



Order of Service
30th January 2022

THE GATHERING OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD

INTROIT TIS 204 vv 1, 3 Come, let us join our cheerful songs

WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP

Let us sing
praise be to God!
who dared to take on human flesh and live among us
praise be to God!
who did not turn back in the face of evil and death
praise be to God!
who continues to dance through our lives even now.
Praise be to God!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We give thanks for the Bangerang Clan
and the Yorta Yorta Nation
who nurtured this land and the waters,
for their stories of the Dreaming,
for their connection with the sacred,
for their 'yes' to creation.
We commit ourselves to work for reconciliation. John van de Laar, adapted

HYMN TIS 188 Where wide skies roll down

PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Creator God,
you who spoke this world in motion,
breathed life into each creature,
painted landscapes
in colourful hues,
you are our God!
you reign: let the earth be glad!

Paul reminds us that
Love is patient and kind:
Lord, it is hard to be patient when there is so much
we need and want to do.
When people slow us down, it is easy to forget to be kind.

Love is not jealous or conceited or proud:
But we are, God.
We think we are better than some people we see.
We feel jealous of what others can do.



Love does not keep a record of wrongs:
But we remember even when we have tried to forgive.

Love is not happy with evil.
But it is hard not to be pleased when others get what they
had coming to them.

Love never gives up, and its faith, hope and love never fail:
But we give up on others, on ourselves and on making a
difference.

Forgive us for not loving as you call us to love,
for not hoping and having faith as you require.
We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Suggested by Carolyn C. Brown

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Hear the good news!
God is patient and kind,
God does not keep a tally of our wrongs,
God never gives up on us
because God's love is for ever!
Thanks be to God!

DOXOLOGY

TiS 772

Worship, honour, glory, blessing
Lord we offer to your name;
young and old, their praise expressing,
join your goodness to proclaim.
As the saints in heaven adore you,
we would bow before your throne;
as your angels serve before you,
so on earth your will be done.

RECEIVING GOD'S WORD

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet
A light to our path

AN EARLY WORD Jeremiah 1. 4-10

It's easy to understand Jeremiah's reluctance to accept God's call to him to be a prophet, even though God prefaces that call by telling Jeremiah that God had known him before he was born, consecrating him then as a prophet. How could he carry the weight of God's word and deliver it to those who had no wish to hear it? How could he call people to change their ways – when these people were his elders, or those he had grown up with? How could he name what troubled them, and help them find a way through? So Jeremiah pleads his youth, his inexperience, his lack of readiness. God tosses all these concerns aside.

When the Jewish artist Marc Chagall depicts this scene in a painting, he shows an angel's hand putting words in Jeremiah's mouth – probably because Jews are not to depict God in an image. Michaelangelo shows a much older Jeremiah, his hand firmly across his mouth!



We might pause to consider whether we are the young Jeremiah provided with words by God, or the older man, rejecting those words...

Psalm Response Psalm 71. 1-6

Men In you, O Lord, I take refuge;
 let me never be put to shame.
 In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
 incline your ear to me and save me.
 Be to me a rock of refuge,
 a strong fortress, to save me,
 for you are my rock and my fortress.

Women Rescue me, O God, from the hand of the wicked,
 from the grasp of the unjust and cruel.
 For you, O Lord, are my hope,
 my trust, O Lord, from my youth.
 Upon you I have leaned from my birth;
 it was you who took me from my mother's womb.
 My praise is continually of you.

The Letter 1 Corinthians 13.1-13

The Gospel Luke 4. 21-30

Lord, may your Word live in us
and bear much fruit to your glory.

REFLECTION

Home Town Visit Turns Violent

Synagogue Visit then Assassination Attempt

Could either of these have been headlines in the Galilee News after Jesus' visit home? Luke is clear that the visit ends in such an attempt:

'When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff.'
Luke 4.29

How has Jesus' first visit to his home synagogue ended like this?

Because we must be clear that today's Gospel reading is part 2 of what we began last Sunday. You'll recall how deftly Glenys pictured the scene: the home town boy is invited to read the Prophet for the day; he takes down the scroll, removes its cover, and reads from Isaiah – 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...' before adding some comments, as was the expectation.

You'll recall how the villagers at synagogue worship that Sabbath seem to approve of what they hear: 'All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.'



