



St. Stephens Uniting Church Worship Sunday 27 Sept 2020

Prepared by June Stinton and Iris Whitehurst using Roots Material.

Bible Reading

Ezekiel 18.1-4,25-32 Psalm 25.1-9 Philippians 2.1-13 Matthew 21.23-32

Call to Worship based on Psalm 25.4-5

The psalmist wrote: 'Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me.' Let us also seek the way and the truth of God.

Hymn TIS 442 - All Praise to our redeeming lord.

A Prayer of confession

We sometimes think that the more we have the happier we will be. 'If only', then all will be well. We sometimes turn the other way, closing our eyes and ears, ignoring what we see, choosing to neglect those asking for help. Sometimes we refuse a helping hand to those in need – we want to do 'our thing' instead. We do not want to confess these things but, Lord God, in this moment, in this place, in this space that we've been given, give us the desire to confess our failings and our sins, renew us from within and set us free from all that shackles us. Set us free to be the human beings you would have us be. **Amen.**

Words of Assurance

You sins are forgiven Thanks be to God.

Bible Reading New Testament: Philippians 2.1-13

If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, ²make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. ⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death— even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹²Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Reflections from Roots material

Paul encourages the Philippians using what seems to be an early Christian poem or hymn (vv.6-11). It has two stanzas. The first is about humility, the second about exaltation. And it clearly and unequivocally identifies Jesus with God. He was 'in the form of God' (v.6) but also distinct from God who 'highly exalted' him (v.9). 'Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father' (v.11).

Paul explains that living faith like it matters means being willing to be completely humiliated, stripping off your former identity and being cast down to the lowest social class (which in this

context is slavery). Status was everything in the Roman world, but Paul says that it counts for nothing with God. And he ends not with a call to repentance, but with a call to humbly 'work out your own salvation'. Here, 'your own' is plural – Paul is writing to the church in Philippi. It has an individual aspect to it, of course, but it is about a community working out their salvation with each person playing their individual part in that collective story. If Paul's letters are about the church as a community, why are we often reluctant to engage with them in this way, preferring to use them to signal only personal morality issues? But remember too that in respect of each of Paul's letters we know only part of the story, as we never hear from those to whom he wrote – and even some of Paul's side of the story is missing.

The links between the readings

Living right with God means making many – and often great – changes in our lives in order to adopt God's values. This is what repentance is. You might say it is a type of 'rehab'. In these three readings, to three different communities, we get three different illustrations – a prophecy, a hymn and a parable – illustrations of what this new way of life looks like. It is a big thing to embark upon and a lifelong project both communally and individually.

Hymn TIS 231 At the name of Jesus.

Prayers of Intercession

Loving God, Hear our prayers for others.

We pray for those in our congregation and in our community who are mourning the loss of loved ones and cannot be close to care for each other.

Our Prayers reach out to all those who are caring for others in homes, shared accommodation, institutions and hospitals. We pray that they will be kept safe so they can continue with their care.

We think of all the families who in sometimes difficult situations are caring for children, helping with remote education and recreational activities. We pray for patience and understanding.

Where there are people isolated and alone, we pray that there are others who care and will be able to reach out to them.

We pray for those who have family and friends in regional Victoria interstate and overseas.

We thank you for the ways people have found to communicate and keep us in relationships. Help us to see new possibilities and act upon them.

We pray together the Lord's Prayer.

Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name,

Your kingdom come, your will be done, as it is 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 forever.

Amen.

Hymn TIS 618 What does the lord require of you ?

A sending out Prayer.

May we go, Lord God, to meet the needs of others and share the love we have from you.

Amen.

Blessing TIS 780

May light come into your eyes,

May hope spring up in your heart,

May peace guide all of your mind,

And keep you in God.