



Order of Service
9th October 2022

CALL TO WORSHIP

Make a joyful noise to God, all the earth.

Sing glory to God's name!

Give God glorious praise!

All the earth worships you, O God.

Come and see what God has done:

God is awesome in all his deeds.

Bless our God, O peoples,

Let the sound of God's praise be heard. From Psalm 66

Let us worship God.

WELCOME

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

We acknowledge the custodianship of the lands of Australia
by the First Peoples since time immemorial, under God.

We acknowledge the Elders of the First Peoples, past and present,
and their knowledge of country, from which we desire to learn.

We believe that God is calling us
to a shared understanding of our common history
and a reconciled society.

We give thanks for the First Nations Statement from the Heart,
offering us a way forward through voice, treaty and truth. *Sandy Yule*

HYMN Tis 163 (tune 217i) *God, who stretched the spangled heavens*

PRAYERS OF ADORATION AND CONFESSION

Creator of all,

Sustainer of all,

Saviour of all,

your glory and majesty

are beyond our understanding,

your power too awesome to behold.

And yet your love enfolds us as a gentle breeze

Saviour of all,

Sustainer of all,

Creator of all,

we bless your holy name.

Holy God,

when we fail to see the wonders of your world,

the degradation and loss we have caused,

the injustices lived by vulnerable people,

the fine words followed by failure to act,

forgive us.



***Forgive us when we are blind, Lord,
wilfully or by chance,
and when we lack insight into your truths.
Let our healing bring hope and love to others.
In the name of Jesus Amen***

Declaration of Forgiveness

Hear the good news!
God, in Christ Jesus, holds us in love
and will lead us into a new journey together
and a future filled with hope.
We are forgiven!
Thanks be to God!

Doxology TIS 720 Halle, halle, halle-lu-jah

AN EARLY WORD



SONG TIS 162 Thank you for giving me the morning

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet:
a light to our path.

FIRST READING

Jeremiah 29. 1, 4-7

PSALM RESPONSE Psalm 66. 1-12

GOSPEL

Luke 17. 11-19

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

REFLECTION

Where is God at work?
Everywhere, we reply. God is everywhere, in heaven and earth. So God is at work there.
And we are comfortable with saying that.
But sometimes we say that God is hidden. Or even, that God is absent. What of God's work then?

Two of our readings today show God at work in very unexpected places and very unexpected ways. First, through a defeated nation, being transported as prisoners of war; secondly, in the borderlands. Moreover, we see a reversal of roles: insiders may become outsiders and excluded outsiders and now included.

2600 years ago, God's word came to the prophet Jeremiah.

The people who hear this word from the Lord, through Jeremiah, have no city: it has been devastated, destroyed, by the enemies who are even now transporting them across about 1450k, the easier, more circuitous route, from



Jerusalem to Babylon. A straight-line journey, wasn't then possible, given the terrain, so army and captives travel the longer route, north, east and south. Years later, Ezra and his group travel this route in reverse: it takes them four months exactly. Soldiers would have taken less time, but both the exiles en route to Babylon and Ezra's caravan returning later include groups of ordinary people of varying ages. So we're thinking four months... Four months of being escorted to indefinite captivity in a foreign land.

But then a letter arrives, from the very unpopular prophet Jeremiah. After all, he has called the people to return to God; moreover, he has warned them of defeat by Babylon – and of exile. Now he writes:

Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.

Imagine how the exiles are feeling on that long journey. Imagine how the letter strikes them! Pray for our conquerors – enemies who besieged Jerusalem, breached the walls, burnt down every important building, plundered, pillaged, put our officials to death, deported the elite, leaving just the poor to fend for themselves? Pray for these people and their city? 'Yes!' says God. 'Surrender to Babylon! Give up...'

Stop! Re-group! Rebuild! Start again! Embrace your exile, because there will be no miraculous exodus this time! Is it any wonder the people try to murder Jeremiah for this treasonous message?

Words like these will be all too familiar to some of our friends, the refugees and former asylum seekers among us, whom I hope may join us today. An entirely different country, though one they were happy to come to, following the decade already spent as refugees elsewhere – new language, new climate, new food – new almost everything. But the same God! The same church – that's what they looked for all those years ago!

Perhaps there are others in our community for whom these words are now extremely significant: in this time of housing crisis, food crisis, there's a call to start again – planting our own vegetables, supporting the Food Bank, sharing food and resources in new ways - as we have recently done again, this time through Winter Night Shelter, and meals at the Lake.

