**22nd September 2019 Pentecost 17 (Proper 20)**

***\**** *a note about the Luke reading for today: there are many and varied interpretations of this passage about the shrewd manager. It has certainly cause interpreters some anxt, including myself. When interpreting a passage though, particular when you are unsure of what is meant, it is always good to consider it in its context – both narratively and historically. One interpreter to do this is Bill Loader. In doing so, the strange suddenly makes sense. I commend his analysis at* [*http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/LkPentecost15Ord25*](http://wwwstaff.murdoch.edu.au/~loader/LkPentecost15Ord25)*.*

**A short but structured service**

*(other suggestions and alternatives are below)*

**Gathering**

**Call to worship**

On behalf of the Child of God whose shoes I am not worthy to unlace, I welcome you into this most hospitable house.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

***And also with you.***

Shake off your worries, shrug off your sluggishness, prepare to worship with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.

***This is the day of the risen Lord. We will rejoice and be******glad in it.***

**Prayer of Approach**

Most wonderful God, help us to delight in you more than farmers do with rain, bankers with profits, and children with parties. Give us the liberty of your Holy Spirit, that here side by side with fellow disciples of Jesus, we may dare to be your children, in your house, and at your feast. In the name of Christ Jesus.

***Amen****.*

**Hymn**

**Prayer of confession**

It is written of old:

“Help us, O God of our salvation for the glory of your name. Deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name’s sake.”

Let us admit to each other and to God, that we are in need of mercy and renewal. Let us pray together.

***God of truth and God of grace,***

***we confess that too often we are nondescript Christians,***

***rarely very wicked and seldom very loving.***

***We drift along in the stream of Australian life,***

***sharing the general indifference and the common selfishness.***

***We participate in the popular fashions and delusions,***

***following Christ rather timidly, from afar.***

***For this our share in community evil, we seek your caustic mercy,***

***and for our many private faults and static faith we beg your forgiveness.***

***Through Christ Jesus our Saviour.***

***Amen!***

**Word of Assurance**

Holy Scripture says: “There is one God, and there is one mediator between God and humanity, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all.” My sisters and brothers, in Christ Jesus we have a Saviour who has shared our nature and known the difficulties we face. He is our mediator before the altar of God. He turns to us and says: “My sister, my brother, your sins are forgiven you. Go in peace.” The peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

***And also with you.***

*(often the Psalm may be used for the prayer and/or the word of grace)*

**Service of the Word**

**Psalm for the day – Psalm 79: 1-9** *© B.D. Prewer 2000*

O my God! Pagans have taken over our lives!

 They have polluted the temple of your Spirit.

Their own bodies are the site of ruin,

 and they treat others like so much meat.

Like birds of prey they circle around,

 like animals in the night seeking carrion.

They waste precious life-blood like water,

 and there are few who care for the victims.

Believers are a joke to their neighbours,

 behind our back they laugh at our faith.

How long, God, will you let it go on?

 Why are you so mad at us or something?

Why don’t you pour out your anger on them,

 those who have nothing to do with you?

Lay it on the arrogant power freaks

 who can’t say your name without swearing.

For their influence is devouring your children,

 making a wasteland of the human spirit.

Do not lay on us the guilt of our forebears,

 come quickly with your compassion.

Meet us where we are right now

 for we have been brought very low.

Help us, God of liberation and healing,

 deliver and forgive us to the glory of your name!

**Epistle or Old Testament/alternate reading: 1 Timothy 2:1-7****OR Jeremiah 8: 18 to 19:1**

**Gospel reading: Luke 16:1-13**

**Short reflection and discussion** *(see links below)*

(Hymn)

**Prayers for others**

**Sharing of concerns**

**Sharing of notices**

**Prayers**

We lift up to God the cares of burdens of those around us in this life, in the sure and certain hope that our prayers are never in vain. Let us pray.

Loving God, we come to you praying for this world for which Christ came, died and rose again. Lord in your mercy;

***Hear our prayer.***

For those in government, and all behind the scenes who influence them. May there be a revulsion against injustice, hatred and war, and a turning towards reconciliation and compassion. Lord in your mercy;

***Hear our prayer.***

For the victims of the current greed and mismanagement of the world’s resources. May there be a better day for the hungry, homeless, unemployed, refugees, oppressed, and those who are condemned to grinding toil with scant reward. Lord in your mercy;

***Hear our prayer.***

For the people who try to alleviate the suffering of humanity. May your Spirit be with humanitarian agencies, church outreach and social justice bodies, and those arms of government that seek to rectify wrongs and heal the hurts of citizens. Lord in your mercy;

***Hear our prayer.***

For those who are looking for spiritual answers and find a bewildering array of churches and other religions. May you aid them in their search, expose religious errors, and bless everything that is true and good in the life of believers. Lord in your mercy;

***Hear our prayer.***

For any among our friends and loved ones who are finding it hard to cope at the moment. Loving God, in weakness be their strength, in darkness their light, in suffering their healing, in anxiety their peace, in fear their courage, in dying their hope, and in sorrow their comfort. Lord in your mercy;

***Hear our prayer.***

And now to you our God, who are able to do more than we can ever ask or conceive, we commit ourselves, our church, and all those who seek first the kingdom of God. May your will be done and your name loved and hallowed, today and always. Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

***Amen!***

**Lord’s Prayer**

**Sending forth the people of God**

**Offering** (a sharing of our gifts and the call to bless others as we have been blessed)

**Hymn**

**Blessing and commissioning**

May God give you wisdom to know−

 when to speak and when to be silent,

 when to offer help and when to hold back,

 when to ask for help and when to go it alone,

 when to comfort and when to challenge,

 when to pray and when to get busy.

