



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost Reformation Sunday

10am – Sunday 25 October 2020

Music to prepare us for worship "*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott (A Safe Stronghold is Our God)*" BuxWV 184, Dietrich Buxtehude (1638-1707); "*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott (Fughette)*", Johann Pachelbel (1653-1706); "*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*", Johann Walther (1684-1748)

played by Peter Stockwell

Welcome

Music of approach "*God is our hope and strength*" Cantata 24

J S Bach (1685-1750)

Call to worship

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Gather us, O God,

and we will know your life that makes us whole.

Gather us, O God,

and we will celebrate your creation of our variety.

Gather us, O God,

and we will give you the pain of our brokenness.

Gather us, O God,

and we will share the gifts of your Spirit.

Trinity of love, bind us as one, that our brokenness be healed by you, our fears be held by you, our gifts be used by you and our lives be offered to you, so that the world may believe.

Amen

Hymn

1 Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation;
praise God, my soul, for in him are your health and salvation;
come all who hear,
into his presence draw near,
joining in glad adoration.

(tune Lobe den Herren) CH4 124 - Joachim Neander

2 Praise to the Lord, who in all things is wondrously reigning,
shields you from harm and is gently yet firmly sustaining.
Have you not seen
how your heart's wishes have been granted by God's wise ordaining?

3 Praise to the Lord, who with blessing
and power will defend you;
surely his goodness and mercy shall
daily attend you;
ponder anew
what the Almighty can do:
God will for ever befriend you.

4 Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in
me adore him!
All that has life and breath, come now
with praises before him!
Let the Amen
sound from God's people again:
gladly for ever adore him.

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.**

Music *"Flocks in Pastures Green Abiding"*

J S Bach (1685-1750)

Children

Hymn

1 When I needed a neighbour, were you
there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour, were you
there?

*And the creed and the colour and the
name won't matter,
were you there?*

2 I was hungry and thirsty, were you
there, were you there?
I was hungry and thirsty, were you
there? [*Refrain*]

(tune Neighbour) CH4 544 - Sydney Bertram Carter

3 When I needed a shelter, were you
there, were you there?
When I needed a shelter, were you
there? [*Refrain*]

4 Wherever you travel I'll be there, I'll
be there,
Wherever you travel I'll be there.
And the creed and the colour and the
name won't matter,
I'll be there.

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

Psalm 90:1-6, 13-17

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or
ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God. You turn us
back to dust, and say, "Turn back, you mortals." For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when
it is past, or like a watch in the night. You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is
renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.
Turn, O LORD! How long? Have compassion on your servants! Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast
love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us,

and as many years as we have seen evil. Let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.

Let the favour of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands -- O prosper the work of our hands!

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

You yourselves know, brothers and sisters, that our coming to you was not in vain, but though we had already suffered and been shamefully mistreated at Philippi, as you know, we had courage in our God to declare to you the gospel of God in spite of great opposition. For our appeal does not spring from deceit or impure motives or trickery, but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the message of the gospel, even so we speak, not to please mortals, but to please God who tests our hearts. As you know and as God is our witness, we never came with words of flattery or with a pretext for greed; nor did we seek praise from mortals, whether from you or from others, though we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, like a nurse tenderly caring for her own children. So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us.

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

Matthew 22:34-40

When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. "Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?" He said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

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

Reflection - Rev Peter Matheson

When I began my ministry, way back in the 1960's, we were clear that the church needed all sorts of reform in its old fashioned ways, in its worship, in its theology. As a member of the Iona Community I felt we were in the advance guard of reform. We wanted to break with sentimental patterns of piety, to get into social justice, to reach out to our Anglican and Roman Catholic colleagues, to renew theology by discarding pre-scientific ways of thought. Virgin Birth, Resurrection could no longer be understood literally. And we should be honest with folk that these old ways were done for ever. Moltmann's Theology of Hope was one guiding star. At heart the church is to be forward-looking, as it was in the beginning. It was daunting, but exciting, too.

