



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

10am – Sunday 11 October 2020

Music to prepare us for worship *"Song without words", "O rest in the Lord,*
"Liebster Jesu"

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47);
J S Bach (1685-1750);

Welcome

Music of approach

"All people that on earth do dwell",

Thomas Tallis (1505-85)

Call to worship

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

In the midst of fear and threat, when a shroud is cast over people,

God offers life as a feast.

In the midst of anxiety and hostility,

God offers rejoicing and gentleness.

In the midst of mayhem and destruction,

God offers life to celebrate.

The feast is spread.

All are welcome.

Let us dress for the party.

We will worship God.

Music

"O for the wings of a dove",

Felix Mendelssohn (1809-47)
Sarah Hubbard/soprano soloist

Hymn

Seasons of the Spirit - Fay White

1 Come to the banquet, there's a place for you
Though you maybe have no money,
though you maybe feel unworthy,
in your strength or in your weakness
you are welcome, come.

3 Come to the banquet, there's a place for you
Woman, wise one, mother, maiden,
see your plate with food is laden
and your place is set and waiting.
You are welcome, come.

2 Come to the banquet, there's a place for you
See, you are an honoured guest,
from constant serving you may rest,
so sit you down, be fed and blessed,
for you are welcome, come.

4 Come to the banquet, there's a place for you
Whether you've been lost or faithful,
whether you've been wise or wasteful,
here's a place of rest and grace,
and you are welcome, come.

5 *Come to the banquet, there's a place for you*
Here is one who runs to meet you,
loving arms stretched out to greet you.
Do not let your fear defeat you.
You are welcome, come.

6 *Come to the banquet, there's a place for you*
Willing hands here make the bread
with yeast and salt and labour shared.
Let all the hungry ones be fed.
It's time for feasting, come.

Children

Song

Rejoice in the Lord always:
again I say, rejoice
Rejoice in the Lord always:
again I say, rejoice

Rejoice, rejoice,
again I say, rejoice!
Rejoice, rejoice,
again I say, rejoice!

Music: unknown, Text: Philippians 4: 4

Prayer, assurance of forgiveness

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.**

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

Isaiah 25:6-10a;

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear. And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations; he will swallow up death forever. Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from all faces, and the disgrace of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, so that he might save us. This is the LORD for whom we have waited; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. For the hand of the Lord will rest on this mountain.

Philippians 4: 1-9

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

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

Matthew 22:1-14

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. Again he sent other slaves, saying, 'Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.' But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, while the rest seized his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them.

The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. Go therefore into the main streets, and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad; so the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' For many are called, but few are chosen."

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

Reflection - Joy in the face of threat

We're coming to the end of a strange year. Many of us are tired from continually having to adapt to changing requirements and challenging circumstances. Requirements we can understand because they are needed to restrict the spread of the virus. But that understanding does not lessen the stress of wondering whether we are doing too much or not enough to protect ourselves and others.

In our context, I noticed this verse in Isaiah 25: "And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations." A shroud has been cast over people this year, a sheet over all nations. We long for its ending.

Each of the readings today offers hope in situations of threat. Isaiah represents the tradition that suggests creation is always under threat of chaos and nothingness, that the threat stands in opposition to God and that if God does not attend to creation, if creation is not under the

rule of God, then the threat prevails. So while God has the upper hand, God is not fully in control and from time to time creation unravels. The threat of nothingness is always present, undermining hope. The power of death, of havoc, of disorder is still on the loose. In the face of that threat, Isaiah proclaims that sooner or later God will prevail over the threats, that there will be a day when God will pay special attention to creation, reclaiming it for life. So God is indispensable, because God is the guarantor of blessing, of safety, of abundance, of order. "On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines ... " The promise is not that we will stagger over the line barely surviving, exhausted, but that we will thrive, that the shroud will be swallowed up. In the meantime, we are to wait so that God might save us.

In the midst of COVID-19, can we keep holding on to such hope? The passage in Philippians also hints at an underlying threat, the threat of disunity, distrust and community hostility. This letter comes from a prisoner who is awaiting a possible death sentence and whose letters to his followers put him and them at risk. The Roman police scrutinise each letter and censor them when needed. The police also watch the recipients of the letter and there are people around them who are hostile and ready to report disloyalty. So it was dangerous to write a letter.

