



St Stephens Williamstown Uniting Church in Australia

Service of the Word for the Gathered at Home

Proper 13 (18) Ninth Sunday after Pentecost / Sunday 2nd August 2020 – 9:30AM

Prepared by Rev S. Juliette Maua'i



Place a cross and Bible on a table (if possible) with a **Green** cloth - today's Liturgical Colour. **If safe**, light a candle **OR** turn on a lamp.
Open internet: copy then paste link **OR** click on link.

Readings: Genesis 32:22-31; Psalm 17:1-7, 15; Romans 9:1-5; Matthew 14:13-21

We Gather as the People of God

Call to Worship *Based on Psalm 17:1-7, 15*

Creator God,

In the dawning of each new day,

In our coming and goings, in our waiting and wrestling, in our joys and despair,

We call upon you, for you will answer me, O God!

In the longing of yesterday and what was; we miss your promises of today to shape hope for the future,

And we call upon you, for you will answer me, O God!

Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Saviour of those who seek refuge in you,

And we shall behold your face, beholding your likeness. **Amen.**

Please remain standing as you are able

Song: TIS 134 Praise, my soul, the king of heaven... <https://youtu.be/GyRIVbdsi4c>

Please be seated



Acknowledgement to Country: I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this Land, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. I pay my respect to their Elders: past, present, and emerging.

Greetings / Welcome: The grace of the Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Opening Prayer

Holy God, In the visions and dreams of your people

You know our hardships, our doubts, our wrestling, that is present.

Gather us when we wander and call us by our names

That in Your covenant of salvation that spans the Prophets of your sacred Word

We might be fed in these times where many are scattering and restless in fear

And may we know and eat of your Manna from heaven

in and through Jesus our Saviour. **Amen.**

Song: TIS 223 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds... <https://youtu.be/LFaoJTf62nk>

Prayer of Confession & Words of Assurance

Merciful God, In Paul's wrestling that not all have embraced the gospel:

"I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart" (*Rom 9:2*). **Lord, have mercy!**

I confess that sin often grips me, I cannot break free: in my mind, on my lips, in my acts done, or even ignored; sin stands between me and you, O God! **Christ, have mercy!**

Often my heart is not always yours and my love of neighbour ignored.

Grant me your renewing forgiveness, O God.

Let me delight in you and grant always I shall follow you, giving glory to your holy name and gratitude in Jesus' words of assurance: 'your sins are forgiven'. **Thanks be to God!**

Precious Young People Time: God's Story: Jacob Wrestles <https://youtu.be/0zIbU866z6A> / **Feeding the Five Thousand** <https://youtu.be/uupg0V-17NU>

Song: Walk with me hold my hand... <https://youtu.be/PhID-0PkOYY>

Please be seated

We Listen for God's Word

Genesis 32:22-31 *God wrestles with Jacob at Peniel* **Matthew 14:13-21** *Feeding the Five Thousand*

Lord, may we meditate on these words of scripture and come to a deeper understanding of their meaning for our time.

Reflection: Love wrestles but will not let you go... Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

Poor Jacob is what springs to mind today when I recall Jacob's journey so far. To put into context, over a few weeks ago

the covenant with God is not smooth; there are ups and downs because of human sin and a 'turning away' from God. It does not help when Jacob and Esau's mother, Rebekah, strategically manoeuvre Isaac, her husband, in giving his blessing to Jacob, their younger son, and whose blessing should have placed Jacob in a better position than his twin brother, Esau. (Gen 25:19-34).

Esau was not forgiving and planned to kill his brother, Jacob. This led Jacob to escape the wrath of Esau and Jacob sets off towards his mother's family. Along the way Jacob encounters God at Bethel where God appears to Jacob in a dream (Genesis 28:12-15). Then last week, some good news that spanned several years before Jacob was finally able to work for his mother Rebekah's brother, Laban.

Finally, Jacob has his love Rachel as his wife, but it was not without some strategic manoeuvring thrown in between Jacob and then his covenant with his Uncle Laban (Gen 31:43-55). Laban rose in the morning, kissed his grandchildren and his daughters, blesses them and farewells Jacob and his family (v.55).

Today, 'poor' Jacob is returning to his homeland with all that God has blessed him: two wives, two maids, eleven children and more (Gen 32:22-23). Remember earlier in today's Genesis 32 chapter, Jacob instructed his messengers to go on ahead of them to appease Esau and Jacob's messengers advise that Esau is coming to meet him (Gen 32:3-8).

