



Leura Uniting Church
7 November 2021
Rev Myung Hwa Park

Order of Service

Gathering

Acknowledgement of country

We come together over zoom whilst our feet are firmly planted on the beautiful Aboriginal land that unites us.

We acknowledge the Gundungurra and Dharug people who cared the land, mountains, water, fauna and flora of this beautiful place, the Blue Mountains.

May we learn from them and walk with them.

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

Call to worship (Opening Psalm 127)

WE GATHER IN THE SPACE THAT GOD CREATES

Leader: Without the LORD building, we labour in vain.

People: Without the LORD keeping watch, we watch in vain.

L: Rising early and delaying our rest gains us nothing.

Just as there are some who eat the bread of their frantic labours, so it seems the LORD gives honour to those the LORD loves.

L: It is children that the LORD gives as a lasting heritage;

P: rewarding with the fruit of the womb.

L: Just as arrows in the hand of the warrior equip him,

P: so the children borne in one's youth give assurance and promise.

L: The community which fills its quiver with children is rewarded, blessed with completeness,

P: and shall not be shamed by those with whom it must contend.

We thank you, living God, that in Jesus Christ you have built a house not made with hands, a people among whom you live. We thank you that you have called us and that we belong to you. We come to you longing to know the touch of your spirit that we may be encouraged to serve you in this world. Come to us that we may know you and sing your praise; through Jesus Christ .

Let us worship God

Worship song : TiS 703 As the deer pants

As the deep pants for the water, so my soul longs after you.
 You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you.
 You alone are my strength, to you alone may my spirit yield.
 You alone are my heart's desire and I long to worship you.

CCLI Song # 1431
 Martin Nystrom

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Prayer of confession

Divine Provider, we confess that we sometimes doubt your provision for us. When we start scraping the bottom of the barrel, we cut back our sharing with others who have already run out and are hungry or in need. Forgive selfishness and independence that prevents interdependence and working together to solve distribution problems in the use of the resources of yours.

L: Friends, hear the good news! Christ has entered into heaven.

P: Christ now appears in the presence of God on our behalf.

L: Friends, believe the good news!

P: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven

Scripture reading

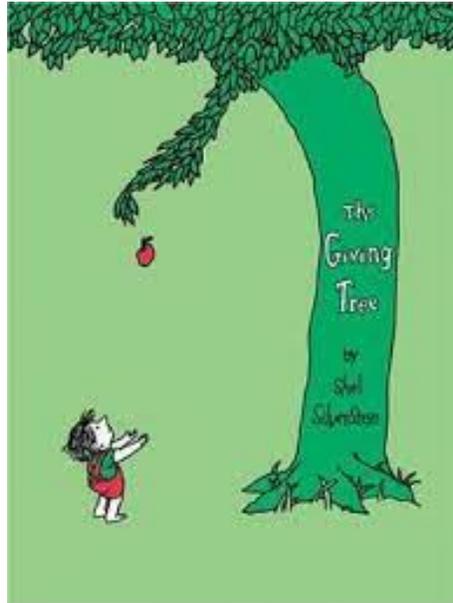
Ruth 3:1-5; 4:13-17

Mark 12: 38- 44

This is the word of God

Thanks to be God

Reflection



In my first winter in Australia, I was asked to help the Winter Appeal for Salvation Army. I thought the task was like a piece of cake, for I had to work in one of the most affluent areas in the North Shore suburb of Sydney.

But before too long, I discovered how wrong I was for assuming that all those rich people living in those beautiful houses would open their gates to me and offer a generous sum of donation to the very worthy cause, helping the homeless people!

On the way from the failed mission, I missed the people in Pakistan whom I spent three years before coming to Australia. Most of the people I worked with were poor, but they were incredibly generous and hospitable to me and shared everything they had without reservation. They made me feel their home is my home and treated me as their daughter, sister and aunty. They gave everything they had without holding back. The generosity of Pakistanis reminds me of the children's book "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XFQZfeHq9wo>

The Giving Tree is a beautiful story of friendship. In this story, the Tree gives everything to make the boy happy and provides the Tree with joy. The boy plays with the Tree, after sometime later, the boy cut the Tree's branches to build a house. When the boy got much older, the Tree offered its trunk to make a boat to travel afar. When there is nothing left but an old stump, the Tree still offers the boy, who is now a significantly older man, to sit and rest. The Tree gave everything to the boy without holding back anything, for the boy loved the Tree, and the Tree was happy.

