

Sunday 8th

Renew in us the joy of your upside down, chaotic kin-dom.
Dispel the confusions and fears that cling close to our souls.
Recreate in us a spirit of justice and mercy,
that we may see ourselves and all people
with eyes cleansed by the freshness of this new God-given day.

(inspired by a Celtic prayer)

The Lord's Prayer

And so, we are bold to pray, using the version below by the late Rev'd Jim Cotter,
or with words or languages that are familiar to us:

Eternal Spirit,
Earth-maker, Pain Bearer, Life-Giver,
Source of all that is and that shall be.

Father and Mother of us all,
Loving God, in whom is heaven:
The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.

With the bread we need for today, feed us.
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.
From trials too great to endure, spare us.
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.

For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and forever. Amen.

*by the late Rev'd Jim Cotter,
from The Prayer Book of The Anglican Church of New Zealand*

Prayer of Illumination

Prepare our hearts, O God, to hear you Word.
Open us to hear your voice and the songs and cries of all people,
that we may accept your Word and live it.
Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Readings

Proverbs 22: 1-2, 8-9, 22-23 | Isaiah 35: 4-7 | St Mark 7: 24-37

All Age Introduction

The 1st verse from Proverbs encourages us to choose a 'good name' rather than riches. Coming from a family with a 'good' name was important. In a Christ-like society we might want to focus on reputation: being authentically our God-created selves and what we do, rather than the power and superiority of a family name (or what brands we buy, team we support etc.) You might look at the meaning behind different names. If you know the congregation, that will help – but you can choose more common names if you're visiting. E.g. Martin means 'God of war' in Latin. What are some of the 'good'/'Christ-like' characteristics we would like our name (ourselves) to be associated with? What are some of the things we would like the 'name' of your church to be known for? Being welcoming, hopeful, peaceful, focused on local issues etc? You could make name badges and think about what 'name' you would like?

Sermon Notes

Proverbs 22: 1-2, 8-9, 22-23

Vs.1 There is lots of scope in exploring what a 'good name' or good reputation might look like in our culture. We could explore the reputation of ourselves, churches, businesses, politicians, faith or culture groups. Vs.2 connects with Paul writing 'there is neither...; for all are one in Christ Jesus. We find an affirmation that the social, discriminatory or economic divisions we humans are prone to are not of God. Vs.8-9 The agricultural imagery is commonly found in scripture for good reason. It was easily understood. This proverb offers comfort to the oppressed, assuring them of God's justice. Vs. 22-23 takes this further. The poor and oppressed can often be found outside the city gate in Jerusalem – or on the edge of our society. God will plead their cause – has a bias towards them – especially when civil authorities fail in their duty. The call to social justice where our society ignores those 'at the city gate' is strong in this passage.

Isaiah 35: 4-7

It is worth placing this passage in the literary context of Isaiah. If chapters 1-33 promise judgement and restoration for Judah, then chapters 34-66 presume that judgement has been pronounced and restoration is at hand. There is great joy in verses 1-3 of chapter 35 – with the desert blooming like the crocus. Our focus for today is verses 4-7 is to consider what we mean by being 'redeemed' and 'restored'. We are prompted to look beyond the spiritual condition, as Isaiah is very earthy and political. As the exiles look to return after such desolation seen (it seems to me) two things: justice and vengeance. Justice is about freeing from injustice and changing the structures that cause it. Vengeance seeks to bring the same (or greater) suffering to those who have inflicted it

on us. The bullied becoming the bully. As we try to connect with Proverbs and God's bias towards the poor and oppressed, do we think that extends to wreaking vengeance on the perpetrator? In the undoing or overturning (like Jesus and the tables) of unjust structures, some may experience that as punishment. When some who have had power, in its many forms, are asked (or required) to relinquish some of it – cries of "injustice" and "I'm now a minority" may follow. There is fertile ground in many contemporary issues: race, the climate crisis, gender, sexuality, poverty –

Let us go to those who are not like us,
in all its discomfort and fear
and learn from them more about you and each other.

Let us be but one part of creation,
in all its diversity and natural balance
and learn more from all things about you and each other.

Let us look within ourselves,
to all the joys and disasters
and learn to trust that you are lovingly with us
and with all others.

Confession and Assurance of Forgiveness

Great God, in the silence we lament our brokenness,
not to weigh ourselves down with guilt
but to acknowledge our limits, to name them with you,
and to seek the mercy that leads to new life.

(Silence is kept)

And so, we use a confession from the Iona Abbey Worship Book,

with the people of God,
I confess to turn away from God
in the ways I wound my life,
the lives of others and the life of f f

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Offertory Prayer

Gracious God,
may the money we offer
and the gifts you have given us to use for your service,
be a blessing to our community, in your name. Amen

Holy Communion

Introduction

Everyone who seeks to follow Jesus Christ is welcome at this table. This is a place where we gather and we model the community God would have us be.

The Peace

As we come to this meal, we seek peace for each other and for the world.

The peace of the Lord be always with you. And also with you.

The Invitation

Jesus was often a guest. He shared many meals with his friends, and they long remembered his words at the table. Though some disapproved of the company he kept, Jesus ate and drank with all kinds of people and showed everyone the love of God. Wherever people met together Jesus was glad to be welcomed and to be fed.

Today, we are the guests of Jesus. He welcomes us, whoever we are and whatever we bring, and he will feed us at his table. Old or young, rich or poor, joyful or in sorrow, Jesus invites us to share bread and wine with him, to remember the story of his life and death, and to celebrate his presence with us today.

On the night before he died, Jesus shared a meal with his disciples in an upstairs room in Jerusalem. The Gospel writer tells us what happened that night.

The Story

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to them, and said, 'Take; this is my body'. Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly, I tell you, I will never again drink the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'

We are the friends and disciples of Jesus today. He invites us to break bread together, to remember him and to pray that God's Kingdom will come – and so we pray as he did:

Great Prayer

God is with us! We give thanks and praise to God!

Loving God, the world you made is beautiful and full of wonder.
You made us, with all your creatures, and you love all that you have made.

You gave us the words of your prophets,
the stories of your people through the generations,
and the gathered wisdom of many years.

You gave us Jesus, your Son, to be born and to grow up
in difficult times when there was little peace.

He embraced people with your love and told stories to change us all.
He healed those in pain and brought to life those who had lost hope.
He made friends with anyone who would listen and loved even his enemies.

For these things, he suffered. For these things, he died.
And he was raised from death and lives with you forever.

You give us your Holy Spirit, to teach and to strengthen us,
to remind us of Jesus Christ, and to make us one in him.

For all these gifts we thank you, and we join with all your people
on earth and in heaven, in joyful praise:

Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!

We praise you that we are here today, around the table of Jesus.
We have heard the good news of your love;
the cross is the sign of your arms stretched out in love for us
and the empty tomb declares your love stronger than death.

Christ has died! Christ is risen! Christ will come again!

Send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and wine,
and upon your people, that Christ may be with us,
and we may be made ready to live for you
and to do what you ask of us, today, and every day to come.

We make this prayer through Jesus Christ,
in the power of the Holy Spirit,

