



St Stephens Williamstown Uniting Church in Australia

Service of the Word for the Gathered at Home

Proper 10 (15) Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July 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 25:19-34; Psalm 119:105-112; Isaiah 55:10-13; Psalm 65:(1-8), 9-13; Romans 8:1-11; Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23.

Song: TIS 152 Joyful, joyful we adore you... [https://youtu.be/zkDK\\_kBojnc](https://youtu.be/zkDK_kBojnc)

### We Gather as the People of God

**Call to Worship** based on Psalm 65:9-13

Gracious God,

In praise we give you thanks!

You enrich the earth and water it.

Your rivers are full, and your grain provides for your people

Your provision is bountiful for all the earth and creation.

We shout and sing together for joy.

Let us come in worship before our God Creator.

*Please remain standing as you are able*

Song: TIS 210 O for a thousand tongues... <https://youtu.be/DQ-pcqaft10>

*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

Creator God,

just as your Word is a lamp to our feet,

instil in us an open heart

to receive your Word and gifts of the Spirit.

May your Word take root, be nurtured, and grow in us

that we might be the light and sowers of your Word,

'hearers' and 'doers',

in the name of Jesus our Saviour. **Amen.**

Song: TIS 398 Come down O Love divine... <https://youtu.be/wCZXIgQjAM0>

### Prayer of Confession

Gracious God,

your gifts to us: our lives, this world, and your word to us.

When we receive your word,

may we nurture it so that it grows roots within us.

May we not be distracted by the lure of wealth or the cares of the world.

Let us be good soil, receiving your word, understanding it, and acting upon it. **Amen.**



**Words of Assurance** based on Romans 8:1-11

In the apostle Paul's words:

There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus

has set you free from the law of sin and death.

Hear Jesus' words of assurance: 'your sins are forgiven'.

**Thanks be to God!**



**Song: TIS 430 Your words to me are life and health...** <https://youtu.be/553ynQB2-rY>

*Please be seated*

### We Listen for God's Word

**Readings: Genesis 25:19-34** *The birth and youth of Esau and Jacob and Esau sells his Birthright*

**Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23** *Parable of the Sower and Parable of the Sower explained*

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

**Reflection:** *Cultivators of the good seed build up ears to hear and hearts to listen...* Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

Life's encounters require us to assess and reassess, to listen and discern, to accept and adapt or dismiss, to ask for help when we need help, and for forgiveness to be part of life's encounters for without these, reparation, reconciliation and healing will not take root and grow. At times we may find ourselves retreating from the world when the going gets tough. What will sustain you and keep you? How do you sustain and maintain your relationships: spiritually, mentally, and physically, with others? What about with God?

Jesus could talk to his disciples directly. In Jesus' earlier teachings he spoke very direct with the crowds. Perhaps then with the crowds closing in on Jesus in numbers, it was time for a new way of teaching: out on the water where perhaps Jesus' voice would carry across the water. Perhaps Jesus was aware the crowd may include the religious authorities who sought another agenda and spies from the Roman empire of the day. No doubt the crowds included the marginalised: prostitutes, the ill-minded, the lepers, pick-pocketers and thieves.

They gathered and Jesus spoke in parables which was a common practice. Parables, and their meanings, are definitely "hard to hold." (Barbara Brown Taylor: *The Seeds of Heaven*). Jesus calls the crowd to "Listen!" (Matthew 13:3) and again Jesus ends his speech in the *New Revised Standard Version* (NRSV) with the same word: "Listen!" (v.9).

In the verses (10-17) omitted from today's gospel reading, the disciples ask Jesus why he speaks to the crowds in parables and he replies, in effect, that those who are confused or confounded by the word of the kingdom will never understand. In answer to the disciples is also, in v.14, where Jesus fulfills the Scriptures (cf. Isaiah 6:9). Jesus knows that only those who have ears to hear, and hearts to listen, will understand what he is talking about.



Source unknown

We all like to think we "listen"! *But how well do you "listen"?* How well are you listening today to each other, and to others? Do you listen well to the voice of God in your relationship with the Creator?

