**Worship 19 – 21 June 2020 – Pentecost 12a (Proper 7a)**

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/9A2dI0Wr6Rg>.

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.

This week comes during the continuing protests in Australia regarding the dispossession and incarceration of our First Peoples. You may like to keep in your prayers all those who suffer oppression at the hand of another.

**WELCOME TO 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.

**CALL TO WORSHIP – PSALM 86:1-13A – The Living Bible**

1Bend down and hear my prayer, O Lord, and answer me, for I am deep in trouble.

**2**Protect me from death, for I try to follow all your laws. Save me, for I am serving you and trusting you. **3**Be merciful, O Lord, for I am looking up to you in constant hope. **4**Give me happiness, O Lord, for I worship only you. **5**O Lord, you are so good and kind, so ready to forgive, so full of mercy for all who ask your aid.

**6**Listen closely to my prayer, O God. Hear my urgent cry. **7**I will call to you whenever trouble strikes, and you will help me.

**8**Where among the heathen gods is there a god like you? Where are their miracles? **9**All the nations—and you made each one—will come and bow before you, Lord, and praise your great and holy name. **10**For you are great and do great miracles. You alone are God.

**11**Tell me where you want me to go and I will go there. May every fiber of my being unite in reverence to your name. **12**With all my heart I will praise you. I will give glory to your name forever, **13**for you love me so much! You are constantly so kind!

**SONG: Lord I Come to You TIS 685**

In 1992 Geoff Bullock wrote his much loved song, “The Power of Your love”. Following a period of great difficulties he rewrote the song in 2004 reflecting his recognition that it is God who comes to us with grace and love. The change in emphasis reflects his awareness of God’s initiative. The words of the new song are below. Geoff sings the new version on our video.

**The Power of Your Love II**

*Geoff Bullock, Music ©: 1992 Word Music, Words ©: 2004 Geoff Bullock*

Verse One:

Lord you come to me,

And as my heart is changed, released

This miracle of grace gently sets me free

And Lord I’ve come to know,

The weaknesses I see in me,

Will be stripped away

By the power of your love.

Chorus:

You hold me close,

You’ve let your love surround me,

For you’ve come near

To draw me to your side.

And in your life

 I’m rising like the eagle

 And I will soar with you

 As your spirit leads me on

 In the power of your love

Verse Two:

Lord unveil my eyes,

You let me see you face to face

In the knowledge of your love

As you live, in me.

You renew my mind

As your will unfolds in my life

In living every day

In the power of your love

Verse Three:

Lord you’ve come to all

With hope that shines to light the way

As mercy soothes our souls, healing every heart.

Love that sees the tears

Overcomes our darkest fears

Grace that lifts us up

In the power of your love

**A PRAYER OF CONFESSION AND THANKSGIVING**

*A meditation written by a person close to passing as recorded in an article entitled: “Presence in a Heath Care Setting: Sacred Time, Sacred Space, and Sacred Touch”. Article by Hannah O’Donoghue and Scott Quinn in Presence Vol 17, No.4 Dec 2011*

**A MEDITATION FOR THE MOMENT**

I am thankful to be here in my existence another day, even if this day is filled with struggle.

As the Creator of all Life, You have been there guiding me to reach this moment…

the gate of my earthly existence.

When I allowed confusion, doubt, pride and shame to

populate my world they seduced the moment for me.

That precious moment was my life.

Then I struggled to take control of the pain and sorrow in my life, and be in charge of the eternal plan. When did I become my own god?

My life unfolds moment by moment, painful or glorious.

I embrace them all.

I’m not numb, but sometimes fear the watching.

Hearing every breath, feeling my heart beat in my chest,

 or even when my body aches all over, I may only know one true thing.

I’m here… if only for this moment.

 *A private moment of reflection, of giving to God your fears, pains and concerns and*

*Allow the love of Christ to wash over you, in gratitude and thanksgiving.*

**SERVICE OF THE WORD:** Pause, read and reflect on our readings for today: **GENESIS 21:8-21 & MATTHEW 10:24-39**

**REFLECTION**

During times of significant pain, oppression, grief, illness and struggle one of the strongest emotions we feel is isolation. We feel alone. It is an experience common to all of humanity.

The “Black Lives Matter” movement exploded onto the world stage because of this sense that the oppression experienced was unrelenting. It is a desperate cry for justice and for others to stand with them. It seeks for their voices to be heard.

Our stories from Genesis and Matthew’s Gospel both speak of such pain and address the experience of isolation. Two things stand out from our stories. God hears our cries. We are not alone. We are reminded of the reassurance at the end of Matthew’s Gospel, “behold, I will be with you to the end of the age.”

God hears the cry of Ishmael and extends the blessing of the elect to him. The striking element of the Genesis story is that this gracious presence of God goes beyond just the elect. God is not interested in which group we belong to or come from. God cares and is generous. God’s compassion and grace goes beyond our systems, classifications and groupings.

We often seek God to bless those who are “on God’s side”. And in international conflicts we seek God to bless our side. Yet here God goes far beyond whose side are you on and just shows compassion and grace.

It says something to the way we relate to those who are different to ourselves or who think differently to us. Regardless of race, religion or culture, God is gracious and loving to all.

This is a massive challenge to us. We need to step outside our comfort zone and engage those who are different. We are called to work alongside of God in being gracious and compassionate.

Finally, we need to remember that no promise is made that we will escape suffering. The comfort of the disciple is the ongoing presence of God.

In this we allow the presence of God to be both our comfort and the comfort of all who struggle.

**QUESTIONS FOR DELIBERATION:**

The rejoinder from those who criticize the “BLM” movement is that “All Lives Matter”. Rather than to hear the cry, it is a dismissive statement to ignore oppression, behaviour that demonstrates that black lives matter less than white. It is a cry that once heard calls for action. How then can we show that all lives really do matter, be they Indigenous, Muslim, Christian, atheist, disabled, LGBTQI, etc?

Last week, the poem read, “His hands are our hands” point out how our actions show or fail to show God’s love. How then can we be God’s ears and presence to those hurting, oppressed or struggling?

**PRAYER FOR THE PEOPLE** *\*1st verse by Bruce Prewer – Brief Prayers for Busy People.*

Loving God and holy Friend

We pray for self-understanding,

That we may sincerely repent,

For simple, genuine faith

That we may trust your mercy;

And for constancy in loving,

That we may ever adore

The Source of our salvation.

We pray for a world in turmoil

That there may be your peace

For those who feel unheard and unseen

That they may know that they are heard and seen by you.

For those of are in mourning

That they may know your unconditional love.

We pray that from the dust your

Spirit may be sought anew.

That hunger and thirst for justice

May be found in Jesus

And that love and compassion

May be found in the arms of the Father.

In Christ’s name we pray

Amen

**THE LORD’S PRAYER**

Say the Lord’s Prayer in the way you are familiar.

**COMMISSION & BENEDICTION**
The Lord bless you and keep you;

The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious unto you;

The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

 *(The Aaronic Blessing)*

**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

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