

Devotion for the week leading to the 24th of January 2021

This service is written for Stretton Park and McDonald Wing in Maffra, Laurina Lodge in Heyfield and Royal Freemason's in Sale, but with the intention of also being available for private use.

From Psalm No. 62

O, my soul, find rest in God alone. My hope comes from the Lord who is my rock and my salvation. I shall not be shaken. Trust in God at all times, pour you heart out to Him, for He is our refuge. God has spoken and I have heard two things: that God is strong and that God is loving.

HYMN No. 1 - All people that on earth do dwell

You can read the words to yourself, or out loud. If you remember the tune well enough you can sing it yourself. You can, of course sing just the first, or the first and last verses.

PRAYER

We thank you, O Lord that you always care for us, and have always cared for us. You have been with us throughout our lives. In the good times when things went well for us, and in the bad times and sad times when we have needed support and comfort. Help us to remember that we can always rely on you. Your love for us is steadfast, and even if we complain or go the wrong way, your forgiveness is always greater than our failings. Help us to remember that your forgiveness is greater than any limits we might imagine. Thank you O God, for your never-failing love towards us and all people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

HYMN No. 9 - Praise my soul the king of heaven

BIBLE READING - The book of Jonah

REFLECTION

Today's reading is a story from the time when the people of Israel thought that God was their God and did not care for the people of any other country. The story of Jonah is well known, but mostly just for the bit about Jonah being swallowed by the whale. That is an extraordinary and memorable story. There has been a lot of discussion about what sort of whale or large fish would be able to swallow a person whole. But that is not the point of the story.

This is the story: God called a man called Jonah to be a prophet to the foreign city of Nineveh. He was to tell the people there to repent, to stop doing the bad things they were doing, and to turn to God. Jonah knew that the people of Nineveh were bad, he was sure they would not repent. They weren't even Jewish. He was certain it was a waste of time, and he did not like the people of Nineveh. He did not want to go there. Jonah took a boat trip in the opposite direction and that was when the storm happened, Jonah went overboard and was swallowed by the huge fish. Three days later, Jonah was washed up on shore.

It took this disaster for Jonah to see that God was serious, so he went to Nineveh. Jonah spoke to the people there about the wrong things they were doing and how God would punish them if they continued in their bad ways. Even though Jonah was grumpy and thought it was a waste of time, the people of Nineveh could see the truth in what Jonah was saying. The king called the city to a better way of justice and the people began to treat each other with respect. They listened to God and God forgave them. That made Jonah angry because he thought they were bad people and God should never forgive them.

Do you ever think that there are some people that are too bad, and that God should never accept them? May be you get grumpy because God seem to be doing things that you are not comfortable with. Don't be like Jonah. The message from the story of Jonah is that God's love is for all people, for those we like and even for those we don't like.

HYMN No. 29 - Amazing Grace

PRAYER

Thank you, O Lord, that you are always ready to help us and all people. Help us to always treat others with respect. Help not to judge other people as bad just because they are different to us in some way. We pray for our friends and family, keep them safe we pray, both those nearby and those far away, especially those overseas. We remember places where there is war, civil unrest or famine. We pray for those caught up in natural disasters like floods, cyclones and landslides. And lastly we pray for ourselves, that you might be in our thoughts, reminding us that you are always with us and caring for us.

All these things, we pray through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, For ever and ever, AMEN

HYMN No 31 - Jesus loves me this I know

The BLESSING

May God be with you in all that you do,

And may the blessing of the almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit

be upon you and remain with you always, Amen