In our current times, why are folks not listening to the authorities, in our covid19 situation for the betterment of all? If we cannot listen to one another (or will not) then how well will we listen for the Word of God in our lives, for the betterment of all? Are we good new of the Gospel?

It is not enough to sow the seed but to be the cultivator of the seed. Perhaps as "cultivator", we have a hand in nurturing growth and giving life or hope in the relationships we encounter, and/or in the relationships we already have. We become revealers/lamps of the Gospel or light to God's path (cf. Psalm 119:105) to those who have ears to hear, and hearts to listen, to edify and not to divide.

That said, alongside the intersecting relationships and encounters of the household of Abraham is the challenge between older and younger siblings. Such is the case with the sibling rivalry between Esau and Jacob, the twins. I think most of us can relate sibling rivalry in our own relationships that are not limited to familial relationships but with relationships and encounters in our daily lives. These may include our church family contexts, and/or students with their peer relationships and educators, our relationships in the workforce and mindfully, our relationships and encounters of the spiritual nature.

Sibling relationships and any relationship requires work. If we think about our daily general encounters with others, we have the choice and the ability to build a relationship or not. But as we encounter today's Hebrew Scripture passage in Genesis 25:19-34, we encounter a sibling rivalry from within the womb and two brothers enter the ancient world struggling at birth with Jacob hot on the heels of his older sibling, Esau.

Sibling rivalry is common and healthy competition is said to be "healthy". So could Rebekah and Isaac, as parents, have foreseen the writing on the wall with the entry of Esau and Jacob into the world, and their "healthy struggle" from out of the womb? I am not a psychologist nor am I a psychiatrist. However, I wonder what an analysis of the twins' relationship would reveal, and to what extent might Rebekah and Isaac have contributed to the relationship between their children to build up or to divide?

It is easy to be aware of God's foresight in the covenant context God was building with the Abrahamic family, in our hindsight as readers and listeners of the narrative today. That said, and given the context of Esau and Jacob in today's Genesis narrative is there an insight for us in the church to examine our own relationships?

In other words, are there ways in which rivalries or longstanding family influences in our church universal and local church, where established rivalries have made it difficult for others to contribute for fear of offending those who have been there before us? Might we



glean the hand of God in seeing ourselves in Esau and Jacob, and Rebekah and Isaac as parents, and recognise any divisions we create in our current relationships that are not life-giving?

Perhaps when we scrutinize seriously how profoundly, and to what extent, we have ears to hear others – sisters and brothers – and hearts to listen for different understandings and other ways of being the church, then we might be the ‘cultivators of good seeds’.

In being ‘cultivators of good seeds’ that take root in the relationships around us and in community, we might come to understand the manner God was building “covenant” with the Abrahamic families of the Hebrew Scriptures and, where Jesus was teaching ‘people of faith’ who “hear the word and understand it, who indeed bears fruit and yields...” (Matthew 13:23). **Thanks be to God!**

## We Respond to God’s Word

**Song: TIS 182 Bring many names beautiful and good...** [https://youtu.be/xWDek2Xhw\\_8](https://youtu.be/xWDek2Xhw_8) (note lyrics in the comments)

### Offertory Call *Based on Psalm 119:107-108*

Give us life O Lord according to your Word.

Accept our offerings of praise and tithings for your glory.

### Offertory Prayer - *Offering brought forward*

Gracious God,

Bountiful is your generosity to us that we are called to be generous to others.

Accept and bless our gifts of word and money as we commit our lives to you.

In Jesus’ name we pray. **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: TIS 607 Make me a channel of your peace...**

<https://youtu.be/GJJTHnNZq1k>

### Blessing/Dismissal

May you tend to the Word in yourself.

Go out in joy and be led back in peace.

Recall the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song,

and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

So go forth in the Spirit and in the joy of God,

secure in God’s presence around you and within you. **Amen!**

---

### **Martin Luther King Jr., 20th century**

"We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers."

Rev S. Juliette Maua’i  
UCA Minister (Part-time)

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

St Stephen’s Williamstown Uniting Church in Australia

179 Melbourne Road | Williamstown VIC 3016 Australia

m: 0456 690 291

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

e: [asojl@bigpond.com](mailto:asojl@bigpond.com)