



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

*Captivated by the vision of the realm of God,
made known in Jesus, given in grace*

10am – Sunday 26 January 2020
Third Sunday after the Epiphany

Pre service music

“Presto”

“Folk melody”

J S Bach (1685-1750)

Percy Whitlock (1903-46)

We are invited to worship

(based on Matthew 4)

Kia noho a Ihowa ki a koutou. May God be with you.

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Jesus invites every person to follow him,

To walk his way and share his life,

To trust his leading and the call we hear,

To turn from all that impedes the journey.

Jesus invites every person to be part of his ministry,

Proclaiming the good news of God's reign,

Healing all kinds of disease and sickness.

We come to hear the call again

to receive the strength to respond

to be sent by Christ.

Let us worship God.

We sing

(Gather us in) CH4 623 - Marty Haugen

1 Here in this place new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away,
see in this space our fears and our
dreamings,
brought here to you in the light of this
day.

Gather us in – the lost and forsaken,
gather us in – the blind and the lame:
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.

2 We are the young – our lives are a
mystery,
we are the old who yearn for your face,
we have been sung throughout all of
history,
called to be light to the whole human
race.

Gather us in – the rich and the haughty,
gather us in – the proud and the strong;
give us a heart so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.

3 Here we will take the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.

4 Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away,
but here in this place the new light is shining,
now is the Kingdom, now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us for ever,
gather us in and make us your own;
gather us in – all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.

We pray and are assured of God's great love

E te whanau, in Christ we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

We share the peace of Christ

Kia tau tonu te rangimarie o te Ariki ki a koutou; The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

A conversation about adventure

We sing

Goodness is stronger than evil;
love is stronger than hate;
light is stronger than darkness;
life is stronger than death.
Victory is ours;
victory is ours through God who loves us.

GtG 750 - Desmond Tutu

We listen for God's Word

Isaiah 9:1-4, 1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church **Thanks be to God**

Isaiah 9:1-4

9:1 But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish. In the former time he brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the latter time he will make glorious the way of the sea, the land beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the nations.

9:2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined.

9:3 You have multiplied the nation, you have increased its joy; they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

9:4 For the yoke of their burden, and the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.

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Corinthians 1:10-18

1:10 Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose.

1:11 For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.

1:12 What I mean is that each of you says, "I belong to Paul," or "I belong to Apollos," or "I belong to Cephas," or "I belong to Christ."

1:13 Has Christ been divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

1:14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

1:15 so that no one can say that you were baptized in my name.

1:16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)

1:17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power.

1:18 For the message about

## Matthew 4:12-25

*This is the Gospel of Jesus Christ **Praise to Christ the Word***

4:12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee.

4:13 He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali,

4:14 so that what had been spoken through the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

4:15 "Land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali, on the road by the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles

4:16 the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned."

4:17 From that time Jesus began to proclaim, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

4:18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea for they were fishermen.

4:19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

4:20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

4:21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them.

4:22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

4:23 Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing every disease and every sickness among the people.

4:24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought to him all the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them.

4:25 And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

## ‘Beyond the bush-line – taking adventurous paths’

We had a week tenting on the shore of Lake Benmore near Omarama at the top of the Waitaki Valley. One day we drove up Quailburn Road towards the mountains to the Ahuriri Valley. The road quickly became gravel, with much dust because of the dry weather. At the end of the road is an historic woolshed built in the 1920s. And nearby an early and very basic homestead. Important historically because it was the location of some of the first farms in the Mackenzie country. Two Scots arrived there, but which land were they to farm, north or south? So they decided to have a horse race and the one who came first could decide. Beyond the woolshed is a valley with a stream and a track. So we walked along the track, criss-crossing the stream, taking careful steps - steep sides, slippery rocks, fallen branches, but it was sheltered and still and well-protected.

