



Leura Uniting Church
11 July 2021
Pentecost 7
Stephen White

Let us celebrate our great God.

Acknowledgement of Country

This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here.
We acknowledge the Durag and Gundangurra People, traditional custodians of this land under God.
We commit ourselves again to caring for this land and working for reconciliation in this land.

Call to Worship

Our call to worship this morning is Psalm 24. This 3000 year old psalm is believed to a song sung when a great procession of priests and people carried the Ark of the Covenant into the sanctuary in an annual celebration.

In another time, without COVID, we could process in from the lawn into the church singing this psalm, with the leader asking the questions and the people answering.

Today, we are worshipping over Zoom, so I invite you to join in with reciting this psalm. Please say the parts in bold

Rev Dr Moira Laidlaw
Based on Psalm 24

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,

the world, and those who live in it;

for the Lord has founded it on the seas,

and established it on the rivers.

Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord?

And who shall stand in the Lord's holy place?

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts,

who do not speak or act in false or deceitful ways .

They will receive blessing from the Lord,

blessing from the God of their salvation.

Such is the company of those who seek the face of God.

Lift up your heads, O gates! and be lifted up, O ancient doors!

that the King of glory may come in.

Who is the King of glory?

The Lord of hosts is the King of glory. Hallelujah! Amen!

Prayer of Adoration

Rev Bruce Prewer

God of secret purposes and extravagant blessings, we come to praise you. We come because we want to, we sing our songs because we are glad to, we pray for your grace because we need to, and we ask for the love of Christ in our hearts because without it we are a dead loss.

Please lift every shutter within our mind, and open every door within our soul, that you, the Lord of glory, the God of countless hosts, may come in. Through Christ Jesus, the joy of loving hearts.

Amen!

Song TIS 279 The King of Glory Comes

*The King of glory comes, the nation
rejoices,
open the gates before him, lift up your
voices.*

1. Who is the King of glory; how shall we
call him?
He is Immanuel, the promised of ages.

The King of glory comes...

2. In all of Galilee, in city or village,
he goes among his people curing their
illness.

The King of glory comes...

4. He gave his life for us, the pledge of
salvation;
he took upon himself the sins of the nation.

The King of glory comes...

5. He conquered sin and death; he truly has
risen,
and he will share with us his heavenly
kingdom.

The King of glory comes...

Willard Francis Jabusch 1930-
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Prayer of Confession

Rev Dr Moira Laidlaw

We read in Ephesians that we were chosen by God before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before God in love.

Such a privilege...

Such a responsibility....

God chose us...to be holy and blameless.

We do try, but being holy all the time is not easy.

Forgive us Lord, when we fail.

We read that we are destined for adoption as God's children through Jesus Christ...

Such a privilege...

Such a responsibility....

Our identity as members of God's family should be apparent to others...

That means being recognizable as Christians through our words and deeds.

Forgive us Lord, when we fail

We also read that we were marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit which is the guarantee of our inheritance as God's own people...

Such a privilege...

Such a wonderful privilege, knowing that the burden of living up to such an inheritance has been taken off our shoulders

because of the grace which has been lavished upon us.

Because in Jesus we have been forgiven according to the riches of God's grace.

May our response to such blessings be to live as grace-full and joy- full followers of Jesus, our Lord and our Saviour. **Amen**

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:

Rev Dr Moira Laidlaw

Hear again the good news: Because of the riches of God's grace: in Jesus we have received the forgiveness of our sins - all gifts of God's generous and amazing grace. *Based on Ephesians 1: 7*

Thanks be to God!

Readings:

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12-19

Trevor Prowse

Ephesians 1:1-14

Kerry Jordan

Sermon Let us celebrate our great God

Here we are in another week of lockdown and worshipping through Zoom.

Worshipping through Zoom we miss out on many of the aspects of worship that we love and we can't wait to get together again face to face. Yet when we can again meet face to face, the many restrictions take away a lot of the joy of worshipping together.

What we want is to be able to come and worship with no restrictions, to come and have a great celebration as we worship our great God.

In Psalm 24, which we used as a call to worship, and our reading from 2 Samuel we see the people of God worshipping as a great celebration of their God.

2 Samuel 6

For the last five weeks we have been reading parts of 1 and 2 Samuel.

In our reading from 2 Samuel, we have the story of King David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

We have been following the story of Israel calling for a king and Saul was anointed as King over Israel. We followed some of his successes but then we saw how he lost favour of God through his disobedience.

Then along comes the boy David. He was anointed by the prophet Samuel. David came and defeated the giant Goliath and later served Saul, firstly as a musician and then as a brave soldier and David won many battles.

It was after Saul was killed in battle that David became the King over Israel. He captured Jerusalem and made it his city. He then went to bring the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem.

