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St. Margaret's Uniting Church Mooroolbark

**Sunday 28th October, 2018
23rd Sunday after Pentecost**

(including the "Cutting of the Ties" for Rev Arnie Wierenga who will leave us to take up an appointment with his wife Rev Jennie Gordon in the Gippsland Presbytery as Presbytery Ministers – Pastoral Care)

Welcome

All are invited to share lunch following the service

WE GATHER TO WORSHIP GOD:

ACKNOWLEDGING THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all ... **and also with you.**

WE SING 'Lord for the years' (*Timothy Dudley-Smith*)

[1]

Lord, for the years Your love has kept and guided,
Urged and inspired us, cheered us on our way,
Sought us and saved us, pardoned and provided:
Lord of the years, we bring our thanks today.

[2]

Lord, for that word, the word of life which fires us,
Speaks to our hearts and sets our souls ablaze,
Teaches and trains, rebukes us and inspires us:
Lord of the word, receive Your people's praise.

[3]

Lord, for our land in this our generation,
Spirits oppressed by pleasure, wealth and care:
For young and old, for commonwealth and nation,
Lord of our land, be pleased to hear our prayer.

[4]

Lord, for our world where folk disown and doubt You,
Loveless in strength, and comfortless in pain,
Hungry and helpless, lost indeed without You:
Lord of the world, we pray that Christ may reign.

[5]

Lord for ourselves; in living power remake us -
Self on the cross and Christ upon the throne,
Past put behind us, for the future take us:
Lord of our lives, to live for Christ alone.

CALL TO WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER

WE LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD:

SHARING THE EARLY WORD

Lost Sheep – Claudia the caterpillar

WE SING 'If I were a butterfly' (*Brian Howard*)

[1]

If I were a butterfly,
I'd thank You, Lord,
for giving me wings.
And if I were a
robin in a tree,
I'd thank You, Lord,
that I could sing.

And if I were a
fish in the sea,
I'd wiggle my tail and
I'd giggle with glee;
But I just thank You, Father,
For making me 'me'.

[chorus]

*For You gave me a heart
And You gave me a smile,
You gave me Jesus
And You made me Your child,
And I just thank You, Father,
For making me 'me'.*

[2]

If I were an elephant,
I'd thank You, Lord,
by raising my trunk.
And if I were a kangaroo,
You know I'd hop
right up to You.

And if I were an octopus,
I'd thank You, Lord,

for my fine looks;
 But I just thank You, Father,
 For making me 'me'.

[3]

If I were a wiggily worm,
 I'd thank You, Lord,
 that I could squirm.
 And if I were a billy goat,
 I'd thank You, Lord,
 for my strong throat.

And if I were a
 fuzzy-wuzzy bear,
 I'd thank You, Lord,
 for my fuzzy-wuzzy hair;
 But I just thank You, Father,
 For making me 'me'.

THE PSALM 126 *A Harvest of Joy*

When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion,
 we were like those who dream.

**Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
 and our tongue with shouts of joy;**

then it was said among the nations,
 'The Lord has done great things for them.'

**The Lord has done great things for us,
 and we rejoiced.**

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
 like the watercourses in the Negeb.

**May those who sow in tears
 reap with shouts of joy.**

Those who go out weeping,
 bearing the seed for sowing,

**shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.**

THE GOSPEL

Mark 10:46-52 *The Healing of Blind Bartimaeus*

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!' Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, 'Son of David, have mercy on me!' Jesus stood still and said, 'Call him here.' And they called the blind man, saying to him, 'Take heart; get up, he is calling you.' So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, 'What do you want me to do for you?' The blind man said to him, 'My teacher, let me see again.' Jesus said to him, 'Go; your faith has made you well.' Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

... for the word of the Lord, **THANKS BE TO GOD.**

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

'Go, your faith has made you well'. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

REFLECTION ON THE SCRIPTURES

The Faithful God

As exciting as it is, I struggle with change. It is far easier to stay with what is known than to leap into a future that we can barely imagine God has in store for us. I'm keenly aware of it in this process of endings and sorting and moving. Final conversations with people (at least final ones that belong to a pastoral relationship) have felt awkward. How do we say goodbye and part well?

