



Leura Uniting Church
7 March 2021
3rd Sunday in Lent
Rev. Myung Hwa Park

Acknowledgement of country

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kbouhpGpEs&feature=youtu.be>



This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here. Let us acknowledge the Gundungurra and Dharug people, traditional custodians of this land under God and pay our respects to their Elders and Leaders, past and present, and pray for the future of their communities. May we learn from them and walk with them.

Welcome and Announcements

Jesus said "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day.

Jesus is calling to us.

Let us open our hearts and spirits, seeking a new direction in our lives.

Worship song TIS 477 Jesus calls us here to meet him

1. Jesus calls us here to meet him
as, through word and song and prayer,
we affirm God's promised presence
where his people live and care.
Praise the God who keeps his promise;
praise the Son who calls us friends;
praise the Spirit who, among us,
to our hopes and fears attends.
2. Jesus calls us to confess him
Word of Life and Lord of All,
sharer of our flesh and frailness
saving all who fail or fall.
Tell his holy human story;
tell his tales that all may hear;
tell the world that Christ in glory
came to earth to meet us here.
3. Jesus calls us to each other:
found in him are no divides.
Race and class and sex and language
such are barriers he derides.
Join the hand of friend and stranger;
join the hands of age and youth;
join the faithful and the doubter
in their common search for truth.

CCLI Song # 878695

Graham Maule | John L. Bell

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Prayer of Adoration

When we open our eyes, we see your glory, O God.

Sun, moon, and stars proclaim your magnificence.

When we open our ears, we hear your word, O God.

The voice of creation reaches the ends of the earth.

When we open our hearts, we receive your truth, O God.

You fill us with joy and light forever.

When we open ourselves, we praise your holy name.

Praise God's holy name.

Prayer of Confession

Gracious God, you gave us the covenant of the law
to guide us and help us live with our neighbours in love.
But we evade your commandments.

We talk ourselves out of living your grace
but we rely on our own power and control.

Save us from the sins we know in our heart.
Save us from the sins we hide.
And redeem us through Christ, your son, our Lord and Saviour.

Words of Assurance

God shows steadfast love
and blesses to those who walk in God's ways.
In love, God sent Jesus
to redeem us and restores us to new life.

So I declare to you the mercy of God in Christ Jesus, our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God.

Hymn of praise TIS 83. (Vvs 1, 2 and 6) Let us with a gladsome mind

1. Let us with a gladsome mind
praise the Lord, for he is kind:
for his mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

2. Let us blaze his name abroad,
for of gods he is the God:
for his mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

6. Let us then with gladsome mind
praise the Lord, for he is kind:
for his mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

John Milton
1608–74 *alt.*

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Scripture reading

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet

A light to our path.

Exodus 20: 1-17

The Ten Commandments

20 Then God spoke all these words:

² I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³ you shall have no other gods before^[a] me.

⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶ but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation^[b] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷ You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸ Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹ For six days you shall labour and do all your work. ¹⁰ But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹ For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

¹² Honour your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³ You shall not murder.^[c]

¹⁴ You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵ You shall not steal.

¹⁶ You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

¹⁷ You shall not covet your neighbour's house; you shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

John 2: 13- 22

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

¹³ The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴ In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money-changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵ Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶ He told those who were selling the doves, 'Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a market-place!' ¹⁷ His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.' ¹⁸ The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' ¹⁹ Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.' ²⁰ The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?' ²¹ But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²² After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

This is the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God.

Reflection " Reset your life "

Prayer : Wonderful and Magnificent God, reveal yourself to us as you did to Moses on Mt. Sinai. Speak to us in ways that illumine our darkness and enliven our spirits.



In 1990, as an exit student, I led one of the college chapel services along with my pastoral group. After 3 years of theological training at UTC, it was the moment of truth for me. In front of peers and the teaching staff, especially the lecturer who taught preaching and liturgical

studies, I had to preach. So when it was time for me to give the sermon, I slowly went up to the pulpit, but instead of taking out the sermon notes which I had prepared for weeks from the pulpit shelf, I started to preach in Korean without looking at my preaching notes.

Not a single person there could understand a word of what I was saying or knew why I was preaching in Korean. My unexpected act confused everyone in the chapel, but it most disturbed Graeme Hughes whose role and responsibility was teaching us how to preach. Why did a shy and quiet Asian girl disrupt the college chapel service, which is an important community activity in its own right, apart from being a testing ground for the exit students to reveal their readiness for their upcoming ministerial roles?

Please don't ask me what I preached on that day. But I can tell you that I created a lot of confusion and discomfort for those who were there in the chapel, my pastoral group, my peers of three years, the lecturers, and my friends. At the end of my reflection, I briefly explained why I had to preach in Korean. And perhaps I will share this with you at another time.