Well before the Israelites asked for a king, the Philistines had captured the Ark. At the time it seemed to the Israelites that the Lord was no longer with them.

But the presence of the Ark brought lots of trouble to the Philistines so they returned it to Israel. It was kept at Kiriath Jamin for many years.

What is the Ark?

In the wilderness of Sinai, God instructed Moses to build this Ark of the Covenant, it signified God's presence in the midst of the people. It was a gold covered wooden chest, about 1.3 m long and 800 mm wide and high. (That is just over four feet long and just under three feet wide and high). It contained the stone tablets of the Ten Commandments, Aaron's rod and a pot of manna.



There were two gold cherubim on the lid. It was believed that God sat on the Ark between the cherubim.

The Ark was to be carried by the Levites by inserting a wooden pole through rings attached to the Ark.

Back to our story.

This was a big event. David had 30,000 able young men and headed to Kiriath Jearim to bring the Ark to Jerusalem.

The Ark was put on a new cart. (Note this was against God's instructions) They headed for Jerusalem, celebrating with all their might before the Lord with castanets, harps, lyres, tambourines, rattles and cymbals. It was a real time of celebration of their God.

But there was an incident, where the oxen pulling the cart stumbled and Uzzah reached out to steady the Ark and he was struck down for this irreverent act.

Now, David and all the people were afraid and left the Ark at the home of Obed-Edom and went home, rather subdued, angry and afraid.

After three months, David again went to bring the Ark to Jerusalem.

This time, Levites carried the Ark as it should have been done with the wooden poles.

We are told that they took six steps and David sacrificed a bull and a fattened calf.

The great celebratory procession continued, and David was “dancing before the Lord with all his might.”

They brought the Ark of the Lord and set it in its place inside the tent that was pitched for it. David then sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before the Lord.

Then David gave a loaf of bread, a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each person in the crowd, and they went to their homes.

This whole act of bringing home the Ark was an act of worship to God. It was a great time of celebration.

They also saw it as bringing God into the city as his presence was with the Ark.

Psalm 24

We will now look at Psalm 24.

Rev Dr George Knight tells us that this 3000 year old psalm has taught people all down the centuries the absolute priority in their lives of worship of God. It is recited by Jews first thing on the first day of each week. It is used by Christian world-wide on Ascension Day, and verses 7-10 are sung before Holy Communion in many Reformed Churches.

It began, in all probability, as a song to be used when a great procession of priests and people carried the Ark of the Covenant into the sanctuary in an annual celebration

The psalm acknowledges God as the Creator.

“The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it; for he founded it on the seas and established it on the waters.”

The psalmist then questions;

“Who may ascend the mountain of the Lord? Who may stand in his holy place?”

He then goes on to answer his question:

“The one who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not trust in an idol or swear by a false God.”

And then we have the reward:

“They will receive blessings from the Lord, and vindication from God, their Saviour.

Such is the generation of those who seek him, who seek your face, God of Jacob.”

As the procession approached the wall of the city or maybe the door to the temple the people call out or sing:

Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors that the King of glory may come in.”

As the people processed with the Ark of the Covenant into the temple or the sanctuary, they were saying that God was travelling with them and the Ark. Open the gates so God can come in.

Then they ask:

“Who is this King of glory?”

And they answer:

“The Lord mighty in battle” and the second time “The Lord Almighty – he is the King of Glory.”

Can you imagine the great scene as the priests and the people come processing into the sanctuary praising God in unison as they sang this psalm.

We too should bring our wholehearted worship to our great God. Worship is a time of celebration, even within COVID lockdown.

Our normal worship is very different from the great celebration of David and the people bringing the Ark into Jerusalem.

Different people are used to different types of worship, and there is no right or wrong way in worshipping our God.

Some like a lot of pomp and ceremony as is found in some Roman, High Anglican and Orthodox churches.

Some like the joyous celebration of Pentecostal services, with all the tongues, clapping and participation.

Some like a quiet meditative service where there is lots of silence such as Taize.

We tend to be somewhere in between.

The psalm reminds us that we do not come into the presence of God as we enter our church, but God comes with us as we come to worship. Our God is not captive to a church or any other place but is with us every moment of our lives.

However we worship our great God, we should do it with joy and celebration.

Ephesians

Now the beginning of his letter to the church in Ephesus, St. Paul speaks of praising God through Jesus Christ. This passage does not mention worship but gives us the reasons that we should want to worship our great God.

Quoting Rev Andrew Gilles in *With Love to the World*:

“Today, St. Paul treats us to a rich, lavish outline of the role of Christ and his abundant blessings for the Christian. We are blessed and chosen children of God, recipients of a divine inheritance, holy and blameless, redeemed and forgiven, bearers of divine mystery – all sealed with the Holy Spirit.”