Not knowing how Esau and his household will receive him, Jacob is hesitant and afraid of what might await his return home to face his brother. Jacob begins to pray, "O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac... (Gen 32:9ff). Jacob, in his prayer to God (Gen 32:9ff) is told by God that "I will surely do you good, and make your offspring as the sand of the sea, which cannot be counted because of their number." (Gen 32:12).

Now having crossed the ford of the Jabbok sending his family and everything he had across the stream (Gen 32:22-23), it is night and Jacob is left alone to wrestle with what some say is God or God's angel. The late theologian, (Hebrew Scriptures Emory University of Atlanta), Gene M. Tucker, suggests it may be a "nocturnal demon" Jacob wrestled with and possibly that "the narrator has taken over an ancient, pre-Yahwistic tradition...reinterpreted it as a confrontation between Israel's God and her ancestor." (*Preaching through the Christian Year A*). At this point I am sticking to Jacob wrestling with God because how privileged was Jacob, the only human to have seen God face to face, and lived!

Our current restrictions in metropolitan Melbourne, Mitchell Shire, and for Victoria as a whole, has put a lot of "joints" out of place!

But perhaps our 'night alone to wrestle with God is upon us' and we are missing God's divine grace to speak into our lives: mind, body, and soul, for the journey ahead, to strengthen our faith and lives together within our families, our future mission in the world as the universal Church that starts with us in the Congregations.

These days we are wrestling more and more with "life"! What is happening in your life, in the life of our church congregation, and in the life of our world? How would you interpret this story for your life, together with our missional life in Christ? What insight does the Hebrew Scriptures in this, Jacob's story offer us in this time and environment we are living? Many are hungry, others retaliate, and the faithful wait in faith. Are we yet to cross the Jabbok in the 21st century towards God and, "home"?

Yes, most certainly our lives have been put out of joint in these current times. But might we limp together as we navigate what it is to be fed in Christ Jesus? Might we, like Jacob, hold fast as we wrestle until 'daybreak' (Gen 32:24) through this 'night' of Coronavirus, in the hope and belief that we should wrestle and ask God to bless us, because following the night there is always the day breaking.

Perhaps in our holding on to God, or God's angels, you and yours will see God, be blessed and fed abundantly, and you will come to know new names in the transformation from where we came from (Coronavirus/Peniel) and to where we are going together, as God's Israel! **To God be the glory, honour, and praise: Mother, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

We Respond to God's Word

Song: TIS 602 O Love that wilt not let me go... <https://youtu.be/w1k-5xAwqV0>

Offertory Call - "They need not go away; you give them something to eat" and Jesus said, "Bring them here to me", looked up to heaven, blessed and broke the loaves, handing them to the disciples to feed the crowds. (*Matt 14:16-21*).

Your giving is helping our St Stephens community to continue God's mission in Jesus' name. Your offering is gratefully received.

Offertory Prayer - *Offering brought forward*

God Source of all good things: accept our offerings in these gifts as a portion of that which you have given us.

May these gifts be as loaves and fishes for those who find themselves in poverty or hunger.

Bless our giving that we may participate to bring about transformation in the lives we encounter, transformation from harm, and transformation in our lives.

In Jesus who gave so much to save. **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER... *(prayerfully pray the Lord's Prayer in the language/version of your choice)*

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.

Save us from the time of trial And deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.

We Are Sent Forth into the World

Song: Because He Lives (Amen), I'm alive!... <https://youtu.be/-LwBqG7uXbY>

Blessing/Dismissal

May God's peace: carry, keep and hold you.

May God's love: nourish, bless and enfold you.

May God's spirit: inspire, lift and mold you.

Go forth, walk with God and keep his covenant.

In the name of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,

Be with you now and forever. **Amen.**

Maya Angelou (the Late) – formerly Marguerite Johnson: Poet, Civil Rights Activist

“Spirit is an invisible force made visible in all life”.

“In the flush of love's light we dare be brave

And suddenly we see that love costs all we are and will ever be.

Yes, it is only love which sets us free.”

Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

UCA Minister (Part-time)

Sunday / Monday (rest day) / Tuesday (work from home) / Thursday

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(can also leave a message, text, or email Juliette)

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