



Leura Uniting Church

21 March 2021

Lent 5

Rev Myung Hwa Park

Acknowledgement of country



As we look upon the hills and valleys, we see the love poured out upon this Land by those who have cared for this Land since time beyond measure.

We honour those who have gone before and those who are yet to come.

May we be mindful of the calling God places on humanity to care for all Creation.

May we listen to the voices and wisdom of the Gundungurra and Darug people, whose stories are entwined with the stewarding of this place. May we learn from them and walk with them.

Welcome and announcements

Call to Worship

This is the fifth step on our Lenten journey, the step of sacrifice.

Be with us, Lord, as we take this step.

This requires the willingness to give all of your life to the Lord.

Be with us, Lord, as we commit our lives to you.

Come, let us worship and offer our voices of praise to God.

We open our hearts and spirits to God this day.

Hymn of worship TiS 153 God is love

1. God is love, let heaven adore Him;
God is love, let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before Him,
and exalt Him with one voice.
God who laid the earth's foundation,
h who spread the heavens above,
and who breathes through all creation
God is love, eternal love.

2. God is love, and gently enfolding
all the world in one embrace,
with unfailing grasp is holding
every child of every race.
And when human hearts are breaking
under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.

3. God is love, and, though with blindness
sin afflicts our human hearts,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holding, guiding, grace imparts.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

CCLI Song # 2354220

Timothy Rees

• Public Domain

For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use.

All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI Licence # 300742

Prayer of Adoration (Based on Psalm 119: 9-16)

Holy God, we praise you for your gift to us of your commandments that were given to help us live together as your people within a community of faith, a local community, or in a wider community. We together sing our praises for all God's goodness to us all:

“Joyfully shout all you on earth, give praise to the glory of God; and with a hymn sing out his glorious praise; alleluia! All you nations sing out your joy to the LORD: Alleluia!

Guiding God, we praise you for your faithful people through the centuries who have continued to lead godly lives, even while under stress or persecution; and we give thanks for the vision they had of your Kingdom present and active in the world.

***“Lift up your hearts, sing to your God: tremendous his deeds for us all!
All you nations sing out your joy to the LORD: Alleluia!***

Blessing God, we praise you for the way you bless us each day and night in so many different ways; and we confess that we often fail to give you our thanks and praise for your generosity towards us. We pray that you will help us always to be aware of your Holy Presence with us, teaching us your ways of peace and justice. We praise you for the trust you place in us to be your servants in the world, as we try to live in ways that are godly, generous, loving and compassionate.

“Let all the earth kneel in your sight, extolling your marvellous fame; LORD, you brought your people into your peace. Lift up your hearts, sing to your God: All you nations sing out your joy to the LORD: Alleluia!” Amen.

Prayer of Confession : Hymn TiS 712 Create in us a clean heart

Create in us a clean heart, O God.
Renew within us a right spirit.
Cast us not away from Your presence, O Lord,
and take not Your Holy Spirit from us.
Restore to us fullness of joy,
the joy that springs from Your salvation.
Lighten our minds,
Shelter our lives with Your spirit free.

CCLI Song # 1408198
Digby Hannah

- © 1984 Hannah, Digby

For use solely with the SongSelect® [Terms of Use](http://www.ccli.com). All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI Licence # 300742

Declaration of forgiveness

God is merciful and slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
Receive the forgiveness, healing and loving power of God, for it is given to you through
Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Scripture readings

**Your word, O lord, is a lamp to our feet,
*a light to our path.***

Jeremiah 31: 27- 37

John 12: 20-33

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Reflection “Blessing and Joy in stepping out in faith”

John 12: 20 -33, Jeremiah 31: 31- 34



(Qin Shi Huang, Britannica.com)

Over 17 years, the king of Qin conquered the six neighbouring warring states and finally established the first unified China in BC 221 and called himself Qin Shi Huang, the first emperor of the Qin dynasty.

The emperor Qin Shi Huang deployed one and half million people to build the Great Wall to protect his kingdom from Barbarian's attacks from the North. After establishing the great kingdom, Qin Shi Huang became obsessed with eternal life. So he ordered his servants to bring a miracle plant that would help him live forever. The story is told that his servants ran off, knowing that there is no such thing and if they couldn't bring it, they would be executed by the emperor.

But one day, a dubious sorcerer came and tricked the emperor saying that he would bring the miracle plant from a mythical mountain in the East. He asked the emperor to give him a boat with lots of gold and silver and jewels along with 3000 young men and women. Of course, he too ran off, but in his case, taking everything he got from the emperor. The poor emperor waited for the boat to return with the miracle plant but unfortunately, he died at the age of 50 with mercury poisoning from taking too many Chinese herbal medicines.