However, God has another word for these exiles: Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile. Pray for its welfare, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. This is a very new way to look at exile! God's way for God's people.

In all this, we see God acting in what Don Clendenin calls 'shocking ways – beyond our pathetic boundaries.'

And there are more of God's shocking ways, of things being turned upside down, of the reversal of insiders and outsiders, as we read in Luke this morning.

Luke's dramatic story of Jesus healing ten lepers takes place in the borderlands. It happens between Samaria and Galilee, between the enemy territory of Jews who had intermarried with non-Jews, territory right in the middle of New Testament Palestine. The actors in this drama are all in land which is neither one country nor the other – and all the characters know that, before the exile, it had been one land. Do the usual rules apply in this border land, we may wonder. Who belongs here, and who doesn't?

Jesus travels the borderlands, the land in between – and it is here that he encounters lepers, in their specific lepers' borderland, desperate for an end to their exile, for they are excluded from society in either of the two territories; they are cut off from all the rest of life, from all they have known, because of their horrifying disease. But these ten are hopeful: they cry for mercy. 'Jesus, Master, have mercy on us.' 'Go and show yourselves to the priests' is Jesus' reply. Not a word about healing! But 'as they went, they were made clean.'

One of the ten, seeing that his skin is now clean and clear, returns to thank Jesus. He shouts his praise to God; he prostrates himself – lies flat at Jesus’ feet – to thank him.

Where are the other nine? Jews, apparently, since they were sent to the priests. Perhaps they are too busy reclaiming their place in their families, in the community. But this tenth is the real outsider: he’s a Samaritan, who has taken a chance, followed his heart – and been healed by Jesus! You may note that even Jesus calls him ‘this foreigner’. All in the borderlands...

Again, here is God – through Jesus – acting beyond our boundaries. Today, our Samaritan might be a West Bank Palestinian – definitely an outsider! But an outsider who is included in God’s gift of healing. In God’s geography, this is neither incidental nor accidental.

What does all this mean for us? We need to be mindful that God often works outside the box – our box! So, we should, too. Sometimes we may need to look at rules and change them to get things right. We may need to redraw some boundaries, so that the margins are included. This may require a generous heart: our heart needs to inform every choice, every act. We may be called to walk in the borderland, in areas we have steered away from, perhaps because we lack confidence or are even afraid to go there. Because, you see, borderlands aren’t only geographical, between countries: they may also be cultural, social, psychological, and people and things there may be forbidden, even if the boundary is unnatural.

Today there is a question for us all: How have I encountered Jesus in an in-between place? In my life? In the lives of others?

HYMN *TIS 665 Jesus Christ is waiting*

OFFERING AND DEDICATION

Generous God,
out of the abundance of our lives
we offer these gifts to you.
Through your blessing
and our willingness to share
***may these gifts become a source
for hope and love
in this church family and in the community. Amen***

NOTICES, JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Compassionate God,
we celebrate the healing you bring to us
and to the world.

We ask for wisdom and grace for your Church
that your people may better serve you
as true disciples following their Lord
even to the borderlands.

We ask for healing for your world, O Lord.
Bless all who long to be healed
in body, mind or spirit.
Grant healing of relationships



so that those wrongly excluded
may become insiders, as they are for you.

Grant healing for your earth.
Pour out your Spirit on your world.
renewing it as your perfect creation
through the reconciling power of your Son.

We pray for the city, O Lord.
Bless the Shepparton community
and our local government
so that your people all thrive
as we care for each other.

Bless government at other levels
so that people are not excluded,
so that injustices are righted,
the weak and vulnerable cared for.

We ask you to bless Loni, O Lord.
Grant him healing of body,
calm and peace of mind.
Bless Moti and all the family
granting them your grace.

Grant your blessing on Kerrie and Don Needham
as they move to Shepparton,
as they prepare for ministry with us.
Be their constant Companion, O Lord.

We pray through your Son and we pray
the prayer he taught:

THE LORD'S PRAYER

HYMN TiS 531 *Sent forth by God's blessing*

WORD OF MISSION

May we leave this worship moment.
resolved to be

*a sign of God's presence,
an ambassador of God's grace
and a hospitable proclaimer of God's truth.* Derek Weber

BLESSING

Now may the God of Justice,
the Sustainer,
the Beloved made flesh,
the Reshaper
bless you with courage, faith and cheerfulness
to Get on With It! **Amen! Amen! Amen!** (sung)

