed by the holiness of God and holding fast to what is good,
inspired by the genuine love of Jesus Christ and loving what is good
strengthened by the Holy Spirit and overcoming evil with good.

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