Even after his death, the emperor wanted to protect his body so he was buried with an army of 8000 terra-cotta soldiers and horses together with many bronze and iron objects and various goods in his tomb. Qin Shi Huang wanted to live forever in his death. Many of the leaders of this world continue to be consumed by the power and glory of their roles and can still lead them into terrible falls which even make a mockery of the people after their death.

Unlike the worldly leaders, Jesus gives us a very different example of glory.



(Jesus Mafa, Saint Peter Claver Catholic church)

Jesus, a wandering preacher throughout Judean villages, the merciful healer who touched the untouchables, a remarkable preacher who amazed the scribes at the temple with his knowledge, a miracle worker who even raised the dead man, Lazarus from the tomb, entered Jerusalem on a donkey.

People greeted him as their Messiah, shouting "*Hosanna! blessed is the king of Israel!*", laying the palm leaves and their cloaks on his way. But the king of Israel, the Messiah, wasn't heading to the throne made of gold and silver but his eyes were sternly focused on the cross, the ultimate step to becoming the sacrificial lamb to redeem the world and restore the covenant that God made with the people.

In the Jeremiah reading, we read the comforting words of the prophet Jeremiah to the people in uncertainty that God was making a new covenant which would be engraved in their hearts reminding them that they are God's people and God is their God no matter what.

Today's gospel reading from John chapter 12 gives us Jesus' own account of his death and resurrection which helps us to prepare our journey in this final week of the Lenten season before we enter into Holy Week, celebrating Jesus' victorious entry into Jerusalem, the suffering, death on the cross, and the resurrection of Jesus on the third day.

The gospel text for today begins with some Greeks, who went to Jerusalem during the festival, coming to Philip requesting to see Jesus. Philip might have wondered 'Why would Greeks want to see Jesus?' so he talked with Andrew whether they should bring these Gentiles to meet Jesus. And they in turn told Jesus. With their arrival, Jesus replied "*The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.*" It seems that the arrival of the Greeks must have given Jesus a sign for D day. Some commentators interpret this as the turning point of God's mission when Jesus looked beyond Israel to include all people.

Jesus then went on to put this thought in the shortest parable that we all are familiar with. "*Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.*"



(the gospel call : A Living sacrifice)

It is true that each grain of wheat seed sown in the field can produce more than 200 grains at harvest. This simple agricultural truth was used to describe his death on the cross which would bring many to eternal life. A simple illustration of an incredible truth.

But as I was reading the scripture texts for this Sunday, I was overwhelmed by the unfailing fidelity of God, whose love for Israel was the core of God's mission in Jesus. God wanted to restore the covenant with the Israelites which we read in the Prophet Jeremiah. And God continues to offer this unconditional covenant which was engraved in the hearts of the Israelites to everyone, in Jesus.

And Jesus was fully aware of his mission to restore the covenant of God. And this would glorify God's name, the God of covenant.

In order to glorify God's name, Jesus did not hold onto the glory of this world, for "*Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.*"

The teaching of Jesus certainly contradicts the values and practices of the world.

During the pandemic, we all became extra anxious about our health. And now the vaccine became available, some became anxious about the slowness of getting the vaccination and for some others, they were worried about the risk of side-effects that the vaccine might cause.

At such a time as this, we might ask, how can we apply the simplest truth of Jesus' parable into our life, and how we live our life as followers of Jesus?

The prime minister announced the other day, that Australia will send 8,000 doses of its COVID-19 vaccine supply to Papua New Guinea next week, and asked the producers of AstraZeneca and the European authorities to divert another 1 million doses to the country. To my ears this sounds as good news for PNG which is going through a serious situation with the pandemic. I only hope that the response that the Australian government made was from genuine compassion, and not out of self-interest, believing that if PNG is not helped, Australia will be at increasing risk from the pandemic.

Jesus instructs his followers with the promise of a sure reward, *'Whoever serves me must follow me and where I am, my servant also will be. My father will honour the one who serves me.'*

But we are also reminded that it may not be easy to follow Jesus. Even Jesus expressed his anxiety as he faced the cross. But he kept his focus on God and God's glory. *"It was for this very reason I came to this hour, Father, glorify your name!"*

Jesus chose the worst path in the world to gain the best outcome to bring God's glory, the enduring love of God for the world!

Friends, as followers of Jesus, you and I are called to be as a servant who speaks the words that he did, to feed and tend his sheep as he did, to testify on his behalf wherever and whenever.

And the good news for us it that in serving, in giving ourselves for the good of all in the community, we will be honoured not necessarily with the medals and award from this world, but will be honoured by God.

