



Order of Service
13th March 2022
Lent 2

Introit: 574 (TiS) 'Captain of Israel's host and Guide'

Acknowledgement:

I pay my respect to the traditional custodians of the land in which we live, work and worship. Members and elders of the Bangarang people of the Yorta Yorta nation past, present, and emerging.

Call to Worship:

The Lord is our light and our salvation:

Of whom shall we be afraid?

The Lord is the stronghold of our life:

We will wait for the Lord in faithfulness.

Let us seek the Lord's face in this time of worship:

We will honour God's presence in prayers and songs.

Hymn: 124 (TiS) 'Great God, we sing that mighty hand'

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Confession:

God ever creating, ever leading. When things around us feel chaotic, you are peace.

When so much we hear is not reliable, your word is truth.

When we are paralysed by fear and anxiety, your presence is freedom.

When we feel bereft and helpless, your love gives us hope.

God, you the source of all that matters, we bring you our prayers and our praise.

You reveal yourself to us in the goodness of creation, in the love and mercy of Christ, your beloved, and through the energy and wisdom of the Holy Spirit.

We worship you, O God, ever three and ever One, world without end. **Amen.**

God of compassion, we are creatures who seek our own comfort.

We confess that we prefer our own plans to your purposes.

We shrink from costly discipleship and put our own interests first.

Forgive our fleeting commitment, and the times we have indulge our own complaints.

Have mercy on us.

Inspire us with the courage to do your will and serve our neighbours in the example of Christ, your Son and our Lord. Amen.

Declaration of Forgiveness:

Friends in Christ be at peace with God, with yourself, and with one another, for we are forgiven!



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

Time with the children:

Readings: Genesis 15: 1-12, 17-18; Luke 13: 31-35

Hymn: 447 (TiS) 'Lord, your almighty word'

Sermon brief:

- Last Sunday, the first Sunday in Advent we heard of how Jesus was tempted in the wilderness about his relationship with the Father, and his relationship to the world.
- We also heard that he was tempted whether he trust the Father, his faithfulness to him, and his identity as the Son whom the Father is well pleased.
- That relationship between God and the Son and the relationship between God and humanity is again highlighted for us this week, the second Sunday in Lent, in both the Old Testament and the Gospel reading.
- That relationship is made very real for us in that haunting story about Abram and God. (Genesis 15)
- Abraham was still Abram and it was not until two chapters later in Genesis that God changes his name to Abraham, meaning 'father of a multitude'.
- In our story this morning, Abram was still plain old Abram, an elderly Jew without an heir who believes God's promise of a son and land.
- Now Abram wants proof and what he gets is a covenant with God that took place in the middle of the night among a whole number of slaughtered animals.
- For us, the details are quite bizarre but that was the accepted way of sealing a covenant in Abram's days.
- It involves taking a number of animals being cut in half, clear a path between the two halves, and requires each partner to the covenant to walk between them as a sort of self-curse.
- While passing through the two halves of the animals, each partner says, "May the same thing happen to me if I do not keep my word."
- These days, we approach our altars differently. Some, serenely and serious, some in awe and wonder, and some casually talking about the week's events or the game of the week.
- We approach an altar stained only with candle wax and fruit juice spilled over during the last holy communion.
- For Abram, it was different. He had to wade through blood to get to his, waving his arms to get rid of the flies, and driving away vultures who may have taken an eye.
- Exhausted from his experience of rounding up and butchering all those animals and having to walk between the halves that had been cut, he slept.
- During his sleep he saw a pot of fire, a flaming torch, pass through the halves of the cut-up animals.
- It was the Lord, keeping his end of the bargain and repeating the promise of descendants and land for Abram and his people to live in.
- God had chosen God's people and it is filled with real things. Blood and guts, faith and doubt, fear and promise.
- This is a real relationship!
- Fast forward two thousand years, and we get to Luke's story for this morning. The chosen people has almost become the frozen people, listening to the sounds of a feast from which they have been excluded.



- Standing and knocking at the narrow door but the voice from inside denies any relationship with us. "I do not know where you come from, I do not know you at all."
- And the worst judgement is not that we are to be roasted in the eternal fire, but that we are being separated for all time from the place where we most want to be and the people, we most want to be with.
- All this, because we would not, in our day and age be with the people that God sent us.
- God's messengers who told us things about ourselves we did not want to hear.
- They told us that our world is sick unto death, but we thought we were fine. We thought we were rich, they told us we were poor in the things that really mattered. We thought we could take care of ourselves; they told us we were in desperate need of a saviour.
- "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!
- See, your house is left to you, desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!' (Mathew 23: 37-39)
- Could it be that this is Jesus who is cracking the narrow door for us? "You will not see me until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"
- He is letting us know that nothing – not our rejection of him, not our failure to follow him, not even our hanging him on a cross – can separate us from his everlasting love.
- As heirs of Abraham, we are wedded to God. We are in a relationship with him. We did not choose him, he chose us. This all-knowing God knew all too well what we are capable of. That God knew our weaknesses and still chose us as a partner in a covenant that changes all of history.
- It is not guilt that we are invited to feel today, but love. Love has consequences and it is a love that never ends. A love that depends less on our behaviour than on our understanding who we are and whose we are.
- The hen does not want to gather us under her sheltering wings because we are good, but because we are hers.

Hymn: 599 (TiS) 'Take my life, and let it be'

Notices:

Joys and Concerns:

Offering:

Living God, we offer our gifts today in hopeful gratitude. Bless these gifts and use them to increase the goodness enjoyed by those in need.

Bless our lives that, through our relationships, others will be touched by the hope we know in Christ Jesus and find their lives blessed by his love and mercy. **Amen.**

Prayers of the People:

God of strength and comfort, in the quiet, calm, and peace of your presence, we pause in the whirlwind of concerns around us, and set aside our own distractions to pray for the world you created and loved.



Today we remember before you:

All people in their daily life and work... our families, friends and neighbours, those we work with, and those whose faces we recognise regularly but do not know.

Be with all who find these times stressful or exhausting.

We remember before you the people of this congregation, our presbytery, fellowships of other traditions near us, as well as those who serve in church leadership and all who nurture faith in others.

Help us support each other and look to the future with hope.

We pray for this community, our country, and governments throughout the world, as well as all those who work for justice, freedom and peace.

Send your Spirit, the Advocate, to speak for the voiceless and challenge injustice.

And we pray for those people and situations in our hearts and minds this day.

Hear us as we pray in the words that your Son taught us:

The Lord's Prayer:

**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: 602 (TiS) 'O Love that will not let me go'

Blessings:

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

