




Worship in Spring, Season of Pentecost week 18 Sunday 4th October, 2020



Gathering

The heavens are telling the glory of God
Psalm 19:1

The heavens are telling...
Are you listening? Can you hear it?
Come and join in the song.
Lend your own harmonies.
Come, however you are:
whoever you are, wherever you are.

Come, light your candle;
the light of Christ shines
in the darkness, 
and the darkness cannot overcome it.

Call to worship

God of glory, author of life,
Tune our ears to your sacred songs.

God of love, here, beside us,
**Infuse our heart
with your abundance.**

God of wonder, breath of morning,
Open our eyes to your mystery.

Acknowledging

This is sacred land, air and water.
We acknowledge the First Peoples, the
traditional custodians in the places
where we live. We offer respect to
their elders past, present and
emerging. We commit ourselves to the
ongoing work of truth-telling, treaty
and justice.



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

Breathing

Give your attention to your breath,
moving in and out of your body,
slowly, surely, deeply,

breathe in the Spirit of life,
breathe out with a sigh, letting go ...

- try this 5 times, at least,
- notice how you feel.

Singing

Let all creation dance TIS 187

Let all creation dance
in energies sublime,
as order turns with chance,
unfolding space and time,
for nature's art
in glory grows,
and newly shows
God's mind and heart.

God's breath each force unfurls,
igniting from a spark
expanding starry swirls,
with whirlpools dense and dark.
Though moon and sun
seem mindless things,
each orbit sings:
"Your will be done."

Our own amazing earth,
with sunlight, cloud and storms
and life's abundant growth
in lovely shapes and forms,
is made for praise,
a fragile whole,
and from its soul
heaven's music plays.

Lift heart and soul and voice:
in Christ all praises meet
and nature shall rejoice
as all is made complete.
In hope be strong,
all life befriend
and kindly tend
creation's song.

Spring is a season of New Life:

Where in Toora, Foster, Fish Creek, Tarwin Lower, Inverloch, Wonthaggi, or Phillip Island can you see it?
The Uniting Church in Australia Synod VicTas, from Shearwater Team Presbytery of Gippsland.



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Let all creation dance TIS 187 Used with
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Prayer

God of all creation,
you spill yourself out before our eyes
in the wonder of the world,
in the miracle of existence,
in the scandal of love unbounded.

Our hearts open like flowers
to drink in your goodness.
We are filled, we are full,
Thanks be to God.

*(sit quietly for a moment, knowing
that you are filled with God's love)*

God of all creation,
with full and grateful hearts
we confess that sometimes
we're not so ready
to share your love with others,
especially people who are not like us.

We long to be Christ-like,
shaping our lives in loving kindness,
but sometimes we reject the detail;
sitting down with the lost and lonely,
sharing meals with the hungry,
offering hope into barren lives,
speaking of justice and faith,
and showing love
unbounded.

Along with the love
that fills our hearts,
give us compassion in equal measure
to see the hurt in others
as Jesus did.

Along with the love
that fills our hearts,
give us courage in equal measure

to speak truth to power,
as Jesus did,

Along with the love
that fills our hearts,
give us grace in equal measure
to forgive and receive forgiveness
as Jesus did.

*(sit quietly for a moment, sensing the
blessing of forgiveness)*

God of all creation,
you spill yourself out before our eyes
in the wonder of the world,
in the miracle of existence,
in the scandal of love unbounded,

you hear us when we call,
you restore us,
to be your people
living and loving in the world,
as Jesus did,

Thanks be to God: Amen.

Listening

Read Philippians 3:4b - 14

Read Matthew 21:33 - 46

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word:
Thanks be to God.

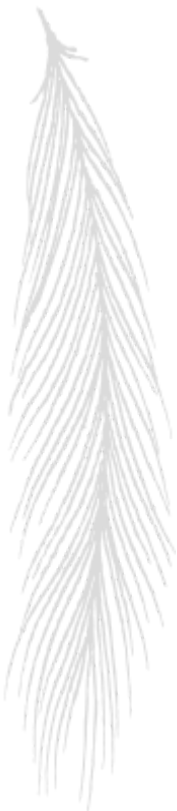


Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

Jesus' use of parables is a real highlight in the lectionary at the moment. They are a very rich way for Jesus to encode the priorities of 'beatitudinal' attitude. They encapsulate the priorities of the Gospel in ways that reveal God to us and reveal us to ourselves. They allow us to discover that which is at first glance concealed. Simultaneously "they conceal what is

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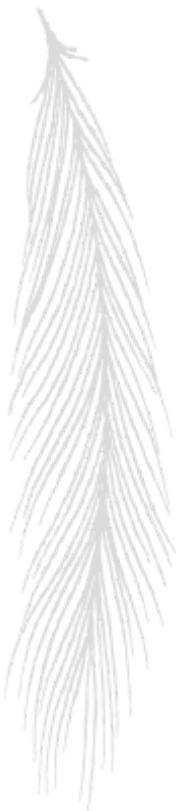
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revealed and reveal what is concealed” in a very deliberate and considered way.^[1]

