



KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 10 October 2021

Pentecost 20 / Ratapu rua tekau o te Petekoha

Music to prepare us for worship “Prelude in G” BWV 568 J S Bach (1685-1750)

“Pavane” Opus 50 Gabriel Fauré (1845-1924)

Welcome to worship

Call to worship

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

Ma lhowa koe a manaaki. May God bless you.

The world belongs to God, **the earth and all its people.** (a globe is placed on the table)

It is good to live to live in community, **to work and talk with each other.** (a tea towel)

Love and faith come together, **justice and peace hold hands.** (the Bible is brought forward)

If the friends of Jesus keep silent, **these stones would shout out.** (a handful of stones)

We are glad to be in this place, **to listen and sing and pray.** (the candle is lit)

Let us worship God.

Sung music (please remain seated)

CH4 198 - Marty Hauge

1 Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,

a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive;

built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;

here the love of Christ shall end divisions:

All are welcome, all are welcome,

all are welcome in this place.

2 Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.

Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,

let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

[Refrain]

Prayer Kia inoi tatou – let us pray ...

Assurance of forgiveness

E te whanau a te Karaiti, family of Christ, we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God.**

Words of peace

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.**

Please stand and make a gesture of peace towards people around you.

Readings – Job 23:1-9, 16-17

Then Job answered: "Today also my complaint is bitter; his hand is heavy despite my groaning. Oh, that I knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his dwelling! I would lay my case before him, and fill my mouth with arguments. I would learn what he would answer me, and understand what he would say to me. Would he contend with me in the greatness of his power? No; but he would give heed to me. There an upright person could reason with him, and I should be acquitted forever by my judge. "If I go forward, he is not there; or backward, I cannot perceive him; on the left he hides, and I cannot behold him; I turn to the right, but I cannot see him. God has made my heart faint; the Almighty has terrified me; If only I could vanish in darkness, and thick darkness would cover my face!

Sung music - echoing Job (we will sing verses 1 and 4) (Passion Chorale)

1 O God, why are you silent? I cannot hear your voice;
the proud and strong and violent all claim you and rejoice;
you promised you would hold me with tenderness and care.
Draw near, O Love, enfold me, and ease this pain I bear.

2 My hope lies bruised and battered, my wounded heart is torn;
my spirit spent and shattered by life's relentless storm;
will you not bend to hear me, my cries from deep within?
Have you no word to cheer me when night is closing in?

3 Through endless nights of weeping, through weary days of grief,
my heart is in your keeping, my comfort, my relief.
Come, share my tears and sadness, come, suffer in my pain,
oh, bring me home to gladness, restore my hope again.

4 May pain draw forth compassion, let wisdom rise from loss;
oh, take my heart and fashion the image of your cross;
then may I know your healing, through healing that I share,
your grace and love revealing, your tenderness and care.

Hebrews 4:12-16

Indeed, the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing until it divides soul from spirit, joints from marrow; it is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And before him no creature is hidden, but all are naked and laid bare to the eyes of the one to whom we must render an account. Since, then, we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

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

Mark 10:17-31

As he was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him, and asked him, "Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus said to him, "Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: 'You shall not murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; You shall not defraud; Honour your father and mother.'" He said to him, "Teacher, I have kept all these since my youth." Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, "You lack one thing; go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven;

then come, follow me." When he heard this, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions. Then Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it will be for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God!" And the disciples were perplexed at these words. But Jesus said to them again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." They were greatly astounded and said to one another, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus looked at them and said, "For mortals it is impossible, but not for God; for God all things are possible." Peter began to say to him, "Look, we have left everything and followed you." Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields, for my sake and for the sake of the good news, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this age--houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields with persecutions--and in the age to come eternal life.

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

Reflection "Living God's Future Now"

The Bible readings we usually use at Knox are selected by an international ecumenical body and they are repeated every three years. The gospel reading today comes up at some of the most inconvenient times for me. When we were in Australia, it came up when our organisation was giving for our use a new car, a very nice new car. To bring the message home, when we went to pick up the car, the letters on the numberplate were s-i-n. And then this week, we were meeting with an advisor about our finances, and what do you know? Here is the passage again. An inconvenient passage. But there is no time that this gospel is convenient.

In the face of this text we need to be honest and realistic. I have not yet met a person who on the basis of my preaching on this gospel has sold what they own and given the money to the poor. I have read about people who have done it. I know about St Francis of Assisi. I have read about people who have done it in part.

Now there was a time in my past, where like other preachers I tried to smooth out the message. There was a period when it was said that the needle was the name of a gate in the Jerusalem wall and camels had to bend low to go through it, so it is really about humbling ourselves and our money before God. Sorry, there was no gate called a needle. I was wrong.

The Bible treats economic issues as theological issues. In the gospel today, Jesus puts together economic life and eternal life. Not something an economist might expect. And yet just last week economist and theologians met in conference to talk about de-growth, how can we develop an economy that takes from the earth only as much as it produces and not more.

A man comes to Jesus with a genuine inquiry. He is a person of stature, distinguished, wealthy, reputable and thoughtful, and he was asking the right questions. The disciples must have been pleased. They might have thought ... how good it was that the Jesus movement had reached this status that such people would be approaching Jesus. The man was the kind of person you want on the board – financial nous, solid reputation, asking the right questions. Here was a prospect for lifting their movement beyond the poor agitators of Galilee to the reputable citizens of Jerusalem.

