



The Uniting Church in Australia  
**SHEPPARTON UNITING CHURCH**

**Order of Service for**  
**Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2021**

**Introit:** 121 (TiS) 'God himself is present'.

**Welcome/Introduction:**

**Acknowledgement:**

**Call to Worship:**

Come before God and see the grand hopes which are before us. Come into the presence of Christ and hear the Good news for the world. Come and walk with the Holy Spirit and tread the pathway to wisdom and grace.

**Let us now be the people of our God, in spirit and in truth.**

Let us worship God.

**Hymn:** 90 (TiS) 'I'll praise my maker while I've breath'.

**Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:**

We thank you O God, that, even in the face of our humanness, you do not lower your standards for us. We thank you that you always hold before us a life which has endless possibilities for good, leading us on towards a shining pathway which is always lit by your grace. As we fall into the depths of our failures, you lift up our hearts and call us on. As we drown in rivers of doubt or fear, you take our hands and save us again in love.

**Thanks be to you our God.**

O God forgive us if we fail to hold your commandments and your grace together for ourselves or for others.

Forgive us if we turn away from your call, in case we find ourselves betraying our own hopes and yours.

Pardon us if we settle for lesser goals, rather than testing your grace.

If we have begun our life journey with you and then fled from your face because we cannot imagine that you will understand what has happened in our lives.

If we refuse to forgive others when we have so often received the gifts of forgiveness from you, applying our rules harshly or pretending that we are other than human ourselves:

**Forgive us and remind us of your mercy, O God.**

**Come to us again with your love. Amen.**

**Declaration of Forgiveness:**

The vision of God's hope for the world are before us and that great dream is always gathered together in grace which surpasses all knowledge. Lay down your guilt and your fear.

We are forgiven.

**Thanks be to God.**

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

**Readings:** Job 1:1, 2: 1-10;  
Hebrews 1:1-4, 2: 5-12;  
Mark 10: 2-16



**Hymn:** 491 (TiS) 'Father welcomes all his children'.

**Sermon:**

- Our lectionary readings for today provides us with an insight into the God that we believe in, which can be challenging at the best of times and downright confusing and difficult to understand at other times.
- If you read the whole story of Job in the Old Testament, you might find some comfort at the very end. But questions remain as to what kind of god is this. A god who is having a good old tussle with Satan and this faithful, righteous man named Job becomes the pawn in their power struggle.
- Perhaps Virginia Woolf represents many who have read the story of Job when she says: "I read the book of Job last night. I don't think God comes out of it well."
- Kathryn Schifferdecker says this about the book of Job: "Job holds on to God with fierce faith, but he does not let God off the hook for the inexplicable suffering that so often shadows this world. And in the end, God shows up, responding to Job's lament with a vision radical in its beauty."
- This week's reading from the first two chapters of Job tells us about how Job suffers greatly in losing his children, his possessions and his friends.
- But we do know from reading the whole story that due to the steadfastness of his faith, he was rewarded with double of everything he had lost and given ten more children, three girls and seven sons. Job lived for a hundred and forty years.
- We learn from our reading from the epistle to the Hebrews of the contrast between how God in Christ surpasses all that God spoke and worked prior to God's revelation in Christ.
- The contrast between the old covenant and the new, between the Law, the prophets and Christ is not a contrast between good and bad but rather to reveal the superiority of Christ as the Son of God. He is the beginning and the end, as the book of Revelation puts it, the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 22:13).
- The Law and the prophets cannot claim to be heirs of all things, that is a title only Christ can claim for Himself.
- From our gospel reading, we hear of the Pharisees trying to trap Jesus by asking that sensitive question about divorce especially for us moderns in which Jesus showed the Pharisees that they have misunderstood the law of Moses, and that they have misused scripture and traditions to justify their weaknesses and their errors.
- Jesus redirects the conversation from the legal requirement of the law to God's design in creation (Genesis 1-2). His brief argument describes as a unifying bond between two people – that is why he speaks about divorce the way he does.
- If marriage is what Jesus says it is, we may understand better why failed marriages bring much pain to couples and their extended families. He is pointing to the hurt and brokenness that comes, even when a divorce appears to be the best option.
- "This passage requires our attention to the differences between our cultural context and that of Jesus, and Jesus' rationale behind the prohibitions. As the church has painfully learned over recent generations, to impose these words uncritically as inviolable commands can result in the church denying protection and grace to those who need it." (Scott Shauf)
- The last three verses from the gospels perhaps sums up the whole passage. The disciples scolded those who brought their children to Jesus so that he can put his hand on them.
- Jesus was angry. "Let the children come to me, and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you that whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will never enter it." (14-15)
- The Kingdom of God can only be received. It is not given on merits but that we need it. It is available to those who are least, dependent, and powerless. It is offered to those who cannot pray, the outcast, and the downtrodden. It is available, it is eternal.

**Hymn:** 654 (TiS) 'When love is found'.

**Notices/Concerns:**

**Offering:**

O God, as we bring our offerings to you; give to us a refreshed understanding of what true human community could be like. Give to us a new image of resources shared, the vulnerable gathered in and kindness restored, we pray.

**Amen.**

### **Prayers of the People:**

O God, we raise our eyes to heights of your great mountains and see a different heaven and a different earth with the soaring splendour of justice and freedom for all people rising in delight as we long to be part of that dream

**Hear our prayers, O God.**

We look across the surging wonder of your seas and see horizons of love which stretch beyond our sight and cleansing tides which wash away past violence inviting fresh beginnings for our relationships with each other.

We pray for peace.

**Hear our prayers, O God.**

We descend into your green valleys of deeper understandings, with recognitions of the ambiguities and complexities among which so many people live, often born of cycling vulnerabilities and painful pasts.

We pray for wisdom and loving kindness.

**Hear our prayers, O God.**

May every part of your creation speak to us, O God, as we walk this earth with thankfulness. May every sunrise be truly a new day for us and every sunset be the beginning of rest, that we may be refreshed in the life which we live with you and for you.

**Hear our prayers, O God.**

**We come in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.**

**Hymn:** 103 (TiS) 'A mighty fortress is our God'.

### **Blessing:**

Go in peace. Go in strength to be the people of God.

And may strangers become friends, and God be found in unexpected places. May life rise to greet us with hope and the Spirit hold us fast in love. **Amen.**

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