The track was called “to the bushline”. And after a while, that is where we arrived. The bush ended suddenly. Here there were trees, then there was scrub, mainly matagouri. We wanted to explore further, so we started along a steeper path, towards the mountains. We left the protection of the trees, the sound of the stream, and we entered a place more exposed. The wind more obvious. The heat more intense. The environment less protected. We had a sense that the cloud could quickly emerge from behind the hills to surround us and the temperature would drop.

And as sometimes happens, I had a thought, or perhaps it was a question. I think it’s time for Knox to reclaim again its history of going beyond the bush-line. It’s time for adventure. That is the nature of this church. This building is an emblem of adventure. In some of his writing, the first minister Dr Stuart sets out all the reasons people gave for not building it: they didn’t have the money, the future was too unclear, too much was uncertain. But here it is. And now, in our day. I hear people speak about how they have come to faith or reclaimed their faith or found their faith again or risked return to the church they thought they had finally left, I hear of people venturing, of going to what for them are frontiers of new meaning and fresh spirit and exploratory faith. Adventure is our history and identity.

One gains a sense that over recent years many congregations have been carefully picking their way over slippery rocks and uneven paths. And we have reached the bush-line again. It’s time for us to reclaim our identity as an adventurous people. To go again beyond the sheltered and protected and known.

But it carries risk. Risk of unfavourable winds and changing conditions and insecure resources. For churches especially, the idea of security and certainty is a phantom. It isn’t who we are. It isn’t how God deals with us. It isn’t how we are called to live. Those congregations that do not risk are those that gradually fade away.

Let me give a simple example of what adventure might mean. Last week, I received a letter from Presbyterian Support Otago. It offered us the opportunity to visit a Support project. The easiest path would be – we don’t really have the time or the resource or perhaps enough people who would be interested. It will take too much effort to organise. But I was amid writing this sermon, so I thought – what is the adventurous option here. I hope we enable as many of us as possible to spend time at one of the services offered by Support, and see where it takes us. The more often we make those choices, the more adventure becomes our way of being.

For me personally, the church has been a place of adventure. From the time when as an adult I came through a Presbyterian church door to a strange place and people, with its ritual and imagery I had to learn. Within a few months I was in a group studying the book of Ephesians – what an adventure. Then into a group of young people who ran a coffee shop in mid Auckland, in an attempt to witness to our peers. I learned to pray in a group for the first time. And when our church got a new minister, we visited every house in the neighbourhood, in pairs. New challenge after new challenge.

The readings today invite us to adventure. It's there in the names of Zebulun and Naphtali. Zebulun was a tribe with a special territory, at the southern end of Galilee. An outpost at the edge of the land of the Gentiles. It bore the brunt when foreign nations invaded, always the first land armies conquered. Zebulun means dwelling or home. From its outset as a newly liberated nation, Israel has to find its home on the boundary with other nations. And Naphtali. Naphtali was a child borne by Rachel's servant Bilhah to Rachel's husband Jacob. This led Rachel to exclaim "I have had a great struggle with my sister, and I have won." So Naphtali means "struggle", the struggle of a wife whose husband had a child to another woman. Naphtali has a history of uncertainty and insecurity. These names of Zebulun and Naphtali were so marginal, that by the time of Jesus, they were no longer used.

So in reviving these lost names, Matthew is making a point. That the home of Jesus is in the soil of struggle and on the edge of what is acceptable. That the ministry of Jesus emerges amid insecurity and uncertainty. And that is where Knox church and every congregation are now located. In the mid-sixties the census recorded the first plunge of numbers of people who publicly identified with the Christian faith. Since then the downward trajectory has been unrelenting. So the church has had to learn to make its home in Zebulun and Naphtali, in what is uncertain and insecure. It's not an aberration. It is not a lesser way of being. It doesn't represent failure. This is our home, where we now live. Beyond the bush-line. What an adventure! And in that context Jesus says - "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." It's not a nice image for our relationships with people. That we cast nets and drag people into the kingdom of God. Jesus is using an image that makes sense to the people he is addressing. For fishermen, the image of fishing. Perhaps if you are a carpenter, he might say, I will make you shape people for the reign of God. Or if you are a student, he might say - follow me and I will make you learn for people for the reign of God.