Paul is in military custody which allows him to receive visitors and money, but he is in continual discomfort. The prison was without fresh air, dark, filthy and unhealthy. He would have suffered greatly, physically tortured with beatings and whippings along with mental torture such as insults and threats. He is always chained to one or two soldiers, either with his arms and hands or feet. It seems likely that he dictated the letter or paid a soldier to unchain him enough to write the letter himself. The letter tells us he is anxious and worried, facing threat. He refers to his weakness, his uncertainty about the sentence he will receive. He worries about his readers struggling to cope with his absence and the hostility around them. He is also probably hungry because prisoners were not well fed. Even if he is released, he faces ongoing scrutiny for the same reason he was imprisoned - because a private citizen did not like what he was saying and reported him.

But he knows that the Philippian church was in good hands and the leaders needed encouragement. It was made up of and led mainly by women. Women were not usually named unless they were notable or notorious. And here Paul names Euodia and Syntyche. It seems they were notable women in the Christian movement in Philippi and they may have been in charge of ministries in the community. There may have been conflict about the direction of the community. Paul urged the leaders to ensure the conflict did not become personal. In that troubled context, for Paul himself, for the recipients of the letter who were under scrutiny and for the leaders of the community who were in conflict, Paul encourages the whole community to rejoice. In threatening circumstances, it seems strange to call for joy. Yet it is a common theme among prisoners facing death. Elsa Tamez says this – "In the midst of misfortune, persecution, and possible death sentences, prisoners draw strength from writing or talking about joy in order to deal with both present and future pain ... they tell their recipients to let go of the sadness brought on by imprisonment and persecution, and they encourage them to rejoice ..." It is possible to rejoice in the midst of hostility and threat, and to show kindness to others because God is close to them and empowers them. Harsh

circumstances need not suck us of joy because joy rests on what is more enduring than circumstances.

However, we might need to think about how we can avoid making those circumstances worse. Paul uses words that aim to calm Roman fears. He knows that the Romans would thoroughly endorse these words. So he writes something that the Romans could agree to. “Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things ...” If there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things ...

So what joy can we know as we continue to face the threat of a pandemic along with other threats? The parable also speaks of threat. It is soaked in violence, the seizing and mistreatment and murdering of slaves. The sending of troops, the killing of murderers, the burning of the city. The binding of people hand and foot, throwing them into outer darkness. This is not a nice parable. Behind it, something is at stake. The community of Matthew had experienced the destruction of the Temple, the centre of Jewish faith. It was a devastating blow that reminded them of Roman power and their own powerlessness.

They were made to feel that they did not belong in their own land, that their faith was. It seems that there were people who refused to be part of Jesus’ inclusive call, perhaps because of who they would have to associate with.

Hymn

(Sursum Corda) TiS 259- John Bell (b. 1949)

1 Among us and before us, Lord, you stand
with arms outstretched and bread and wine
at hand.

Confronting those unworthy of a crumb,
you ask that to your table we should come.

2 Who dare say No, when such is your resolve
our worst to witness, suffer and absolve,
our best to raise in lives by God forgiven,
our souls to fill on earth with food from
heaven?

3 Who dare say No, when such is your intent
to love the selves we famish and resent,
to cradle our uncertainties and fear,
to kindle hope as you in faith draw near?

4 No more we hesitate and wonder why;
no more we stand indifferent, scared or shy.
Your invitation leads us to say Yes,
to meet you where you nourish, heal and
bless.

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 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.

Hymn

CH4 182 Martin Rinkart (1586-1649)

1 Now thank we all our God,
with heart and hands and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices;
who from our mothers' arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love,
and still is ours today.

3 All praise and thanks to God
who reigns in highest heaven -
the Father and the Son
and Spirit - now be given:
the one, eternal God,
whom earth and heaven adore;
for thus it was, is now,
and shall be evermore.

2 Oh, may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever-joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
and keep us in his grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ills
in this world and the next.

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

Blessing

Music for our leaving
"Trumpet tunes from King Arthur"

Henry Purcell (1659-95)
arr. Christopher Dearnley

Serving

Minister – Kerry Enright
Associate Minister - Jordan Redding
Organist and Choir Director – Karen Knudson
Reader – ...Sara Brown
Prayer for others – ...Janet Wishart
Welcoming team – Leigh Haslam's team
Counting team – Tony Haslam's team

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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