How disappointed the disciples must have been. Jesus blew his chances with a blunt advice "Sell what you own and give the money to the poor", he said to the man. O Jesus, could you not have toned it down a bit, treated him more sympathetically, led him along more gently?

Let's look more closely. The man was polite. He knelt before Jesus. He called him good, a very rare compliment of the time. The man was using flattery, and in the culture of the time, one compliment like that required a similar response. The lack of a similar response immediately creates tension and awkwardness. Jesus gave him the first clue that this was more than a polite conversation. "Only God is good", Jesus says. And if only God is good, and Jesus does not want to take that quality for himself, then think about yourself, he is saying to the man. But the man is so used to respect, he does not pick up the clue.

When asking his question, the man uses a verb with which he is very familiar. We learn later than he is wealthy, that he had many possessions. The way people gained wealth in the time of Jesus was through acquiring land. So it is natural for him to use the word “inherit”, because that is how he acquired land. “What must I do to inherit eternal life?” Poorer people did own land, but they were very vulnerable, vulnerable to Roman taxes that were as high as 50%, vulnerable to the vicissitudes of farming and vulnerable to treatment in the hands of people who lent them money. Lenders would put pressure on the poor landowners until they could not pay. They would then foreclose the debt and acquire the property. Landowners represented the most politically powerful social group.

Although this was legal, Jesus seems to regard it as fraud. Because there is another clue here. When Jesus is listing the commandments, he slips in one that is not in the ten commandments. “You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal ... And then “you shall not defraud.”

So we have awkwardness instead of social convention. We have direct challenge when the man thinks he has done all that is needed. But there is another surprise here. Before the challenging words are spoken Mark says ... “Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said – “You lack one thing, go, sell what you own and give the money to the poor ...”

This is the only time in the whole of the gospel of Mark that Jesus is recorded as loving someone. Not to say he didn't love others, but this is the only time it is recorded. But it was tough love because, I assume, he could see that the man was trapped. He had reached a certain social status. He had acquired land fairly in terms of the economic system of the time, although Jesus saw it as fraudulent. He thought he had lived a good life and he thought that he could inherit eternal life, just as he had inherited all his other possessions. Jesus looked at him and loved him.

It adds to the poignancy of the note “When the man heard what Jesus said, he was shocked and went away grieving, for he had many possessions.” In the Greek, it says he slinks away. I imagine he was dispirited and discouraged. It is too much to ask of him.

Ched Myers suggests the man was addicted to the economic system of the day that privileged him. He speaks of how our society suffers from the same addiction. We have come to believe that the way we live is the only way to live. While we can see that the economic system divides our world and divides our nation, we live as if it is the only model. If we wonder how the economy divides, look at the differing rates of vaccination between central Auckland and Murupara. And so as the man in the story, we have come to depend on what is wrong.

This is not a story about Jeff Bezos or Bill Gates or any other billionaire. Nor is it a story aimed to generate guilt, leaving us immobilised or argumentative - “how dare you question me?” It is a story of tough love that seeks to make an intervention in the man's life and in our life, because what Jesus has in mind is the reign of God, and the reign of God has an economy that enables everyone to flourish. And he wants us to live into that reign of God, that future God brought in Jesus. He wants us to live that future now.

Can we imagine a world in which there is no rich or poor? Can we imagine a nation like that? Can we imagine a nation without the economic divide that followed how land was inherited from the first peoples of this land? We are called to keep wrestling with this.

Jesus loves the rich and the poor, and he sees their flourishing as happening together in community where people together receive a hundredfold and with it, eternal life.

Notes from the Knox Plan 2021 - 2023

“We are captivated by the biblical vision of the realm of God, made known in Jesus, given in grace.”

“We believe we are called to be a community following Jesus, alive to God's Spirit, living into God's coming realm.”

“We want to invite, welcome, receive and support people who are strangers to us and keep discovering with them the richness of life in a loving Christ. We will go the second mile to include people to be changed by our interaction with them.”

“In worship we bring our most authentic selves, strongest feelings most intelligent thoughts and deepest longings.”

Quietness

Music “Prelude” Robert Schumann (1810-56)

Prayer of thanks and for others

Rachel Tombs leads prayer and speaks about the recent General Assembly. Rachel will be referring to a presentation by Therese Cho who was a keynote speaker at the General Assembly. Therese is based in San Francisco and her address sounded Knox-like in approach and commitment to inclusion. You can see her speaking here, if you scroll down the page.

[General Assembly 2021 on Vimeo](#)

The Lord’s Prayer in English and Te Reo Maori

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.

Notices and Offering prayer

Sung music (please remain seated)

1 Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair,
Lord, in the suffering this is our prayer.
Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace,
sunrise to sunset your kingdom increase.

2 Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills,
work for the craftsmen, trade for their skills.
Land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak,
voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.

*God of the poor, friend of the weak,
give us compassion, we pray,
melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain.
Come, change our love from a spark to a flame.*

Blessing (please stand)

Threefold Amen

Music for our leaving "*Fugue*" Maurice Duruflé (1902-86)

A whakatauki – E hara taku toa i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini. My strength is not as an individual, but as a collective.

Serving today

Minister - Kerry Enright

(minister@knoxchurch.net) 0274675442)

Associate Minister - Jordan Redding

(jordan.redding@otago.ac.nz 0274285234)

Organist and Choir Director - Karen Knudson

Reader - Richard Brown

Prayers for Others - Rachel Tombs

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*