



# KNOX CHURCH, DUNEDIN

10am – Sunday 14 November 2021

Pentecost 24 / Ratapu rua tekau ma rima o te Petekoha

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Music to prepare us for worship “*Allegro*” Antion Vivaldi, arr J S Bach (1685-1750), played by Grace Togneri  
“*Leibster Jesu*” J S Bach (1685-1750)

## Welcome to worship

**Music** “*Across the vast eternal sky -Do not despair that I am gone away*” Ola Gjelio (b. 1978), John Elder/ piano

## Call to worship

(adapted from Psalm 16)

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

**Ma Ihowā koe a manaaki. May God bless you.**

Remain ever before me, O Loving Presence,  
**for in You am I safe.**

Love is my chosen food, my cup,  
**holding me in its power.**

I walk beside the Spirit of Truth;

**I celebrate the Light.**

I shall not be afraid nor fall into the pit;

**In Love's presence I know fullness of joy.**

## Hymn *(we will stand and sing while masked)*

(Groeswen) CH4 192 - Joachim Neander

1 All my hope on God is founded,  
all my trust he will renew;  
safe through change and chance he guides  
me,  
only good and only true.  
God unknown,  
he alone  
calls my heart to be his own.

2 Human pride and earthly glory,  
sword and crown betray God's trust;  
though with care and toil we build them,  
tower and temple fall to dust.  
But God's power,  
hour by hour,  
is my temple and my tower.

3 God's great goodness lasts for ever,  
deep his wisdom, passing thought:  
splendour, light, and life attend him,  
beauty springing out of naught.  
Evermore,  
from his store  
new-born worlds rise and adore.

**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.**

## **Passing the peace**

Kia tau te rangimārie 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.*

## **Hymn** *(Please remain seated)*

(Be still and know that I am God) CH4 755

1 Be still and know that I am God. (x3)

2 I am the Lord who saves and heals. (x3)

3 In you, Lord God, I put my trust. (x3)

## **First reading: 1 Samuel 1:4-20**

On the day when Elkanah sacrificed, he would give portions to his wife Peninnah and to all her sons and daughters but to Hannah he gave a double portion, because he loved her, though the LORD had closed her womb. Her rival used to provoke her severely, to irritate her, because the LORD had closed her womb. So it went on year by year; as often as she went up to the house of the LORD, she used to provoke her. Therefore Hannah wept and would not eat. Her husband Elkanah said to her, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" After they had eaten and drunk at Shiloh, Hannah rose and presented herself before the LORD. Now Eli the priest was sitting on the seat beside the doorpost of the temple of the LORD. She was deeply distressed and prayed to the LORD, and wept bitterly. She made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if only you will look on the misery of your servant, and remember me, and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a male child, then I will set him before you as a nazirite until the day of his death. He shall drink neither wine nor intoxicants, and no razor shall touch his head." As she continued praying before the LORD, Eli observed her mouth. Hannah was praying silently; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard; therefore Eli thought she was drunk. So Eli said to her, "How long will you make a drunken spectacle of yourself? Put away your wine." But Hannah answered, "No, my lord, I am a woman deeply troubled; I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but I have been pouring out my soul before the LORD. Do not regard your servant as a worthless woman, for I have been speaking out of my great anxiety and vexation all this time." Then Eli answered, "Go in peace; the God of Israel grant the petition you have made to him." And she said, "Let your servant find favor in your sight." Then the woman went to her quarters, ate and drank with her husband, and her countenance was sad no longer. They rose early in the morning and worshiped before the LORD; then they went back to their house at Ramah. Elkanah knew his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, "I have asked him of the LORD."

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

**Anthem** *"Set me as a seal"* text Song of Solomon, music K Knudson (2015), in memory of Verna McKenzie  
Carolyn Schmid/ organ, Grace Togneri/ soprano soloist

## **Gospel reading: Mark 13:1-8**

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down." When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birthpangs.

