



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

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

10am – Sunday 8 March 2020
Second Sunday of Lent, Quarterly Communion

Pre service music

*“Apres un reve”
“The Hymn of Nuns”*

Gabriel Faure (1845-1924)
Lefébure-Wély (1817-69)

We are prepared for worship, led by our choir

Psalm 121

Walford Davies (1869-1941)

We are invited to worship

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Dearly Beloved

The shadows are deepening but the Light persists.

Dearly Beloved, who will we be?

We're water-washed and Spirit-born. We're anointed, beloved and free!

Let us worship God.

We sing

(Kingsfold) GtG 50 - Brian Wren

1 Deep in the shadows of the past,
far out from settled lands,
some nomads travelled with their God,
across the desert sands.

The dawning hope of humankind
by them was sensed and shown:
a promise calling them ahead,
a future yet unknown.

2 While others bowed to changeless gods,
they met a mystery,
invisible, without a name:
“I AM WHAT I WILL BE”;
and by their tents, around their fires,
in story, song, and law,
they praised, remembered, handed on,
a past that promised more.

3 From Exodus to Pentecost
the promise changed and grew,
while some, remembering the past,
recorded what they knew,
or with their letters and laments,
their prophecy and praise,
recovered, kindled, and expressed
new hope for changing days.

4 For all the writings that survived,
for leaders, long ago,
who sifted, copied, and preserved
the Bible that we know,
give thanks and find its story yet
our promise, strength, and call,
the model of emerging faith,
alive with hope for all.

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

"Ubi Caritas et Amour-Where Charity & Love are found, God is there"

Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

We converse

We sing

(Dundee) CH4 81 - *The Scottish Psalter*, 1929

1 I to the hills will lift mine eyes.
From whence doth come mine aid?
My safety cometh from the Lord,
who heaven and earth hath made.

3 The Lord thee keeps, the Lord thy shade
on thy right hand doth stay:
the moon by night thee shall not smite,
nor yet the sun by day.

2 Thy foot he'll not let slide, nor will
he slumber that thee keeps.
Behold, he that keeps Israel,
he slumbers not, nor sleeps.

4 The Lord shall keep thy soul; he shall
preserve thee from all ill.
Henceforth thy going out and in
God keep for ever will.

We listen for God's Word

Genesis 12:1-4a

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

12:1 Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you.

12:2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

12:3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

12:4a So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

John 3:1-17

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

3:1 Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews.

3:2 He came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God."

3:3 Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above."

3:4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?"

3:5 Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.

3:6 What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.

3:7 Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.'

3:8 The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

3:9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?"

3:10 Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things?"

3:11 "Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony.

3:12 If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things?

3:13 No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

3:14 And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up,

3:15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

3:17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

'Born again, again'

He'd reached the point in his life where he was respected. There was about him a maturity, born of experience. He had made many mistakes and each mistake had taught him something because he had wanted to learn from them. He was now old for the time, grey haired, more measured in his speech, more deliberate in his words, more careful in his actions. He didn't need to make a fuss to get attention because he lived in a culture and at a time when elders were listened to. Although he was experienced, he was open to learning. He had a delightful but cautious curiosity.

And he treated people with a certain dignity, even those others dismissed, those on the margins, the unconventional. He was still surprised at how people turned to him for wisdom and he was surprised at their questions. He didn't think he had any great wisdom, but he had lived through a bit and had seen tough times. He faced challenges he had faced before and there were times he said to himself – well I have faced harder challenges, so I can attend to this one. And he was conscious of the responsibility he had because people listened to him. He needed to be careful that he did not go beyond his knowledge or beyond the scope of his experience. Just because he knew some things, didn't mean he knew everything. He was conscious that his knowledge may not have been entirely up-to-date. And he needed to be careful that the firm opinions he had formed over the years didn't detract from focusing on what was essential.

People had begun to speak to him about this new prophet, Yeshua. He wasn't closed off to new knowledge and new experiences, but he had learned to be cautious. And he didn't want to be seen talking to Yeshua in a way that might lead others to suggest that he endorsed the prophet or supported what the prophet said and did. His authority was so hard earned that he didn't want to squander it on an untested immature and dubious prophet. So wanting to learn and needing to be careful, he arranged to meet the prophet at night. That way others were unlikely to see him. He went genuinely curious.

It was a strange sight - an old man, seasoned elder, respected leader, going to see a 30 something marginal prophet. "No one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." the prophet said.

The old man was mystified "How can anyone be born after having grown old?" Perhaps the old man was wondering wistfully if there could still be any newness to come in his life when experience had given him so many habits and opinions and convictions and caution. He felt often that he only learned when he looked back. The playwright Arthur Miller's autobiography *Timebends* includes these words: " I would be twenty before I learned how to be fifteen, thirty before I knew what it meant to be twenty, and now at seventy-two I have to stop myself from thinking like a man of fifty who has plenty of time ahead. It was in my twenties that I felt old, that was when time was like an abrasive wheel grinding me down. But it was not so much death I feared as insignificance." p69 Miller felt old when young, but now as an older man his feelings of having plenty of time can't be trusted. He wasn't sure he was able to start again.

