



The Uniting Church in Australia

SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH

Order of Service for
Sunday 8th August 2021

Introit: 59 (TiS) 'All people that on earth do dwell.'

Welcome & Acknowledgement:

May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also, with you.

I pay my respect to the traditional custodians of the land in which I live, work and worship. To the elders and members of the Yorta Yorta Nations past, present and emerging. I pledge myself to continue to work toward reconciliation between the first people of this land and those who have called it their home.

Call to Worship:

There is a bread which is offered to all, if we will but receive it.

There is a love which is too great for words, flowing towards us from the life of Christ.

There is a hope which is made real in each moment with our God.

Christ is the bread of life, offered and shared and received in faith.

Hymn: 133 (TiS) 'O worship the King, all glorious above'.

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

Our hearts warm with love for you, Jesus Christ, as the one who leads us towards the true God. We praise your courage in choosing to live with us and to enter all that we experience. We are grateful for every way in which you feed us: in the grace which surrounds us, in gifts of true friends, and for the universe around us which delights us with food and flowers, with birdsong and sunlight.

Thanks be to you, O God.

O God, if we come before you in confession, we do so because, within the bread of your life, lies all that we need for forgiveness and renewal. Your life in us does not hold us in guilt but sets us free to leave behind the things of death.

We now come before you with all our frailty and failing and we wait to know who we are:

(Silent reflection)

O God, it is often hard for us to believe in your love. We sometimes labour on, trying to earn our salvation, or trying to blot out our realities in the hope that you won't notice them.

(Silent reflection)

Forgive us, O God.

Become the bread of life for us now, we pray.



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Then, if we ask for our own forgiveness but refuse to forgive others, confront us with our lack of love, O God, and recreate your holy life in us, day by day and moment by moment.
Forgive us, O God.

Become the bread of life for us now, we pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness:

The grace of God is like manna from heaven. It falls on us gently, whoever we are, and restores us to life to embrace every new day.

We are forgiven!

Thanks be to God.

Doxology: 768 (TiS) 'Praise God, from whom all blessings flow'.

The young church: 'Medicine'

Readings: 2 Samuel 18: 5-9, 15, 31-33; John 6: 35, 41-51.

Hymn: 117 (TiS) 'The Lord Jehovah reigns.'

Sermon:

Those of you who have been following the lectionary readings will notice that this is the sixth Sunday in a row in which the Old Testament reading comes from the Book of 2 Samuel, and the third Sunday in a row in which the New Testament reading comes from the gospel according to John chapter 6. Today, the lectionary reading from 2 Samuel ends but the gospel of John chapter 6 will continue for another couple of Sundays.

The whole focus of the 2 Samuel readings for the last sixth Sunday including today, is the growth and development of David as king of Israel and Judah, his success and his victories, his failures and repentance, and his restoration. Whilst our gospel readings from the gospel of John chapter 6 focuses on Jesus feeding the hungry, and his bold claim to be the bread of life. The last Sunday's gospel reading concluded in verse 35, but this week, verse 25 is again included in our reading.

That makes it easier to contrast the kingship of David and that of Jesus Christ.

David the shepherd boy and the youngest of Jesses sons, anointed by God, loved by God but we know from following the lectionary, it did not end well with David. The boy who in the power of God killed the Philistine giant Goliath with a sling shot, severed his head and carried it to Jerusalem with him is in trouble with the God whom he was supposed to serve. The king who had won battles against the Ammonites, the Jebusites, the Philistines and the uncircumcised has now despised God.

In 2 Samuel chapter 11, we learn that springtime comes around, the 'time when kings go out to do battle', David stayed home. He remained in Jerusalem. Maybe he thought, not this time, let someone else fight for me and for Israel. That was one big mistake! Because one afternoon, did



a little walk about on the roof his palace, that he saw a woman bathing. That was the beginning of that slippery slope for David.

That woman he saw was the wife of Uriah the Hittite but David the king sent messengers to get her. He lay with her and she conceived and sent a message to David with these three fateful words "I am pregnant".

The king's royal brain shifts into top gear. He sent for Uriah the Hittite who was fighting for him in the battlefield. He sent him to his wife Bathsheba but Uriah refused "The ark and Israel and Judah remain in booths; and my lord Joab and the servants of my lord are camping in the open field; shall I then go to my house to eat and drink, and to be with my wife? As you live, and as your soul lives, I will not do such a thing."

