



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

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

10am – Sunday 2 February 2020
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Pre service music

“Prelude” K Knudson, *“Prelude”* & *“Andante Sostenuto”* Douglas Lilburn (1915-2001)

We are prepared for worship, led by our choir

“Blest are the pure in heart”

text from Matthew, music Malcolm Archer (b. 1952)

We are invited to worship

(adapted from Matthew 5)

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Blessed are they of a gentle spirit;

They shall have the earth for their inheritance.

Blessed are they who hunger and thirst to see the right prevail;

For they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful;

For they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed are the peacemakers;

For they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed be God who does wondrous things;

Blessed be God for ever.

Let us worship God.

We sing

(Dunedin) AA 155 - Shirley Murray

1 Where mountains rise to open skies
your name, O God, is echoed far,
from island beach to kauri's reach,
in water's light, in lake and star.

4 Your love be known, compassion shown,
that every child have equal scope:
in justice done, in trust begun
shall be our heritage and hope.

2 Your people's heart, your people's part
be in our caring for this land,
for faith to flower, for aroha
to let each other's mana stand.

5 Where mountains rise to open skies
your way of peace distil the air,
your spirit bind all humankind,
one covenant of life to share!

3 From broken word, from conflict stirred,
from lack of vision, set us free
to see the line of your design,
to feel creation's energy.

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.

Our choir leads us in praying

"When Mary to the temple went...in peace I now depart"

music Johannes Eccard (1553-1611)

We listen for God's Word

We sing

(Tenderness) CH4 243 - Shirley Murray

1 Touch the earth lightly,
use the earth gently,
nourish the life of the world in our care:
gift of great wonder,
ours to surrender,
trust for the children tomorrow will bear.

3 Let there be greening,
birth from the burning,
water that blesses and air that is sweet,
health in God's garden,
hope in God's children,
regeneration that peace will complete.

2 We who endanger,
who create hunger,
agents of death for all creatures that live,
we who would foster
clouds of disaster,
God of our planet, forestall and forgive!

4 God of all living,
God of all loving,
God of the seedling, the snow and the sun,
teach us, deflect us,
Christ reconnect us,
using us gently, and making us one.

We listen for God's Word

Micah 6:1-8

6:1 Hear what the LORD says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice.

6:2 Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel.

6:3 "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

6:4 For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam.

6:5 O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD."

6:6 "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old?

6:7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"

6:8 He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

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

Matthew 5:1-12

5:1 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him.

5:2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

5:3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

5:6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

5:8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

5:10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:11 "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

5:12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

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

Poetry and Piety - giving thanks for the music of Shirley Murray

How wondrous it is that we are able to make music, and that in company with creatures like whales! How wondrous it is, that there are people with skill to echo the rhythms of nature and to help us express what we most deeply experience! Would Christianity ever have flourished if no one sang it? Would Christianity ever have spread if it was not able to be sung in our languages and cultures? Every religion seems to find that words alone are inadequate. There needs to be rhythm and rhyme and movement. It needs to fill lungs as well as minds, to expand our bodies as well as our souls.

Piety needs poetry and poetry that is sung. Poetry and piety – I am using words used by Shirley Murray, New Zealand's most honoured hymn writer who died just over a week ago. Singing was there in Judaism and found in the Hebrew scriptures. One of the earliest Christian hymns may be found in the book of Philippians – let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited ... Even the Beatitudes have the sound of song. Blessed are the poor in spirit ... Blessed are the merciful ... Blessed are the meek. The repetition and the structure, pointing to the structure of the coming reign of God.

Matthew is telling how the life of Jesus shows us God's way, God's world. What is God's world like? It is a world where the poor in Spirit are blessed, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are filled, the pure in heart see God, reviled people are glad. The Beatitudes are like the contents page for the gospel of Matthew. See how what is written here gets enacted later on - the person with leprosy who is healed ... O, so that is what it is like to be poor in Spirit. The one who breaks the sabbath and heals a person ... O so that is what it means to be reviled for the right reason ...

The Beatitudes are also a call to action. How do we participate in the coming reign of God now? How do we live into God's realm now? Not by living the virtues of the Roman empire! How do we receive the kingdom of heaven? ... not by being decorated and honoured and powerful. How will we be comforted? ... not by accumulating wealth. These experiences of loss and death and violence and war were real to the people Jesus addressed. In the eyes of the empire, the people Jesus addressed had much to mourn, were poor in spirit and longed for their society to be just.

It's a promise to them and we are eavesdropping. So to us Jesus is asking – who do you want to be like? Another way of translating the word blessed is “enviable”. Envious are the poor in spirit, envious are the meek. Envy these people. And in saying this, Jesus isn't speaking from some high and idealised spot. The mountain here is not Aoraki or even Cargill. The mountain here is a high point from which we can see clearly, from which we see the range of people's experiences, from which we can see how people are going about their everyday lives. It's like looking from the Knox Church bell-tower. It is a place of revelation, when we see more clearly how people are living. Looking out from the Knox bell tower, Jesus is noticing people who emerge from the hospital, or Rob Roy, or the Bog or Lone Star or the dentist. Of all these people, envy those you might easily miss, the poor in spirit, the merciful, the meek.

Which brings me to Shirley Murray's music. Shirley Murray was, as I said earlier, New Zealand's most internationally recognised hymn writer. Hundreds of hymns, 22 in the Church of Scotland hymnary, 10 or so in the US Presbyterian Church hymnary, an honorary doctorate from the University of Otago and much more. Grew up in Invercargill, Methodist, influenced by a thoughtful minister, her intermediate school principal, she was head prefect at Southland Girls' High, proficient in music and language, Otago University graduate. At the age of 16 she came to Dunedin to represent her school at a French speaking contest and beat – vanquished she said - a young man from Kings High School, John Murray, who years later she married. He became a Presbyterian minister and Shirley started writing hymns.

