



Leura Uniting Church
16 May 2021
Easter 7 (Ascension of Jesus)
Rev Myung Hwa Park

Ophidiophobia / Cross

Acknowledgement of country

As we gather in this place, we give thanks for the Gundungurra and Darug People. We acknowledge the commitment their ancestors made, across the generations, to nurturing this Land. Together, may we walk into the future, recognising the sacred footsteps that continue to lead us to the promise of Heaven.

Welcome and Announcements



Worship song by Linda 10,000 reasons

Call to worship (based on Psalm 1)

Today we celebrate the Ascension of our Risen Lord,
 Let us prepare for the coming of God's kingdom.

Blessed are the ones who do not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand with sinners or sit in the seat of mockers, but rather whose delight is in the ways of the LORD.

Blessed are the ones who meditate on the way and the word of the Lord day and night for they are like trees planted by streams of water.

They yield their fruit in season and their leaves do not wither. Whatever they do, the Lord is with them and they seem to prosper.

It is not so with the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away.

Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the ways of the wicked will perish and they will see the errors of their ways.

Prayer of adoration and confession

Let us pray,

We praise you O God, for you raised Jesus from the death and calls us to life in his glory.

God of Grace, you call us to follow Christ, to be different from the world,

so we can hold different priorities, different values and live alternative way of life.

May we find our hope in Christ, in his words and in his faith as we worship you and celebrate the Ascension of Christ Jesus, our Lord.

While we claim to celebrate the ascension of our Lord,

the way we live proclaims our lack of faith

in his power to deal with the world.

Let us confess the incongruity between our faith and practice.

Let us pray:

We come, O Lord, on this day of glory to confess our lack of trust.

While we sing of your lordship over all creation,

we have too often acted as though you are powerless

in the face of today's events.

Help us to live with confidence in your presence today

and fill us with the power of your Spirit, that we may proclaim your good news as did your son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Silence

Word of Assurance

Christ died for our sins and rose again to give us His life.

While on earth and in heaven, Christ is our heavenly High Priest intercedes for us so nothing can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Therefore I declare to you that in Christ Jesus we are forgiven, redeemed and restored.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Scripture readings

1 John 5: 9-13.

John 17: 6-21

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ raised to live forever.

Linda's Song 'Where We Belong'

This face that you see
That you think is me
Holds the dark and the light

I would hide my self
And shelter all my pain
And cover my light

You came and you had to leave
To be closer than breath
Love so deep it never ends
And holds every step

From the light you call
To rest in the cool and shade
Of belonging and love

This life that we've been given
To be treasured not unloved
To be whole and one

You came and you had to leave
To be closer than breath
Love so deep it never ends
And holds every step

You call us home
On this road to freedom within
To walk as your beloved

Love is where we belong
Held in the dark and the light
To not wither but live

You came and you had to leave
To be closer than breath
Love so deep it never ends
And holds every step

Linda Peterson May 2021

Sermon 'Where we belong'

Last week, I drove to Berrima to meet with my old friends, a couple I have known for almost the entire duration of my time in Australia. They looked after me while I was a theological college student. They were there for my family and me on every special occasion; at my wedding, at my children's baptisms, and almost every induction that I had except the last one. Then when I became a widow, they promised me that they would pray for me every morning. Whenever I ring them, they would say, "We did pray for you this morning as we always do". These are the most reassuring words which make me feel that I can get through anything, everything.

We know that prayer is not just words or a spiritual exercise that we do routinely or in public worship but an act of love; bringing concern about someone to God, actively seeking and petitioning for the hopes, the joys and wellbeing of ourselves and others for whom we care and love.

Now my friends are ageing, and both face some health issues, so their prayers for me may not be there for long. So I am acutely aware of their prayers at this very late stage of their lives as I reflect on the final prayer that Jesus was offering for his friends in today's reading in the gospel of John. After he had his final meal with them, he gave his final teaching, then said his final prayer for them.

Although the reading is set for the last Sunday in the Easter season, the priestly prayer of Jesus seems to be especially fit for the Ascension of Jesus as we celebrate the final moments of the risen Lord before he ascended into heaven.

At the beginning of John chapter 17 we read, "After saying this, Jesus raised his eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come, Glorify your Son so that your Son may glorify you" as if he wants his listeners to hear his conversation with God.