"How can anyone be born after having grown old?" Maybe there was another question in that question - Why would a mature, respected, experienced leader want to go back to being young, child-like, a baby? Especially when he had learned so much and finally figured out a whole lot of stuff. Maturity is not a process of gradual improvement. Especially spiritual maturity. From time to time, we need to be born again, born from above again, reborn of the spirit. To have our imaginations reshaped and our understandings reworked.

Not in a self-improvement way, for that would be to trivialise the spiritual life. Everett Falconer – "the most superficial thing that can be attempted in the name of religion is to call on someone to turn over a new leaf, to be better, to be different."

How can we avoid being trapped in conclusions we have reached too soon, in certainties that really are not as certain as we imagined, in practices that seem at odds with evolving truth.

To grow up we need to be born again, again. And in the Christian faith, we need to meet again as if for the first time this thirty something Palestinian, Yeshua. To be born again is to have what we think we know taken away from us. The old man might have thought he knew how God works, that it was but an extension of what he had already experienced. But Jesus said to him, the wind, the spirit, blows where it chooses. You do not know where it comes from or where it goes – the Spirit is not just an add on to what you already know. In fact, Nicodemus, you do not know. To be born again, to be a child in need is to have our precious and hard-earned knowledge of how we think this world and God works taken away from us. In its place, to be given only one thing – the Spirit of God. What one writer calls the wild child of the Trinity.

We aren't sure what happened to the old man. The civil right activist, Valerie Kaur, noted that his all happened at night and she said "Perhaps this darkness is not the darkness of a tomb – but the darkness of a womb." Was the old man born again to God the birthing mother, whose body gives us life, whose spirit is our breath, and who delivers us to the world for love.

Affirmation of Faith

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O God, the source of our being and the goal of all our longing, we believe and trust in you.

The whole earth is alive with your glory and all that has life is sustained by you.

We commit ourselves to cherish your world and to seek your face.

O God, embodied in a human life, we believe and trust in you.

Jesus our brother, born of the woman Mary, you confronted the proud and the powerful, and welcomed as your friends those of no account.

Holy Wisdom of God, firstborn of creation, you emptied yourself of power, and became foolishness for our sake.

You laboured with us upon the cross, and have brought us forth to the hope of resurrection.

We commit ourselves to struggle against evil and to choose life.

O God, life-giving Spirit, Spirit of healing and comfort, of integrity and truth, we believe and trust in you.

Warm-winged Spirit, brooding over creation, rushing wind and Pentecostal fire, we commit ourselves to work with you and renew our world. Amen.

We sing

(A Place at the table) CH4 685 - Shirley Murray

1 For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread,
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead,
*and God will delight
when we are creators of justice and joy,
yes, God will delight
when we are creators of justice,
justice and joy!*

2 For woman and man, a place at the table,
revising the roles, deciding the share,
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power,
for woman and man, a system that's fair,
[Refrain]

3 For young and for old, a place at the table,
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,
the hands of a child in hands that are
wrinkled,
for young and for old, the right to belong,
[Refrain]

4 For just and unjust, a place at the table,
abuser, abused, with need to forgive,
in anger, in hurt, a mind-set of mercy,
for just and unjust, a new way to live,
[Refrain]

We share news and share the offering of Christ

"Ave verum corpus- hail true body"

music W A Mozart(1756-91)

*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.*

Invitation to the Lord's Table

"Hear my prayer, O for the wings of a dove" Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47) Calla Knudson-Hollebon/soprano soloist

Eucharistic prayer

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

We give you thanks and praise, O God ...

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is the one who comes in your name.

Hosanna in the highest.

We give you thanks and praise for Jesus ... forever and ever. Amen.

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 rangatiranga.
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai
ki runga ki te whenua,
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.
Hōmai ki a mātou āianei
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 rangatiranga, te kaha,
me te korōria, Āke āke āke. Āmine.**

We sing

1 Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessèd, most glorious, the Ancient of
Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we
praise.

2 Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in
might;
thy justice like mountains, high soaring
above
thy clouds, which are fountains of goodness
and love.

(Here I am Lord) CH4 132 - Daniel Schutte

3 To all, life thou givest, to both great and
small;
in all life thou livest, the true life of all;
we blossom and flourish as leaves on the
tree,
and wither and perish, but naught changeth
thee.

4 Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their
sight.
All praise we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendour of light hideth thee.

We are sent

Postlude

Praeludium und Fuga in E minor 'The Phrygian' BuxWV 152

Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707)