Today we will receive the gift of Jesus, his body and blood, the true sign of God's love as a sacrificial lamb. Let this sacred ritual remind us of God's enduring love and become a foretaste of the eternal life, which God promised for the beloved in Christ.

As we contemplate the death and resurrection of Jesus in this last part of the Lenten journey, may we be filled with the blessing and joy to take a leap in faith to witness God's enduring love for the world.

Let me finish the sermon by quoting the reflection written on the Diving Belle.



Diving Belle by Craig Knowles, English artist blacksmith from Sunderland.

“In this decisive moment she is suspended between heaven and earth,
Christ-like, her ego weightless,
freely, lovingly, utterly, completely, and totally
one with the divine love that bids her plunge
way down, deep down; always down
into the depths and far below the surface
of all that is unresolved yet never unloved
by the One who waits there for her.”

(The reflection written by Visualtheology for the Connexion magazine, April 2015)

Hymn of reflection TiS 248 When Christ was lifted (tune of TiS 112)

1. When Christ was lifted from the earth
his arms stretched out above
through every culture, every birth,
to draw an answering love.

2. Still east and west his love extends
and always, near or far,
he calls and claim us as his friends
and loves us as we are.

3. Where generation, class and race
divides us to our shame,
he see not labels but a face,
a person and a name.

4. Thus freely loved, though fully known,
may, I in Christ be free
to welcome and accept his own
as Christ accepted me.

CCLI Song # 3255775

Brian Arthur Wren

• © 1973, 1995 Hope Publishing Company

For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI Licence # 300742

Prayer for Offering

Prayer of Intercession

Annie Cox

Let us pray.....”This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it”. We give thanks for the opportunity to meet in freedom as a faith community when there are so many in our world experiencing persecution, torture and death as a result of their faith, race, sexuality or culture. We pray for those who hunger, those who thirst, those who cry out for justice, those who live under the threat of terror, and those without a place to lay their head, the displaced, the refugee and asylum seeker.

God of Compassion.....**hear our prayer**

We pray for the earth, the air and the waters. May we not only talk about climate change but rather look for ways in which each one of us can do our part to conserve resources, care for the environment and protect our native animals.

We pray our world leaders including those in Australia will act to protect our planet and its inhabitants.

God of Creation.....**hear our prayer**

We pray for our leaders and all in authority that they will not abuse their positions of privilege and power but rather govern with wisdom, compassion and justice. Following the National March4Justice last week we pray for

workplace reform. May all staff, employees and volunteers be safeguarded from harassment of any kind and we pray for the women, men and children who have experienced the trauma of gender and family violence. May they receive justice from our lawmakers that leads to the protection of the vulnerable in our society. God of Compassion.....hear our prayer

May the activities of Harmony Week deepen our appreciation of the diverse cultures that enrich our nation and we pray for inclusiveness, respect and a sense of belonging for everyone. We pray for the First Peoples of this land. May the National Close the Gap Day renew our resolve to end their disadvantage. We pray for all in aged care. May the recommendations of the royal commission ensure they are cared for with dignity and compassion. May the voice of the disabled be heard and the recommendations for their care, safety and dignity be implemented. God of Justice.....hear our prayer

You call each one of us in our community to faithful stewardship and mutual care. Grant us everything necessary for living in community and lead us to share so that none may be alone or in want. We pray for our Minister, our church leaders and faith communities here in Leura, Katoomba and Blackheath and all faith communities nationally and throughout the Mountains. We pray for the ministry of Open Table and Junction 142 as they minister to the homeless and disadvantaged in our community and we pray for ourselves as we minister to one another. We pray for those who are ill, in pain, under stress, grieving and those who are lonely, anxious or fearful. We pause now to remember those who are heavy on our hearts and those mentioned in our bulletin..... God of Healing.....hear our prayer

Thank you God that you have written your law in our hearts, not on tablets of stone and so we come to you seeking to become whole. "Create in us clean hearts and renew a right spirit within us" Fill us with generosity and faith, that we may reflect your loving compassion and grace throughout creation. God of the new Covenant.....hear our prayer

We now pray the prayer that Jesus gave us to pray:

Our Father in heaven
Hallowed be your name
Your kingdom come
Your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
And 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 forever.....Amen

Hymn TiS 259 Among us and before us(Vvs 1, 4 and 5)

1. Among us and before us, Lord, You stand
with arms outstretched and bread and wine at hand.
Confronting those unworthy of a crumb,
you ask that to your table we should come.

5. No more we hesitate and wonder why;
no more we stand indifferent, scared or shy.
Your invitation leads us to say yes,
to meet You where You nourish, heal and bless.

