



The Uniting Church in Australia

SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH

Order of Service for

Sunday 6th June 2021

CALL TO WORSHIP (based on Psalm 138)

In the times of trouble,
when all seemed hopeless, I cried out to God.
And the Lord heard my pleas and answered me.

When I felt lost and alone, I looked for God.
And God found me and brought me home.

When my life was filled with joy and blessing,
I danced and praised God.
And God danced and rejoiced with me.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

OPENING PRAYER

Come, Spirit of grace, settle in with us today
open our hearts to your words of encouragement and faith,
and build within us an attitude of thanks
that will prepare us for our calling in the world. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*“We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today
and pay respect to their elder’s past, present and emerging.”*

WELCOME

HYMN TiS 596 Fill my whole life, O Lord, my God

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Perhaps we are never really ready for you, gracious God,
never really able to understand how you shook up the world
and upside-downed everyday expectations and ideas.
We confuse promises of an easy life
with those of an abundant and blessed life.
We allow the loudest voices to instruct us on ethics and integrity
and ignore those who speak words of compassion and peace.
We buy the lie that money and status is all we need to fix what we believe has gone wrong
and forget that kindness and goodness is your balm to what ails the world
Forgive us for not looking your way and seeking your wisdom above all else.
Forgive us for trusting in false promises, rather than having faith in your love.
Fill us with the Spirit of faith and hope and love.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

The love of God is always on offer to us, even though this is an idea that is at the edges of our understanding. Let God's mercy and grace fill your hearts with joy and grant you peace.

AN EARLY WORD

HYMN TiS 609 May the mind of Christ my Saviour

BIBLE READINGS: Mark 3:20-35
2 Cor 4:13-5:1

REFLECTION

Have you ever described someone as out of their mind? Why would we do that? Perhaps there are times when we are genuinely concerned about the mental well-being of a family member or friend, and we might say "they seem out of their mind". Or perhaps when someone makes an outrageous statement or suggestion we might counter with "you are out of your mind to say that." It's a way of discrediting people, of dismissing their views and actions, of trying to limit, if not destroy, their credibility and influence.

But normally it's not a phrase we would regularly use in everyday life.

So it's interesting that only three chapters into Mark's story about Jesus, those around him are saying "he's out of his mind". This is strong language, and it's not just being said here and there, once in a while, or under their breaths. No, they're saying it out loud, in public, and even to his own family. Not only that, but his family seems to believe it. They are moved to action because as Mark notes, "people were saying, he has gone out of his mind" .

So what does it take for you to decide someone is out of their mind? Is it that they hold very different beliefs from you? That they are at the other end of the political spectrum than you are? That they act and behave in ways that are threatening or, at the very least, hard to understand? That they have a passion which isn't just theirs but that they want, even insist, it should be everyone's?

In Jesus' case, it seems to be that he is healing anyone and everyone in need and casting out demons and doing all this even on the Sabbath. He is, in other words, breaking the rules to make sure everyone can experience God's grace - all of which sounds pretty good. So why are people saying he's lost his mind?

The religious leaders of Jesus' day had rules in place which sought to help the people live within the power of the law so that their actions were good, productive and pleasing to God. However the Pharisees' increased reverence for the Law led to a lessening of their respect for the human person as someone created in God's image. As the custodians of the law, the Pharisees' power increased, while the people's power decreased into powerlessness.

Jesus challenged the Pharisees' power not only with words but with deeds. One Sabbath day, a man with a withered arm longed to touch Jesus - to experience healing - so Jesus asked him to come and stand up in front of everyone in the Synagogue. He then asked the Pharisees "Is it lawful to do good or to do harm on the sabbath, to save life or to kill?" But they were silent. Jesus was deeply distressed when they said nothing, so he said to the man: "Stretch out your hand." The man stretched it out, and his hand was restored - whole and useful once more. The very fact that the authorities

remained silent shows how much they had deviated from discerning what God's will was - healing, wholeness, and justice.

That incident is at the very beginning of the chapter from which our gospel reading today comes, which helps to explain the hostility shown towards Jesus, and the description of him as “out of his mind”.

We wonder nowadays why people cannot discern God's will for the world, and yet here we have Jesus in person demonstrating God's way of love. However because this threatened the power base of the Pharisees, they could not, or would not, see the good being enacted in other people's lives. They could only react out of the threat to themselves.

It seems that even Jesus' own family were blind to his God-given powers. Jesus' question might sound strange to our ears, and even callous and unfeeling . When he is told that his mother and brothers are outside he says "Who are my mother and brothers? "

Jesus is saying that any blood relationship is of little consequence when compared to the relationship with him which grows out of seeing his deeds and hearing his words. As Jesus looked around at those seated in a circle around him, he said "Here is my mother, and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."

Jesus shared our humanity to show that God is not a distant God enshrined in legalism but rather a God who embraces the hurts and suffering people of the world. There is a delightful story about a little girl who was late home from an errand and her worried parents questioned her as to why she was so late? She explained that she had come across a friend who had dropped her beloved china doll and it had smashed to bits on the footpath. "Oh", said her father "you stopped to help her pick up the pieces?" "No" said the child, "I stopped to help her cry."

Through Jesus, God stopped to help the world cry - to share the pain of the world, to demonstrate that evil does not have the last word...and Jesus says to us: “Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

Jesus was not out of his mind. He was and is and always will be - love. There are times when we as followers of Jesus might be called crazy, or out of our mind for our stance on certain issues, or our willingness to engage in edgy programs that have the welfare of others as our focus. We are in good company, and members of a global family with Jesus at the centre. Thanks be to God!

HYMN TiS 650 Brother, sister let me serve you

OFFERING and DEDICATION

Spirit of love,

let the goodwill with which we give these gifts remain with them as they make their way to places and people that will receive them. May they be a force for good. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Heavenly Father, you call us to be your friends and to make friends of others – more even, to recognize in them our brothers and sisters, your family in Christ.

So we pray for ourselves and for the world and its people:

We pray for all areas in the world where deep divisions run between ethnic groups because of race, religion or past history.

Lord, help your people to be your friends and to make friends – your family in Christ.

We pray for our communities where different traditions shape different outlooks on things.

Lord, help your people to listen well to each other that we may learn to live together knowing that though different we are your family in Christ.

We pray for our own families where growing up is difficult, where harsh words spoken in anger are not easily taken back, and hurtful or thoughtless actions are endangering relationships.

Lord, empower your children to be patient, slow to anger and to become wise in their speaking and acting as your family in Christ.

We pray in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying:

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 TiS 613 Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

We leave this time of worship renewed and restored,
reassured of the love of God that never rests
and remains with us all our lives.

Let the songs of praise we have sung guide your way
and the prayers we have prayed strengthen you in the days to come.

Amen

HYMN TiS 781 Father, bless us as we go