***Amen!***

The grace of our Saviour Christ,

the love of our faithful God,

and the joy of our Friend the Holy Spirit,

will be with you now and always.

***Amen!***

 *(Adapted from a Celtic blessing)*

\*Note: all prayers and litanies above, are courtesy ©B D Prewer. It was Bruce’s intention that the prayers and litanies be adapted by each user to their own situation. This material can only be used for worship with acknowledgement and not otherwise reproduced without permission. Thank you to the estate of Bruce Prewer for allow us to publish his material here. Contact <http://www.bruceprewer.com> for details.

**A shorter prayer service**

*(may include some of the above material in the following format. Hymns may be included if desired and music is available)*

Greet each other

Prayer (may include invocation, adoration, confession and recognition of grace)

Reading: Psalm 79:1 – 9

Gospel reading: Luke 16:1 – 13

Sharing and discussion of the readings

Sharing of concerns

Prayers for others (see above, may involve one or several people praying; may involve the use of symbolic actions as part of the prayers)

(Conclude with the Lord’s Prayer)

Blessing

***Howard Wallace suggests*** *(see****:*** [*http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/*](http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/)*)*

The lament over the destruction of the temple is not easy to incorporate into our weekly worship where such dramatic events do not always occur. The central verses vv. 8-9, however, would make a very suitable conclusion to the **prayer of confession** which could be said in responsorial fashion as here, or read to the congregation by the one leading worship:

Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors;
***let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low.***
Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of your name;
***deliver us, and forgive our sins, for your name's sake.***

Howard often uses the NRSV but other versions can be used such as Nathan Nettleton’s paraphrase (found at <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>), The Message, Bruce Prewer’s adaptations (both paraphrases) or the New Living Translation. The Message and New Living Translation are accessible via [www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com).

**Songs which may bring deeper reflection are** – lots to consider:

TIS 256 The Servant King

DMAC Do justice *(songs listed as DMAC are David MacGregor’s and are available via the below link.)*

TIS 742 One God

TIS 689 Sorrowing song

TIS 679 God of Jeremiah, grieving

TIS 90/AHB 44 I’ll praise my maker while I’ve breath

TIS 657 God of freedom, God of justice

TIS 618/AHB 568 What does the Lord require

TIS 215 /AHB 144 You servants of God, your master proclaim

TIS 123/AHB 48 Be still, my soul, the Lord is on your side

David MacGregor has a range of contemporary songs that go really well with the celebratory tone. You may like to select one to learn. He often provides a downloadable mp3 file, music and lyrics for songs that are his own. His site is at: <https://togethertocelebrate.com.au/>

**Other Creative suggestions:**

* Visuals are very appropriate for most services. Art works can be used to draw people into the stories. <http://www.textweek.com/yearc/properc20.htm> has links to artworks and movie suggestions related to the themes arising from the Bible readings. Some of these are by some of the greats and others by world class contemporary artists.
* Ann suggests a film clip and listening songs. The film clip is from **Wit.** Show the scene right near the end of the film where Vivian's old professor comes in and, through means of a children's story book, prays for her to die in peace. This goes well with the Timothy reading. The first listening song is Peacemaker by Maire Brennan on her album, Whisper to the Wild Water. The second is **Comforter** by CeCe Winnans on her album, *Alabaster Box.* Ann has several discussion questions for the film clip and guidance about how to use the listening songs.
* Ann suggests several adult responses and discussion questions for the service. Why not use these as a starting point for deeper exploration?
* Geoff Shrowder suggests when the **Luke reading is the focus**: *This week’s reading from Luke’s gospel offers the opportunity to focus on aid programs, domestic and international, that are partnership in nature rather than paternal.*
* Seasons of the Spirit is a resource package available through Media Com. They have weekly resources available that can be purchased. They have great resources for all ages, creative ideas and thoughtful suggestions for reflection and sermon development. If you want to check it out, speak to Rev Peter or contact our Romsey congregation who use the material often.

**Other resources**

* See the Resources page of our web site for an extensive list of links and other resources.
* Our Romsey congregation has access to Seasons of the Spirit materials. Contact Jay for details as to what is available.
* Bruce Prewer’s web site has sermons and prayers. Go to <http://www.bruceprewer.com/>.
* Nathan Nettleton’s site has paraphrase versions of the readings, sermons and prayers. Go to <http://www.laughingbird.net/LaughingBird/Welcome.html>.
* Ann Scull has some great suggestions for creative worship. Go to <http://seedstuff.blogspot.com.au/>.
* Sacredise is a great web site that has a huge range of resources. Go to <http://sacredise.com/>.
* David McGregor has some great suggestions for contemporary music and songs. Go to <http://togethertocelebrate.com.au/>
* Geoff Shrowder has suggestions for the use of the Psalm, often a thoughtful piece and suggestions for hymns. Go to <http://thebillabong.info/>.
* Many other resources are available on the web site