Well, that didn't work. The king then invited Uriah to his table, got him drunk but Uriah did not go home to his wife. That didn't work either so David sent a letter to Joab in which he wrote, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hardest fighting, and then draw back from him so that he may be struck down and die."

This made God very angry – refusing to engage the enemy with his army and staying home in his palace, then the look that led to the murder of an innocent and faithful servant. David has displeased God. God then sent his servant Nathan to confront David about his sin: "You have struck down Uriah with the sword, and have his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites". Then the punishment: "Therefore the sword shall never depart from your house,...I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbour..."

The good news for David was that he repents of what he had done, and Nathan told him: "Now the Lord has put away your sin..."

2 Samuel chapter 12 up to today's reading (2 Samuel 18: 5-9, 15, 31-33) records what happened to David and his household after the drama in chapter 11. Absalom has killed his brother Amnon, David's eldest son. Absalom had taken 10 of David's wives as a sign to Israel and Judah that he is now taking over... Today, Absalom is killed by Joab and his servants in battle, and we read how the king lament the death of his son: "O my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom! Would I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son, my son!"

As mentioned before, we can see the contrast between the kingship of David and that of Jesus the Christ. David was anointed as king but did not go to battle or engage the enemies of Israel and Judah. Instead, he stayed in his palace. Jesus Christ was anointed by the Holy Spirit and willingly goes to battle for his people. David stayed in his palace, but Jesus Christ left his realm to come as one of us that we may become sons and daughters of God.

David saw from his tower of power the only lamb that belongs to the neighbour as his to use, abuse and victimise which affirms his own power and authority. Jesus came to be the lamb that was slain, offering himself as the heavenly bread, the bread of life!



We live in a society where people strive to create their own tower of power. A place where they can enjoy the privilege of not having to engage the enemy in the world. And, when they get there whether its social, political or even religious power and authority, they are easily seduced by what they see in the neighbour. Jesus Christ comes to us as a servant with a message to love your neighbour and he showed what that means by ultimately and decisively giving himself up on the cross.

Now, he is reminding us – as in chapter 6: 35: “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty”.

You and me, the church, members of Christ’s risen and crucified body are called to be the bread of life to a hungry and thirsty world. A world where the powerless, the abused and the victimised are hungry for freedom and integrity. A world where the lonely, the slaves, and the strangers are hungry for recognition, friendship and acceptance.

With Christ engaging in our battle, and in the power of the risen Christ we can celebrate new life, eternal life. We can overcome the seduction of power and fill our hearts with compassion for the welfare of our neighbour. Amen.

Hymn: 239 (TiS) ‘Jesus the Lord said, ‘I am the bread.’

Notices:

Joys & Concerns:

Offering:

Come, let us bring all that we have and all that we are to our God.

Let us bring it in kindness for those who have little. Let us bring it in gratitude for all that we receive,

Receive our offering, O God. Add to it the bread of life in Jesus Christ that all may eat and be filled, we pray.

Amen.

Prayers of the People:

O God, we know only too well that there are millions of people around the world who find it hard to believe in the Christ as the bread of life because we, their neighbours, refuse to share our bread with them. As we thank you for the bread of life which we receive from you, we pray that we will be given a new spirit and new wisdom in responding to their need.

(Silent reflection)

We think of those who hunger for love:

and we pray that we will gather in the marginalized and rejected.

We remember those who long for health and freedom from pain:

and we pray that we will share all that we know and have to renew them.



We think of those who wait for a home:

and we pray that we will be those who find them shelter and a welcome.

We remember those who live in fear of violence and war:

and we pray that we will be channels of your peace.

We think of the ones who carry the burdens of work and exploitation:

and we pray that we will be part of their justice.

We remember those who are hidden in the grieving and suffering:

and we pray that we will be those who seek them out.

Be the bread of life for us, Jesus Christ, that we may add love to the life of the world.

Amen.

Hymn: 145 (TiS) 'The king of love my shepherd is.'

Blessing:

Go forth with the gift of life in you, filled with compassion for the world as the Christ has given us.

And may the horizons of hope shine with new possibilities in the Spirit, the depths of life be revealed as the dwelling place of God, and our every step be walked in the way of Christ.

Amen.

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

