



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 14 March 2021

The Fourth Sunday in Lent

Music to prepare us for worship "A Scott's Tuen" - Anon, from 'Kiste o' Whistles', ed. Raymond White. *Es spricht der Unweisen Mund wohl (As Speaks the Mouth of the Unwise)* BuxWV 187 - Dietrich Buxtehude (1637-1707).
The Complaint of a Sinner - Andrew Kemp (17th Cent), from 'Kiste o' Whistles'.

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

Welcome

Music of approach "Lacrymosa- tears" W A Mozart (1756-91)

Carolyn Schmid/ organ, Sara Brown/ piano

Call to worship

(from Ps 107)

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

Ma Ihowa koe e manaaki. May God bless you.

Give thanks to God for God is gracious;

God's steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of God proclaim:

That God redeemed them from the hand of the foe.

We thank you God for your steadfast love.

For your wonderful work for all people.

Let us worship God.

Hymn

CH4 352 - Charles Wesley

1 O for a thousand tongues, to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!

2 Jesus! the name that charms our
fears,
and bids our sorrows cease;
'tis music in the sinner's ears,
'tis life, and health, and peace.

3 He speaks, and listening to his voice,
new life the dead receive,
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.

4 My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honours of thy name.

Prayer of praise and confession

Before and at the conclusion of the prayer, the following refrain will be sung:

E te ariki, kia aroha mai

E te karaiti, kia aroha mai

E te ariki, kia aroha mai, kia aroha mai

O Lord, have mercy, have mercy on us

O Christ, have mercy, have mercy on us

O Lord, have mercy, have mercy on us, have mercy on us.

Assurance of forgiveness and passing of the peace

E te whanau a te Karaiti, brothers and sisters 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

Music

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent - God so loved the World" music John Stainer,

from *"The Crucifixion"*, text John 14. Jesse Hanan/ tenor soloist

Readings

Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

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

John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those

who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

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

Reflection "Look up and live"

This year, more than others, people have been sleeping in the Knox garden beside the Church. One day there appeared to have been four people, last week there were two. The people sleep on the garden seats or sometimes underneath them or they find a flat area among the plants or under one of the trees. They cover themselves with blankets and old clothes, with cardboard and on one day polystyrene. Last week, they slept there through the heavy rain that fell through the night. They leave discarded cartons of wine or beer or stronger drink and cardboard and old clothes and old blankets. As well, people have been coming to the garden just to drink, up to six people. Often there is just one. And more recently, it appears from their behaviour, that there are people who might have taken drugs. At Holy Name there are often about three people sleeping and at First Church there is often one. There are people who bring their food baskets from St Vincent de Paul, take what food they want and discard most of the food in the agapanthus.

Nearly every day we are faced with a very sad sight, a very challenging sight. Most of the people move when you ask them, but they come back the following day. So we have enlisted the help of the Police and of Campus Watch. And last Sunday morning, we were able to offer a sausage to one man who had slept there during the night.

What a contrast it is in our garden. It is a very pleasant space with grand trees, colourful plants, a heritage building, bird song and plenty of room. It's an oasis on a busy main street. Families bring over the ice creams they bought from Rob Roy. People come from the hospital or the dentistry school or nearby businesses to have their lunch or sit quietly. On warm days, dozens of people sit on the grass in groups.

And here we are, followers of Jesus, the Jesus who spent time with people on the margins, the Jesus who cast out demons and sent them fleeing enabling people to live healthy lives, the Jesus who upheld people society ostracised, the Jesus who engaged the most unlikely people in conversation. Here we are as a church, trying to hold these two things together and trying to make sense of what is happening. And to make sense of it, I want to move to the strange image Jesus uses of the serpent in the wilderness and his talking about the Cross. I want us to imagine that as we talk about the Garden, we are faced with the Cross, planted where we cannot avoid it.

"And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up that whoever believes in him may have eternal life."

When people hear the phrase "eternal life", many imagine it is about life after death or living forever. Eternal life is not about length but about depth, about a quality of life, what one preacher calls life-plus. Belief in Jesus offers deep living.

