



The Bell is rung and we stand for the Bible- sign of the enduring and ongoing word of God.

Acknowledgement of First peoples and Ancestors.

As today we return to St. Andrews building for worship we acknowledge this land as that cared for and nurtured by the people of the Kulin nation from time immemorial. This is the land where the people of the Wurundjeri language gathered and celebrated their stories, songs and dances passed on by their ancestors and the Great Spirit of the Dreaming over countless generations. We acknowledge these ancestors and give thanks for their memory.

We also give thanks for the foremothers and forefathers of our St. Andrews' Uniting Church and the Hanbit Church; all those who have given their gifts and graces to be a shining light of God in the Christ among us for the wider Community of which we are a part.

To the community of saints, living and of the past, named and unnamed we give honour and respect.

Today we also remember and honour all those who sacrificed their lives in war and conflict and were honoured accordingly on Remembrance Day at the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of this eleventh month.

**Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his
life for his friends.**

John 15:13

The Paschal Candle is lit for the Christ who is the true light of the World.

Hymn 276

*There's a light upon the mountains,
and the day is at the spring
when our eyes shall see the beauty
and the glory of the King;
weary was our heart with waiting,
and the night watch seemed so long,
but his triumph day is breaking,
and we hail it with a song.*

*There's a hush of expectation,
and a quiet in the air,
and the breath of God is moving
in the fervent breath of prayer:
for the suffering, dying Jesus
is the Christ upon the throne,
and the travail of our spirit
is the travail of his own.*

*He is breaking down the barriers,
he is casting up the way,
he is calling for his angels
to build up the gates of day:
but his angels here are human,
not the shining hosts above;
for the drumbeats of his army
are the heart-beats of our love.*

*Hark, we hear a distant music,
and it comes with fuller swell –
the great triumph song
of Jesus, of our King, Immanuel:
Zion, go you forth to meet him;
and, my soul, be swift to bring
all your finest and your dearest
for the triumph of our King!*

Reflection

I would like to say how much I have enjoyed the privilege of preparing weekly worship on-line and thus sharing with you the paradox of fellowship in isolation. It occurs to me that this has really been a time of identifying with the early Christian experience when the formal structures of the church and its fellowship were yet to develop. As we know from the Book of Acts and the New Testament Letters the Christian fellowship groups were dependent on written communication from often far removed leaders to address the issues of faith and practice.

So what we have been experiencing with our on-line interaction has been a re-visiting of the beginnings of Christianity! An awesome thought! and, surely, an uplifting recognition in an otherwise challenging time. It gives a very first-hand understanding to that wonderful passage in the Letter to the Hebrews

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the people of old received their commendation.

By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place that he was to receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. For he was looking forward to the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God.

And what more shall I say

For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets—who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, were made strong out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ...

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who ...is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 11:1-3, 8, 10,32-34; 12:1-2

Yes, we are, in our unique experience of late, indelibly written into “the great cloud of witnesses”. There have indeed been fears and frustrations. But being people of faith we have endured. Now we are challenged to move on and build anew on the heritage within which we are privileged to stand as the people of God.

"You, Lord, laid the foundation of the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; they will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment, like a robe you will roll them up, like a garment they will be changed. But you are the same and your years will have no end."

Hebrews 1: 10-12

Hymn 158

*God has spoken by his prophets,
spoken his unchanging word,
each, from age to age proclaiming
God, the one, the righteous Lord.
In the world's despair and turmoil
one firm anchor holds us fast:
God is king, his throne eternal,
God the first, and God the last.*

*God has spoken by Christ Jesus,
Christ, the everlasting Son,
brightness of the Father's glory,
with the Father ever one;
spoken by the Word incarnate,
God from God, ere time began,
Light from Light, to earth descending,
God revealed as Son of Man.*

*God is speaking by his Spirit,
speaking to our hearts again,
in the age-long word expounding
God's own message, now as then,
through the rise and fall of nations
one sure faith yet standing fast;
God still speaks, his word unchanging,
God the first, and God the last.*

Greeting and the Peace

News of the Church

A special birthday was celebrated this week. Our congregational Chair, Heather Thomson, marked her eightieth birthday. We congratulate her and thank her for her herculean efforts to keep us afloat during the pandemic. She is our anchor and mainstay.

Gospel Matthew 25:14 -30

"For[the kingdom of heaven] will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, 'Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents

more.' His master said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master. He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed and gather where I scattered no seed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

This is the gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection

At first glance this gospel seems a harsh and unfairly demanding parable. But surely what it is about is the need for all who would commit to faith to commit in totality, regardless of their ability or place in the community of faith. Even the simplest of us in the faith in our Lord is to rise to the occasion in our calling in Christ for only so can we be the risen Lord for our world; to back down in fear and uncertainty is to fail our Lord and master, is to fail God. But to act in faith and commitment, regardless of our limitations, is to earn the ultimate accolade.

'Well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.

Enter into the joy of your master'.

And to God be the praise and glory, now and always.

Amen

Hymn 136

*There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea,
and forgiveness in his justice
sealed for us on Calvary.*

*For the love of God is broader
than the measures of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.*

*But we make his love too narrow
by false limits of our own,
and we magnify his strictness
with a zeal he will not own.*

*If our love were but more simple
we should take him at his word;
and our lives will be illumined by the
goodness of our Lord.*

Offering

Prayers of Thanksgiving and for Others and Lord's Prayer

O God, show us more truly where our talents lie. Uncover resources for good in us which we have never been prepared to acknowledge and use and free us to take the risks which expand them and make them available to others.

May we so live that others can spread the wings of their lives where all things are possible for all.

Open our hearts and minds to gifts and graces in friends and strangers alike; in all those we encounter. Give to us a generosity of spirit which encourages even the most timid; drawing from them all manner of surprising capacity and good. May we recognise, O God, that there are many in the world about us who use every single part of their lives for a tenuous and struggling survival and have little time, or energy, or resources for doing more than that. We pray for such as these now.

May we so live that others can spread the wings of their lives where all things are possible for all. May we recognise in others gifts which will enhance our own living, gifts of songs of longing, of simple joys which stand firm in the midst of all challenges and bring courage and conviction to face each day with steadfast faith and determination.

Bring all the talents of your people together, O God that we may know the fullness of your abundant life in and through each other.

So now we pray in the words which Jesus himself taught us

***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 for ever.
Amen*

Hymn 547

*Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

*Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou my great Father, thy child let me be;
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.*

*Riches I scorn and the world's empty praise,
thou my inheritance, now and always:
thou and thou only the first in my heart;
high King of heaven, my treasure thou art.*

*High King of heaven, after victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O ruler of all.*

(Dedicated to Rowan Ebbels)

Benediction

May our lives take flight like eagles soaring towards the heavens,
may our feet stay firmly on the ground as we follow the Christ
and our hearts leap with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit among us.

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Halle, halle, hallelujah!

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

Christ the true Light of the World

