**PENTECOST 19a – Proper 14a MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**7 – 9 August 2020**

You may like to follow our service on our video. You can find it on our Worship Services page on our website at <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services> or on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/V_3onYiRUd8>. Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. Allow the stories told to lead you. We suggest reading the passages when suggested below. We are touching on several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

The ministry team would appreciate your feedback on our services during this time of Covid restrictions. Please let them know your thoughts by completing the survey that is available on our web site Worship Services page. You can also request a survey by contacting them via repeterc@gmail.com or Rev Peter on 0434 310 862. If you would like to look at previous videos on our YouTube channel, go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb4hzdO-YgzmrIRVC-oby_w>.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

You are welcome here, as we reflect in different rooms and districts, States and Countries around the world, our spiritual connectedness through Christ Jesus, is not forgotten.

**WELCOME AND CALL TO WORSHIP**

Its been a pretty rough week (year even!). The tightening of Covid restrictions around Victoria. Record infections and deaths. Many struggling and just when we thought we could get back to normal.

Where do we find hope?

How can we stay connected?

What can we do to support each other?

All are important questions we need to consider as we join with God as part of God’s story. Our passages today tell stories of conflict, struggle and fear. Yet in each God is present, sometimes hidden and at others obvious. So pause a moment. Let God speak. Listen. Share your concerns and struggles. Be encouraged and let God’s grace hold you.

**PSALM 105: 1-6, 16-22, 45** *(*© *B D Prewer 2002)* **WITH PRAYER FOR OTHERS**

Be thankful, call on the name of our God,

            let it be heard in every country!

Sing, sing, sing your best praises,

            tell the wonderful things God has done!

***Lord, we pray for those who are unable to speak your name for fear of being persecuted, tortured or murdered for their faith.***

Revel and delight in our God’s name,

            let all seekers rise up and celebrate!

Set your mind on God’s kind of strength,

            set your heart on the presence of the Spirit!

***We pray for those who are depressed and find it difficult to rise up and celebrate because of the situation they find themselves in, especially during this time of COVID-19. May they find your peace.***

Remember all the great things that have happened,

            the unexpected deeds and justice of God,

by love we are spirit-children of Abraham,

            descendants of Jacob and God’s chosen people.

***Let us show true love to those who are the least deserving of love. The love that is Godly and patient, that settles on the heart for eternity.***

When God saw famine come on their land,

            and their food supply was cut off,

a man had been sent on ahead of them:

            Joseph, who had been sold as a slave.

***We pray for all who are hungry. Who cry for help in their despair. May we listen to their plea and act in your love and wisdom.***

Joseph’s feet were injured with shackles,

            his neck was clamped in iron.

But what he forecast really happened,

            God’s word proved him right.

***Lord, may we kneel down with those who’s souls are shackled to complacency. Let their spirit rise to know you.***

The Pharoah gave the order for his release,

            a great nation’s ruler liberated Joseph.

He made him lord of the royal household,

            manager of all his affairs.

***We pray for our leaders who are working to balance the economy, to balance people’s health and to keep the community unity in these times. May they have wisdom, compassion and dedication to the task at hand.***

He was to instruct the princes as he pleased,

            and to teach old advisers new wisdom.

So that they could know God’s commands

            and practice them. Hallelujah!

***We give thanks that your son Jesus Christ came to us for us to acknowledge as Lord and Saviour, that our relationship with you may be made complete. Amen***

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY:** Take a moment to read our other readings for today: Genesis 37:1 – 4, 12 – 28; Romans 10:5 – 15; Matthew 14:22 – 33.

**REFLECTION** *on Matt. 14: 23-33 by Janet Wood AM*

Humans have had a long fascination with storms in ancient times and modern. Their power excites us, their ferocity frightens. It’s not surprising than many cultures saw storms as demonstrations of the power of their gods.

In our own scriptures, we find storms in the stories of Moses, Noah, Jonah and much later, Paul.

Storms represent our smallness against the forces of nature and of the divine. We have no control of them. In these last weeks in a state of not-much-to-do, I have been reading the history of the Pacific and particularly of the ships that explored this vast ocean and its islands. Much of it is a story of storms.

We know this week’s story of Jesus calming the waters so well. Rembrandt painted it in a dark canvas of red and black tinged clouds. The waves swamp the boat. One man hangs over the side, sick as a dog. Two more seem to be haranguing Jesus to ‘Just do something’. Sadly this is not a painting we can see today. In 1970 it was stolen from a museum in Boston.

But this story is more than one of a miraculous sea rescue. Matthew intends it to point to the very nature of Jesus.

Last week’s account of the feeding of the 5 thousand begins with healing and ends with feeding. it reflects the life of faith lived through the Eucharist.

This story sets Jesus within the cosmos. He comes down from the mountain where he has been alone. He has been drained by the demands of many for healing. He has regained his strength and so now he calls to his terrified disciples that, even in the midst of the storm, he is with them.

And impetuous Peter does what he always does; he gets things half right and half wrong. He can take some steps of faith but not enough, literally out of his depth.