Hymns of this soil. The mountain from which Shirley observed life was not idealised and distant, but here and now. The other New Zealand hymn-writer Colin Gibson says of Shirley's hymns – “it was singing our faith in the present tense”. So she wrote of rights and racism, peace and war, climate and inclusion. Shirley's heartfelt love for our country keeps shining through - the clear skies, the mountains and lakes, this bird-rich land. Faith has set us on a journey past the landmarks that we know, to quote one of Shirley's hymns. And they were songs of faith – there's never a time to stop believing, we will shortly sing. It sought to tell all our story and uphold the meek. Colin Gibson calls Shirley's hymn “honour the dead” the greatest war hymn of our age, chosen by the Government to be sung at the Gallipoli commemorations, and now even the defence force including the verse that honours conscientious objectors.

Shirley wrote of what prompted her: “It seemed to me that the hymns we sang had no resonance with the world I lived in... there was no imagery that evoked a particular environment, no landscape of thought to accommodate the southern hemisphere (think of 'In the bleak midwinter' in high summer, for example), no connection with the Maori culture of our society, which is officially bicultural, nothing to articulate our own hopes and visions.” “Because I live in a highly secular society in Aotearoa/New Zealand, I am conscious of how the stereotypes of Christianity can be cynically dismissed. I long to say that there is so much to understand and embrace in the wisdom, spiritual treasury and survival skills that Jesus has given the world.” “I have wanted to move to where Christ consciousness as well as Christian conscience meshes with the world I experience in my own life and time. Almost everything I have written revolves, ultimately, round the concept of 'peace' in all its manifestations.”

Using plain language – “I like language that gives a jolt of reality.” “Many of the hymns we have traditionally sung were meant for the Biblically literate and larded with references, incomprehensible without some Bible teaching. ... I write hopefully, however, because people will never stop singing about what they believe ...” Shirley wrote the words and others wrote the music. The hymn, Loving Spirit, for example, has 17 different musical settings to which it can be sung. This music came from a woman with a warm humanity and lively faith and a ready smile. Shirley and John were wonderfully encouraging friends and colleagues. I had the privilege of following John as chair of the Hymn Book Trust that published much of Shirley's work.

One of our challenges was how to help churches sing of the here and now. That challenge remains evident. When I go to regional and national church gatherings, overwhelmingly the music is focused on the otherness of God, the transcendent, and on personal experience. Little is about the here and now, the outer, the structures and systems with which we struggle. Perhaps this looking away from ourselves is also a response

to secularism, that the church seems so small and weak, we cannot imagine changing much and so we look away from ourselves, speaking of salvation of a kind rather than creation as God intended. For much contemporary music in New Zealand, the mountain of God seems very high. In the Beatitudes, the mountain is more humble, to help us see what is happening around us, with us and our society. We are singing from the Knox Tower. In the music of Shirley Murray, we sing from that mountain, in the spirit of the Beatitudes. Thanks be to God for the life and music of Shirley Murray.

We sing

(Ellen) CH4 597 - Shirley Murray

1 Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,
you have chosen me to be,
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

4 Friend and lover, in your closeness
I am known and held and blessed:
in your promise is my comfort,
in your presence I may rest.

2 Like a mother you enfold me,
hold my life within your own,
feed me with your very body,
form me of your flesh and bone.

5 Loving Spirit, loving Spirit,
you have chosen me to be,
you have drawn me to your wonder,
you have set your sign on me.

3 Like a father you protect me,
teach me the discerning eye,
hoist me up upon your shoulder,
let me see the world from high.

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

"Blessed are the pure in heart"

music Walford Davies (1869-1941)

Grace Togneri and Greer Brittenden soloists

*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

AA 113 - Shirley Murray

1 Our life has its seasons, and God has the reasons
why spring follows winter, and new leaves grow,
for there's a connection with our resurrection
that flowers will bud after frost and snow
*so there's never a time to stop believing
there's never a time for hope to die,
there's never a time to stop loving,
these three things go on.*

2 There's a time to be planting, a time to be plucking,
a time to be laughing, a time to weep,
a time to be building, a time to be breaking,
a time to be waking, a time to sleep,
but there's never a time to stop believing

3 There's a time to be hurting, a time to be healing,
a time to be saving, a time to spend,
a time to be grieving, a time to be dancing,
a time for beginning, a time to end,
but there's never a time to stop believing ...

We are sent

Postlude

"Toccata from Suite Gothique"

Léon Boëllmann (1862-97)

An adaptation of the Beatitudes from Brian McLaren and Rob Bell

The poor, and those in solidarity with them – God is on your side.

Those who mourn and feel grief about the state of the world – God is on your side.

The non-violent, gentle and humble – God is on your side.

Those who hunger and thirst for the common good – God is on your side.

The merciful and compassionate – God is on your side.

Those characterized by sincerity, kindness and generosity – God is on your side.

Those who work for peace and reconciliation – God is on your side.

Those who keep seeking justice – God is on your side.

Those who stand for justice and truth as the prophets did, who refuse to be quiet even when slandered, misrepresented, threatened, imprisoned or harmed – God is on your side!

~ posted on the **Third Space** blog. <http://third-space.org.uk/fairtrade-beatitudes-and-sanctuary/>