In the *Seasons of the Spirit* material, we read:

The writer tries to explain God’s plan for the whole world. All are chosen as God’s loving people before the beginning of time. The passage makes three key points about God’s plan. For the right ordering of things:

- Its motivation and source is God’s love;
- It has been in existence for all eternity;
- It encompasses all creation.

At the fulfillment of this plan, all that exists will live in the context of relationship with God, and all will be children of God.

We as Christians have even more reason to worship our great God than the people of the Old Testament.

While we are restricted at the moment to Zoom, let our worship be a great celebration of God’s love and grace to each one of us.

Amen.

Song - TIS 129 Amazing Grace

1. Amazing grace how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
was blind but now I see

2. As grace that taught my heart to fear
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed

3. Through many dangers, toils and snares
I have already come:
God's grace has brought me safe thus far
And grace will lead me home

4. The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be
as long as life endures.

John Newton
• Public Domain

Announcements

Prayer for the Offering

Prayer of Intercession

Perce Marland

For years, I have been deeply distressed by the constant and on-going resort to violence in the world. What exacerbated that distress recently was hearing that 67 little children were killed in the recent Israeli/Palestinian conflict. What a tragic and senseless loss! In a world where humankind has created so many wonderful innovations and performed such wonderful feats, why haven't we found a way to put an end to wars and violence when the misery they cause is patently obvious? So today, I have designed our prayers to focus in part on seeking an end to violence at all levels - personal, local or national. Let us pray.

God of love, You who have urged us to love one another, we acknowledge that our world is in torment because of humankind's failure to heed your command to be compassionate and to live in love. We implore you to raise up leaders who are dedicated to peace and who will make a public vow never to use violence in the management of the world's affairs. Loving Lord, we pray that those who inflict pain and suffering on others might see the error of their ways, cease their senseless acts of violence and learn the transformative power of love. For the millions who are so traumatised by acts of violence, we pray that they might find relief in the ministrations of loving people and see and experience acts of love to blunt and blot out the pain of violence.

Loving Lord, we pray that our churches and church leaders will be so emboldened by the indisputable wisdom of Your direction to be loving, that they will seek to proclaim fearlessly that the world needs to follow Your way. A world that is not founded in love is a world destined for distress, the kind of distress that swathes of people are experiencing right now. We pray earnestly that all those who work for peace, whether they be in our churches or elsewhere, will find their efforts rewarded over and over again.

Merciful God, the world's peace has also been shattered by the COVID pandemic. People have lost loved ones, are struggling financially, have been separated from family members for months if not years and are living with untold stress. We pray for all those so suffering. May they find support and compassion so that their suffering might be relieved and their deep anguish become a thing of the past. In this battle against the pandemic, countless people – doctors, nurses, health staff and administrators - have been seeking to counter the effects of this dread

disease. We ask that their wonderful services be acknowledged in meaningful ways and that they experience community plaudits that they so richly deserve.

There are countless others for whom we also pray: the victims of natural disasters such as heat waves in Canada and the north-west of the US and the high-rise collapse in Miami, refugees seeking a better life, detainees such as the Biloela family who are enduring the impact of heartless officialdom, Australians who are sleeping rough and those, especially in our own community and congregation, enduring illness, pain and loneliness. Heavenly Father, we ask that they receive Your healing power and the blessings of care from their friends and community members.

Loving Lord, we are often so pre-occupied with our problems, that we fail to recognize the thousands who are Your agents of love. Amongst those are social service workers, counsellors, emergency workers and those committed to the welfare of others such as those who work at Junction 142. Make known to them our thanks for their service and how much we appreciate what they do. Shower them with your divine blessing, we pray.

Now let us join together in reciting the words of the Lord's prayer.

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 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

Song - TIS 268 Joy to the World

1. Joy to the world ! The Lord has come;
let earth receive her King;
let every heart prepare Him room,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven and nature sing,
and heaven, and heaven and nature sing.

2. Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;
let us our songs employ;
while fields and streams, rocks, and hills
and plains
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy,
repeat, repeat the sounding joy.

3. He rules the world with truth and grace,
and makes the nations prove
the glories of His righteousness
and wonders of His love,
and wonders of His love,
and wonders, wonders of His love.

CCLI Song # 2856405
Isaac Watts

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Benediction

Rev Bruce Prewer

It is time to go out and share God' secret purpose
which has been disclosed in Jesus Christ.
With God's help, Amen!

Share that secret with others by the way you live:
with the words on your lips,
by the deeds of your hands,
with the prayers in your minds,
and through the love in your hearts.
With God's help, Amen!

The grace of Christ will redeem you
the enduring love of God will support you,
the friendship of the Holy Spirit will accompany you,
this day and ever more. **Amen!**