



11th October, 2020
10.00am

Welcome ... to this service of worship.

Whether this is your normal place of worship, or if you are new or a visitor here, it is good to be together to worship God.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal Dharug, Gundungurra Nations, the first inhabitants of this place. We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.

Gathering of the People of God

As we come to our time of worship you may like to prepare a space where you can be peaceful and focus on being accompanied into the holy presence of God.

You might like to light a candle. Be comfortable and warm wherever you are sitting.

Remember you are not alone. You are in God's presence and have those whom you love and are loved by in your heart.

While we are not coming together in the church for worship, we are still together in spirit as we participate in our Worship Service at home. So we are in a sense gathering together in spirit.

Today's service is led by Paull Cameron; the Scripture readings are read by Perce Marland; and the Prayers of the People prepared by Dennis Christie. Louise Mattay has recorded the music.

Coming Together To Worship

Call to Worship

L: Here in this place, with these people,
we come to worship the living God.



**P: In you, O God, we hope;
in you, Creator of love, we live.**

L: Here in this sacred space, in these very moments,
we are invited to be with you.

**P: In you, Christ of the Way, we rejoice;
in you, dear Brother, grace is as near as your heart.**

L: Here on this day of gentleness and beauty,
we are filled with the peace of God.

**P: In you, O Spirit, we find our path;
in you, Teacher of hope, we learn to serve.**

Hymn 474 Gather us in (verses 1,2,4)

1. Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away,
see, in this space, our fears and our dreamings,

brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken;
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2. We are the young, our lives are a mystery;
we are the old, who yearn for your face;
we have been sung throughout all of history,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty;
gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.
3. Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven light years away,
but here in this space, the new light is shining,
now is the kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in, and hold us forever;
gather us in, and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

Marty Haugen
1950–

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Prayer of Thanks

We bring you our thanks, O God,
for the wedding feast of life,
for the beauty of your hospitality
and your invitation to celebration.
We rejoice in the wonder of unexpected moments
when we find ourselves
gathered into your company.
We thank you for your introduction
to those who stand for peace
and who are clothed
in the garments of your glory.
Thank you for your refusal to settle
for lives lived in triviality and indulgence.
We know that life like that is far removed
from that of your holy community.
Thanks and praise to you, O God. Amen.

Call to Reconciliation

Called to have the same mind as Christ, we often spend too much time thinking about all those ways which then lead us astray. But, if we confess our sins, God will forgive us, and strengthen us to be Christ's sisters and brothers.

Call to Reconciliation

... Join me as we pray together, saying,

Prayer of Confession

You would call us to your feast, Inviting God, but our busy lives keep us from responding. You remember every word we utter, every prayer we whisper, but we forget all the little ways you care for us. You would make your gentleness known through us, but we lash out in anger and fear towards others.

Forgive us, God of all hope, and remember your Servant, Jesus Christ. In him, we can live in your way.

Through him, we can learn the dreams you have for us.

With him, we can open our arms and embrace all the people we meet.

Silence is kept

Assurance of Pardon

L: As we are forgiven by God, we can begin to reflect on all those ways in which we can live justly, act honourably, love completely. This is indeed good news for us.

P: At the Wedding Feast, we are fed with grace, and nourished with joy, so we may go and bring hope and peace to everyone we meet. Thanks be to God. Amen.

We Listen For The "Word" Of God

Reading from Philippians 4:1-9

Faith, friendship, reconciliation and strong, ethical behaviour are all wrapped into these few verses. They are among the most intimate words written by the austere apostle Paul. Since this was the first congregation he had founded in Macedonia, a northern province of Greece, he had a very special relationship with the Christians of Philippi.

It may be difficult for Christians of our day to realize just who made up many of these early congregations. As it had been with Jesus in many instances, it was largely the underclass and moral outcasts like prostitutes and the ethically corrupt like tax collectors who were attracted to the Christian way. Paul's ministry in Philippi had begun with two people, neither of whom would have been among the prestigious citizens of that Roman city – a woman of commerce and the town jailer (Acts 16:14-15, 25-40). In the households of both of these who were baptized would have been many slaves too. Whatever their former life had been like, Paul expected everyone to behave according to the same high standard.