As we've been sorting through our things at home we are also aware of all the small bits and pieces that once seemed to bring comfort amidst a turbulent life. But now they seem like extra baggage that provides no comfort at all but just weighs us down, the flotsam and jetsam of life. Because leaving is hard and imagining the next is also challenging, I find myself telling stories of how wonderful the next thing will be.

And I do believe that – because I believe that God infuses our lives no matter what is constant or what changes in it. But those stories can distract from a richer truth – that God is very present in the leaving and remains central to the time we have shared together. Through Jesus Christ, God continues to be our story teller, the animator of our lives as we embrace the faith that belongs heart and soul to us all.

The lectionary cycle of readings has featured the story of Job for some months now, and while we haven't followed it closely, it seems there are many elements that are relevant to the discomfort of change and dislocation, and the struggle to imagine what is next.

Job has everything, and this is seen as transactional, a blessing from God. His friends and the society around him believed that if Job was wealthy and prosperous then he must be a righteous person. But as he loses everything, these same friends begin to question his integrity. What has Job now done to deserve his fate? There are many difficult and soul-searching moments, but eventually Job finds the heart to stop feeling sorry for himself and to look outwards.

It was a despairing Job who then prays for the same friends who question him. It was the Job who had lost everything who asked God's blessing on others. Ultimately Job finds his own peace and restoration because he stops dwelling in self-pity and instead recognises the needs of others.

There is a deep faithfulness more powerful than the turmoil of his physical life. And it is faithfulness like that I want to highlight today.

As we turn to the gospel story of the healing of blind Bartimaeus, we might wonder about his circumstances as well. As one who is blind, all

he can do is stand or sit vulnerable by the roadside or in the market place and beg. I'm sure there are elements of his world judging him like they would have questioned the integrity of Job. And I'm sure you've been on the other side of encounters with beggars, wondering what to do. I can imagine Bartimaeus being abused, ignored or pitied, but rarely if ever, treated like a loved and valued child of God. He cannot see Jesus, and yet he trusts in Jesus' healing power. Somehow, he is able to transcend his circumstances and find life in the one who calls us to see the author of life and love.

Like Job, there is a deep faithfulness shown here, and Bartimaeus is rewarded for his faith in the deepest way humanly possible. His eyes are fully opened and his place in society is restored. He can now work, make a life, and be involved in community as one who belongs. Rather than struggle to survive, Jesus has given him what is needed to thrive, or live an abundance of life. I'm sure there are parallels here with responses to those stuck on Nauru. I wonder what Jesus would do for those calling out to be restored to life, love, a place of belonging? I do hope and pray that faithful Christians will continue to raise a voice until all are restored to life.

With his eyes wide open, Bartimaeus continues to trust and follow Jesus. His situation stands in contrast to others in the world of Jesus who seemingly cannot see beyond themselves, or perhaps are so comfortable and blinded by them that they will not open their eyes. We hear of many religious leaders and folk in the crowd who see first-hand the works Jesus does, and yet cannot see who Jesus really is. Bartimaeus sees Jesus as the 'Son of David', in other words, the Messiah, and his faith makes him well.

Both Job and Bartimaeus show us our circumstances can blind us, but that it's also possible to find a deeper way in faith. In their stories we discover promises fulfilled if only we trust that Jesus is the one come to us from God. It is a powerful reminder that in the endings and new beginnings for St. Margaret's and for ministry in Gippsland, we are

invited to see what God does and will continue to do as we continue to trust and walk with Jesus along the road.

Whatever comfort we have invested in a particular way of being together, or stories shared along the way, the story of God's love shown us in Jesus Christ is always more than that. Where we cannot see clearly what is ahead, or fear change, or struggle with saying goodbye, we are invited to see the work of the Holy Spirit in and around us as the story of God continues to weave the fabric of our lives.

As followers of Jesus Christ we can sing and celebrate this part of our time together and anticipate the blessings of tomorrow. It is why we will end today echoing the promise from Psalms. 'You shall go out with joy'.

As we marvel at a depth of faith that pulls Job out of his misery and the judgement of his friends; as we marvel at the tenacity of Bartimaeus to trust Jesus despite his troubles, let us wonder too at how Jesus calls us deeply to see it is God who is first faithful to us. As we wonder and marvel at what God has done and continues to do with us, let's sing a great hymn of the faith. This one is etched deeply in my soul from early days of the Dutch Reformed Church. It was sung in English, but I still hear it sung in thick Dutch accents. 'Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father...'