But here in Aotearoa, as in the church world-wide, little of this chirpy optimism about changing the face of the church survived. Since the Geering controversy and since Vatican 2 large sections of the church have - to put it bluntly - given up on theology. Given up on thought. Anti-intellectualism is widespread, because for many all they can be sure about any longer is their emotional commitment to the faith. Jesus, Jesus Jesus, they cry. You can understand that. But that means critical & difficult issues such as those to do with gender or bioethics or our relations to Islam are decided on a gut level. Fatal. Hopeless.

When I stand here in the pulpit, when you - as Knox congregations do - listen carefully and critically, we know that this won't do. The Gospel is not about us and our precious gut

feelings. We are not some religious club. Before God, our own preferences, opinions, feelings, instincts, are of course important. We are who we are. Yet in Bonhoeffer's terms, they are penultimates. Luther put it this way: we are chronically turned in on ourselves, incurvatus in se. So the ancient image of taking off your shoes when you enter holy ground is relevant. If faith means anything at all, we have to take off our old hiking boots, our flash new loafers, sandals, pumps whatever. Metaphorically we have to walk barefoot. Be open to re-inventing ourselves

This abstract preacher talk becomes reality for me when I try to wrestle my way into the life and thought of the great Reformation figures. Our traditional Protestant glorification of Luther or Calvin or John Knox is long gone. Downing popes and bishops and ushering in the glorious new era of us. When we mihi to Luther or John Knox, to Katharina Zell or Argula von Grumbach we say hello to people whose language, actions, commitments are a million miles from ours. We only see ourselves for what we are when confronted by others who are so absolutely different from us. History is self discovery. We don't study the Reformation out of academic interest. Blood sweat and tears is more like it.

Part of the key message, that we have to offer our presentist generation, with its hunger for instant truth, for one-liners, for easy answers, is the humbling insight that truth always means going back to the beginning of things including of course the child within us. Every Reformer worthy of the name combined incredible sophistication with utter innocence. The toughest analysis and the gentlest prayer: the radical reformer, Thomas Müntzer, who saw through the power play of the princes and the corrupt structures of justice of his time, and died young, tortured and executed after throwing himself onto the side of the impoverished peasants and miners: *O kindly God, open up the abyss of our souls, that we come to know the immortality of our being through the new birth of your son, by the power of his flesh and costly blood.*

The abyss of our souls. We don't talk like that any more. Richard Rohr talks of "the laboratory where all such radical change can occur—inside of our very mind, heart, and the cells of our body. I call it the laboratory of contemplative practice, which rewires our inner life and actually confirms in the soul a kind of "emotional sobriety."

But we do talk here in Knox about transformation, and that's what's meant. In her book *The Silent Cry*, Dorothy Soelle suggests that there is the closest link between the mystics - allowing themselves to fall into the abyss of the soul and transformative social justice. Like Bonhoeffer she began with philosophy but moved to this view that truth/justice is to be found by weaving together a sense of wonder with a tough engagement for justice. We have to go deeper. To let go, to walk barefoot. "a man had not yet given up everything for God as long as he held on to the moneybag of his own opinions." Francis of Assisi.

All this clashes with much of our modern mind-set: I got involved in a fascinating conversation recently with a sociologist working in the States. We no longer have any accepted criteria for truth or falsehood, right or wrong. Relativity rules supreme. Truth, justice for most folk are chimaera. Populism rules supreme.

Maybe, this is Matheson speaking now, we have tossed out God and end up with nothing but penultimates. No dimension of mystery left. No cutting edge analysis either.

So we need to return to our heritage, to explore what's there.

Here's a woman reformer, Katherine Zell, from the busy trading city of Strasbourg, on the Rhine, talking about transformation, as only a woman could, likening it to child birth. Again, the language is not ours, but be patient; listen for the meaning: for her Christ is a mother, giving birth: blood, sweat and pain.

