



Order of Service
17th October 2021

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP *(based on Psalm 104:33-35)*

Come and worship the God of all creation
***I will sing to the LORD all my life
and celebrate my God with music as long as I live.***
Come and worship the God who gave you breath
***May my meditation please the LORD,
as I have delighted in the LORD God.***
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Hallelujah!

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."*

HYMN TiS 187 Let all creation dance

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION *(based on Psalm 104:1-9)*

Great and gracious Lord God
arrayed in glory and majesty,
we praise you and bless you.
Creating God,
you stretched out the heavens like a tent
and set your dwelling place over the water
You are carried on the clouds, and on the wings of the wind;
the winds are your messengers, and flaming fire your servants.
You set the earth on its foundations,
never to be moved.
The deep waters covered even the mountains,
but at your voice they fled,
coming to rest where you had appointed,
***beyond the boundary you set,
never to cover the earth again.***
Bless the LORD, O my soul.
O LORD, my God, you are very great.
Your works are many and varied



and in wisdom you have made everything.

Loving God,
in our human condition you know who we are, and what we are;
**you know our awkwardness with ourselves, with each other,
and with you.**

(a time of silence)

Help our unbelief;
**give us the boldness, by the presence of your Spirit,
to believe in your possibilities for us,
in Jesus' name. Amen.**

OLD TESTAMENT READING: JOB 38:1-7

The LORD Answers Job

38 Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind:

² "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?"

³ Gird up your loins like a man,
I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

⁴ "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?
Tell me, if you have understanding.

⁵ Who determined its measurements - surely you know!
Or who stretched the line upon it?

⁶ On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone

⁷ when the morning stars sang together
and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?"

AN EARLY WORD

HYMN TiS 650 Brother, sister, let me serve you

BIBLE READING: Mark 10:35-45

The Request of James and John

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." ³⁶ And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?" ³⁷ And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" ³⁹ They replied, "We are able." Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴² So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³ But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."



REFLECTION

Jesus and his disciples have been travelling one last time to Jerusalem from Galilee, and along the way Jesus has been teaching them. Some of the people following him think that surely this will be the time when he restores the Kingdom of David, and leads Israel in a military rebellion against Rome. Others are hoping he will help to reform a corrupt Temple and restore worship of the One True God to its rightful place in Jewish life. But Jesus isn't about rebellion, or religious reform. Jesus has a completely different plan in mind.

Three times, Jesus has announced that he will go to Jerusalem to be tortured and killed. But on the third day, he says, he will be raised from death. Each time Jesus has predicted his own death, the disciples show that they just don't understand.

The first time he made this announcement was just after Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah. When Peter later rebukes Jesus, he responds by telling the disciples that they must lose their lives in order to save them. That just doesn't make sense!

The second prediction of torture, death, and resurrection follows the Transfiguration. The disciples are afraid to ask Jesus to explain what he is talking about, and Jesus further confounds them when he says, "whoever wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all." Then they proceed towards Jerusalem. A rich young man walks away sorrowful, because Jesus has asked him to sell everything so he can follow Jesus.

Once more, Jesus tells his disciples that he must be betrayed, turned over to the Gentiles by the Jewish authorities, and killed. And after three days he will rise again. Mark tells us that the disciples are "amazed" and those who follow are "afraid." They still do not understand that Jesus isn't about rebellion or reform, but resurrection.

It's ironic then that James and John ask for places of honour immediately after Jesus has just told them how he will suffer humiliation and be killed. Ever since Peter's confession of faith, Jesus has tried to show his followers how the word "Messiah" might not mean what they think it means.

It seems that as Jesus words become more clear and direct, the less able the disciples are to understand him. Certainly James and John, in their eagerness to claim places of honour, ignore all his words about suffering, torture, and death. Their dialogue with Jesus is extraordinary. "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." Jesus replies: "What is it you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking.

James and John are certainly willing to follow Jesus into glory. Even when Jesus asks them if they can drink from the same cup as he, and be baptized with the same baptism, they assure him that they can, to which Jesus replies that while suffering may await them in the future, it is not in his power to grant their desire to sit at his right and left.

