



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 31 January 2021
The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany

Music to prepare us for worship “Arioso” J S Bach (1685-1750), “Adagio” Frank Bridge (1879-1941)

Please place your offering in the offering boxes at the back of the church, if possible before worship commences.

Welcome

Music of approach “Morning glory, starlit sky, soaring music, scholars truth” Barry Rose
Grace Togneri & Alex McAdam/ soloists

Call to worship (adapted from Mark 1)

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

They were in the place of worship when Jesus taught.

He taught as one having authority.

A person asked Jesus what he intended to do in that place:

“What have you to do with us?”

Jesus so engaged the spirit of the person that the people asked:

“What is this new teaching?”

We gather for worship in this place.

God engages our spirits with the new teaching of Jesus.

Let us worship God.

Hymn

(tune: Picardy [CH4 263]) GtG 174 - Ruth Duck

1 Come and seek the ways of Wisdom,
she who danced when earth was new.

Follow closely what she teaches,
for her words are right and true.

Wisdom clears the path to justice,
showing us what love must do.

2 Listen to the voice of Wisdom,
crying in the marketplace.

Hear the Word made flesh among us,
full of glory, truth and grace.

When the word takes root and ripens,
peace and righteousness embrace.

3 Sister Wisdom, come, assist us;
nurture all who seek rebirth.
Spirit-guide and close companion,
bring to light our sacred worth.
Free us to become your people,
holy friends of God and earth.

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.**

Children

Hymn

(tune: Be still) CH4 755 - Unknown

1 Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.
Be still and know that I am God.

3 In you, Lord God, I put my trust.
In you, Lord God, I put my trust.
In you, Lord God, I put my trust.

2 I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.
I am the Lord who saves and heals.

Anthem *"O breath of life"* music Bob Chilcott

Sara Brown/ piano, Carolyn Schmid/ organ

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

Deuteronomy 18:15-20

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak--that prophet shall die."

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

Mark 1:21-28

They went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus

rebuked him, saying, "Be silent, and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching--with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

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

Reflection "What have you to do with us?"

A first person sermon ... "My name is Hezekiah. I know – you heard my name last Sunday when I was a fisherman. By way of explanation, I can only say I keep popping up. I was in the synagogue that day - not like the synagogues you know now - this was a long time ago, first century, before the Temple was destroyed. The synagogue was a meeting place, a teaching and talking-place, a place where judgements were given. So it was familiar to us all, but that day it was a sabbath day and a sacred place.

A familiar place with a familiar routine. We were there expecting what always happened, the same routine, interesting, helpful, but pretty much the same. Reading the Torah, teaching the commandments. The scribes trying to be faithful in translating and interpreting. I was sitting on one of the benches around the wall. And in the middle there was a stand on which the Torah sat, from which the law was read and from which the scribes instructed us. Over there sat Mr Smith. He sat near the front because he couldn't hear so well. And over there sat the Browns. Their family had sat on that bench for many years. And over there sat young Jones. Learning the faith. I could tell you about nearly every person there, and they knew me.

The prophet came in. Any Jewish man could speak in the synagogue, so we were not surprised, although we had not heard him before. Immediately I noticed the difference. The sense of immediacy and urgency. He expected our lives to change, to change soon. He spoke with authority, not claimed or demanded, not presumed or assumed. I could tell people listened to his message. He spoke about a new realm just round the corner, just down the road, near at hand, present. He spoke as if something was at stake. I could tell he was trying to be true, to speak truth. I thought of those words from our past – "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet."

As he spoke, he changed the atmosphere. We were more on edge, more nervous perhaps, the heart beating faster. There was tension, as if something was about to happen. And it did.

One of us cried out. I cannot remember who it was now, because we were focused on the prophet. But among our number, a person who valued the scribes, cried out. "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" It was the question we were all asking in a way because Jesus was no scribe. It was the question the scribes would have asked if they had been there. Asked because his way was different, challenging, even disturbing. So I wasn't surprised at the opposition, stiff opposition, harsh, strident opposition. "What do we have in common?" You have come here from Nazareth – the man almost spat out the name of the town. "We have nothing in common. You are not one of us. Are you trying to dismantle what we have put in place, disturb the status quo, upend what we value? Why do you meddle with us, with our way of doing things?" Awkward. But I tell you this, everyone was awake. He was threatening the powers that decided how things were done, the people who were in control

I could have sat there, on the side, watching. I could have thought the man was deranged, disturbed, irrational. I could have crept away embarrassed at the fuss. I could have said – this isn't about me – Let them argue it out. But I noticed a word the man said ... us. He asked Jesus - "What have you to do with us?" I am one of the us. Why was I implicated?