The reason I've shared my story with you this morning is that I feel that I can somewhat empathise with Jesus and what he did in the Jerusalem temple courts. The temple was crowded with people coming from all over the country to celebrate the important feast for their nation, the Passover, remembering God's saving act which spared their ancestors while their enemies were struck down by God.

And of course, the temple authorities facilitated the celebration by providing trading stalls for the pilgrims to buy animals, cattle, sheep, and doves for the burnt offerings, and money exchanging booths to change their Roman currency into temple currency.

It was a necessary business that the temple authorities practiced. But what Jesus saw in the temple courts was nothing but a market, a setting for human greed.

With a whip, he drove all from the temple courts, both animals and people, turning the money exchanging tables upside down, confronting the authorities, saying "Stop turning the father's house into a market".

In response to this unexpected act of Jesus, the temple authorities asked with indignation, "What sign can you show us that you should act like this?"

The answer Jesus gave confused them even more. "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."

There are many underlying meanings in this. Obviously, the Jews didn't get that.

The Jerusalem temple took 46 years to complete.

To even destroy it could be the work of three years, let alone rebuilding it in three days!

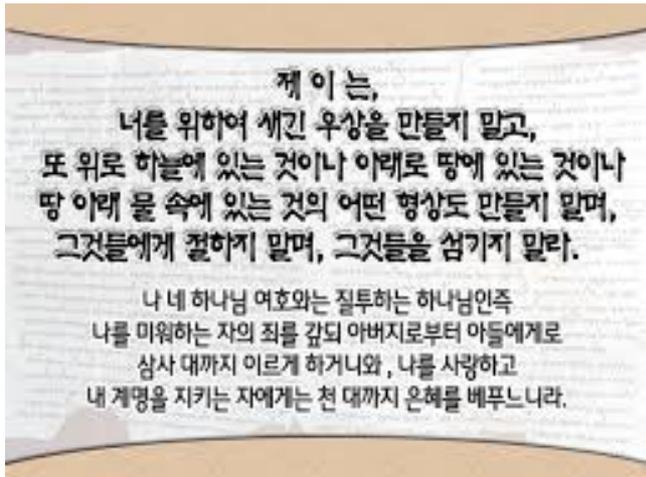
The Gospel writer, John kindly added a comment here that Jesus was speaking of the temple that was his body.

Jesus interrupted the business of the temple authorities in order to refocus that the temple first and foremost is the house of God. Jesus protested that the authorities were standing between God and the people, as if they were providing a necessary channel, whilst they were in fact exercising their power and authority over people and gaining benefit from it.

And sadly this is still happening in our time in many religious institutions.

In the Old Testament reading, we can see what God offered for God's people as the best institute to live godly life.

On the Mountain Sinai, Moses received the words of God, the Ten Commandments, a covenant between God and all of God's people.



Although the Ten Commandments set boundaries and restrictions for the Israelites, with the list of "do this and don't that", it was actually about God's blessings for them. The Ten Commandments was about how to keep a righteous relationship with God and with each other, with family, neighbours, and the rest of society.

Buddha, on his death bed, said to his disciples who were so worried about losing their teacher said "Do not cry, I have given you my teaching and it will guide you". And the teaching of Buddha has sustained and nourished the lives of thousands and thousands of seekers for more than 2500 years.

Well, for the next 3000 years, the Ten Commandments have guided the Israelites to godly living but have also been used to trap people into religiosity and be kept away from God's abundant blessings.

I like us to remember that Jesus said "*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfil them.*" (Matthew 5: 7)

At the Jerusalem Temple, Jesus who identifies himself as the temple of God, indicates that he is the ultimate sacrificial lamb, in him, the saving grace of God who raised Him from the dead, is to be found. So the gospel writer John confidently wrote "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life" (John 3: 36a).

At the Jerusalem temple, Jesus not only showed his anger at the corruption of religion, but he cleaned the temple. And as the followers of Jesus, we too are encouraged to act, to speak, and to live the life God wants the Israelites to live and the way of Jesus leads, faith not religiosity, right relationship not indifference and ignorance.

I may not have convinced anyone at the chapel service in 1990 and I probably haven't helped anyone here understand why I had to preach in Korean either, but I did this to honour God's call to me a Korean woman to this place, for a reason.



A rape victim, Brittany Higgins may not change the culture of our society, especially that of many of our politicians and other leaders who still hold sexism and discriminatory attitudes towards women, people of differences whether it is of gender, age, religion, or race. But Miss Higgins and others who spoke courageously against sexual violence and injustice, and I hope we place ourselves firmly in this category, will continue to seek a world in which it is clear that we all are made equal in God's sight and freed to build a right relationship with each other, with God.