In our day and age this vineyard would have a café, a wine-tasting area and somewhere for big events such as weddings. The watchtower would feature in the photographs and promotional material. Anyhoo, I look at this parable with some trepidation. What will it reveal to me? Who do the various characters represent? What part do you play in this drama? Perhaps you are feeling squeezed, or pressed, like one of the grapes! If we find our way into the story through the perspective of the landowner, we see a very unjust story. Are the tenants in the story just the Strict Religious Authorities of the day, the privileged religious ‘few’? Is Jesus saying that they are robbing God of something, rejecting the prophets and then the Son? Am I one of the tenants? If I am, what is the story asking me? Surely, I would have given the wine and the profits back, and even more surely, I wouldn’t have killed the heir, would I?

Perhaps the question is really, how do I reject the Son, this cornerstone who has been rejected but is now the crucial point of God’s Kingdom? The parables have certainly been describing the Kingdom to us in recent weeks. They give us an image of something vastly different to an earthly kingdom. Perhaps this Realm of God concept and its very different values is better described in terms of God’s Common-Wealth.

But back to the question about rejection of the Son. There are many ways we all do this rejecting of Jesus. Sometimes, and in some circumstances, we outright reject Jesus, and there are many who simply do not factor him into their thinking at all. Other times we profess to follow his teachings but really, it is all too hard isn’t

it? Jesus was a radical and his values are costly. Sometimes I wonder how he felt about that himself? Did he feel like a black sheep, like a square peg in a round hole? Perhaps we hold to his teachings in theory as long as they don’t require us to get involved, to feed the hungry and get off our pews and out into the edges where the rejected ones dwell. If we accept that every part of the Bible speaks about caring for the rejected, binding up the broken hearted, freeing the captives, caring for widows and orphans, hospitality to the stranger and the disaffected, then there are many ways that we reject the Son and the values he lived out. Jesus’ heart was all about inclusion and he had a heart for the tax collectors, prostitutes, the sad, the sick, the broken and the lonely. One of the ways we sometimes reject people is by seeing them as “other”. If we view them in this way it can seem OK to treat them differently, unkindly, or even cruelly, because they are in some way ‘less’ than us. They are not us. We certainly then, do not think that we need to attend to them. The truth of the Gospel is that we are all us.

Perhaps then, these voiceless and disaffected folks are part of the cornerstone which the builders reject. Are they then one of the rejected stones on which the church is built?

Over recent times, we will be aware of discussions about wellbeing and health vs the economy. It is almost as if they are two different things! I am reminded of my favourite quote from Parker Palmer, "When we forget that politics is about weaving a fabric of compassion and justice on which everyone can depend, the first to suffer are the most vulnerable among us—our children, our elderly, our mentally ill, our poor, and our homeless.

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As they suffer, so does the integrity of our democracy." Surely politics is more than the arguments between parties about power and authority. These are not new frustrations to people who live within the boundaries of structural poverty. Kingdom and Common-Wealth images may look different depending on where you find yourself placed. We are asked to give care to "the least of these" and to stand up for them in our structures of care.

So, where do the readings intersect? In the Philippians reading Paul again bares his heart. "Can you not see?" He seems to say. It is not whether we are qualified, or worthy, in some way. Nothing really matters but Christ. If all else is stripped away, what is left? Paul has a heart centred desire and longing. "I want to know Christ". Paul wants to experience Christ and come back to what is vitally important rather than the trimmings. Paul shared deeply in the sufferings of Christ and his heart longing was to be in Christ and Christ in him. All else is loss.

So, what is at the heart of our faith? Like Paul, what is this heartfelt longing we have, to be more like Christ? Our faith is a relational faith and our hearts long to be in deeper relationship with God, with one another, even with ourselves. Certainly also with our environment. This Common-Wealth, this Kingdom with its topsy turvy values is imaged in the parables in a way that encourages us to understand that we are all connected and deeply relational. We reject Christ when we fail to see Christ in the other, when we don't treat each other as loved by God.

We are called by Jesus to go further than just sticking with the 10 commandments in our treatment of others. We are called to love. Anti-Poverty week is October

11-17. Poverty is deepening through the Covid times and really, it has been an epidemic all on its own, all over the world and for many years. Perhaps we can think of one thing we can do this week to stand up for those who need us to do so. Can we make a stand in some small way, for those who are rejected and stand with Jesus in making them our priority?

[i] Jesus the Parable: Christ as Process, in *On the Mystery: Discerning Divinity in Process*, 133-158. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008). Catherine Keller

Prayers for World & Community

Paul's letter to the church in Philippi reminds us

"Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God."

So we pray: opening ourselves in prayer awakens the missional Word of God within us, to care for our world, our community and our environment.

Loving God

We give thanks for the gift of prayer: The formal prayers we pray together now, and all the daily prayers caught in the sighs of our hearts. We give thanks for this place in which we live: the beauty of the land, the refreshment of Spring: the hope it brings.