We might not like the image of fishing, yet that is what happens. What led me to Jesus and what prompts me to venture now - he tangata, he tangata, he tangata. How do we get drawn into the realm of God? Its people. Its God working through people like us. So in this insecure and uncertain place which is our home, we are called to the adventure of building relationships with neighbours. Going to people, to where they are. To help them sense the realm of God in their daily lives, to help people sense the presence of God with them.

"They left their boat and their father and followed him." They left their work and their father. They left what had given their life structure and purpose. They shifted their perspective and reimagined their lives and its purpose. What an adventure.

Barbara Brown Taylor describes how it happens: "This is not a story about us," she writes. "It is a story about God, and about God's ability not only to call us but also to create us as people who are able to follow — able to follow because we cannot take our eyes off the one who calls us, because he interests us more than anything else in our lives, because he seems to know what we hunger for and because he seems to be food."

Its adventure time. The adventure of life in the Spirit as we subject our living to God's loving scrutiny. The adventure of neighbourliness, helping people sense the realm of God and respond to God where they are. The adventure of responding to the call – Follow me and I will make you – without knowing where we will end up. The adventure of being part of the ministry and mission of Jesus, as we live in the home of insecurity and uncertainty.

## We sing

1 Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?

2 Will you leave yourself behind  
if I but call your name?  
Will you care for cruel and kind  
and never be the same?  
Will you risk the hostile stare  
should your life attract or scare?  
Will you let me answer prayer  
in you and you in me?

## We pray for others

**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.  
E tō mātou Matua i te rangi**

(Kelvingrove) CH4 533 - John L Bell & Graham Maule

3 Will you love the 'you' you hide  
if I but call your name?  
Will you quell the fear inside  
and never be the same?  
Will you use the faith you've found  
to reshape the world around,  
through my sight and touch and sound  
in you and you in me?

4 Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

*Anglican prayer book*

**Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.  
Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.  
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai  
ki runga ki te whenua,  
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.  
Hōmai ki a mātou āiane  
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.  
Murua ō mātou hara,  
Me mātou hoki e muru nei  
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.  
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;  
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:  
Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha,  
me te korōria, Āke āke āke. Āmine.**

## We share news and share the offering of Christ

*"Pictures at an Exhibition-Promenade"*

Modest Mussorgsky (1839-81)

*We recognise and bless the gifts brought to the table,  
and those which wing their way electronically from our banks to the Church's account.*

## We respond to God's call

1 I danced in the morning  
when the world was begun,  
and I danced in the moon  
and the stars and the sun,  
and I came down from heaven  
and I danced on the earth –  
at Bethlehem I had my birth.  
*Dance, then, wherever you may be;  
I am the Lord of the Dance, said he,  
and I'll lead you all, wherever you may be,  
and I'll lead you all in the Dance, said he.*

2 I danced for the scribe  
and the pharisee,  
but they would not dance  
and they would not follow me.  
I danced for the fishermen,  
for James and John –  
they came with me  
and the Dance went on. [*Refrain*]

## We are sent

## Postlude

*Partita on "Lord of the Dance"*

Noel Guilmant

(Lord of the Dance) CH4 404 - Sydney Bertram Carter

3 I danced on a Friday  
when the sky turned black –  
it's hard to dance  
with the devil on your back.  
They buried my body  
and they thought I'd gone –  
but I am the Dance  
and I still go on. [*Refrain*]

4 They cut me down  
and I leapt up high –  
I am the life  
that'll never, never die.  
I'll live in you  
if you'll live in me,  
I am the Lord  
of the Dance, said he. [*Refrain*]