In the gospel of Saint Mark, Jesus notices the widow's offering, who put two tiny copper coins in the temple donation box. At the time of Jesus, the people who came to the temple had to pay half a shekel, a silver coin used for the annual temple tax. But the poor widow's did not have enough to fulfil the temple requirement, but she offered all she had.

Jesus is making a point here for his disciples about faith, commitment and total fidelity by saying that the widow put more into the treasury than all the others who gave out of their wealth, for she put in everything, all she had to live.

Following the beautiful introduction for the story of Naomi and Ruth last Sunday, we need to see how this captivating storyline developed and learn the important message from it.

Ruth is an outsider, a Moabite woman, who followed her mother-in-law Naomi to the land of Israel where she does not know cultural practice or family lineage. But her devotion and faith in her mother in law, she put all she had into the treasury. And the story tells that Boaz became the redeemer for Ruth, but through their son, Obed, who became the grandfather of King David, the lineage of our Lord Jesus the Christ, who became the redeemer for us all.

As we watch the UN conference, COP26, we become more aware that the earth is our common home which we need to look after together, not in selfish or nationalistic interest. We do not own anything as we often confess in our prayer for the offering. It was clear from the moment of creation that it is our role to look after God's creation as a good steward.

Friends, we have been given life and have been entrusted with the goodness and abundance of the creator. So let us be faithful like Ruth to her new life and like the widow who was willing to offer everything she had. Those widows show their uncompromised devotion and commitment to God.

And Jesus praised the selfless, uncompromised devotion of the widow in the temple court, for by giving we are receiving!

May we learn the joy of giving today and always!

TIS 599 (Second tune) Vss 1, 4 and 5

Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee
Take my moments and my days, let them flow in ceaseless praise.

Take my silver and my gold, nothing, Lord would I withhold.
Take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.

Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine.
Take my heats, it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.

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Frances Ridley Havergal
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Prayer for offering

Generous God,
we offer these gifts and our living
in response to your loving-kindness.
Empower us by your Spirit
to respond with practical love
to those who cry out for mercy and justice.
In Jesus' name, we pray.
Amen.

Announcements

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us come before God to pray for the Church, the world and for one another ...

A brief silence is kept.

We pray for the Church throughout the world and, in particular, we pray for the Uniting Church in Australia. May it never lose sight of its essential ministry and mission to witness to a message of hope in Christ, to offer God praise and worship, to bring help and healing and to be a voice for the voiceless.

We pray for our President Sharon Hollis, our Moderator Simon Hansford, the Chairperson of Parramatta-Nepean Presbytery Geoff Stevenson, our Minister Myung Hwa and Church Councillors; may they continue to be faithful witnesses for you.

We pray for our local congregation ... may we learn, strive, and grow in taking risks in your service. Help us to be daring and bold in forgiving one another; in telling others about the hope that is in us; in shining the light of Jesus' love in the dark and ugly corners of life; and in easing the burdens on others.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

We pray for the world community, the environment and those in authority ...

A brief silence is kept.

O God, at times the pain, trauma, and hurt of this world can overwhelm us. We are constantly burdened with bad news: of places throughout the world where violence and tyranny and famine are almost commonplace, and generosity and grace are a distant memory. We ask that your Holy Spirit descend upon these trouble spots with your liberating love and abiding peace.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

