



**St Stephens Williamstown UCA - Service of the Word at Home+Zoom - during Lockdown 6.0**  
**Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost 12<sup>th</sup> September 2021 (Proper 18B / Ordinary Time 24B)**  
Prepared by Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

*Place a cross and Bible on a table. GREEN is today's Liturgical Colour. Suggested hymns, on YouTube. Copy & Paste Links to listen.*

**Readings:** Proverbs 1:20-33; Psalm 19; James 3:1-12; & Mark 8:27-38

### **Gathering of the People**

**Greetings/Welcome:** The Lord be with you. **And, also with you.**

### **Call to Worship**

Today we take rest in the Lord our God.

**We lay aside the week and interruptions, to wonder and worship.**

Today we sabbath, mindful that the way we worship is different.

**We gather to do liturgy that honours God, the work of the people.**

Today we sabbath, for the world does not revolve around us.

**We revolve around God and God's goodness and grace.**

Come, let us worship God!

### **Acknowledgement to Country**

I acknowledge the Wurundjeri People and the land I preside from this morning and the  
Bunurong People of the land you gather on, the Traditional Custodians of the Kulin Nations.  
We pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.

### **Opening Prayer**      Psalm 19

God of Creation,

throughout the earth the world proclaims your praise,  
from the high heavens to the recesses of the sea.

Make our voices true and faithful, our words encouraging in love,  
as we join the voices of all of creation to sing your praise. **Amen.**

### **Song: TIS 156 Morning has broken** - Joyce Butcher

(Zoom – Mute and sing at home) / (Home Worshipers) [https://youtu.be/EFgB1-Von\\_g](https://youtu.be/EFgB1-Von_g)

Morning has broken like the first morning;  
Blackbird has spoken like the first bird.  
Praise for the singing, praise for the morning,  
praise for them, springing fresh from the word.

Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,  
like the first dewfall on the first grass.  
Praise for the sweetness of the wet garden,  
sprung from completeness where his feet pass.

Mine is the sunlight; mine is the morning  
born of the one light Eden saw play.  
Praise with elation, praise every morning,  
God's recreation of the new day.

*Gaelic melody arr. Lawrence Francis Bartlett 1933-2002*

*Eleanor Farjeon 1881-1965*

*Words and music from Enlarged Songs of Praise 1931 by permission Oxford University Press. Arrangement © L. F. Bartlett*

### **Prayer of Confession**      James 3:1-12

**Merciful God of Love and Wisdom,**

You gave us our tongues that we may speak words of love, wisdom, and grace.  
Often our tongues are used inappropriately: instead of love, hatred; instead of wisdom, foolishness; instead of faith, fear; instead of grace, rage.  
Help us use our tongues to speak kindness, compassion, courage, and forgiveness.  
In the name of Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.

**Assurance:** Hear Christ's words of grace: "Your sins are forgiven". **Thanks be to God!**

**Read/Listen for God's Word** - Ross Howie

Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet, a light to our path.

Psalms 119:105

**James 3:1-12** – Taming the Tongue.

**Mark 8:27-38** – Peter's declaration about Jesus & Jesus Foretells His Death and Resurrection

Lord may your Word live in us; and bear much fruit to your glory.

John 15:8

**Reflection:** "Let Wisdom be our channel that speaks words of hope..." – Rev S. Juliette Maua'i

Our readings from the Letter of James (3:1-12) and the Gospel of Mark (8:27-38) today, and this week's readings as a whole, most certainly holds all who are in authority to account. As followers of Christ and believers of God we are held to account, if we believe the commandments are to be taken seriously ("The Law" - cf. James 2:11, Exodus 20:1-17 & cf. Luke 24:44, Mosaic Law in the first five Books of the Hebrew Bible/Pentateuch).

In the Letter of James to the twelve tribes, "James [is] a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ", ministering during the time of the Jews being exiled to other countries (1:1). In the context of the dispersed Jewish Christians at the time, the third chapter of James' moralistic warning on the use of the tongue, might be where we today channel our pondering to how are we to be, and live, as Christians right now and into the future. What may we learn from 'taming our tongue'? How might we be judged as 'being Christian' in the world in what we say and do?

Suffice to say that we might shy away from today's epistle passage because we most certainly will be judged. Let's face it, we have no control over other people's opinions and the Letter of James opening caution (3:1) is telling us what we should not do at the beginning. The hope in this passage comes later.

Certainly, the challenge is, to not be the moral police. For example, in our church context today, our words to non-believers may be words of damnation rather than words of love and hope, though it is not our Christian intent. However, our evangelizing words and deeds may dissuade others into our Uniting Church's worshipping and congregational communities. We are not perfect, not one of us.

So what about freedom of speech and freedom to protest? Speaking into public spaces, and not speaking into public spaces and on social issues when the Church ought to, may also be contributing to Christians leaving the Church, or the Body of Christ disconnected to the point where the members are congregation/denomination leap frogging.

Words are how we may communicate. James says that words can bless and curse. If we view today's epistle passage from Wisdom's standpoint that does not diminish our Christian faith as being too hard to obey the Law (cf. Matthew 5:17-18) but helps to hold us to accountability, whereby our faith is made stronger to endure (3:9a) our situations in our lives, might we then come to accept where we are at in our worldly and personal circumstances, to then, in Wisdom, move forward in hope?

