



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

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

10am – Sunday 16 February 2020
Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany

Pre service music

"Pastorale" César Franck (1822-90), "Adagio" J S Bach (1685-1750)

We are prepared for worship, led by our choir

"Lead me Lord"

music Samuel Sebastian Wesley (1810-76)

We are invited to worship

(from Deuteronomy 30)

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Throughout our lives we make choices.

God invites us to choose so life flourishes and the land prospers.

We walk among blessings and curses.

God invites us to be people of blessing for all of creation.

Life involves giving for the sake of future generations.

God invites us to hold fast to God and the ways of God.

Let us worship God.

We sing

(Two Oaks) CH4 198 - Marty Haugen

1 Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive;
built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:
*All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

2 Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:
[Refrain]

3 Let us build a house where hands will
reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:
[Refrain]

4 Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
[Refrain]

We pray and are assured of God's great love

CH4 345

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

Halle, halle, hallelujah! (x3)

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

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.

Our choir leads us in praying

"Love Divine, all loves excelling"

music Howard Goodall (b. 1958)

We listen for God's Word

We sing

GtG 750 - Desmond Tutu

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.

We listen for God's Word

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

30:15 See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity.

30:16 If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess.

30:17 But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them,

30:18 I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

30:19 I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live,

30:20 loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

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

'Attending to the heart'

Matthew 5:21-37 *read during sermon*

The Bible readings we normally use on Sundays are suggested by an international body. They selected for today a tough set of sayings. Indeed, if I was going to lead a seminar on why to dislike Jesus, the reading today would be my text. Harsh and condemnatory. I want to peel away the top layer, and see what is at their heart. Because what is at their heart can peel back our skin, and ask what is in our heart. Peeling back the skin of approaching these as if they are statements of Victorian morality. Peeling back the skin as if concepts used then, mean the same thing now. Peeling back the skin because the world of the Bible is and is not our world, and we need to take the difference seriously. For example in relation to marriage. 2000 years ago, marriage was very different. Marriages were arranged, not motivated by love as we understand it. Marriages were unequal - the husband was often twice the age of the wife, and the wife could be easily dismissed. So as we peel back the surface, what is at the heart of these sayings and what do they ask of our hearts? I am doing something I rarely do, go through a text, saying by saying.

Verses 21-22

It sounds like a condemnation of anger. But Jesus is not speaking about plain anger. Jesus himself got angry, at people, at things. We learn that from the gospels. Anger in itself is neutral and natural - like hunger or thirst. Jesus is speaking about holding anger against a person, about anger that abides. If we hold on to anger, it can be redirected against ourselves or blow up cruelly, as Jesus says. This is an important topic in an increasingly polarised society where people express outrage and react online and where every day there are hateful and vindictive statements. The question is whether we are letting anger rest in our heart, and what we do with that anger. Is it turned towards justice and life and peace, or tearing people down or creating enemies? Do we let anger reside in our heart, straining relationships?

vv. 23 to 26.

Jesus asks us to bring the right attitude to worship. It is a good thing to make an offering – worthy and right and life-giving – but let it prompt forgiveness and reconciliation. Eugene Peterson's paraphrase - "If you enter a place of worship and about to make an offering you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go this friend and make things right. Then work things out with God." Worship sensitises us to what we are doing with our relationships, and it offers a safe place for people to make peace. Worship gets beneath the surface, under our skin and if often breaks open our hearts – again and again. Which is why church can an awkward place, because people are aware they cannot separate their relationship with God from their relationship with each other. We are in a constant process of straining and rebuilding relationships, which is often the hardest, most deeply personal part of worshipping. Because it is about integrity and genuineness and authenticity. Church is not a pretend place and worship is not a pretend time. When we pass the peace, when we pray for others, when we confess, we are expressing this call of Jesus. What is in our heart? How does our offering reflect a desire for peace or an exercise of power?

vv. 27 – 30

Hyperbole. Exaggeration to make a point. These words are addressed to men in relationship with women. Do not look upon a woman in order to make a sexual response to her. Do not look upon a woman for the purpose of sexualising her. Do not look upon a woman in a way that objectifies her. Jesus is not asking us to repress sexual feelings. When they are healthy, they are as natural and neutral as anger is. But, men, how are you approaching your relationships with women? What is in your heart? Eugene Peterson – "Those leering looks you think nobody notices – they also corrupt." This was a time of pronounced patriarchy, when women had little voice or power or status. We now live in a time of pornography spreading through the internet. These words are as relevant as ever. Jesus is saying to men, take control of yourself. Take

responsibility for how you express yourself sexually. It is one thing to explore sexuality; it is another to objectify or sexualise women – that is an abuse of power.