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

## **Sermon "Not the end, the beginning"**

Mark chapter 13 sounds like what the people say who come from faith communities that go house to house. You see them coming up the path, you open the door and you know how what they will say. "The world is in bad shape – wars and rumours of wars, famines and disasters." Then they ask the question: "are you concerned about this?" The aim is to recruit us.

Now we find there are groups using the pandemic to recruit us. "Are you unhappy about the pandemic, about mandating vaccinations, about people losing their jobs, about the government overriding your freedom to decide for yourself? Join our protest march!"

Wars and earthquakes and famines, nations against nations – they are always with us and we can imagine Mark is describing the reality of everyday life. In a way he is. But those who first heard these words would have known the specific events to which Mark was referring. Sure, they are generic apocalyptic words, but in Mark they have a specific context. Let's explore.

In approaching the reading, I want to recognise that the text is in two time zones. There is the time of Jesus and his early followers around 30 AD. But there is another time zone - forty years later when the gospel was written down – about 69AD. We are going to spend time in the second time zone. I am drawing on the work of a New Testament scholar, Ched Myers. Note that we are coming to the end of a year given to the gospel of Mark. We have come to the end of Jesus' public ministry and we are now in the period he goes underground towards the cross.

Mark tells this story in the context of a Jewish-Roman war when there was a revolutionary Jewish provisional government in Jerusalem. It came to power by way of a revolt launched in Jerusalem in June of 66AD and it quickly spread to the surrounding provinces. Naturally, the Romans were not happy. So in November 66, Cestus Gallus led Roman troops to march on Jerusalem to put down the insurrection. They occupied the northern part of the city but were turned back when they attacked the Temple mount. Stunned, they retreated in disarray. Jewish guerrillas pursued them to the coast and the Roman army sustained heavy losses. Gallus sent an urgent message to Rome for extra troops.

The Jerusalem rebels were euphoric. Palestine was liberated! Against all odds, outnumbered and out-armoured, the rebels had turned away the oppressors. Unfortunately, the provisional rebel government was mired in internal power struggles, bordering on civil war and that did not help their organising. The liberation was short-lived.

Vespasian the greatest general of the time and soon to become emperor was dispatched to shut down Palestine. He gathered legions from Egypt and Syria, and with 6000 heavily armed troops, began a march down through Galilee towards Jerusalem. Despite heroic resistance by scattered guerrilla forces, within a short time many regions were retaken by Vespasian. By June of 68, he was ready to begin his siege of Jerusalem. Once again, though, the unexpected occurred. He had to withdraw. Rome itself became locked in a fierce civil war. The emperor Nero had died and four candidates were vying to succeed him. So Vespasian had been urgently summoned back to Rome. He was one of the candidates. The Jewish resistance would get

a reprieve of almost a year and a half. Surely, they thought, only Yahweh, only God could have worked not one but two miracles to save the holy city!

In the middle of this was an early Christian community, caught between a rock and a hard place. The Jewish revolutionary government and fighters on one side, and the Roman army on the other. Vespasian sent Titus to finish off the Palestinian rebels. Titus began his siege in April 70AD and after five months of pitched battle, Jerusalem fell. The city was sacked. The temple was burned to the ground.

Myers believes the gospel of Mark was written in 69AD in the period when the Jewish resistance had reason to believe Yahweh had intervened, twice, on their behalf. During this time, it seems the rebel supporters were going through Palestine calling on the faithful for the final battle. They would have used all the stories of how God rescued Israel in the past. They would have portrayed the war as a sure sign Israel was entering the messianic age when Israel would finally have a liberating leader. So the recruiters would be out on the streets, crying out – now is the time to fight. Now is the time to push away the Roman oppressor, once and for all.

While this was happening, what were the followers of Jesus meant to do? Which prompted Mark to write things down for the benefit of those followers. Mark wanted the members of his community to reject the claims of the rebel recruiters. But how was Mark to persuade them? Against the pull of patriotism. Against the promise that God would vindicate Israel. Against the call to save the beautiful and beloved Temple.

