



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

10am – Sunday 5 July 2020

Music to prepare us for worship *“Up, up my heart with gladness” (See what is done today)*
from *‘Partita’*, Flor Peeters (1903-86); *“The heart of peace”*, Mons Leidvin Takle (b. 1942)

The bell sounds, then quietness

Welcome

Music of approach *“I sat down under his shadow- and his banner over me was love”*
music Edward Bairstow

Call to worship (adapted from Ps 145)

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Lift up your hearts, all you who choose the path of Life!

My heart is lifted up!

“Do you not know that your whole being is encompassed by My Love?”

“I am the infinite and the eternal within your soul.”

“O that I might make Myself known to you!”

“Choose Love that you might overcome blind obedience to false idols!”

Hymn

(tune Melita) CH4 484 - Brian Wren

1 Great God, your love has called us
here,
as we, by love for love were made.
Your living likeness still we bear,
though marred, dishonoured,
disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and
mind
your call to hear, your love to find.

2 We come with self-inflicted pains
of broken trust and chosen wrong,
half-free, half-bound by inner
chains,
by social forces swept along,
by powers and systems close
confined
yet seeking hope for humankind.

3 Great God, in Christ you set us free
your life to live, your joy to share.
Give us your Spirit's liberty
to turn from guilt and dull despair
and offer all that faith can do
while love is making all things new.

Prayer, assurance of forgiveness – based on Romans 7:15-25a

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.**

Art and music – Ox yoke, oxen yoke, shoulder yoke, ox yoke

"Across the vast eternal sky", music Ola Gjeilo (b. 1978)

Children

Prayer for Illumination

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

Zechariah 9:9-12

Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

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

Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

"But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds." At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I

will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

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

Reflection "Yoked to hope"

Hopes ran high. The people had come through a long and difficult period. They had faced down major challenges and it seemed as if life was improving. And they waited and waited and yearned and yearned for that new life, but life didn't improve. How do you hold on to hope and become what Zechariah calls "prisoners of hope" when there is much about which to despair. How can hope keep calling us forward when it's easier to be cynical, more natural to give up?

I refer to the reading from Zechariah because I want us to know that we are borne along as part of a world-wide movement of hope thousands of years old. Let me give its background. The temple had been destroyed and people had been taken into exile, and now seventy years later the descendants of the exiles were returning to their ancestral homeland. They contemplated independence and the restoration of the monarchy, but their dreams never materialised. The foreign kings of Persia ruled for another 200 years, only to be replaced by Greek and then Roman rule.

A prayer in Nehemiah expresses how they felt. "Here we are, slaves to this day ... The land's rich yield goes to the kings whom you have set over us ... they have power also over our bodies and over our livestock at their pleasure, and we are in great distress."

Long years of yearning met with nothing but unbearable subjugation. How could they continue to hope when the fulfilment of their hope seemed less and less likely as the centuries rolled on? Centuries! Such a heavy yoke!

In our own land, for a period of time there was a remarkable national spirit. Collectively we stopped the spread of COVID-19. How inspiring to see across our country, people helping each other. Maybe, we thought, that with this spirit, we could achieve more, not just addressing a virus but many of our other national challenges. A buoyant spirit that would take us forward.

And then something happened. Our public health system run down over a long period, struggled and sputtered. Despite there being no community transmission, the struggles were highlighted and amplified. We had to blame someone even though we know that a public health system develops over years. Then it became politically partisan, mirroring what we have seen overseas. The short term blame buried the long term possibilities. There was a downward spiral that chewed up our hope. Our memory of acting together despite mistakes was picked apart until we wonder how we ever hoped for a different future. Which leads to weariness and the struggle to carry burdens, and a longing for rest. Such a heavy yoke!

How often have we seen this in organisations and churches and societies? So let's look to Zechariah again. We read that the one to change our fortunes, the hopeful one, identifies with people who are poor and oppressed, that the hopeful one comes on a donkey not a war horse, that the hopeful one leads people on to the streets.

Matthew names what Jesus faced, that no matter how often truth was spoken, people would not receive it. John the Baptist came, abstemious, disciplined, highlighting injustice, and people accused him of having a demon. He wailed and the people did not mourn. By contrast, Jesus came, eating and drinking and people called him a glutton and drunkard. He played the flute and the people would not dance. John was too serious; Jesus was not serious enough.

Jesus points to an underlying, persisting, powerful, feminine presence in our world, the figure of Wisdom, with a capital W. She stands on the street corner speaking truth and calling for justice. Despite how people dismiss John and Jesus, she is at work in our world, and we are invited to join her. Wisdom is a power and a presence active in our society. Wisdom helps us understand life beyond sensory perception. In our faith, we believe Christ is the Wisdom of God.

This invitation comes from the Wisdom of God, from Jesus –

"Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

In Proverbs, Wisdom beckons us to a feast she has prepared— “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. Lay aside immaturity and live, walk in the way of insight.” Proverbs 9:5-6.

By using the image of the yoke, Jesus took up a Rabbinic image, to highlight the importance of teaching and the gift of Wisdom. In following Jesus, we are yoked to Wisdom. Living the way of Christ is not to be a heavy burden or a tiring load. It’s not about keeping a set of moral standards or complying with a list of laws. It is rather about enjoying a relationship in which he steadily influences us. We become yoked to him, to his life, his power, his work in the world.

This power transforms our desires into passions for God’s just and powerful reign in the world. We don’t need to pretend that we are self-made people. We don’t need to imagine we are left to our own resources to achieve society’s goals of wealth and personal success, goals that exhaust us, make our shoulders sag, leave us restless and anxious.

We are invited instead, to receive the yoke of Christ, to believe that Wisdom is at work in our world, taking up our longing and yearning and praying and working for life that is abundant for everyone.

The yoke of hope. We look back on millions of people who have carried this yoke before us over thousands of years, believing that the world will one day be as God wants it.

Song - *meditatively*

CH4 759 - John Bell

Come to me, come to me, (x3)
weak and heavy laden;
trust in me, lean on me.
I will give you rest.

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 forever. 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 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 rangatiratanga, te kaha,
me te korōria, Āke āke āke. Āmine.**

An aspect of mission

Hymn

(tune Kingsfold) CH4 540 - Horatius Bonar

1 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Come unto me and rest;
lay down, thou weary one, lay down
thy head upon my breast':
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, worn, and sad;
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.

3 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'I am this dark world's Light;
Look unto me, thy morn shall rise,
and all thy day be bright':
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my Star, my Sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk,
till travelling days are done.

2 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
'Behold, I freely give
the living water; thirsty one,
stoop down and drink, and live':
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul
revived,
and now I live in him.

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

Blessing

Music for our leaving

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.*

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