



Order of Service
10th July 2022

Introit: TiS 53. Come, sing praises to the Lord above v 1& 2 with chorus

CALL TO WORSHIP

1. Come, neighbours and strangers,
2. *prophets and seekers of justice,*
1. those who need a helping hand
2. *and those who have something to offer.*
1. Whether your faith is weak or strong,
2. *come, bring your questions,*

All: and let us worship God together

OPENING PRAYER

God of grace and hope,
fill us with your spirit,
that we may know your will and act on it.
Help us to do the things you ask,
and so bear fruits of justice and love in our world.
Strengthen us in faith,
to be your ministers among our neighbours.
We pray in Jesus' name
Amen

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we are gathering and worshipping today. I pay my respects to Elders past, present and emerging, and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to the lands and waters of this region.
And, noting the theme of NAIDOC week, invite us all to 'get up, stand up and show up' as we live together as first and second peoples.

WELCOME

HYMN: Arise (tune: Converse MHB 538. What a friend we have in Jesus. From Synod opening worship.
Spirit calls, 'Arise, come with me.
Oh, my dear ones, come away.
Now the wattles are all blooming.
Now the magpie greets the day'
We, emerging through the struggles
seek a 'truth and justice' way,
heed the call and walk together,
love and listen, learn and pray.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING – from the Opening Worship service of the Synod Meeting

Holy One, God of our life,
Christ of our heart,



Spirit of God.

You who know every beat of our heart, every breath we take,
every longing, every ache, every hope,
every dream for a world made new,

We give you thanks.

When we thought we could not hold our head above the waters,
when we lost our footing on constantly shifting ground,
you were there.

We give you thanks.

You have sustained us, you have held us, you have carried us.
You have been with us, before us, behind us and within us.
You have been beneath us, above us, on our right and on our left.

We give you thanks.

You have been there as we lay down to sleep
and as we dreamed,
as we worked and imagined and created,
as we held out our hands and hearts for each other, near and far
bringing us hope for what is yet to come.

We give you thanks.

And now, you gather us here,
to be a community of generosity and peace and blessing
In the world you so love.

We give you thanks.

We come because we hear your call to us:
“Now is the time. Arise, come with me”

We arise today

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

And we confess....

O God, you call us to live fair and honest lives.
We do not always do that.

Forgive us, God, when we do not measure up.

You ask us to be fair to the poor and homeless, to speak up for those who have no voice, and to defend
the rights of the powerless.

We do not always do that.

Forgive us, God, when we do not measure up.

Sometimes when we hear modern-day prophets calling us to change our ways, we treat them like the
people treated the prophets of long ago: we try to discredit them.

Forgive us, God, when we do not measure up.

You ask us to see everyone as our neighbour, and to love them as we love ourselves.
It's hard. Sometimes we don't love ourselves, and sometimes we don't love others.

Forgive us, God, when we do not measure up.



Silence

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

Hear the good news from the letter to the Colossians: we share in the promises God made to all people. God forgives us and sets us free to live new lives.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

AN EARLY WORD: 'Measuring up'

HYMN TiS 640 Kneels at the feet of his friends.

BIBLE READINGS: Amos 7:7-17 Luke 10: 25 – 37, Colossians 1:1 – 14

REFLECTION

The Good Samaritan: a very familiar story so how much do we even listen as it is read to us? Do we just switch off and think about something else?

What surprises us when we read it again?

Is there an idea or an image that you have not noticed before?

What jumped out at you for the first time?

This reading comes immediately after last week's reading of Jesus sending out the 70, and his rejoicing in the Holy Spirit after their return. So there must have been quite a crowd gathered around Jesus though he had been speaking to the disciples privately, when a lawyer stood up with a question to test Jesus – 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' Jesus knew that the lawyer would already know the answer, so in the manner of all good teachers, answered with another question – 'What is written in the law?' and complimented the questioner when he answered correctly

You shall love the lord your god with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your strength, and with all your mind; (in other words, with all your being) and your neighbour as yourself.

But the Lawyer was not to be silenced so easily and asked a second question

"and who is my neighbour?"

At this point Jesus told one of his most familiar parables – The Good Samaritan. We are so familiar with this story that it is possible that we do not understand the shockwave that would have rippled through the crowd as Jesus told this story for the first time.

For most of us, here in the flat terrain of the Goulburn Valley and in this day of modern transport, the idea of someone travelling between two localities is not a dangerous exercise, but for Jesus' listeners the idea of a lone individual travelling between Jerusalem and Jericho would have been quite a shock, and to help us understand why, let's look at some photos of the terrain travellers would have to pass through on such a journey.