Mark sets out the vision of Jesus in utter conflict to the rebels. Jesus does not predict that God will intervene to save the Temple, but that it will be destroyed. This amazingly beautiful and substantial building made with enormous blocks of stone ... gone. This powerful and legitimating structure central to Jewish life ... gone. This icon of Israel that God protected from Roman oppression ... gone. Such news must have shaken them deeply. So they approached Jesus privately.

And Mark records Jesus saying - Beware that no one deceive you. Beware the false prophets. Mark is challenging the false myth of popular kingship and a final dramatic solution. The images he uses have specific references.

Rumours of wars – Was the siege coming? Were the Romans withdrawing?

Kingdom against kingdom – the wavering fortunes of Rome in 67 AD after the death of Nero, four contenders vying for power.

Natural disasters – the famine that hit Palestine in the early 50s, the earthquakes and volcanic eruptions that destroyed Laodicea and Pompeii in 61 and 62.

People knew what Mark was referring to. What Mark opposed was the idea that these events signalled the end time and that there would be a decisive victory. He uses a rare word that means to avoid precipitous action.

Mark says that these events are not the end, but the beginning, the beginning of a new way of living. He speaks of experiencing the pain of childbirth. Israel is going through a time of disturbance and pain for being reborn. Echoing the story of Hannah. This is not a time for revolutionary triumphalism stirred up by rebel recruiters. This is a time entering into a new way of living, for being birthed into a crucified, vulnerable and loving life.

Over recent months in our country, recruiters have used apocalyptic language, exaggerated imagery – we hear the use of words like fascism, communism, dictatorship, rebellion, and more serious threats. Mark seems very relevant. This is not a time for rebellion that proclaims instant liberation and a triumphant individualism.

This is a time for coming to terms with pandemics, and of living the crucified life, in love of neighbour. This is a time for finding a new way of living, new patterns of loving, new means of offering each other support, of building a new kind of community. Yes we can lament what is no more, but it is not the end. It is the beginning of something new, if we are prepared to work through it, labouring on, living the crucified life of love, abiding in the crucified one.

## Hymn *(Please remain seated)*

(Kilmarnock) 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.

## Prayer for others

### 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.

## Offering prayer *(please stand)*

### 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** *"Hostias"* Gabriel Faure (1845-1924), Alex McAdam/ tenor soloist  
*"Solo"* from *Chorale No 3* Cesar Franck (1822-90)

**Hymn** *(we will stand and sing while masked)*

(Darwell) CH4 149 - Brian Wren

1 Let all creation dance  
in energies sublime,  
as order turns with chance,  
unfolding space and time;  
for nature's art  
in glory grows,  
and newly shows  
God's mind and heart.

2 Our own amazing earth,  
with sunlight, cloud, and storms,  
and life's abundant growth  
in lovely shapes and forms  
is made for praise,  
a fragile whole,  
and from its soul  
heaven's music plays.

3 Lift heart and soul and voice:  
in Christ all praises meet,  
and nature shall rejoice  
as all is made complete.  
In hope be strong,  
all life befriend,  
and kindly tend  
creation's song.

**Blessing**

Music for our leaving *"Toccata"* Ernani Sark, played by Grace Togneri

If you are new to Knox or visiting please make yourself known to the minister or the elder at the door.

The online worship resource is continuing. It is accessible on the Knox Church YouTube channel.

A whakatauki – Tangata ako ana i te kaenga, te turanga ki te marae, tau ana. A person nurtured in the community contributes strongly to society.

## **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 - Patsy Mason

Prayers for Others - Keren Skegg

*In relation to your monetary offering, you may:*

- *Make regular automatic payments (which are tax deductible) - contact Helen Thew at [plannedgiving@knoxchurch.net](mailto: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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