We pray for the people of Yemen and their struggle to survive the world's worst current humanitarian crisis. We pray for the 2.3 million children under 5 who are facing death due to malnutrition and the 16 million people at risk of acute hunger. Lord, loosen the grip that hatred and cruelty have on human hearts. Bring the basic necessities such as food, clean water, sanitation and medical supplies to the people of Yemen.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Holy God, the pandemic continues to be the backdrop to our lives. We are grateful to the scientists who make vaccines and for their ready availability in Australia. We are also thankful for the lifting of border restrictions and the greater freedom of movement within our state. Yet, we are mindful too that there are nations throughout the world, like our close neighbour, Papua New Guinea, where the situation is dire, deaths are increasing and the percentage of the population double vaccinated is in single digits. Help us to see the ways that our health and wellbeing are inextricably tied to one another. Take away the borders that block your love. Lift the restrictions on care to our neighbours.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Creator God, forgive us when we fail to thank you for your bounteous and beautiful creation. Make us ever thankful for this precious gift. We thank you for the stark warnings about climate change from young people, from naturalists and environmentalists like David Attenborough and, most powerfully, from the people of countries and regions already facing climate upheaval. We pray that the promises made by world leaders at the COP26 conference in Glasgow to protect the Earth's forests, cut methane emissions and limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius will be implemented and that nations will work together to share technology and find ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

We pray for the sick and suffering, for all in the nursing homes, and for those who are isolated, homeless, lonely and housebound ...

A brief silence is kept.

We hold in your presence all who are being cared for in Leura Church and we thank you for the care and dedication of our Minister, pastoral carers and the informal networks of love and care.

We name before you all those with particular needs who have asked for our prayers, especially those named in the Bulletin ... and Tom, Frank, Betty, James, Delma, Anne Lawrence's mother Joy Crawford, and others dear to us whom we name silently in our hearts ...

May they know that your presence with them, and that you are their strength, their healing, and their salvation.

Lord, in your mercy
hear our prayer.

Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers. Grant that what we have asked in faith we may by your grace receive through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

TiS 693 Come as you are

Come as you are that's how I want you.
 Come as you are feel quite at home,
 close to my heart, loved and forgiven.
 Come as you are why stand alone?

Come as you are that's how I love you;
 Come as you are, trust me again.
 Nothing can change the love that I bear you
 all will be well, just come as you are.

CCLI Song # 1504731
 Deirdre Browne

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Passing the Gift of Peace

"Peace I give you," said Jesus. Now let us share this extravagant gift with each other in a breakout room.

Breakout room (5 min)

*Share a story of peace , hope and joy

Preparing for the Meal

God's love for the world was so great that He gave us His Son, so that anyone who believes in Him should not die but receive eternal life.

Silence

We come to this table in need; We are weak and need strength; We are broken and need healing; We are hardened and need softening; We are poor in spirit and need care.

We give thanks for Your compassion, O God; We rejoice at Your invitation to share in this meal, and we receive again Your abundant grace. So, let's remember how Jesus gave Himself for us; At supper, on the night of His betrayal, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and shared it with His friends, saying: This is my body, given for you. Take it, eat it, and remember Me.

After supper, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks and shared it with His friends, saying: This is my blood shed for you. Take it, drink it and remember Me. Amen.

"Bread is blessed and broken"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWvFZZXHBhw>

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.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever.

Amen.

Communion

In this bread and in this wine we receive again the generous, and costly gift of life, offered to us through the sacrifice of Jesus. This meal is a proclamation of God's goodness, a thanksgiving for God's grace and a sharing in God's life. And we will keep celebrating in this way until Jesus returns. Amen.

TiS 654 When love is found (Vvs 1& 5)

When love is found and hope comes home,
sing and be glad that two are one.
When love explodes and fills the sky,
praise God and share our Maker's joy.

Praise God for love, praise God for life,
In age or youth, in calm or strife.
Lift up your hearts! Let love be fed
through death and life in broken bread.

CCLI Song # 3440731

Brian Arthur Wren

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Word of mission & Blessing

L: The Grace of Christ has been offered to us again today;

P: We receive it with thanks, and through our kindness we will share it with others.

L: The Love of God has come to us again today;

P: We fill our hearts in joy, and through our compassion we will share it with others.

L: The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit has embraced us again today;

P: We delight in it with gratitude, and through our generosity we will share it with others.

L: Go in peace and thanksgiving, Live and work so that God's goodness may be recognised and praise. May the blessing of God almighty be with you now and always.

P: Amen.