The disciples are often in this state of faith, then doubt. I’ve always seen this as a sign that we are not expected to know everything and be everything immediately. As Matthew illustrates in the many stories that follow this one in his gospel, this was not a five hour on-line course, nor was it learned only or even by reading a book. The disciples learned by watching Jesus in action.

It was in his actions that they could then turn to him and say, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

When the ecumenical movement was at its most energetic and exciting in the post-world war 2 world, the newly formed World Council of Church adopted as its symbol a boat, set on a trinity of gentle waves with the cross as its mast, a symbol of the Christ who could heal the wounds of the world and the scars of his churches.

The world again is in a storm. This one silent, and it is this silence which makes it so scary. We had energy for its first wave, not just doing jig-saws and cleaning out garages but offering support to our neighbours, prayers for our fellowship.

This second bout is testing us all. We can easily feel we are, if not drowning, at least out of our depth. We still say ‘we are all in this together’ but perhaps with a bit less enthusiasm.

So where will we get our strength? In a curiously simple way, perhaps by remembering stories such as this one.

Do you remember that very simple hymn:

Tell me the story of Jesus I love to hear

things I would ask him to tell me if he were here

Scenes by the wayside, tales of the sea

stories of Jesus, tell them to me.

And the third verse:

Tell me in accents of wonder, how rolled the sea

Tossing the boat in a tempest on Galilee

And how the Master, ready and kind

Chided the billows and hushed the wind.

Not complicated, perhaps for this stormy time a simple faith will do us.

**A REFLECTION** *by Rev Dr D’Arcy Wood*

**Genesis 37: 1 —4 and 12 — 28**

In the Middle East today, much of the struggle is about land: who owns it, who controls it, who farms it and who can build on it. To make use of land, of course, there is also the need of water, and that is also a crucial issue in the Middle East.

The story of Joseph in the book of Genesis is a long one. After a time of family conflicts, Joseph is sold by his brothers and ends up in Egypt. His fortunes take a big turn for the better as he serves in Pharaoh's court, even becoming the 2nd most powerful man in the land. At the end of the story Joseph-is able to dispose of much land for the benefit of his family. Land is wealth and land is power.

In the OT, various Semitic peoples struggle over land, over inheritance and over military superiority. The situation today, thousands of years later, is quite similar. What can we learn from this? I suggest 2 things:

\* that division in families, over all sorts of issues, can last for a very long time, but the way of reconciliation that we read about in the NT is the only answer that lasts. The way of reconciliation that God offers us is shown most clearly in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

\* that God deals with us and with his Church as imperfect people, God offers us again and again a new and strange way that leads to life in its fullness.

**Romans 10: 5 - 15**

Some religious people, including some Christians, think of their faith as a matter of following rules. In our reading from the Letter to the Romans, Paul gives a different approach: he says we should "believe in our heart and confess with our mouth". In the Bible the heart is not just the seat of emotion: it is everything about our inner self, our mind, our will, our aims, our feelings and hopes. All of these belong to God, so our faith is to believe that we belong to him and can live in his wonderful light.

The OT is also thought of as a religion of rules, but that isn't the whole story by any means. In Deuteronomy we find this central command: "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might". Jesus quotes this verse in his own teaching. Our faith is about the heart, which is the whole self, not just following rules.

St Paul says that believing should be followed by "confessing with the mouth", In other words we should share our faith in words and actions.

The Christian journey is a process of learning, of sharing our faith and looking to the future with hope. Whatever the struggles we have in life, we live in God's presence and in the unstoppable love that comes to us in Jesus.

**PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

So let us pause.

Rough times can unsettle us.

At such times we can easily resort to reacting out of fear and anxiety.

Both normal reactions but sometimes they can lead to not the best decisions or actions.

Sometimes we grab a hold of the nearest supports.

These may not be the most helpful to ourselves or others.

Sometimes we give vent to our own survival instincts and forget we belong to a community.

Selfishness can take over.

God forgive us.

Transform us into the image of Jesus, the Christ.

May your grace give us pause and new breath for life.

Amen

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Say the Lord’s Prayer.

**BLESSING**

Revel and delight in God’s name, let all seekers rise up and celebrate!

Set your mind on God’s kind of strength, set your heart on the presence of the Spirit!

Remember all the great things that have happened and remain confident that God stands with you.

**Amen**

**OFFERING**

You may like to consider giving an offering to your congregation via direct deposit. Details for each are:

* Gisborne: Gisborne branch, Bendigo bank, B.S.B. 633 108, A/C: 1512 83736
* Romsey: Bendigo Bank, B.S.B. 633 000, A/C: 161501200, Account name: UCA Romsey Uniting Church
* Lancefield: Account Name: Lancefield Uniting Church, BSB: 633 108, A/C No: 112926639
* Mia Mia – Kyneton: Commonwealth bank, B.S.B. 063 517, Account no.: 1002 1775

 *I will publish other congregation’s details as they come to hand. Contact you congregation’s treasurer for details if they are not here.*