vv. 31 - 32

Before Greco-Roman times if a husband was unhappy with a wife, he took another wife - polygamy. In Greco-Roman times, polygamy ended and the only way to end a marriage was through divorce. But in a patriarchal society, a man could divorce a woman on the most spurious grounds – the quality of cooking, a menial task not completed. Arbitrary discarding, that brought shame on the woman and on the woman's family, often through no fault of hers. A divorced woman had three options – Return to her original family – not always possible, and brought shame; marry again – in a patriarchal and unequal society; or be an independent person, although this was by far the most risky step. So Jesus is raising the bar. The only ground for divorce became adultery. And Matthew has gathered these sayings for a community called to care for women who were divorced. Painful as it can be, divorce is sometimes necessary. Painful as it is, couples sometimes decide adultery will not lead to divorce. This is a not a law against divorce. The heart here is the overcoming of patriarchy, one of the most persisting of injustices. The heart here is building a community that protects the vulnerable. Overturning the destructiveness of unrestrained male power.

vv. 33 – 37

Let me read from Eugene Peterson ... Don't say anything you don't mean. You only make things worse when you lay down a smoke screen of pious talk saying ... "I'll pray for you", and never doing it, or saying "God be with you," and not meaning it. You don't make your words true by embellishing them with religious lace. Just say "yes" or "no". Let your yes be yes and your no be no.

But there is something else running through these sayings. They sound harsh and condemnatory. The sound like those preachers who try to scare us into the kingdom of God. But that approach is a denial of the heart of love. Let's peel away that skin. These sayings highlight the consequences of what we do with anger and relationships including between men and women. And they raise the question of whether people get away with injustice and abuse and sustained anger and the discarding of vulnerable people. There is underlying these sayings a belief that there will there be a day of reckoning when things are put right, when love with prevail and truth will be seen. They highlight that the arc of life bends towards justice and equity, to adapt a saying.

So Jesus is peeling away the skin, and raising questions for us. How does a community enable hearts to be healthy? What would a world look like if our hearts were Jesus hearts? Where anger didn't take hold of us. Where our worship incited reconciliation. Where we never objectified people. Where vulnerable people are supported. Where our yes meant yes and our no meant no. What is in our heart?

We sing

(Bonnie George Campbell CH4 165) CH4 115 - Alison M Robertson

1 Love is the touch of intangible joy;
love is the force that no fear can destroy;
love is the goodness we gladly applaud:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

3 Love is the light in the tunnel of pain;
love is the will to be whole once again;
love is the trust of a friend on the road:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

2 Love is the lilt in a lingering voice;
love is the hope that can make us rejoice;
love is the cure for the frightened and
flawed:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

4 Love is the Maker and Spirit and Son;
love is the kingdom their will has begun;
love is the pathway the saints all have trod:
God is where love is, for love is of God.

We pray for others

Anglican prayer book

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
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

“Beati Quorum Via - Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the LORD”

text Psalm 119 vs.1 ‘Psalm of the Day’, music Charles Villers Stanford (1852-1924)

*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 sing

(Here I am, Lord) CH4 251 - Daniel Schutte

1 I, the Lord of sea and sky,
I have heard my people cry.
All who dwell in dark and sin
my hand will save.
I who made the stars of night,
I will make their darkness bright.
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?

*Here I am Lord. Is it I, Lord?
I have heard you calling in the night.
I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
I will hold your people in my heart.*

2 I, the Lord of snow and rain,
I have borne my people’s pain.
I have wept for love of them.
They turn away.
I will break their hearts of stone,
give them hearts for love alone.
I will speak my Word to them.
Whom shall I send?
[Refrain]

3 I, the Lord of wind and flame,
I will tend the poor and lame.
I will set a feast for them.
My hand will save.
Finest bread I will provide
till their hearts be satisfied.
I will give my life to them.
Whom shall I send?
[Refrain]

We are sent

Postlude

"Sun Dance" Bob Chilcott (b. 1955)

played by Grace Togneri, Knox Organ Scholar

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