4¹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

2 I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. **3** Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. **5** Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. **6** Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **9** Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

L: May we, like Paul, ground ourselves in Jesus' teachings and praise God in all circumstances.

ALL: Amen, Hallelujah!

Gospel Reading – Matthew 22:1–14

The Gospel has, in effect, two parables, or a parable and an allegory. The former can reflect Jesus' sense of rejection. He has offered a banquet, and those invited will do anything to avoid the celebration! (A similar story is recorded by Luke, at 14: 16-24, where fanciful excuses are offered to avoid joining the party!) The second story may reflect Matthew's own time, with people joining the church, turning out to be unfit, and being expelled!

Matthew's own intensity of feeling may come through in the reading.

22 Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³ He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴ Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ ⁵ But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶ while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷ The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸ Then he said to his slaves, ‘The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹ Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.’ ¹⁰ Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹ “But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹² and he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?’ And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ ¹⁴ For many are called, but few are chosen.”

L: May we respond to Jesus' words with care and commitment,

ALL: Hallelujah, Amen.

Hymn 465 Father in heaven grant to your children

1. Father in heaven,
grant to your children
mercy and blessing,
songs never ceasing,
love to unite us,
grace to redeem us —
Father in heaven,
Father our God.
2. Jesus, Redeemer,
may we remember
your gracious passion,
your resurrection.
Worship we bring you,
praise we shall sing you —
Jesus, Redeemer,
Jesus our Lord.
3. Spirit descending
whose is the blessing,
strength for the weary,
help for the needy;
make us your temple,

born a new people —
Spirit descending,
Spirit adored.

Daniel Thambyrajah Niles
1908–70 alt.

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Address Rev. Paul Cameron:

Here we go again, God as the merciless tyrant, who, in this case, burns down an entire city and slaughters all its inhabitants: men, women, and children. The justification is that they refused to come to his party for the wedding of his son.

And so we have the justification for the Crusades, when Christians, in the name of the Prince of Peace, charged across the lands held by both Jews and Muslims to punish them for not accepting God's son, not coming to the wedding party. We have the justification for the Inquisition, in which Christians, in the name of the Prince of Peace, tortured and killed countless Jews and Muslims and unorthodox Christians for not coming to the wedding party. We have the justification for the wars of the Reformation, in which Protestant armies fought each other and the Catholic armies, killing other Christians, for not coming to their version of the wedding party. We have the justification for the Holocaust, when Christians tortured and killed countless Jews and Muslims and unorthodox Christians for not coming to the wedding party.

But the parable begins with "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to ..." So what do we do with it? Doesn't that imply that this is a description of the kingdom of heaven, in which God is the king and Jesus is the son?

The internet Dictionary.com offers this definition of the word "compare":

(v) estimate, measure, or note the similarity or dissimilarity between.

When we compare things, we do it with two goals in mind, to find the things that match, that agree, and to find what doesn't fit. While in test directions, they often use the phrase, "compare and contrast," the second verb is not necessary. It's implied in the first. There's no need to compare if we don't look for differences.

An example: There was once a man who had two horses. So as to tell them apart, he trimmed off the mane of one of them. But the mane grew back, so he cut off the other one's tail. It grew back. Frustrated, he measured them. That's when he discovered that the black horse was two inches taller than the white horse.

So let's begin our comparison with the other version of the story in Luke's Gospel.

We begin by noting the different audiences and dates. Matthew's 'church' more likely to be a group of Jewish Christians of the 70-85CE. Luke's – more likely a gentile audience 80-90CE.

They recount the stories at different stages in the life of Jesus. In Luke we are in a general teaching area of the gospel. The story is followed by the cost of Discipleship and then the lost coin, lost sheep, lost son 'more joy in heaven' over the restoration of the item/person. In Matthew, Jesus has entered Jerusalem and is in conflict with the Jewish authorities. This is the third of his stories of judgement on Israel.

Note both accounts are written after the fall of Jerusalem to the Roman armies in 70CE.

So the task then if you are willing to accept it.

As we look at Matthew's account what does it tell us that is different to Luke and does it help to understand Matthew's Jesus message.

Here is Luke's account.