All is going well – as they hear the familiar words each one knows so well:

‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release of captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.’

Even this reference to the Year of Jubilee’s being fulfilled now passes without comment:

‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’

Jesus affirms Isaiah’s words, claiming the prophecy for himself. He is indeed filled with the Spirit, as we saw three weeks ago at his baptism.

Part one of Jesus’ first public speaking event at his local synagogue ends calmly.

Perhaps there’s even a buzz of excitement: how can this local boy have become such an accomplished speaker? They’ve heard tales of what he’s been doing round about – a wedding at Cana - water turned to wine. Stories of healing. Certainly the district is full of the Carpenter’s son.

Having heard the grapevine news, the crowd is longing to welcome home this preacher, this miracle-worker. Whatever he’s said, whatever he’s done, he’ll do infinitely more for us – we’re his friends, his neighbours – his favourites? It’s this very excitement which turns sour so quickly.

Here they put a finger on the crux of the matter: Jesus has not stayed home, but has left the village. The village cannot hold, cannot define him. He is now defined by those very words from Isaiah. Jesus senses that the villagers want him to do a sign – a miracle – for them. ‘No prophet is accepted in his home town’, Jesus replies.

And then Jesus seems to give his hearers an unprovoked lecture. They want to get close to this one of their own – but he pushes them away. He challenges their comfortable position as God’s Chosen Ones, pointing out that they are no different from previous generations who mistreated the prophets. In the time of the mighty prophet Elijah, during a drought which lasted three and a half years, Elijah wasn’t sent to one of the many widows in Israel, but to one at Zarephath in Sidon. In enemy country? Yet this poor widow was granted oil and grain which didn’t run out until the drought ended – enabling her, her son and Elijah, to survive. Although there were numerous lepers in Israel, it was the Syrian General, Namaan, whom Elisha healed.

In other words, God is not just yours – but you are God’s! God is always working with those on the margins, always on the move, doing new things with new people..

So Jesus himself seems to cause the problem with his hearers in the synagogue, attacking their sincerity. Is it any wonder they try to get rid of Jesus so they don’t have to hear any more from him?

‘But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.’

This story of Jesus’ first meeting with the locals in his home synagogue raises further questions for us.

- Has there perhaps been some earlier tension with Joseph’s Son?
- Has Luke left out part of the story?

After all, Jesus has spent those long years working with his father, listening to the villagers as they chat away, spilling stories of their problems, sharing their complaints, doubts, despair...

It is clear to us, with our hindsight, that Jesus needs to challenge their tightly-centred views – and that they need to change!



What questions would Jesus ask to challenge us today?

Who is the Good News for?

Just those who already part of our church community? Perhaps our friends in other denominations?

Or some we mightn't have considered?

- the homeless - 116, 000 in Australia
- our Aboriginal neighbours?
- the Muslims in our community?
- refugees who came by boat
- people who've been in gaol?

The Jews Chase Christ out of the City 1190-1200. The Hague, National Library of the Netherlands

Lynn Miller, artandfaithmattersblogspot, commenting on this painting, notes that the scroll of Isaiah has now become a book. She ponders whether, in rejecting the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us, the villagers also rejected being told that Isaiah's prophecy had been fulfilled in their hearing.

Lynn Miller considers that the people don't realise that they are pushing away the Word of God – and that this book, leaving with Jesus (not like the scroll, left in the synagogue's scroll cupboard) shows that his power is leaving with him.

Where do we stand? You see, we are today's version of the Nazareth villagers.

Are we in danger of domesticating Jesus, making him our own?

Are we likely to miss Jesus in faces we don't recognise? Faces on the margins... beyond our comfort zones?

Jesus, the Great Unsettler!

OUR RESPONSES

HYMN The church of Christ in every age Tune TIS 124

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

Generous God,
we bring our offerings, small or large,
in the hope and confidence
that all we do, all we offer, all we say
will take root in this world
and be the source
of new expressions of God's justice,
of God's character, of God's mission, of God's reign.
May your will be done on earth through us,
alongside us, in spite of us. Amen

NOTICES

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

World Council of Churches Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Western Sahara, Tunisia

The Presbytery The Scots' School, Albury; Chaplain, Samantha Menzies



