

ORDER OF SERVICE FOR SUNDAY 28TH FEBRUARY
Shepparton Uniting Church and Shepparton Rural congregations

Introit: 407 (TiS) 'Breath on me Breath of God'.

Call to Worship:

I will tell my people what you have done;

I will praise you in their assembly.

Praise him, you servants of the Lord! Honour him, you descendants of Jacob! Worship him, you people of Israel!

He does not neglect the poor or ignore their suffering; he does not turn away from them, but answers when they call for help.

In the full assembly I will praise you for what you have done; in the presence of those who worship you I will offer the sacrifices I promised.

The poor will eat as much as they want; those who come to the Lord will praise him.

May they prosper for ever! (Psalm 22: 22-26)

Let us worship God.

Hymn: 217 (TiS) 'Love divine, all loves excelling'.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

With grateful hearts, we come to you, O God. We are thankful for this day for all the opportunities which you place before us: for the chance to start again with fresh trust and innocent hope; for the joy of being refreshed so that anything seems possible because we, ourselves, have been redeemed.

Our souls rest in the safety of your promises, O God, and stay with you in thanksgiving.

O God, there are times when we sink with relief into old decisions of faith, as we live out of past times when we agreed to love you and shield ourselves from further challenges.

Take our hand, Jesus Christ.

Look into our hearts and search us out, then forgive us for our reluctance to walk further into your life.

Sometimes we hold our place as your people with unwarranted pride, pointing with triumph to a moment of commitment instead of living in gratitude for the ongoing grace we receive.

Look into our hearts and search us out, then forgive us for our reluctance to walk further into your life.

If we are resisting your voice within us and around us which invites us to be born again into newer life, to enter your body for a time of cherishing to ready us for a different emerging and growing:

Take our hand, Jesus Christ.

Look into our hearts and search us out, then forgive us for our reluctance to walk further into your life. This we pray in faith.

Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness:

The offer of God always stands ahead of our life.

We may be born again, leaving behind all that is of death or guilt.

We are not condemned.

We are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Doxology: 771 (TiS) 'Now to him who loved us, gave us every pledge that love could give'.

Readings: Romans 4: 13-25, Mark 8: 31-38

Hymn: 619 (TiS) 'Have faith in God my heart'.

Message: 'The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a contradiction'.

- We hear from our gospel reading today, Mark 8: 31-38, the difference between how the disciples understood the messiahship of Jesus and how Jesus understand his messiahship to be.
- They seem to have accepted that Jesus is the 'Son of Man' (another title for Jesus's messiahship), it is the second part of the statement that comes as a shocker for them.
- As soon as Jesus declared that the "Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the Teachers of the Law. He will be put to death, but three days later he will rise to life", Peter the impetuous one – rebuked him.
- The declaration by Jesus of his impending death, his rejection and suffering were too much to accept especially after they had seen him perform miracles in healing the sick and exorcising demons.
- It is the first time that Jesus predicts his death and the way he is to die. The first of three predictions of his death in the gospel according to Mark and each prediction is followed by the disciple's failure to relate to Jesus's own understanding of his messiahship and their own perception of him.
- Jesus was trying to teach them about true discipleship which will be fulfilled in him, in his death and death by crucifixion.
- When Jesus rebukes Peter for his misunderstanding, Jesus gave the reason for why true discipleship are misunderstood and can be misunderstood.
- After rebuking Peter, Jesus turned to the crowd and the disciples and gave the reason why they, and us today can misunderstand true discipleship.
- "If anyone wants to come with me, he must forget self, carry his cross, and follow me. For whoever wants to save his own life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for me

and for the gospel will save it. Does person gain anything if he wins the whole world but loses his life? Of course not! There is nothing he can give to regain his life.” (Mark 8: 34-37)

- This is the contrast between human values and God’s values according to Mark. “Get away from me Satan, your thoughts don’t come from God but from man.” (v. 33b)
- This contrast will come up again in the second prediction of his death when the disciples argue as to who is the greatest among them, and Jesus instructs them to be like a servant and like a child.
- When James and John requests places of honour, Jesus invites them to drink his cup and share in his baptism, his suffering and death implied, and embrace the role of a servant.
- The life of discipleship, according to our gospel reading this morning, contrasts with the ways of the world.
- Our human values teach us that our own life comes first. As Marilyn Salmon mentions in her commentary in this text, “We might be kind and generous and thoughtful toward others, yet cultural norms dictate the priority of our own safety or privilege or physical comfort”.
- By our human nature we want to be prosperous, strong, successful and influential. Jesus has other priorities. He, on the other hand, came to serve, not to be served. His ways are not our ways, and his invitation is for us to follow his way.
- The disciples represent human values. They aspire to power and greatness and assume that Jesus shares the same values. Jesus represents God’s values, the willingness to risk one’s own life for the sake of others.
- Jesus does not encourage suffering for its own sake, nor does he recommend acceptance of forced servitude and the key to understanding all this is the words “for the sake of the gospel”.
- That is the invitation to us and the church, to risk our lives for the sake of others. As David Rhoads wrote in his commentary “Most of us will not face giving our own precious life for the sake of another, but we have opportunities daily to consider how we define success or failure, or to choose between self-preservation or life-giving for others. In the clash between human values and God’s values, what does it look like to lose our life for the sake of the gospel in order to save it?”

Hymn: 209 (TiS) ‘And can it be that I should gain’.

Notices, Joys & Concerns

Offering:

Prayers of the People:

Holy God, slow to anger and infinite in mercy, hear us when we bring our prayers for your people.

We pray for the world, for peace and co-operation between nations, for wise and honest government and for a just and careful use of the earth’s resources.

When we make tools of power and possessions, when we are greedy for what is not ours, or take what belongs to others, overturn our values, that we may be passionate in the pursuit of justice.

Holy God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for your worldwide church, for all who exercise leadership, for those who minister in your name, for all who worship in this place.

When we do not place you first in our lives, when we profane your name, or forget your worship, overturn our values, that we may proclaim your gospel by your words and by our lives.

Holy God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all who live in this community, for our families, our friends and all with whom our lives are bound. When our jealousy, unfaithfulness or neglect destroys relationships with parents, children, partners or friends, when we are less than truthful, or damage others by our words, overturn our values, that our relationships may be based on mutual respect and trust.

Holy God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We pray for all in need, for the hungry, the homeless and the unemployed, for those without friends and those who have lost ones, for all who are in pain, for the sick and for the dying. When our selfishness overrides our concern for others, when we abandon our responsibilities for the vulnerable, the aged and the infirm, overturn our values that we may learn to care for each other with compassion and tenderness.

Holy God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for your faithful people of every generation, for all who have walked in your way and now find eternal rest in you. When we leave your path and follow our own desires, overturn our values, that, with all your saints, we may find true treasure in following your Son and come into the joy of your everlasting presence.

Holy God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer. Amen.

Hymn: 215 (TiS) 'You servants of God, your Master proclaim'.

Blessing:

Walk now towards the horizon of life, which extends as far as faith will carry us into God's future.

And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all . **Amen.**

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