The Parable of the Great Dinner - Luke's version Luke 14:15-24

¹⁵ One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, 'Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!' ¹⁶ Then Jesus said to him, 'Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. ¹⁷ At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, "Come; for everything is ready now." ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it;

please accept my apologies.”¹⁹ Another said, “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my apologies.”²⁰ Another said, “I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.”²¹ So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and said to his slave, “Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.”²² And the slave said, “Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.”²³ Then the master said to the slave, “Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled.”²⁴ For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.”

In the Matthew story we should start by recognising that there are two parts within it. One is the great feast and the second is the guest who is not clothed in wedding attire..

Matthew seems angrier and more strident than Luke. The destruction of the city (maybe Jerusalem is remembered) is given as the punishment for not turning up given the invitation. However the emphasis does not remain there it stays with the people who are invited and will accept that invitation.

Matthew builds his allegorical interpretation into the story, making the parable an allegory of salvation history from the initial sending of the prophets (the first sending out of the slaves with the invitation) to Israel through the renewed invitation by Christian prophetic missionaries (the third set of slaves), concluding at the last judgment when the good and bad in the church are sorted out.

The original dinner party has become the messianic banquet given by the king (God) for his Son (Jesus), who invites guests who agree to come (Israel) to the wedding celebration (salvation, the messianic banquet), but who then refuse the final invitations.

There are several unrealistic elements in the story that points to its allegorical meaning: the messengers are tortured and put to death, as dinner waits, the king wages war, kills those who had dishonoured and rebelled against him, and burns “their” city, presumably also his own. On the historical level, this is not only an overreaction, but also hardly possible.

Matthew’s story is the ‘Star Wars version’. Fit for movie and TV.
More is to come!

The invitation is no longer restricted to those who had accepted the previous invitation, but is extended to all. Those who are “gathered in” are both bad and good, corresponding to Matthew’s realistic picture of the church and setting the stage for the appended conclusion of this scene.

It fits awkwardly after the first section.

How could those unexpectedly herded into the wedding hall from the streets wear the expected clothing, which all but one of them seem to do? Again, realism is sacrificed to theological meaning. In early Christianity, the new identity of conversion was often pictured as donning a new set of clothes; the language of changing clothes was utilized to express the giving up of the old way of life and putting on the new Christian identity.). At the this level, the person was expected to have the deeds of an authentic Christian life, corresponding to the “fruits” in the imagery of the preceding parable. When confronted with his lack, the man has no response, for he is without excuse.

The whole passage seems to be directed mainly to Matthew’s community. You have been invited do not presume, as the Israelites did, that entry to the Kingdom is automatic. It comes with demands to be Christ’s people, to wear his clothes.

I can’t go past the other Passage set for today from Philippians.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.”

It is the powerful passage also directed to a struggling Christian community. It is a message of hope. Paul’s words are intended to encourage the Philippians to behave with consideration toward others and to think positively about their present lives. To know that Christ is with us in our everyday lives ought to be a great comfort to us. But we need also to remember that Paul’s statement looked back to the promise that the Lord will come to transform us and make us like himself. (in terms of Matthew ‘new clothes’). In terms of human history, the final coming of the Lord may seem no nearer than when Paul wrote these words. But for those in

Christ, the promise is sure. Paul's declaration that the Lord is near reminds us—paradoxically!—of a destiny that will be fulfilled beyond space and time.

Few of us find it easy to follow the advice. We tend to worry about everything! Our attitude is the very opposite of the trust in God that Paul commends. It is sobering to remember that Paul was in prison, facing a capital charge, when he wrote this letter. And that was not his only problem, for his responsibility for the churches was a constant concern. Moreover, the people to whom he was writing were unlikely to be living comfortable lives. Most of them were poor, many were slaves, and few of them would have known the meaning of security. In marked contrast, those of us who live in comparative wealth and luxury today are frequently those who are most worried and anxious. The secret of Paul's composure is that he is relying on God, and not on material goods. This freedom from worry and anxiety does not, of course, imply an irresponsible attitude toward life and one's obligations. It is a mark of the Christian maturity to be able to distinguish between the anxiety that cripples and destroys the individual and the concern for others that builds up the whole community.

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵ Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.”

Gratitude to God for all that we have been given will allow the peace of God to guard our hearts and minds, protecting us against all that might destroy us.