4. Who dare say no, when such is Your request
that each around Your table should be guest,
that here the ancient Word should live as new,
'Take, eat and drink all this is meant for you'.

CCLI Song # 1090922
Graham Maule | John L. Bell
• © Words: 1989 WGRG, c/o Iona Community,
• (Admin. by Willow Publishing Pty. Ltd.)
For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use.
All rights reserved. www.ccli.com
CCLI Licence # 300742

Holy Communion

Invitation

Brothers and sisters in Christ, the gospels tell us that before he suffered, Jesus sat at table with his disciples and established a new covenant in his blood. After he suffered, on the day he rose from the dead, he appeared to some of the disciples and was made known to them in the breaking of the bread. Come, then, to the supper of our Lord. Let us prepare the table with the offerings of our lives and labour.

Offertory

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, you who have brought forth bread from the earth.

Blessed be God, now and forever!

Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, you who created the fruit of the vine.

Blessed be God, now and forever!

As the grain once scattered in the fields and the grapes once dispersed on the hillsides are now reunited on this table in bread and wine, so, Lord, may your whole church soon be gathered together from the corners of the earth into your kingdom.

Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!

The Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right for us to give thanks. It is our joy and our peace at all times and in all places to give thanks to you, Holy Father, Almighty, Everlasting God, through Christ our Lord.

It is indeed right and good to glorify you, at all times and in all places, and to offer you our thanksgiving, O Lord. Through your living Word you created all things and pronounced them good. You made human beings in your own image, to share your life and reflect your glory. In the fullness of time you gave Christ to us as the way, the truth, and the life. In the upper room Christ gave us this supper, that we should celebrate the memorial of the cross and resurrection, by which he became the source of salvation for all who put their trust in him. Therefore with the whole company of saints in heaven and on earth, with all creation in all time, we sing a hymn to your glory:

Sung by Choir TiS 761 "Holy, Holy, Holy Lord

The Institution

We give thanks to God the Holy one that our Savior, Jesus Christ, before he suffered, gave us this memorial of his sacrifice, until his coming again. For the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The Memorial

We shall do as our Lord commands. We proclaim that our Lord Jesus was sent by God into the world, that he took upon himself our flesh and blood, and bore the wrath of God against our sin. We confess that Jesus was condemned to die that we might be pardoned, and suffered death that we might live. We proclaim that he is risen to make us right with God, and that he shall come again in glory to his new creation. We do this now, and until he comes again.

Prayer of Consecration

O Gracious God, send down your Spirit upon us, your people, and upon this bread and wine, that to us they may be Christ's body and blood, and that in partaking we may be one body and one spirit in Christ, a living sacrifice to the praise of your glory.

Breaking the bread

The bread which we break
is a sharing in the body of Christ.

**We who are many are one body,
for we all share the same loaf.**

The cup for which we give thanks
is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

**The cup which we drink
is our participation in the blood of Christ.**

Sung by Choir TiS 766 Lamb of God

The Communion

(*Please remain seated while the bread and the wine be brought to you and consume once you receive the elements)

Receive this holy sacrament of the body and blood of Christ and feed on him in your hearts by faith with thanksgiving.

The body of Christ, given for you and the blood of Christ, keep you in eternal life.

Prayer after communion

Gracious God, we thank you that you have fed us in this sacrament, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in your eternal kingdom. We offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory. Amen.

Benediction

God will write a new covenant on our hearts
God will be our God and we will be God's people
No longer shall we teach one another,
or say to each other, "Know the Lord."
For we shall all know God.
May the blessing of God, the Source of Life,
the Word of Truth, and the Spirit of Love be with you now and always.
Amen

Closing hymn TiS 537 Let us talents and tongues employ

1. When His time was over
the palms lay where they fell.
As they ate together
he told His friends farewell.
Jesus, though You cried out
for some other end,
love could only choose a cross
when our life began again.

2. Secretly they planned it,
with money changing hands;
in the quiet garden
a kiss betrayed their man.
Priests and elders tried Him.
Soldiers crowned Him King.
We were in the crowd that day
when our life began again.

3. Women wept to see Him;
he said, 'Don't weep for Me.'
Many laughed and mocked Him;
'Forgive them, they don't see.'
Jesus, please forgive me, You know what I am;
I was one who nailed Your hands
when our life began again.

4. There was one who asked You,
'Remember me this day.'
Jesus, when I'm dying,
remember me that way;
when my life is over,
be with me, my friend,
like the thief upon the cross,
when our life began again.

CCLI Song # 1272032
Robin Mann

• © 1980 Mann, Robin

For use solely with the SongSelect® Terms of Use. All rights reserved. www.ccli.com

CCLI Licence # 300742