Friends as we journey through Lent, let us imitate Christ, who challenges us to look for wholeness for God's creation.
Amen.

Hymn of reflection TIS 674 (Vvs 1,3,4 and 5)

1. Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain,
informed of God's own bias, we ask him once again:
'How long must some folk suffer? How long can few folk mind?
How long dare vain self-interest turn prayer and pity blind?'
3. From those for ever shackled to what their wealth can buy,
the fear of lost advantage provokes the bitter cry:
'Don't query our position! Don't criticise our wealth!
Don't mention those exploited by politics and stealth!'
4. To God, who through the prophets proclaimed a different age,
we offer earth's indifference, its agony and rage:
'When will the wronged be righted? When will the kingdom come?
When will the world be generous to all instead of some?'

5. God asks, 'Who will go for me? Who will extend my reach?
And who, when few will listen, will prophesy and preach?
And who, when few bid welcome, will offer all they know?
And who, when few dare follow, will walk the road I show?'

CCLI Song # 3163221
Graham Maule | John L. Bell
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Prayer for offering

Prayer of intercession

With confidence and trust let us pray for the world
our response to "God of Love" is "**hear our prayer**"

We pray for the Church throughout the world, for the whole People of God, that each one may be a true and faithful servant of Christ. We pray for the mission of this Church, that in faithful witness we may preach the gospel to the ends of the earth, proclaiming a Gospel of love and justice. God of love,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for those drawing near to the light of faith, may they be brought to the true knowledge of you; we pray for our families and friends, that you will give them joy and satisfaction in all that they do; we pray for the whole human family, that we may live together with justice and mercy. God of love,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for peace in the world, that a spirit of respect and reconciliation may grow among nations and peoples; we pray for our country, that we will help contribute to its true growth and well-being; we pray for good weather, and for abundant harvests of land and sea for all to share. God of love,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for those in positions of power and influence during this time of a pandemic, that what they do will benefit humanity; whether they are doing research, creating policies and protocols, planning distribution, making calls or administering vaccines. Strengthen all who give their energy for the wellbeing of the whole community. God of love,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for the poor, the persecuted, the sick, and all who suffer; for refugees, prisoners, and all in danger; that they may be relieved and protected; we pray for all whom we have injured or offended, and for grace to amend our lives and to further your reign, God of love,
Hear our prayer.

We pray for those we know who are ill at home or in hospital, and name them now in our hearts...

May they experience the healing and renewing touch of Jesus. God of love,
Hear our prayer.

Tomorrow the world celebrates International Women's Day. Let us think of the mothers, sisters, daughters, wives, colleagues, friends who have nurtured us and upheld us with the warmth and wisdom of women.

God of all,
Hear our prayer

God of the covenant, you call us to be fruitful servants of creation, and to offer our lives as the foundation of your realm. In our prayers, we lay before you the desires of our hearts, that we may be transformed by their fulfillment. May the prayers we offer be a channel for new and abundant life for the whole earth. In the name of Christ, we pray. **Amen.**

Let us now join together in the words Jesus taught us to pray:

Closing hymn TIS 751

What does the Lord require of you?
What does the Lord require of you?
Justice, kindness, walk humbly with your God.
To seek justice, and love kindness
and walk humbly with your God.

May be sung as a round

Micah 6:8

CCLI Song # 456859

Jim Strathdee

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Word of mission



*Disturb us, Lord, when
We are too well pleased with ourselves,
When our dreams have come true
Because we have dreamed too little,*

*When we arrived safely
Because we sailed too close to the shore.*

*Disturb us, Lord, when
With the abundance of things we possess
We have lost our thirst
For the waters of life;
Having fallen in love with life,
We have ceased to dream of eternity
And in our efforts to build a new earth,
We have allowed our vision
Of the new Heaven to dim.*

*Disturb us, Lord, to dare more boldly,
To venture on wider seas
Where storms will show your mastery;
Where losing sight of land,
We shall find the stars.*

*We ask You to push back
The horizons of our hopes;
And to push into the future
In strength, courage, hope, and love.*

(Prayer attributed to Sir Francis Drake 1577)

Go now into the world with the Lord at your side, seeking goodness and compassion. Bring the message of hope and be the channel of peace to all whom you meet.

Blessing

May God the Creator bless you,
May God the Redeemer heal you ,
May God the Holy Spirit enlighten you , now and always.
Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
In the name of Christ. Amen.