In his prayer, Jesus reveals intricate relationships between three parties: God, the disciples and himself. Jesus saw his role as making God's name known to the people whom God took from the world and gave to him. There were three in this relationship!

And this wasn't a problem for Jesus, unlike some others might do.

The mission of Jesus is to let his followers know that God had sent him to them, and they have truly accepted this and obey God's word. And Jesus gave full credit to God for everything.

One of the most important elements of a relationship is a sense of belonging.

In various settings through life we promise each other to share a similar sense of belonging to each other, whether it is a marriage vow, job contract, taking up citizenship, or becoming a member of the church. Here, Jesus reveals his sense of belonging to God in the most profound way, revealing something of their eternal relationship. *"All I have is yours and all you have is mine and in them, I am glorified"*.

There's a Korean phrase, "The money in my pocket and the money in the safe are the same money" 주머니 돈이 싹지돈. For Korean couples, whoever earns money, it all belongs to the family. Likewise, Jesus dared to declare that everything God has is also his. But only through emptying himself which gave him the greatest sense of wholeness.

In the volatile situation of the pandemic, many serious concerns and questions have been raised.

Because of the volatile situation of the pandemic, our Government had decided to ban Australians returning from India temporarily. People raised serious concerns and questions on the citizenship.

Families in domestic violence experience that their home is no longer a safe place, where they can belong.

Homeless people especially in this cold winter's night, would ask where in this vast country they belong?

Today, we might ask ourselves, 'what gives us a sense of belonging? Where do we belong? Or we might ask where we should ultimately belong?

Jesus knew that his followers would find the same rejection and troubles that he faced as the world did not accept the word that he passed on. The darkness of the world rejected and hated the way of God, selfless and unconditional love Jesus revealed in his teaching, in his relationship and in his willingness to give himself up.

But here, Jesus prayed for his disciples not to remove them from the world even though the world might hate them. So instead he prayed for their protection from the evil one.

Instead of running away from the wicked influences in life, greed, selfishness, indifference, Jesus asks God to sanctify his followers by the truth, by the Word of God which came into the world in flesh, to reveal the love of God.

Jesus, the sanctified one now sends his followers, including us who believe in his words, into the world so they too may be sanctified, witness that they belong to God.

Friends, as we celebrate the Ascension of Jesus, and the last Sunday in the Easter season, let us remember that living out the resurrection is to celebrate the community of faith that we have become, the community which seeks, strives and follows the way of Christ, bringing God's reign in which we belong.

May the community of faith in which we belong be the place all may feel a deep sense of belonging as we continue offer hope and strength to the world around us.

Amen.

Song of reflection 'Where we belong' by Linda

Prayer for Offering

Prayers of the People

Gracious God, you have revealed your dear self to us through the gift of Jesus. His first friends enjoyed his physical being among them. They could see and touch, in a way that we do not. Yet we can still learn from him and follow him, in a wonderful new way.

Where the death of Jesus brought dismay to those first friends, causing them to run and to hide, we may now see your death as mysteriously leading to new life. When Jesus' first friends learned how he was alive and present to them, a new way of understanding your divine life was revealed to them, as now to us. We thank you.

We no longer cling to your risen body. We trust in your absence as leading into a new and never-ending presence. We discern you in the face of strangers who may need us. We re-discover you in loved ones who are so often close at hand. We find you mixing and enjoying the company of those whom others regard as unlovely, alarming, or strange. You call us to join with them and you at your universal table, where bread and wine in abundance are to be found.

You call us to join with you at this table here today and receive from you bread for the journey and the refreshment of our soul's thirst. Send us to those who need us this week. Invite us to table with the humble and meek. Invite to the table with the unwell and the strong. Invite us to the table with our companions here, who encourage us with their stories, their faith, and their hope. By your grace, enable us to be at table with sisters and brothers all over the world: those who know your bread of life, and those who do not; those who have tasted your cup of salvation, and those who do not. Be with them and bless them we pray.

We also pray for those who cannot be present with us today. We quietly call to mind the names of those whose burdens are known to us: the ones who need a little peace; the ones who need rest; the ones who need healing, relief from pain, and uplifting from grief. We call to mind those who need our personal attention and encouragement. We call to mind any who need our personal intervention or help from our community.