Of course when the other disciples hear of this conversation, they are rather miffed, probably because they hadn't thought first of the idea of elevating themselves. They've worked just as hard, walked just as many miles, listened to just as many sermons, and given up everything to follow Jesus. Why should James and John get the good seats, and not them?



It's at that point that we receive the profound definition of true leadership: "Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Jesus is saying that authentic leadership is revealed in servanthood. He highlights how his rule is the opposite of earthly rule. The calling of the followers of Jesus is to be a ministry of love and service.

Mother Teresa of Calcutta, who gave her life to the destitute and derelict of India, was once asked "How do you measure your success?" The saintly aged woman looked puzzled for a while and then responded. "I don't remember that the Lord ever spoke of success. He spoke only of faithfulness in loving and serving others. The Lord has called me to that faithfulness. This is the only success that really counts."

We know deep inside that she is right, but such ministry is not easy. That's why we need readings such as this one from Mark to remind us of what true leadership is in God's eyes.

It is putting the needs of others before any of one's own needs.

Think what a difference would be made to community attitudes if the first question in everyone's minds, in whatever situation, was 'How can I best serve your needs?' Maybe we would see some trust being injected into relationships at every level. At every level of social, political, industrial, family, intergenerational, religious life - we need to place that question squarely before God 'How can I best serve your needs, Lord?'

A New Testament scholar Donald Juel wrote: "In the shadow of the cross we get a brief glimpse of a new community in which relations are not governed by power and status but by service and hospitality for those without status – *a community in which those who have been ransomed live for others.*"

"The truth is there is a cross in all of our paths almost all of the time, and if it's not in our path at the moment, it's in someone else's path we can help share. There are hard promises we must keep, difficult roads we must traverse, and painful decisions we must make against our self-interest, all in the interest of loving God and loving others."

Jesus calls us to live dramatically different lives that put the needs of *all* others ahead of our own. In these difficult days of Covid-19 that may mean putting fear aside and being vaccinated for the well-being of others as well as ourselves.

When asked if they could drink from Jesus' cup and be baptized with his baptism, James and John answered, "We can." But what Jesus is waiting to hear from us is this: "Yes, Lord. *We will.*"

Prayer - The God Who Serves

Though you are God,
with all the influence and status that the name implies,
you refused to pull rank,
and parade your power among us.

Instead, you chose to step down into our experience,
living among us, as one of us,
with all the struggle and suffering
that goes with being human.

More than that, you adopted the role of slave,
washing feet, serving people of no reputation or social standing,
and giving of yourself completely.

As incredible as it sounds,
you are the God who serves,
and we can respond in no other way
than to give ourselves to you in praise. Amen

HYMN TiS 256 From heaven you came, helpless babe

ANNOUNCEMENTS

DEDICATION OF OFFERING

God, through whose creative generosity
we have these gifts to share;
accept and use the offerings of our hearts and our hands
in the service of others,
to the glory and honour of your name. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Compassionate God,
who walks beside us every moment of every day,,
let the light of your Word, and the warmth of your Spirit
comfort and encourage the oppressed and grieving,
strengthen the weak and the lonely,
and delight those for whom life has begun anew
that they may know your peace.

O God,
There are so many people of influence in our world -
Those with loud voices and deep pockets,
those with large lives and wide networks.
But, where are the leaders?

As we struggle to keep our broken humanity
from splintering into countless irreparable fragments;
As we wrestle with our greed and arrogance,
our ignorance and short-sightedness,
our violence and coldness,
our carelessness and narcissism,
Where are the leaders?

Raise up for us, O God, leaders worthy of the name,
men and women who like Christ
are unafraid of challenge,
unashamed of serving,



and unattached to their own personal gain;
men and women who like Christ
call to the best within us,
and then lead the way.

And, in our own small spheres, God,
may we be the leaders we seek.

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 forever. Amen.

HYMN TiS 665 Jesus Christ is waiting

BLESSING

Go into this week
blessed by the greatness and glory of God
filled with the humility and love of Jesus Christ
led by the guidance and power of the Holy Spirit

**We go in peace to love and serve the Lord
in the name of Christ. Amen.**

