

“Flying kites for Matariki” a sermon based on Mark 6:1-13 preached by Kerry Enright at Knox Church Dunedin New Zealand on Sunday 8 July, on the occasion of celebrating the sacrament of baptism of Kalani.

One of the most enjoyable childhood activities must be flying kites - away from the power lines of course.

The most rudimentary creation can elicit the most thrilling experience.

- The careful assembling then repairing after each failed attempt;
- The effort in getting it into the air
- The many attempts
- The rare success
- Then the tug on the string as the kite lifts and is carried into the sky
- The unpredictable movement soaring and dipping determined by the pattern of air
- The need to do no more than hold on tight and not let go
- Then the inevitable end as the kite plunges to earth or we get bored.

Kites are for adults too.

Ashburton is home to one of the world’s leading kite makers, Peter Lynn, grandfather of people in this congregation. Kites of all kinds including an eighteen metre long dragon called Toothless, once towed down the Thames in London. Peter has made some of the biggest kites in the world, certainly among the most colourful and interesting.

Kites have special meaning. For centuries Maori and Pacific peoples have celebrated Matariki by flying kites. Because according to ancient wisdom they flutter close to the stars.

The constellation of Pleiades is 440 light years away. 500 stars, 14 can be seen by a humble telescope, seven by the naked eye.

The stars were a navigational aid to sailors, a sign the stormy season had past so the weather was safe for long voyages.

The stars had significance in guiding life’s journeys.

Matariki “mata”, eyes, “ariki” god. Or matariki “little eyes”.

In Samoan the word is Mata'ali'i.

Stars had significance – the eyes of God.

Kites lift our eyes to the space that surrounds our living.

Kalani will grow up living under the stars of Matariki, Mataali'i.

Ma'au i lou ofaga; mau'a lou fa'asinomaga, Keep your identity alive, to thrive.

Underpinning her cultural identity is her identity in God.

Today we name that identity in baptism. Kalani is a child of God.

If faith is anything like a kite, raising our eyes, lifting our view, getting us to notice the stars, then how do we help our children keep hold of the kite as it soars and dives according to the direction and strength of the winds of our time?

How do we help Kalani learn how to hold on to the kite of faith, hope and love?

How do we let Kalani help us hold on to the kite of faith, hope and love?

Kia mau ki te tumanako, te whakapono me to aroha.

Part of it involves learning how faith lifts, how faith tugs us beyond ourselves, how faith flies beyond earth-bound boxes.

It was as much a struggle for the people of Palestine then as it is for the people of Aotearoa now. They could not make sense of the deeds of power.

Is this not just a carpenter, only a son of Mary, nothing more than a brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, no more than a brother of his sisters?

They knew these categories and relied on them. They could fit him into these categories: his occupation, his place in the family. The deeds of power did not fit those categories.

The disciples came to see beyond those categories, to let the kite fly free, to sense the mysterious deeds of power God does in the world.

How was the kite to fly free, their hands holding on to the string?

Jesus said - Take nothing on the journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. Wear only one tunic, not two. And if you encounter resistance, don't let it bog you down. Shake off the dust on your feet and keep moving.

There's lightness here, the kind of lightness that lifts spirits beyond heavy practices, beyond a heavy church, beyond what bogs people down.

There's an old hymn we used to sing decades ago. I remember the first two lines and I sometimes sing it at the beginning of the day.

"I feel the winds of God today. Today my sail I lift. Though heavy oft with stinging spray, and torn with many a rift."

I fly my kite to be lifted by the Spirit.

So what are the songs Kalani will learn to lift her?

What is the spirit into which Kalani will enter?

How will she learn the lightness of faith that raises her sight to the stars in wonder?

The biggest influence is her closest family.

Praying is a way to catch the breeze, to lift the eyes. It doesn't have to be complicated, heavy, wordy prayer. Learning from the start - simple, regular prayer.

Gratitude – thank you for the people I met today. Thank you for the gift of this child and how precious she is and what she did today. Thank you for love and support that surrounds me. Thank you for the food we are about to eat.

Gratitude can become our everyday pattern. At the end of each day, thank you. Before every meal, thank you.

Extending gratitude to prayer for others. For other mothers and fathers, other families.

Gratitude is a way to hold on to the kite, to be carried by it, to sense how we have been lifted and how we can lift others.

And stories of the Bible and especially of Jesus. With a good children's book.

So Jesus becomes a part of our everyday, a name that is used, a light that shines, a presence in our home, a source of wisdom for living. Leading up to Christmas, a little display of the family of Jesus. A star on the Christmas tree. A candle lit on the 8th of July every year, the anniversary of this baptism. And the Christian traditions of Maori and Samoan cultures. Simple steps that bring Jesus home.

Look to the spiritual sources handed by your ancestors for deeper wisdom. The church can be a support, an encouragement, a pointer to the stars.

The kite flying tradition of Matariki reminds us of the faith that lifts our eyes, extends our horizons. We can hold on to our faith, as it flies and falls, as it dips and soars, lifted by God's holy spirit.

Ma te wheturangi o Matariki, e tiaki mai, e manaaki mai I a koutou, I a koutou ranei, mo te tau e taka mai ana.

May the gentle light of Matariki guide and inspire you all this year.

KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN
alive to God's Spirit



Knox Church
449 George Street
Dunedin
New Zealand
Ph. (03) 477 0229
www.knoxchurch.net

Kerry Enright: 027 467 5542, minister@knoxchurch.net