



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

Third Sunday after Pentecost

10am – Sunday 21 June 2020

Music to prepare us for worship "*Meditation*", Gabriel Dupont (1878-1914) "*Antiphon III- I Am Black*",
Marcel Dupre (1886-1971)

The bell sounds, then quietness

Welcome and introduction

Music of approach "*Deep River, my home is over Jordan*", anon Spiritual

Call to worship

(adapted from Psalm 86)

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Show us your way O God,

That we may walk in your truth.

We will praise your name O God with all our heart;

And glorify your name forever.

Great is your steadfast love;

You have delivered us from the power of death.

Hymn

(tune Abbot's Leigh) CH4 123 - Timothy Rees

1 God is love: let heaven adore him;
God is love: let earth rejoice;
let creation sing before him,
and exalt him with one voice.

God who laid the earth's foundation,
and who spread the heavens above,
God who breathes through all
creation:

God is love, eternal love.

2 God is love, and is enfolding
all the world in one embrace;
with unfailing grasp is holding
every child of every race.

And when human hearts are
breaking

under sorrow's iron rod,
then they find that selfsame aching
deep within the heart of God.

3 God is love: and though with blindness
sin afflicts the souls of all,
God's eternal loving-kindness
holds and guides us when we fall.
Sin and death and hell shall never
o'er us final triumph gain;
God is love, so Love for ever
o'er the universe must reign.

Prayer of praise and confession, the promise of deliverance

Extracts from Romans 6:1b – 11

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

Kia tau te rangimarie o te Karaiti ki runga i a koutou. May the peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

Prayer for Illumination

Readings – Listen for God's Word to us ...

Genesis 21:8-21

The child grew, and was weaned; and Abraham made a great feast on the day that Isaac was weaned. But Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, playing with her son Isaac. So she said to Abraham, "Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac." The matter was very distressing to Abraham on account of his son. But God said to Abraham, "Do not be distressed because of the boy and because of your slave woman; whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you, for it is through Isaac that offspring shall be named for you. As for the son of the slave woman, I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring." So Abraham rose early in the morning, and took bread and a skin of water, and gave it to Hagar, putting it on her shoulder, along with the child, and sent her away. And she departed, and wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. When the water in the skin was gone, she cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, "Do not let me look on the death of the child." And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him." Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. God was with the boy, and he grew up; he lived in the wilderness, and became an expert with the bow. He lived in the wilderness of Paran; and his mother got a wife for him from the land of Egypt.

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

Art and music – Images of Hagar

Hagar, 1875, Edmonia Lewis, carved marble sculpture, *Hagar in the Desert*, 1960, Marc Chagall, lithograph, *Hagar and Ismael*, 1955, Jakob Steinhardt, Hand-colored Woodcut *Hagar and Ishmael*, Alan Jones, print.

"Peace be to you", text from Revelation, music by Paul Manz

Matthew 10:24-39

"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

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

Reflection "When our backs are up against the wall"

"At some time in all our lives, whether we are black or white, we are all Hagar's daughters. When our backs are up against a wall; when we feel abandoned, when we find ourselves in need of another woman's help; we, like Hagar, are in need of a woman who will 'sister' us, not exploit us. In those times we are frequently just a sister away from our healing. We need a woman, a sister, who will see in our destitution a jagged image of what one day could be her own story. We need a sister whose genuine mercy—not pity which is episodic, random, and moody—is steadfast, consistent, and free." Renita Weems was commenting on the reading from Genesis 21.

Let me retell the story. Last week we heard how God promised that in their old age Abraham and Sarah would have a child. It was a laughable promise because they were so old. But a child was born to them as promised, Isaac. Before this, because they had not been able to have children, Sarah gave Abraham permission to have sex with Sarah's slave woman, Hagar an Egyptian. He did. Hagar conceived. A son was born, Ishmael. Now we come to today's scene, where Sarah sees Ishmael playing with Isaac. Many of the struggles of Genesis have to do with inheritance. Who will inherit from Abraham and Sarah? Isaac alone, or Isaac and Ishmael. Sarah was clear. Only Isaac should inherit. She tells Abraham to cast out Ishmael and Hagar. God intervenes. God says to Abraham, yes, do as Sarah says, but ..."As for Ishmael I will make a nation of him also, because he is your offspring ..." Two peoples will live together. So Abraham sent Hagar away and provided for her, including with water. When the water was gone and the provisions ran out, she put Ishmael under a bush, anticipating that Ishmael would die. It seemed her only option. She moved back and sat down a way off, because she did not want to see her son die. And she wept. Now God sent a messenger to say that God had heard the voice of the crying boy. God asked Hagar to take hold of Ishmael and water was supplied to enable the boy to live. Ishmael grew up and flourished.

As Renita Weems says, the easiest thing would be to make a case out of the ethnic differences that separated Hagar and Sarah, differences that would manifest itself today between an African woman and a Hebrew woman, a woman of colour and a white woman, a Third World woman and a First World woman.

