



The Uniting Church in Australia
SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH

Order of Service for

Sunday 18th July 2021

INTROIT TiS 772 Worship, honour, glory, blessing

CALL TO WORSHIP

Neighbours and newcomers, families and strangers,
we gather in this place built by God's steadfast love.
Strugglers and stragglers, pilgrims almost at the end of the journey,
each of us seeks to follow Jesus, the compassionate One.
Builders of bridges in fractured communities,
those who stand on either side of walls of fear,
the Spirit of faithfulness calls us to live as one people – God's people!

OPENING PRAYER

Our God, you have travelled throughout all existence.
And you meet us here again today.
Open our minds to your living presence
for we long to know you more,
to hear your word and understand it deeply in our souls.
**God who meets us wherever we are,
today, in the presence of your gathered family,
we share in worship, prayer and song.
Praise to you, O God of every moment!**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*"We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which we gather today
and pay respect to their elders past, present and emerging."*

WELCOME

HYMN TiS 152 Joyful, joyful, we adore you

PRAYER OF ADORATION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Loving Jesus,
You never seemed to tire, with all whom you met,
to offer loving comfort and healing for their soul.

We often are too weary to offer more to others
and in our own weariness, bring words or actions that bring harm.
Help us learn from you,
by taking rest in our days;
to pray on the mountain;
to share at a table with others;
to accept the little which is given with a lot of love;
to listen to the other as if no one else is listening;
to be generous of heart, while being aware of our need for healing too.

Loving Jesus,
We turn to you for wisdom and healing
for we do not always know the way. Amen

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear the stories of long ago,
of God's presence throughout all situations.
Let us hear again, today, that we do not journey alone.
Rest with God, be held by the Spirit, and pray with Jesus each day,
for they are waiting and listening with you.

AN EARLY WORD

HYMN TiS 693 Come as you are

BIBLE READINGS: Mark 6:30-34, 53-56
Ephesians 2:11-22

REFLECTION

The disciples are tired. They've been preaching repentance and casting out demons and healing sick bodies, which is what Jesus sent them to do. Now they've returned to tell him all that happened since he sent them out, two-by-two, carrying nothing but a staff, depending on villagers for hospitality and on God for guidance. As the disciples describe the recent events in their lives, their teacher hears the fatigue in their voices, watches their faces as they stifle yawns. And all around this little assembly, crowds of people buzz in and out, like bees in and out of a hive. So Jesus suggests that they go to a private location to get some much-needed rest and something to eat. With all the interruptions, they haven't even had time for food.

The disciples gladly heed Jesus' advice and head out by boat to a deserted area; but even before they arrive, the crowds have set up camp, getting there well ahead. Jesus could have - politely - told the crowds to get lost for a while. He might even have told his disciples to ignore the crowds pressing in around them. But that's not what happened. Instead, Jesus was moved by compassion because he saw that the crowds were like sheep without a shepherd, so he began to teach them many things.

Jesus was moved with compassion for the crowd.

I looked up the meaning of compassion:

One dictionary describes compassion as:

a strong feeling of sympathy and sadness for the suffering or bad luck of others and a wish to help them.

I preferred the Webster dictionary offering which says compassion is *the consciousness of others' distress together with a desire to alleviate it*

In both meanings a feeling is followed by action. Whenever the word “compassion” is used in scripture to describe a deep feeling, it is followed by action. In today’s story, Jesus felt the pain he saw, and he acted with compassion – first of all for his disciples, inviting them to rest. He knew his friends’ physical and emotional limitations, and in his compassion for them, he invites them to a deserted place for much needed time away.

Unfortunately this intent is twice interrupted by crowds so again compassion results in action: first by teaching the crowds, and then by feeding them, and later, by healing their diseases.

What can we draw from today’s gospel reading?

First, we ourselves need rest. We need to heed that lovely invitation from Jesus to *“Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”*

Rest is more than physical quietness. We can be by ourselves and still be besieged by crowds of a different kind – thoughts and anxieties that swirl through our minds preventing quietness.

It requires almost an act of will to focus on Jesus and with his help put such thoughts to rest and return to a more even keel. Rest is wonderfully restorative, especially when feeling overworked or anxious about something in life.

Throughout his ministry Jesus rested and prayed, breathing in strength from God so that he could breathe out with love and compassion to those whose needs were great. Following Jesus’ example of breathing in and breathing out, may we take time out for rest and prayer so that we then have the strength to offer God’s healing love to others.

Secondly, we need to see ourselves not as self-sufficient, but as people also in need of Jesus’ compassion.

In his book *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen reminds us that it is only when we look honestly at our own exhaustion, confusion and mortality that we can extend compassion to others. The person with all the answers for others, the one who conveys the image of having their act together, Nouwen dismisses as ineffective and so distant from the human condition that they have nothing to offer anyone. But acknowledging our brokenness, acknowledging our pain, admitting to our fatigue and our sadness, our disappointment, our hunger for meaning, opens us to the compassion, the love, the forgiveness, the healing of the Good Shepherd who calls us by name and extends love to us, often through the love of others. Only then, in our weakness, do we become equipped, as did the unlikely first twelve disciples, to minister to others, to heal, to love in ways that surpass anything we would have imagined possible.”

Jesus calls us, as he called those earliest disciples, to share in God’s works of love and compassion. Two gifts make that possible: the gift of God’s Spirit, which comforts, guides, strengthens and instructs us in what we do, and second, the gift of community, the body of Christ in the world - Christ’s living presence. Together, as Christ’s body, we offer love and aid and comfort to one another, loving as we have been loved, and giving that love away to our communities. We are each individually called to follow our Lord, but we should never mistake cultural messages, which tell us to be strong and independent, with what Jesus tells us, which is that we must lose our lives to find them, and that we belong to one another.

We follow Christ together. As Christ’s church, may we consistently consider the source of our life and health and salvation and well-being, relying on that source for the well-being of God’s world. May we together, with God’s help, seek out the poor, the weak, the desperate, the forgotten, partnering with them, offering our lives. And strengthened by God’s presence, may we work to find just and humane solutions to human need. Amen

HYMN TiS 665 Jesus Christ is waiting

OFFERING and DEDICATION

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

Journeying Jesus,

In your travels, you met people in need.

We pray for those in the world who are in need of healing this week

We pray for the people we have met this week in our daily journeys.

We pray for the people we wish to remember in our missional journey here.

We pray for the people in our church and ministry life.

We pray for those in our family and friends who need healing in their midst.

Journeying Jesus, as we travel each day,

let us hold your wisdom and healing within our hearts

to share with all whom we meet.

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 608 Where cross the crowded ways of life

COMMISSIONING AND BENEDICTION

The peace of God which is beyond all our human understanding, be upon you,

The peace of Christ which breaks down barriers, be within you, and

The peace of the Holy Spirit which creates true fellowship, be among you.

Amen

HYMN TiS 782 Go now in peace