

SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 24TH MAY 2020

Gathering of the Scattered:

Allow me to welcome you all to our worship service this last Sunday of Easter, those who are receiving hard copies, those who are joining us in this recording on our web page or on social media. In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Amen!

I would like to pay my respect to the traditional custodians of this land in which we live, work, and worship. To the Elders and members of the Yorta Yorta Nation past present and emerging.

Call to Worship:

Raise your heads, when all around holds little hope. See the fragile springing forth of newness, hidden among our doubts and fears. The Christ enters our world with peace. Let us meet him in this moment with open hearts and minds.

We open ourselves to Christ in faith!

Prayer:

Holy, and loving God be present among us, in us and around us. Gathered in pain, gathered in anguish, gathered in fear, yet centred in your sacred love, sustained by faith, and directed by hope. Embrace your people to the glory of your name.

Amen!

Hymn: 'Blessed Assurance' 91 (MHB)

Blessed Assurance, Jesus is mine	Perfect submission, all is at rest
O what a foretaste of glory divine	I in my Saviour am happy and blessed
Heir of salvation, purchase of God	Watching and waiting, looking above
Born of His Spirit, washed in his blood	Filled with His goodness, lost in His love

*This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long
This is my story, this is my song
Praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

Declaration of Forgiveness:

Doxology: (771 TiS)

*Now to Him who loved us, gave us
Every pledge that love could give
Freely shed His blood to save us
Gave his life that we might live
Be the kingdom
And dominion
And the glory evermore!*

Reading: John 17: 1-11 (NRSV)

1After Jesus had spoken these words, he looked up to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son so that the Son may glorify you, 2since you have given him authority over all people, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. 3And this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. 4I glorified you on earth by finishing the work that you gave me to do. 5So now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with glory that I had in your presence before the world existed.

6" I have made your name known to those whom you gave me from the world. They were yours, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. 7Now they know that everything you have given me is from you; 8for the words that you gave to me I have given to them, and they have received them and know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me. 9I am asking on their behalf; I am not asking on behalf of the world, but on behalf of those whom you gave me, because they are yours. 10All mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I have been glorified in them. 11And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one.

Message: God's glory

When you hear the words 'God's glory', 'glorifying God', or 'to God be the glory' what comes to your mind?

I have seen elite athletes after winning a competition either bow down for a brief moment or kneel on their knees in a praying posture and some may just point their fingers to the sky as if to acknowledge someone up there.

I can only assume that for many of them they are saying 'to God be the glory'. If that is true, then it is not dissimilar to what the writer of Psalm 19 says about God's creation, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the firmament sheweth his handiwork." (KJV)

A little bit of ecological hermeneutics (science of interpreting Scripture from/for the whole of creation) can inform us that we as human beings are not the only created beings capable of declaring the glory of God. The whole of creation does that. The days and the nights, the heavens and the firmament and God the Creator even created a tabernacle for the sun. (Ps. 19:4)

But our human desire for self-glorification, our desire to be like God as if we are distinct from and can exist beyond the realm of the created was what led to our banishment from paradise.

Fanny Crosby, the writer of our first hymn 'Blessed Assurance Jesus is mine, O what a foretaste of glory divine, heir of salvation, purchase of God born of His Spirit washed in His blood. This is my story, this is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long.' The loss of her father when she was only six months old, the illness that took her sight when she was only eight years old did not make her bitter toward anything or anyone but rather, she believed that the glory of God can be revealed in her, in her life of blindness. She wrote, "It seemed as if it was intended...that I should be blind all my life,...if perfect earthly sight were offered me tomorrow I would not except it. I might not sung hymns to the glory of God If I had been distracted by the beautiful and interesting things about me". She also said, "When I get to heaven, the first that shall ever gladden my sight will be that of my Saviour".

Fanny Crosby wrote 8000 hymns, she was a mission worker, a poet, a lyricist and a composer. All to the glory of God she would say.

With the help of her mother Mercy and her grandmother Eunice Crosby she learned all of the Psalms by heart, the Pentateuch and the four Gospels before her fifteenth birthday.

In a culture of self-gratification, self-glorification, and desires to be our own creators, we are confronted and challenged by stories like that of Fanny Crosby and the lectionary Gospel reading for today – John 17:1-11.