The differences relate to the question - who will inherit the earth? The similarities between this story and the reality of relationships across racial lines are undeniable. Here is a story of ethnic prejudice but it is exacerbated by economic and sexual exploitation. The situation of Sarah was at a time when woman's self-worth and social status pivoted around her family – the reputation of her husband and the number of children she had. Yes, she was wife of someone socially prominent. Yes, she had wealth and standing. But society depended on the replenishing of the population, so as Weems says, a woman's womb was her destiny. Sarah had standing but she didn't have standing.

By contrast Hagar was young and able to bear children. But she was poor. More than that, she was a slave and so she was powerless. So the differences were not just ethnic. They were economic. Hagar was Sarah's slave, and any child born to the slave belonged to the mistress. Hagar was never asked her opinion. She was never asked to make a choice. But by bearing a child, relationships changed. Hagar went from being a defenceless slave to being a protected woman in Abram's household. It awakened something in Hagar, but Sarah was determined to show who was boss. The slave-woman Hagar was punished for humiliating Sarah. As Weems points out, this is very similar to the accounts of black slave-women and white mistresses during slavery. Those experiences continue to shape women's experience now. Black Lives Matter arises from that place. My own family history in this land include experiences like this. But this story is about more than ethnic prejudice. It is also about the economic stratification of women. Hagar was a worker; Sarah was her employer. And within a capitalist society, disparate economic relationships among women can affect how people are viewed, superiority for people with wealth, inferiority for people without. Sarah took advantage of Hagar's slave-woman status. We are reminded of the inequity among people, and women in particular. Yet, as Weems says, and as COVID has shown, we are all just one pay from Hagar.

In many ways, reflecting the time, this is not the story of Hagar or Sarah. It is Abram's story. The two women are used to demonstrate God's promise to Abram. And Sarah lost sight of who she was in that world. She forgot that in a patriarchal society she had more in common with Hagar than what divided them. Their fate as women in society that seemed to reward only men should have brought them together. And Hagar? She saw herself as a slave. She was free of her mistress, but still enslaved. Weems calls this story a piercing portrayal of one woman's exploitation of another woman. Could Sarah not remember what it was like to be rejected and scorned? There is much sorrow and pain in this story. It reminds us of the ethnic divides in our own country. It reminds us of the economic divides between those whose wellbeing keeps improving and those whose wellbeing keeps getting worse. And it reminds us of what happens in relationships with men. Betrayal. Exploitation. Denial. Resentment. Suspicion. Anger. Silence. How do we reach beyond the enormous gulf of distrust that exists in so much of our society? Our future as a people depends on our ability to bridge over the memories of our scars, and our willingness to tunnel through the tragedies of our past encounters. Hope is emerging from the generations of Ishmael and Isaac, from our children and our children's children, as they march on the street. May the reign of God come in fulness. Amen.

Song - *meditatively as an affirmation of faith (3X) – please stand*

Te Aroha, te whakapono, me te rangimarie, Tātou, tātou e.

We are sent

Prayer for others and the Lord's Prayer

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

Minute for Mission - What parts of what follows connects with your experience?

ANTI-RACISM: FIXED TO GROWTH MINDSET
@HOLISTICALLYGRACE

FIXED - COMFORT	GROWTH - COURAGE
"I DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START OR WHAT TO SAY"	"FIRST I WILL LISTEN/READ/WATCH. I WILL SPEAK AGAINST INJUSTICE"
"I DON'T WANT TO GET IT WRONG OR GET CALLED OUT"	"I WILL MAKE MISTAKES, NO DOUBT ABOUT IT. I WILL BE GRATEFUL FOR THE LESSON"
"IT WON'T MAKE A DIFFERENCE WHAT I DO, NOTHING IS GOING TO CHANGE"	"THINGS HAPPEN WHEN I TAKE RISKS AND BECOME PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER"
"I DON'T GET INVOLVED IN POLITICS. I DON'T HAVE TIME"	"THIS IS A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. THIS MATTERS, I WILL MAKE TIME"

Hymn

(tune Repton) CH4 710 - Pamela Pettitt

1 'I have a dream', a man once said,
'where all is perfect peace;
where men and women, black and
white,
stand hand in hand, and all unite
in freedom and in love,
in freedom and in love.'

2 But in this world of bitter strife
the dream can often fade;
reality seems dark as night,
we catch but glimpses of the light
Christ sheds on humankind,
Christ sheds on humankind.

3 So dream the dreams and sing the
songs, but never be content;
for thoughts and words don't ease
the pain:
unless there's action, all is vain;
faith proves itself in deeds.

4 Lord, give us vision, make us
strong,
help us to do your will;
don't let us rest until we see
your love throughout humanity
uniting us in peace,
uniting us in peace.

Dedication of offering – *Please place your offerings in the offering bags held out for you at the door as you leave.*

Blessing – Extracts from Matthew 10:24-39

Music for our leaving - *Grand Choeur in G major*, Theodore Salome (1834-1869)

Notices have been emailed to people for whom we have email addresses. They are also shown on the screens at the conclusion of the service. For those who have not received the emailed notices, printed copies can be uplifted from the table at the rear of the church.

In relation to your monetary offering, you may:

- *Make regular automatic payments (which are tax deductible) – contact Helen Thew at plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net*
- *Give online to the Church's bank account at 03 0903 0016425 00 - our charity number for tax rebate purposes is #CC52318.*
- *Give at the conclusion of the service.*