In the light of 'Wisdom' (cf. Prov 1:20-33) we are enabled to receive in acceptance rather than shy away from the admonition of James' epistle. We might view James' epistle reading (3:1-12) as an opening window to 'the living and transforming Word of God'.

We can connect then the Markan gospel (Mark 8:31-32a) and connect this week's lectionary readings from the perspective of where we 'let *Wisdom* be our channel that *speaks words of hope*' where Jesus' identity is made known, and Jesus openly affirms who he is, "...of them the Son of Man...comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." (v.38). The transition where Jesus now asks, "who do people say/who do you say, that I am?"

(8:27, 29) then become the words leading to Peter being told to keep silent and rebuked (v.30, v.33). The identity of Jesus is Mark's signature, to the point the disciples and others question who Jesus' is (from Galilee). Now in today's Mark reading where Jesus' identity is revealed in Caesar's patch, in the Greco-Roman town of Caesarea Philippi, north of Israel, sets our eyes and ears on Jesus' suffering and towards Jerusalem.

More so than ever before, we no longer need to be silent/rebuked as followers of Christ but called to meditate on the words we speak, 'taming the tongue', and activate love, not hate; honest truth, not truth that manipulates; for the Church to speak into conversations that requires the Body of Christ to 'take up their cross and follow [Jesus] me' (Mark 8:34), rather than remaining silent; and to uphold each day a willingness to forgive, rather than wait to be forgiven and believing that forgiveness is not ours alone, but that our forgiveness is reliant on God's transformation within us and in our suffering world, that only God alone makes possible. **To God be the glory! Amen.**

**Song: TIS 607 Make me a channel of your peace** - Peter Kofoed

(Zoom – Mute and sing at home) / (Home Worshipers <https://youtu.be/2svZhZT6Pro>)

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there is hatred let me bring your love; where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;  
and where there's doubt, true faith in you.

*O Master, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console,  
To be understood as to understand, to be loved, as to love with all my soul.*

Make me a channel of your peace.

Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope; where there is darkness, let me bring your light;  
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Make me a channel of your peace.

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned, in giving of ourselves that we receive,  
and in dying that we're born to eternal life.

*Sebastian Temple 1928- arr. Betty Pulingham 1928-  
Based on an anonymous prayer (?French) c.1900. This version by Johann Sebastian Templehoff ('Sebastian Temple') 1928-  
Words and music by permission of Oregon Catholic Press.*

**Offertory** - God's glory is declared in heaven and on earth. Share the gift of the glory of God in our giving.  
*Your offering may be made through direct debit or send your cheque to the Treasurer.*

**Offertory Prayer** – Holy God, teach us to use these gifts to create greater access, insights, and wisdom for others.  
Bless and multiply our offerings, great and small, seen and unseen, for the glory of the God we serve.  
We pray this in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

**Prayers of the People** - Janet Howie

Gracious God,

We are your people. In love and faith, we bring our prayers for others and ourselves to you, in these difficult times.

We think of our church family members, unable to meet together in person, today.

Bless each one, especially those who are struggling in body, mind and spirit.

May they feel your comforting presence.

Help us to keep in touch with one another.

We pray for strength and wisdom for all those who are holding our community together, for we are dependent on each other – doctors, nurses, health carers, counsellors, ministers, political leaders, teachers, service providers, families, parents, friends and neighbours.

Everyone has a role to play. Let us work together for healing and joy.

Our world is broken and troubled. We pray for peace and justice in, and between the nations,

and the willingness of countries to provide disaster relief where it is needed. May the church worldwide take an active part.

We pray for ourselves. Help us to count our blessings, open to new ways of growing as faithful people. In Christ we pray. **Amen.**

### **Sending Out**

**Song: Bond of Love** - by R. Scott Kearns. Ted & Elaine on Ukulele (Zoom – Mute/sing at home to hearts content)

We are joined together in a bond of love, with cords of freedom and of duty.  
Connected in the spirit, our spirits are strong in a bond of wonder and of beauty.

Made by all of us, for all of us, fashioned by ev'rybody's hands.  
All our differences all we share, woven into many coloured strands.

*And this bond will hold us through the storm and encourage us when hope seems gone.  
Knowing that together we belong we'll extend our care to the ends of the earth, and love will ever be our song.*

Shared by all of us, with all of us, offered with love that's full and free.  
Cords of sympathy, cords of joy, stronger for our mutuality.

© R. Scott Kearns

### **Benediction**

Go in peace and face the week ahead.  
Ponder who do we say Christ is in our lives, our community, our world?  
Let Holy Wisdom cry out through all our pondering.  
And may we be led to recognize our Risen Saviour in all our encounters.  
And the blessing of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen!**

**Continue in Worship and Prayer good people... Be kind to others, be kind to yourself!**

Acknowledgements: Joyce Butcher, Peter Kofoed, Ross & Janet Howie, Elaine & Ted Peck on Ukulele.

Free Prayer & adapted Prayers Psalm 19 | Text Week <https://lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu/prayers>

(NRSV) Bible translation. Feasting on the Word Year B Vol 4. | Journeying with Jesus, Robert Bos | CCLI License No. 5062286