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD:

WE SING 'Great is your faithfulness' (TIS 154)

[1]

Great is your faithfulness,
O God my Father,
In you no shadow
of turning we see;
you never fail and
your love is unchanging:
as you have been
you for ever will be.

[chorus]

Great is your faithfulness!

*Great is your faithfulness!
Morning by morning
new mercies I see;
All I have needed
Your hand has provided,
Great is your faithfulness,
Lord God, to me.*

[2]

Summer and winter,
and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars
in their courses above,
Join with all nature
in unspoken witness
To your great faithfulness,
mercy and love.

[3]

Pardon for sin and
a peace that's enduring,
Your living presence
to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and
bright hope for tomorrow,
these are the blessings
your love will provide.

OFFERING

PRAYER

Loving God – the One who is with us in times of uncertainty as well as in times of security and optimism – we dedicate this offering to you today in the Name of Jesus. May it help to bring your love to those who are suffering terrible uncertainty and daily pain, and give hope to those despairing because of what life has

**brought them. Inspire us all to actively work for creative changes,
that reflect your compassion, love and care. Amen.**

WE SING

May new patterns for Christ's mission,
in a small or global sense,
help us bear each other's burdens,
breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision,
words of challenge, said with care,
bring new power and strength for action,
Made companions, free and fair.

CONGREGATIONAL LIFE

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

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.
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.**

SHARING FROM THE CHILDREN

SENDING FORTH OF THE PEOPLE OF GOD:

WE SING 'Christ is alive! Let Christians sing' (TIS 387)

[1]

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring;
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

[2]

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

[3]

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

[4]

Women and men, in age and youth
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

[5]

Christ is alive, and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

“CUTTING OF THE TIES” – Presbytery of Yarra Yarra - Liz McMillan

PRAYER

The Congregation stands.

Do you, the members and friends of this church,
release Arnie from his duties as Minister of St Margaret’s Mooroolbark?

**We release him, with the help of God,
and we pray for God's blessings on us all
as our relationship changes.**

... *Person 1:*

Let us pray:

Lord, you have called Arnie to serve you here at St Margaret's. We recognise that just as he has been your gift to us, so now he goes as your gift to the Presbytery of Gippsland. We pray for each other now, as our once parallel roads of pilgrimage diverge.

We thank you God for all that we have done, learnt and shared together.

Person 2:

We pray for Arnie and Jennie as they explore and put into action the call of the Church that takes them from here.

May they grow in your grace and in the knowledge of your love, so that they may be a blessing to others.

Person 3:

We pray for the Presbytery of Gippsland, that they will value Arnie & Jennie, learn from them, and encourage them.

We pray for ourselves as we stay, that you will keep us faithful to the vision that we have shared and that you will show us what we should do and how we should be, when Arnie is no longer with us.

Person 4:

As we part, we re-affirm that it has been your Spirit who has brought us together, and your Spirit who has enlivened our fellowship.

It is your Spirit who goes with Arnie & Jennie and your Spirit who stays with us; your Spirit who keeps us all together in the world-wide family of your Church. Amen

Arnie:

I want to thank you all for the love, kindness, and support you have shown me, especially through some particularly tough times. I ask

forgiveness for the mistakes I have made, and I am grateful for the ways my leadership has been accepted.

We celebrate the gifts that your leadership has brought to us and forgive your mistakes, letting them go.

In turn, we ask forgiveness for the mistakes we have made.

Arnie:

As I leave, I forgive your mistakes, letting them go,
and I carry with me all that I have learned here. We are especially grateful for your friendship and care, which we will always cherish.

The Bible tells us that endings are also new beginnings.
So let us go forward serving God in our respective places,
for the sake of the Gospel of Christ.

**Go now, and follow God's calling.
As you have been a blessing to us,
go to be a blessing to others.**

... Go in peace to love and serve the Lord **in the name of Christ.**

Amen

SENDING OUT SONG 'You shall go out with joy' (TIS 755)

You shall go out with joy
And be led forth with peace,
And the mountains and the hills
Shall break forth before you.
There'll be shouts of joy,
And the trees of the field
Shall clap, shall clap their hands.
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And the trees of the field shall clap their hands,
And you'll go out with joy.