Risen Christ, we have learned that your departure allowed a new coming – the revelation of all that is God, of all that is you, of all that *is*. In the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit, you are seen because you have found us – in our need you call to us to attend to the needs of others. You call us again. You are not a spook, not an illusion, but Spirit, in our midst. Spirit divine-in-the-human; Spirit of oneness with God; Spirit of oneness with creation.

Your departure from those friends long ago has become your Spirit presence with us. We give thanks for their teaching about you. We give thanks for their bold and courageous faith in times of stress and strife. We give thanks for your continuing fellowship and for your companionship with them, and with us in each generation. Your prayer for us in the Gospel has been fulfilled by those faithful friends so long ago. In this Supper with you today, we break bread with you once more. Prepare us to serve others in your everlasting name. AMEN.

Holy Communion

Here in this place TiS 474 (Verses 1 &3)

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

3. Here we will take the wine and the water
Here we will take the bread of new birth
Here you shall call your sons and your daughters
Call us anew to be salt for the earth

Give us to drink the wine of compassion
Give us to eat the bread that is you
Nourish us well and teach us to fashion
Lives that are holy and hearts that are true

Mary Haugen
1950-

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Passing the Peace of Christ

God's power is a glorious inheritance among the saints.
It is a power manifested in love, forgiveness, and peace.
May the power of peace be with you today.

And also with you.

Let us exchange the sign of the peace of Christ.

Invitation to the Offering or Invitation to Communion

Come to the table of peace.
Come to the table of love.
Come to the table of joy.
Come to the table of power.
Come to the table of Christ.

Great Thanksgiving (*Standing*)

You are worthy of all our praise, O God,
for you are the source of all good power.

By your power,

heaven and earth were formed.

By your power,

you created us and gave us life.

By your power,

we are guided and protected.

By your power,

Jesus Christ triumphed over the grave.

By your power,
the Holy Spirit comes to sustain and care for us.
 And so, in praise and gratitude, we join the generations
 of the faithful in singing your praise.

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.
 Hosanna in the highest.
 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
 Hosanna in the highest.***

(Please be seated)

God of glory, in thanks we remember how Jesus broke bread and gave the cup to make us
 partakers of his body and blood, so that he might live in us and we in him.

God of mercy, in thanks we remember how Jesus invites us to his table, imprinting on our
 hearts his sacrifice on the cross.

In gratitude we bow before the Righteous One, declaring his resurrection and glory, and
 knowing that his prayers alone make us worthy to partake of his spiritual meal.

Bless these gifts, O Lord of all, and pour out the Holy Spirit upon us, that we receive bread
 and wine, we may be assured that Christ's promise in these signs will be fulfilled.

The Breaking of the Bread

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

The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.

The Gifts of God for the people of God.

Invitation to Communion

Jesus says: 'When I am lifted up from the earth,
 I will draw everyone to me.'
 Come, everything is ready.

Distribution

Prayer after Communion

Holy Father, your Son prayed for his disciples that they would be one, as you and he are
 one. As we have eaten of the one bread, and drunk from the one cup, keep your whole
 church harmoniously together in faith and love, united by the one Spirit. We ask this
 through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy
 Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

TiS 468 We are you people

1. We are your people,
Spirit of grace,
you dare to make us
to all our neighbours
Christ's living voice, hands and face.

2. Joined in community,
treasured and fed,
may we discover
gifts in each other,
willing to lead and be led.

5. Give, as we venture
justice and care
(peaceful, resisting,
waiting or risking)
wisdom to know when and where.

6. Christ, as we serve you
In different ways,
may all we're doing
show that your're living,
meeting your love with our praise .

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Brian Arthur Wren

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Word of mission

Jesus said “ Now I am no longer in the world,
but they are in the world.
They do not belong to the world,
just as I do not belong to the world.
As you have sent me into the world,
so I have sent them into the world.”

Let us go forth into the new seasons of our lives in the name of Jesus. Thuma mina.

Thuma mina, thuma mina, thuma mina Somandla.
(*Send me Jesus, send me Jesus, send me Jesus, send me Lord*)

Let us go with caring awareness for the world and all that is in it. Thuma mina.

Thuma mina, thuma mina, thuma mina Somandla.

Let us go forth in peace and be led out in joy. Thuma mina.

Thuma mina, thuma mina, thuma mina Somandla.

Christ our King pour upon you his abundant gifts, make you faithful and strong to do his will,
and bring you to reign with him in glory; and the blessings of God almighty is always with
you.

Amen

Postlude