

**SERVICE OF WORSHIP FOR SHEPPARTON UNITING AND SHEPPARTON RURAL  
CONGREGATIONS – 4<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

Welcome/Introduction:

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

**And also, with you.**

Welcome to all who are joining us for worship this morning...

Acknowledgement: I pay my respect to the traditional custodians of the land in which we live, work and worship. To the members and elders of the Yorta Yorta nations past, present and emerging.

Call to Worship:

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world.

Let us worship God.

(Psalm 19: 1-4)

Hymn: 626 (TiS) 'Lord of creation'

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

Christ, we have great encouragement from being united with you. You bring us into God where we find comfort in your love. If we claim any common sharing in you as Spirit, if we share in common any tenderness and compassion, then we should take complete joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being in one spirit and being of one mind.

But we don't.

Of course, sometimes we do. Yet, often we don't. We fall short of our calling in you as individuals and as community.

Forgive us for what we do out of self-ambition or vain conceit. Forgive us our lack of humility where we value ourselves above others.

Forgive us for looking to our own interests, each one of us, rather than to the interests of others.

Forgive us.

Restore us.

Redeem us and reset us in your way.

We enter into prayer, seeking to obey our commitment to faith and discipleship, looking to continue to work in response to our salvation with awe! Accepting that we will wobble and wander from the path and trembling, but knowing it is you, God who is Christ and Spirit, who works in us, to will us and to help us to act in order to fulfil your good purpose, so that it can be so.

**Amen.**

(Jon Humphries)

Declaration of Forgiveness:

If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us;  
Your sins are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

Doxology: 772 (TiS) 'Worship, honour, glory, blessing.'

Reading(s): Mathew 21: 33-46

Message: 'Ownership or Stewardship'

There are two types of world views that greatly influence and shape the way many people live out their lives. Ownership and stewardship.

We live in a society where ownership is promoted as success and to have ownership determines a person's sense of value and identity.

The concept of ownership brings with it a sense of power and control and a feeling of independence where you are accountable and responsible to yourself.

Then there is the world view that says that we own nothing, and everything belongs to God. We are stewards of God's gifts to us in all of creation and that we are responsible and accountable to God in how we treat and utilise those gifts.

These two world views don't always agree with each other. Most times they are in conflict with each other.

Having said that, Christians believe that God is the creator and therefore the owner of the created world. God declared in Exodus 19: 5, "All the earth is mine." In the psalm "the world and all it contains; you have founded them." (Ps. 89:11)

We do not own anything on earth, they belong to God and when we finished up here on earth, we leave with nothing, we don't take anything. We are stewards gifted with creation and entrusted to us the responsibility of caring for it till God returns.

When the elders and chief priests missed the true meaning of the parable of the vineyard, Jesus told them another one, a second one in respond to their challenge about his authority.

This second parable (Mathew 21: 33-46), known to many as the parable of the wicked tenants distinguishes between ownership and stewardship.

A landowner had prepared his vineyard with everything that is required for both its growth and security – which resembles that of the landowner in Isaiah 5. He established the vineyard with fence, winepress and even a watchtower.

The landowner entrusted his vineyard to tenants to look after, care for, and oversee the production in exchange for rent to be paid at harvest time.

Things did not work out the way the landowner intended as we see. When the landowner sent his servants/slaves to collect what was rightfully his, the tenants killed them. The landowner then sent another group of slaves to collect the rent, but they were treated worse than the first group.

The landowner then decided to send his own son. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, “This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.” That is the clincher I believe. It is all about ownership. For once they kill the son, they would get the inheritance. They become the new owner.

Then Jesus asks the chief priests and the elders, “Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at harvest time” (v 41).

There is another important twist to this story which comes in verse 42. Jesus said to them, “Have you never read the scriptures; ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is amazing in our eyes’?”

God, who was the landowner, is now going to do a new thing for his people. A new building in which the cornerstone, the one that holds the whole building together is the one that is rejected.

God will persist with God’s kingdom even take it away from wicked tenants and give it to those who produce kingdom fruits. Eternal qualities of love, peace, hope, faith and trust in God the Creator of all things.

**Amen.**

Hymn: 187 (TiS) ‘Let all creatures dance.’

Notices:

Offering:

Prayers of the People:

Righteous and merciful God, in confidence and trust we bring to you our prayers for the world and for the church.

Your creation shows forth your glory, O God; hear our prayers for the preservation of the earth. We pray for responsible stewardship of your creation, that we may honour what you have entrusted to us and share justly the abundance you provide.

Righteous God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your law gives wisdom to the simple, O God: hear our prayers for all in positions of responsibility. We pray for wise and honest government of nations, that all your people may live in safety, dignity and freedom, and peace come again to your troubled world.

Righteous God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have drawn us together from the corners of the earth, O God: hear our prayers for the well-being of this nation. We pray for reconciliation between the peoples of this land, that we may rejoice in our diversity and build together a future of understanding, tolerance and trust. Righteous God, in your mercy, **hear our prayers.**

You have taught us how to worship you, O God: hear our prayers for the building up of your church. We pray for an increase in faith in your people, that our lives may bear good fruit and be a sign to others of your forgiveness and grace. Righteous God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You have shown us how to live together, O God: hear our prayers for the welfare of this town. We pray for a community where care and compassion abound, that the young may be nurtured, the elderly honoured and all live in mutual respect and love. Righteous God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You care tenderly for all people, O God: hear our prayers for the relief of those in need. We pray for your healing presence with all who are in trouble or distress, that the bereaved may be comforted, the suffering find release and those in despair find hope. Righteous God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You offer us the gift of eternal life O God: hear our prayers for those who have died. We pray for strength to follow in the steps of your saints, that we may remain faithful to our life's end and with your Son, Jesus Christ, be brought to a joyful resurrection. Righteous God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen.** (J. Nelson LUP 1999)

Hymn: 547 (TiS) 'Be thou my vision.'

Blessings:

Go with the peace of God in your hearts, live in peace with each other and offer peace to all. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and for evermore. **Amen.**

779 (TiS) 'May the feet of God walk with you.'