Well I was torn. On the one hand were the scribes I trusted, knew, relied on. On the other an unfamiliar prophet, speaking directly of a new way. He faced me with a choice, a different centre of authority, a different kind of power. He was wresting control from a system that enslaved and oppressed us. I use the word power, but I know it is an awkward word. You know about the ability of powers to take hold of us, don't you? We are full of powers – aren't we? Some call them spirits – not literally, but in terms of what we absorb from the culture around us, the society in which we exist, what enslaves us, claims us. You New Zealanders know what that is like for spirits to wrestle with each other. It happens on your maraes, as the elders speak and the visitors respond, in the toing and froing, in the words spoken, but more than mere words. Powers, old

and long and established powers swirl around. Ancient forces rise to the surface. Histories that shape us wrestle with each other, as one set of leaders uphold one tradition over another, set one part of history against another part of our history.

That's what happens in sacred spaces at sacred times. That's what happens in places like this and times like this. The power of Jesus wrestles with the powers that rule our lives. Jesus engages spirits in places like synagogues and churches. This is what happens here when we gather.

That day was a breakthrough! In addressing the spirit, Jesus broke the shackles of our imaginations. I realised how much I had been enslaved, and what liberation felt like. I found myself not distant or removed, but addressed, engaged, disturbed. And I began to make connections between what was said and what was happening around me. The systems that excluded and discriminated against people. The powers that determined who would be poor and who would be rich. The church authorities that determined some were acceptable and some were not. The people who imagine that they can control what God does with God's church.

Jesus broke open my imagination that day, and he's been doing it ever since. I am beginning to imagine God's different world. But the shackles on my imagination are not broken without a casting out, a making room. God has to make space in my imagination for God's world to break in. Racism, misogyny, injustice, homophobia, cowardice, discrimination of all kinds— we've absorbed them. What a relief when Jesus speaks to them in me ... Be silent and come out of him! He keeps saying. How does it happen though? For some it is when they face facts. New Zealanders who see the graph of inequality that widened from 1991. When people who spend time with prisoners or refugees. When our eyes are opened to how hetero-centric we are, when we listen to someone with a disability that marginalises. Sometimes it's through learning more. Sometimes it's through awkward questioning. Sometimes it's through loving exploration. In that and more ways, the way of God casts out unclean spirits.

"Be silent, and come out of him!" I thank God for a synagogue where I hear Jesus saying it, even when it puts me on the spot, provided it's in the context of an atmosphere of loving. So I keep coming to the synagogue, week by week, expecting to be amazed, astounded, examined. Because even the unclean spirits obey him. So Jesus, please keep saying to the unclean spirits that have hold of my life – be silent and come out of him. And keep pouring into my life the good Spirit, your Spirit, the spirit of love and life, of justice and truth.

Hymn

(tune: Angelus or Melcombe [CH4 214ii]) CH4 717 - Frederick Pratt Green

1 O Christ, the healer, we have come
to pray for health, to plead for friends.
How can we fail to be restored,
when reached by love that never ends?

2 From every ailment flesh endures
our bodies clamour to be freed;
yet in our hearts we would confess
that wholeness is our deepest need.

3 How strong, O Lord, are our desires,
how weak our knowledge of ourselves!
Release in us those healing truths
unconscious pride resists or shelves.

4 In conflicts that destroy our health
we diagnose the world's disease;
our common life declares our ills:
is there no cure, O Christ, for these?

5 Grant that we all, made one in faith,
in your community may find
the wholeness that, enriching us,
shall reach the whole of humankind.

Offertory Prayer

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

1 Almighty Father of all things that be,
our life, our work we consecrate to
thee,
whose heavens declare thy glory from
above,
whose earth below is witness to thy
love.

2 For well we know this weary, fallen
earth
is yet thine own by right of its new
birth,
since that great cross upreared on
Calvary
redeemed it from its fault and shame to
thee.

(tune: Chilton Foliat) CH4 497 - Ernest Edward Dugmore

3 Then grant us, Lord, in all things thee
to own,
to dwell within the shadow of thy
throne,
to speak and work, to think and live,
and move,
reflecting thine own nature which is
love.

4 That so, by Christ redeemed from sin
and shame,
and hallowed by thy Spirit's cleansing
flame,
ourselves, our work, and all our powers
may be
a sacrifice acceptable to thee.

Blessing *"May the road rise to meet you"* music David Hamilton (NZ composer) Carolyn Schmid/ organ

Benediction

Music for our leaving *"Toccata"* Eugene Gigout

Serving today

Minister - Kerry Enright (0274675542)

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson

Reader - Lincoln Coe

Prayer for others - Helen Thew

Welcoming team - Welcoming team 2

Counting team - Counting team 2

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 before the service, into the offering boxes at the back of the church*

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