The grace of God through Jesus Christ is the true mother, Christ in God and God in him... For he has come to us in our flesh and in great fear birthed us into grace, or restored us to grace, shedding bloody sweat as he did...

Birthed us into grace. Here's me your historian/preacher, offering you all we have from the past: this thin trail of words, from Luther, Katherine,

The analogy I used with my students was walking by the seashore, seeing the thin trail of shells, kelp, tiny skelemonic remains and attempting to recreate from that the vibrant life of the ocean. The vibrant life of the Reformation. Scripture is like that, too, of course, on first glance it's just a thin trail of words. The enormous challenge, we call it hermeneutics, is to read them so that the vibrant life of the people of God reemerges for us.

Here we are, then, I in the pulpit, you critically, carefully weighing what I say. Where in all this is the truth? We are over the easy answers. *For the Bible tells me so.* We can quote a thousand texts, but without the guidance of the Spirit, a feel for the whole journey of the people of Israel, of the folk around Jesus, we are just clashing symbols. I cannot stand here without sensing at my side, Sarah Mitchell, David Grant, Neil Churcher, my own father of course. You will feel the same. We are whom we **were**. We are Abraham, Deborah, Jeremiah, Luther, Katherine, Argula, John Knox. They are the transformative life-blood flowing in our veins.

It was always hard yacka, the Reformation, and could be terrifyingly cruel, in theory we're all for transformation. The reality is the ferocious resistance of all the huge vested interests, not least our own. So if we would reform the Church today as we must, we will need what the first woman reformer Argula of Grumbach called "the gracious friendliness of Christ" - and combine that gentleness with a readiness to ask all the tough questions.

Luther talked of the inner eye, which brings Scripture to life. Our generation is crying out for meaning, for truth, for righteousness. Luther's new way of talking about God has been classically described as a Sprachereignis. Performative language. A way of talking which **changes** everything. Jesus talked like that. Jesus the man for others, as Bonhoeffer summed it up.. Our whole heritage as Presbyterians is about intellectual and spiritual integrity, is it not? Hard analysis, wedded to prayer of the heart. Crafting a community which lives out the impossible possibility of truth-telling - as David Grant never tired of saying - and of righteousness. Open to the abyss yet absolutely down to earth. Amen.

Hymn

1 Our God, we are a church Reformed,
a church reforming still:
we long to grow in your true Word,
and follow more your will.

2 You call us to community;
by faith our hearts are stirred.
In church, we seek an ordered life,
according to your Word.

Prayer for others and the Lord's Prayer

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.

Hymn

1 From this holy time,
from this sacred space,
we go now to serve
our own day and place,
committed to follow
the way Jesus trod:
do justly, love mercy,
walk humbly with God.

(tune Richmond, CH4 352i) - Carolyn Winfrey Gillette

3 As faithful stewards we find joy;
we need no rich display.
Lord, teach us all to use with care
the gifts you give each day.

4 The world makes gods of lesser things,
and wrongly uses power;
so by your Spirit may we work
for justice every hour.

Anglican prayer book

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.

(tune Laudate Dominum, CH4 130) HIOS 31 - Barry Brinson

2 He lives in our midst,
though gone from our sight,
baptised in his name,
we walk in his light;
we treasure his presence,
example and word:
do justice, love mercy,
walk humbly with God.

3 Let this be our life,
till Christ comes again -
to love as he loves
and work for God's reign,
this song in our hearts
and this sign on our road:
do justly, love mercy,
walk humbly with God.

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 *Prelude and Fugue in A*

J S Bach (1685-1750)
played by Grace Togneri/ Knox Organ Scholar

Serving

Minister – Kerry Enright
Associate Minister - Jordan Redding
Organist and Choir Director – Karen Knudson
Reader – David Crerar
Prayer for others – Linda Holloway
Welcoming team – David Richardson's team
Counting team – Howard Smith'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.*