The distance between Jerusalem and Jericho then was almost 29 km. The traveller would be going from the semi-dry area around Jerusalem, 754 m above sea level, through arid, rocky desert country, on a steep, narrow 'roadway' down to Jericho, 258 m below sea level so a steep descent. The area was well known for being frequented by bandits who would attack and rob travellers then flee into the surrounding desert area, or hide in the many caves in the rocks, quite safe from being followed. There was no water or shelter available along the way so the victim stood a good chance of dying. While the road was quite busy,



no sensible person would ever travel alone. So shock number 1 for Jesus' listeners - a story about someone who would not behave in the way they would expect.

Shock number 2 would have been that neither the Priest or the Levite stopped to help the traveller. The priest was an important man. The priesthood was hereditary; you could not volunteer for it and a person only belonged if they were born into it. It was a closed, high-ranking office. Priests had an obligation to obey laws which made them ritually clean, suitable for service in the Temple, and if the Priest had touched the traveller, dirty and bloody, then he would have been ritually unclean. The trouble is, that this priest was travelling away from Jerusalem where the Temple was, not towards it. His Temple duties were already completed. He could have helped, but did not.

A Levite was a Temple official from the priestly tribe of Levi. He was one step down in status from the priest. He had studied the Law of Moses in the Torah (the first five books of the Old Testament), and his task in life was to interpret this Law. He was a respected and responsible member of society. But he too failed to stop and help.

Together, these two men, 'priest' and 'Levite', stood for the great ruling religious institutions of the Jewish nation at the time of Jesus, and the people listening to the story would have expected that these two men would know how to live according to the Torah

Think back to the photos and note the narrowness of the road way. It is likely that both men would have had to actually step over the victim as there was little room to go around him. So shock number 2 for Jesus' listeners - a story about someone who would not behave in the way they would expect

Now let's think about the Samaritan. Loni reminded us a couple of weeks ago that the Jews and Samaritans hated each other and would go out of their way to avoid each so the listeners would have thought of the Samaritan as the classic villain. To the listeners, the words good and Samaritan in the same sentence would be an oxymoron. How could 'good' possibly go with Samaritan?

The people listening to the story expected the Jewish men, rather than the Samaritan, to know how to live according to the Torah, and here the people were being asked to rethink their understanding of who was a good person and who was not. Shock number 3 for Jesus' listeners - a story about someone who would not behave in the way they would expect

And finally – under normal circumstances a Jewish person would never accept help from the Samaritan, but in this case the alternative would most likely have been to die on road...The victim accepted the immediate and ongoing care of the Samaritan.

Shock number 4 for Jesus' listeners - a story about someone who would not behave in the way they would expect

Some of you may have watched the Good Karma Hospital last week, in which a man offered to donate a kidney to his best friend. The prospective donor's son finds out what his father intends and becomes extremely angry and demands that the hospital not allow the transplant to take place. Sadly, the prospective donor's own ill health meant that he could not carry out his wish to help save his friend's life. It becomes clear that the son's concern is not for his father's health but that the man who needs the kidney is Moslem and the man who wishes to donate a kidney is a Hindu. The son's explanation for his stance was that there was conflict between the Hindu and Moslem communities and the slightest thing could lead to violence. He was afraid that one or other of the men might not survive and there would be ramifications around the action of a Hindu man dying to save a Moslem man- sound familiar?

Thankfully, the son came to understand that differences in race and religion were totally unimportant and that his father was acting out of love for his friend.

The kind of love that the reading from Amos described as being measured with the plumb line.

The kind of love that the Samaritan demonstrated in caring for the wounded traveller.

After finishing the story, Jesus poses another question for the Lawyer “which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” and the answer of course was “the one who showed him mercy”

Through these readings today, we are invited to consider the plumb line analogy in relation to ourselves; are we, both as individuals and as a church community, living our lives according to the standards we proclaim?

A new insight for me has been to realise that while this story is about identifying who our neighbour is, which is important, it is more about living out Jesus’ command to love as per his instruction to the Lawyer,- – ‘Go and do likewise’.

Amen.

HYMN TiS 690 Beauty for Brokenness

OFFERING AND DEDICATION OF OFFERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE prepared and presented by the Young Adults Group

HYMN TiS 477 Jesus us call us here to meet him

SENDING OUT

Go out from this time and place of worship into our neighbourhood,
to meet our neighbour with open hearts and open hands,
giving and receiving the goodness of God’s love!

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

TiS 749 Thuma mina

