

SHEPPARTON UNITING & SHEPPARTON RURAL CONGREGATIONS
SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 19TH JULY 2020

Welcome/Introduction:

Acknowledgement:

Call to Worship:

Come, faithful children of the Living God; remember the presence of God in your every thought, before your every word, deep in your heart. We come to remember that God is with us in every time and place; there is nowhere apart from the presence of God.

Prayer of Invocation:

Loving God, we call on you to make your presence known to us. We wait in hope and trust. Settle us down from our frantic doing and meet us in a space of quiet being. Surely, you are in this place: Release us from the fear of your absence, may the Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are children of God. Amen.

Hymn: 178 (TiS) 'Praise the God who changes places'.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

We give you thanks loving God, that there is no place apart from your presence. The knowledge that we are known and loved by you sets us free to be your children, confident that your Spirit will guide and direct us in ways that gives hope to the world. Thank you for the hope in our hearts that this world is your world, and we are your people. Together with you, we wait and work for the reconciliation and renewal of the whole creation.

O God of every generation and every people, we know we do not always recognise you when you come to us – especially if we meet you in the disturbing and threatening lives of others. We know that we sometimes turn our faces away from those who look different from us, or speak a different language from ours, thereby turning our faces from you.

Sometimes we are not wise in seeing who really belongs to you. We are deluded by appearances or seduced by those who seem so sure of their ground. Do not turn away from us Jesus Christ, come to us in the wonder of your grace, and forgive us this day. Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness:

Friends, there is no wilderness of sin in which you can ever be lost to the love of God. We did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but we have received a spirit of adoption as children of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Reading: Genesis 28: 10 – 19

10. Jacob left Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11 He came to a certain place and stayed there for the night, for the sun had set. Taking one of the stones of the place, he put it under his head and lay down in that place. 12 And he dreamed that there was a ladder set up on the earth, the top of it reaching to heaven; and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. 13 And the Lord stood beside him and said, "I am the Lord, the God of Abraham and your father Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and to your offspring; 14 and your offspring shall be like the dust of the earth, and you shall spread abroad to the west and to the east, and to the north and to the south and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you and in your offspring. 15 Know that I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

16 Then Jacob woke from his sleep and said, "Surely the Lord is in this place and I did not know it!" 17 And he was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

18 So Jacob rose early in the morning, and he took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up for a pillar and poured oil on the top of it.

19 He called the place Bethel; but the name of the city was Luz at the first.

Hymn: 136 (TiS) 'There's a wideness in God's mercy'.

Message: 'Testimony of a runner' – Jacob was a runner

Jacob tried to escape from his brother Esau

He left Beer-sheba and went toward Haran – in between the place he was trying to get away from, and the place he was hoping to get to, he had to rest for the night, because the sun had set.

It was in this in-between time and space, that Jacob encountered the Lord in a dream. This in-between time and space can only offer up a stone for a pillow – later became a pillar.

Darkness sets in Jacob can neither go forward or return back – rest is the only option

It was in this in-between time, in the dark of the night – for the sun had set, this tired and afraid escapee was visited in a dream

He saw a ladder set on earth reaching up to heaven – angels ascending and descending

The Lord stood beside him and spoke him with him – gave him a blessing, first – land, second – offspring, third – the Lord's presence until the promise is fulfilled.

(Genesis 28: 17b) "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

It is in the in-between times in people's lives that the Lord can be found – on the margins

The place where the Lord speaks and blesses is none other than the house of God

The ladder symbolises – heaven is accessible from the house of the Lord, where angels are free to ascend and descend

The runner is blessed and promised to be a father of a multitude! This awesome, God is awesome, and nothing will stop him from following his beloved people to the margins, he will bless them and remind them of his abiding presence and of his promise.

Announcements:

Prayer of Intercession:

You know our thoughts before we speak them, and our hearts before we open them. Loving God hear our prayer for a world that is groaning in pain. We pray for the suffering of this present time. Give us courage and eagerness compassionate God to reveal your presence in the midst of every circumstance: bringing hope where there is none and light where shadows prevail.

Give us wisdom to discern your presence in places where we would not expect to find you, where there are only stones for pillows.

Give us courage to hope for what we cannot see: renewal where there is destruction, reconciliation where there is enmity and restoration where there is brokenness.

Lord, give us patience as we wait in hope!

Hymn: 569 (TiS) Guide me, O thou great Redeemer'

Blessing:

We part our ways now, but we go nowhere without God. We leave each other's company now but are assured that God is with you. We leave in freedom with patience, knowing we are loved. Amen.