Let me though address the imagery of the serpent. The reference to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness is a reference to what is said in Numbers 21. The people of Israel complained and grumbled, as they did from time to time, and it seems that there was a building to a crescendo, for on this occasion they grumbled against God as well as Moses. They had reached the peak of complaining. They were going for number one. So, says the writer of Numbers, God sent poisonous serpents among the people of Israel and they bit the people and some died. And the people came to Moses and admitted that they had sinned by speaking against God and against Moses. They prayed that God would take the serpents away. So Moses prayed for the people. And God said "Make a poisonous serpent and put it on a pole and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." And that is what happened. The serpent on the pole.

When they looked at that pole, what did they see. Well, it was something of a mirror of their own society and living. Serpents biting at heels. Nipping at bodies. Wounding and hurting, with abundant ingratitude.

When they looked at the serpent on the pole they saw an image of their own living. When Jesus compares the lifting up of the Son of Man to the lifting up of the serpent, he is evoking a similar dynamic. On the one hand, it represents God's absolute, total, ultimate commitment to people in love, right to the end, through all that would persuade God to give up on us, God remains faithful. The story of the serpent is of a God who is determined to save serpent people, to heal serpent people. Love to the end. And, it is also a mirror, of the inhumanity in which we are caught up, the wounding and crippling and crucifying of which we are a part, the serpent's power. When we look into the eyes of the crucified Christ, we see the deepest compassion and care a human can offer. And we see in that compassion, a judgement on what put him there, the systems we build, the untruths we live. It is a moment of the purest of love and the most telling of judgements. And in that mix is the possibility of new life, eternal life. The lifting up of Jesus on a cross, is God entering into the depths of our struggles and powerlessness and self-defeating patterns all in our world that is serpent-like. God enters into our depths, into the depths of us all, including people who sleep in our garden.

What does it mean that Christ is lifted up on a pole, on a Cross, in the Knox Garden? What is happening in our garden is holding up a mirror of what is happening in our society. We cannot ignore it or look away from it or imagine that we can banish it. The serpent powers are real and they keep re-emerging. Sure, we can issue a trespass notice so people don't come, and for the sake of safety we might need to do that, but we cannot relocate the Cross so that we can avoid facing what the Cross calls us to. We will have life when we face up to it, to see there the society that we ourselves have built, that we ourselves maintain, that we are part of. Public Health physicians know that they are almost powerless when they take on the liquor industry and try to reduce advertising and outlets. Like what used to happen with tobacco companies. We know our own powerlessness to deal with the serpent powers that slither through society.

And yet, through the doors to the Hall, there are people who by the grace of God have found a community of people who have emerged from addiction. Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. People who recognise who they are and who they can be. They are us. We are them. Christ is on a Cross in our garden, and in the city, and wherever we are. Helping us see who we are, mirrored back to us as he looks down on us with eyes of compassion. Helping us see who we are in Christ, recipients of eternal life.

Affirmation of Faith (from the United Church of Canada)

We are not alone, we live in God's world. We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to live with respect in Creation, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Hymn

(tune: Kilmarnock [CH4 69]) CH4 656 - Brian Wren

1 I come with joy, a child of God,
forgiven, loved and free,
the life of Jesus to recall,
in love laid down for me.

2 I come with Christians far and near
to find, as all are fed,
the new community of love
in Christ's communion bread.

3 As Christ breaks bread, and bids us share,
each proud division ends.
The love that made us, makes us one,
and strangers now are friends.

4 Together met, together bound
by all that God has done,
we'll go with joy, to give the world
the love that makes us one.

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.

Communion

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them up to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

...

Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might
Heaven and earth are full of your glory
Hosanna in the highest
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord
Hosanna in the highest

The Distribution: "Serenity" text St Thomas Aquinas, Music James MacMillan (b. 1959)

Calla Knudson-Hollebon/ soprano soloist

Hymn

(tune: Rockingham) CH4 392 - Isaac Watts

1 When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of Glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
save in the death of Christ, my God:
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.

3 See! from his head, his hands, his
feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down;
did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4 Were the whole realm of nature
mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Benediction

Music for our leaving "*Prelude in C minor*" J S Bach (1685-1750)

Serving today

Minister - Kerry Enright (0274675542)

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson

Reader - Janet Sim Elder

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*