The prayer that Jesus offered is placed at the end of the Easter season. The prayer highlights three major themes in John's gospel. First, the glory of God, which according to John is revealed in the Son who completes the work that was given to him by God the Father. (17:4) The glory of God is revealed in how Jesus exercised his ministry in God's power and always in obedience to the will of the Father.

Billy D Strayhorn is right in observing the history of division in the church, "Unfortunately, we all know that not everything that is done by the church and in the church is always done for the glory of God. We know that at times in history, the church has ignored the will of God in order to have its own way".

That leads us to the second theme, that of UNITY! A unity that glorifies God. The foundation for that unity is the unity between Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity! In other words, we learn from the relationship between the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit how we should inform and shape our own relationship that leads to unity to the glory of God. A unity that is defined in terms of the unity of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

When unity is desired to achieve social and political ends and not to the glory of God, it becomes a forced and coerced unity that suppresses, even oppress. Remember that coercion is a form of oppression. We then become more fragmented and more judgemental of the other.

The unity we seek and is gifted to us through Jesus Christ to the glory of God begins with us accepting that personal relation with God – the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. That is central not only in the glorification of God, it is also eternal.

That unity will not allow us to treat others differently from how we treat ourselves.

Max Lucado tells a story about the day his wife brought home a monkey. Their children were thrilled but he wasn't.; he had all kinds of questions. Where was the monkey going to eat? His wife said it was going to sit at the table and eat with them, just like the rest of the family. Then he asked her where it was going to sleep? And she told him it was going to sleep in their bed. Then he asked, "But what about the smell?" And she said, "Oh, he'll get used to you, I did."

That unity which is to the glory of God will not allow us to comment on someone else's odour before we check our own.

The last theme from this prayer in John's gospel is the theme of eternal life.

Unlike the gospel of Mathew and the Book of Revelation, in John's Gospel, eternal life is not so much an escape from the fires of hell or singing "Holy, Holy, Holy" with the heavenly hosts. For John, eternal life is about being in relationship with God. That relationship according to John is "*knowing*" and it is available now!

John is addressing the deep desire to know and be truly known, to love and be truly loved, to understand and be truly understand.

This is why the greatest examples of discipleship in John's gospel are that of the Samaritan woman in chapter 4, the blind man in chapter 9, Mary in chapter 12, and Thomas in chapter 19. In their stories, they gradually understand Jesus more and more to the point of '*knowing*' him as the Messiah, the source of all life.

It led them to worship and giving God glory.

It is my hope and prayer that we may grow in faith and understanding to the glory of God. That, we are united in the ministry of God and the relationship between the Trinity, and that eternal be ours now and for ever.

Amen!

Prayer of Intercession:

Son of God, you who prayed for those entrusted to your care: hear our prayers for your people today. We pray for the people of the world divided by injustice, exploitation and virus pandemics. Unite us in pursuit of justice, and our desire of health and wellbeing, that we may delight in living to your glory.

We pray for our nation, divided by prejudice, ignorance, fear and greed. Unite us and make us one in celebration of our diversity and hope for the future, that all people in this land may be honoured and valued to your glory.

We pray for your church, divided by dispute, distrust, and self-glorification. Unite us in our brokenness with your broken body and the loving cup that we may be witnesses to your glory.

We pray for our community, divided by wealth and poverty, exclusion and neglect. Unite us with your spirit of generosity and care, that we may live in love for one another to your glory.

We pray for all in need, for those who are sick and those who are dying, for the lonely and despair and those who are grieving. Unite us in compassion and charity that you may be glorified in the lives of your people.

Son of God, risen and glorified, hear our prayer. **Amen.**

Hymn: 'To God be the glory' (761 MHB)

To God be the glory! Great things He has done!
So loved He the world that He gave us His Son
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin
And opened the life gate that all may go in.

*Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the earth hear His voice
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord! Let the people rejoice!
Come to the Father through Jesus the Son:
And give Him the glory! Great things He has done!*

Blessing: 779 (TiS)

*May the feet of God walk with you
And his hand hold you tight
May the eye of God rest on you
And His ear hear your cry
May the smile of God be for you
And His breath give you life
May the child of God grow in you
And his love bring you home.*