1. What do you think are the ‘compare and contrast’ messages?
2. What might be Matthew's message for us and the present church?
3. Do agree with that last sentence ‘Gratitude to God for all that we have been given will allow the peace of God to guard our hearts and minds, protecting us against all that might destroy us.’

Our Response To The “Word” ..

Offering - money, selves, and our prayers

Prayers of Intercession. Dennis Christie

In my preparation for these prayers , i went through a couple of short books to gather a few focus points. I came across a passage i used earlier this year, but one i believe to be very true
“the meaning of prayer is that we get hold of god, not the answer”

And also another thought

“prayer is the exercise of drawing on the grace of god”

How good is it that we can freely share our joys and concerns with god at anytime, He is always there, The phone is never off the hook

So, let us pray as one,and add our personal moments as well

Heavenly father,

We thank you for being our god

The one who is always there

The one who loves us, ...and wants a close relationship with us

Thank you for all the answered prayers you return to our lives

Help us to accept your plan, ...and the direction you are leading us toward

Thank you for our church family ,..who join together faithfully,to share and support each other,... through this technology assisted church experience

There are many challenges facing us at this time

Covid

There are Covid –19 problems all around the world, and many confusing methods and plans of management, Even here in our own country.. Australia

We pray for wisdom from our leaders,and tolerance and co-operation from the public as we adjust to restrictions on our choices ,.....(that come and go so often)

Thank you for the tireless work being done by our health and carer professionals,to help keep our communities as save as practical

We give thanks for those people who have been able to maintain their work opportunities,.... In their chosen careers
We pray for those whose jobs are not active, ...or have already been lost
Give them hope for a positive future as they wait,..... And help them plan for new opportunities when they arise
Thank you that there is a collection of financial support processes at present, To soften the financial stress that affects so many,... both businesses, and individuals

HSC

We pray for all students sitting the HSC exams over the next few weeks
Help themand all family members stay relaxed as each day passes, ...and believe that after the exams, ...there is still a good life ahead,(with or without the results that might be expected).
We pray for all those we know in these circumstances,and especially the Randall family who are part of our Leura church

Health

Some of us are not as well as we would like
Lord god,..... We name before you, people we know, (as published in our newsletter) ,... and others who are close to our hearts
You have a plan for all of us, ...to heal,to comfort,....to endure,....
But most of all,..... You are with us ,.... What ever the situation.
We trust you !!!!!

Berievement

Father god, we receive with sadness,...the passing of Gwen Jones last week.
We thank you for the contribution that Gwen (and husband Ross) , gave to the Leura church family for many years
Gwen started a bible study group in the late 1980's, ...that was later lead by rev frank butler ,..and was instrumental in forming the friendships of the White, Garland, Swain, Sinclair, Woodhouse and Christie families,...that are still active today
They are both missed,but leave fond memories with us,... as they reunite in your dwelling place.

Governance

Lord,.... Where do we start ?
The world has wars,... a pandemic,climate change issues,... and a decline in moral standards ,... all around the world
Help us all contribute what we can,to provide a voice for those affected, ...and advocate for better governance and negotiation
.....to bring peace and stability to locations affected by these problems
We pray for people to rise up as leaders ,....to stop the decline of our wellbeing,.... And the planet

Conclusion

Let us conclude by praying with the words of the lord's prayer

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 545 Shout for joy the Lord has let us feast 545 (TIS)

1. Shout for joy! The Lord has let us feast;
Heaven's own fare has fed the last and least;
Christ's own peace is shared again on earth;
God the Spirit fills us with new worth.

2. No more doubting, no more senseless dread:
God's good self has graced our wine and bread;
all the wonder heaven has kept in store.
now is ours to keep for evermore.

3. Celebrate with saints who dine on high,
witnesses that love can never die.
'Hallelujah!'— thus their voices ring:
nothing less in gratitude we bring.

4. Praise the Maker, praise the Maker's Son,
praise the Spirit — three yet ever one;
praise the God whose food and friends avow
heav'n starts here! The kingdom beckons now!

John L. Bell
1949–

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Blessing

And may we be clothed in the garments of Christ,
embraced in the gathering of God
and fed by the nurturing life of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.