We hold in prayer the worries of our world:

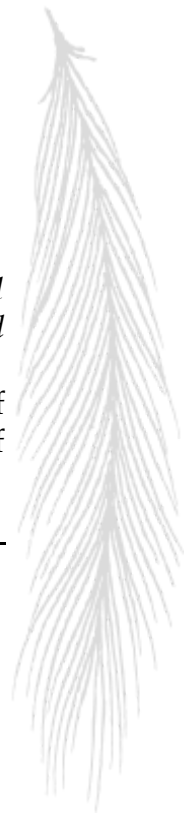
For our world leaders: our Prime Minister and State Premier: that they may guide social policy that empowers the vulnerable, give dignity and worth to those seeking to contribute to society, and enables those with resources to share for the good of all.

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We hold in prayer those who have lost their work, their meaning, their livelihoods over this year.

May losses find a new opportunity to rebuild life and confidence. May social policy stimulate innovation and solutions that were previously imagined.

Particularly, we hold in prayer those for whom the devastating fires destroyed not only livelihoods, but also homes and more tragically the loss of life.

We hold in prayer those who are healing: awakening from hurt: and those with chronic health conditions.

We pray for all medical teams; doctors, specialists, nurses, therapists, pharmacists:
For the cooks and the cleansers, the administrators of Hospitals and Clinics:
For all the allied health teams
Sustain them God in the constant demands made upon them: grant them rest and refreshment
We pray for all who are sick, those managing on-going health conditions.

We pray for our Church

For our agencies: Hospitals, Schools, Social Welfare agencies, Finance Stewards
For our congregations, our office holders, and all who share in the ministry of Christ together:
May we let go of that which holds the church back: may we embrace the mission ahead of us all.

We hold together a space for the prayer only we know

When we pray, Paul assures us that, *"The peace of God that passes all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

May we who pray, rest in the peace of Christ and find our meaning in lives of service and faithfulness.

The Lord's Prayer

We pray the prayer Jesus taught his disciples

(contemporary version from Uniting in Worship II)

Life-Giver, Pain-Bearer, Love-Maker.
Source of all that is and that shall be.
Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:

The hallowing of your name
echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed
by all peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done
by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace
and freedom
sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today,
feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one
another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test,
strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure,
spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power
that is love,
now and forever. Amen.

Passing the peace

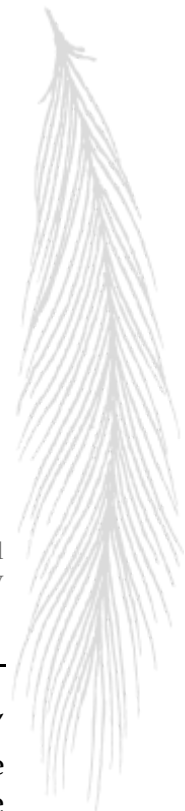
Think of seven people you can contact
and pass the peace of Christ to them.

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Call one person each day this week,
beginning with today.

Offering

We offer what we can, to be shared for the good of all. Gifts of money, time, talents, care and prayer. Receive these gifts, God of all, as an expression of our love. Use them and use us to bring about hope and healing in Jesus' name. Amen.

Notices

Find out how you can get involved in Anti-Poverty week. The theme this year is about affordable housing: *Everybody's Home*.

<https://antipovertyweek.org.au>

Singing Tell out my soul TIS 161

Tell out, my soul,
the greatness of the Lord!
Unnumbered blessings,
give my spirit voice;
tender to me
the promise of his word;
in God my Saviour
shall my heart rejoice.

Tell out, my soul,
the greatness of his name!
Make known his might,
the deeds his arm has done;
his mercy sure,
from age to age the same;
his holy name -
the Lord, the Mighty One.

Tell out, my soul,
the greatness of his might!
Powers and dominions
lay their glory by.
Proud hearts and stubborn wills
are put to flight, the hungry fed,
the humble lifted high.

Tell out, my soul,
the glories of his word!
Firm is his promise,
and his mercy sure.
Tell out, my soul,
the greatness of the Lord
to children's children
and for evermore!

Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! Used with permission CCLI 241 739 TIS 161 Timothy Dudley-Smith 1926- 1.k WOODLANDS

Re-Collection

"Lord, I want to be like Jesus in my heart."
Do you remember that song? We are all called to be imitators of Jesus. We have a longing in our hearts, like St Paul said, to be Christ-like. This is not an easy path, but we're assured that the Spirit will be our companion and guide. May it be so. Amen.



Blessing

Go into this day and each day
with love and courage,
with compassion and kindness
knowing that the Spirit goes with you
to disturb, inspire, and empower you,
and may the words of our mouths and
the meditations of our hearts
be acceptable to you,
God of glory, love and wonder,
Amen.

Shearwater Ministry Team:
Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson
Rev. Jennie Gordon
Rev. Ian Turnnidge



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