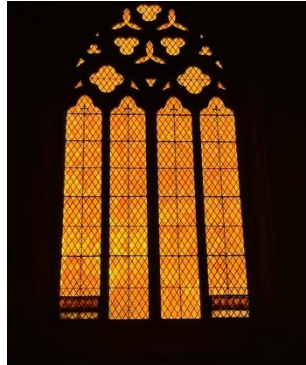


Whitehorse Uniting Church
Sunday 15 October 2023
Pentecost 20_A



Introit– 699 A New commandment
Emmaus Music 2020

<https://youtu.be/YoyhCDMcV0s?si=DpDo83Dyn6FFvn1V>



Welcome

May the Worship bless you

Acknowledgment

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place.
 We honor them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.



Call to Worship

John Davies, Bare Feet and Buttercups, (Edit. Ruth Burgess), Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. www.ionabooks.com Used with permission.

Lord Jesus, you are the king who comes in
You come into the place where we are.



Into our world
 Into our church
 Into our homes
 Into our hearts
 You come as least expected.
 You come to unsettle the complacent
 And unseat the unjust
You come whether we want you to come or not.



This morning we invite you to come.
 Into our world
 Into our church
 Into our homes
 Into our hearts
Come, Lord Jesus

Prayers of adoration and invocation – Tina

Prayers

Neil Paynter, Acorns, and Archangels, (Edit. Ruth Burgess), Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow. (in italics)
www.ionabooks.com Used with permission. (With added responses – Tina Lyndon)

*God, help us to grow,
 like a garden
 like a song
 like a tree.*

You, Lord, intertwine our roots so we become one in you, a new creation.

*Like a great tree,
 like one of those great, old trees,
 you meet sometimes and hug,
 wandering lost
 or enchanted
 in a deep, dark forest,
 in an empty field.*

You help us Lord, become like sheltering great trees providing shade and life.

*A great, old tree
 with roots that reach down to the heart,
 roots that reach down
 but break through the ground around the trunk and lift,
 as if the earth can't contain the yearning.*

**You, Lord, remind us we are all part of creation,
 groaning for completion of your plans for us all**

*A great, old tree
 with arms that shelter and shade
 and house such love.*

*A great, old tree
 with breaks and scars
 but dancing and clapping its hands,
 like a beautiful old woman at a summer wedding.*

**As we age and become shaped by wisdom and life,
 Lord, you help us let go of doubts and the unimportant,
 so, we may discover joy.**

*A great, old tree
 still and centred
 drawing on the living warm core of God
 though left stripped of everything.*
Lord, you fill us with the Spirit, at our core.

*God, help us to grow,
 like a garden
 like a song
 like a tree.*

*Like one of those great, old trees
 you meet sometimes.
 In a crowded forest
 in an empty field.*

Lord, you bless us and help us to grow, amen.

Invocation

Knowing you are love and of your love for us.

Come Lord Jesus

A meditation of confession for reconciliation – Rev Peter

The news this week has contained some horrific content. In particular the conflict between the Israelis and Hamas has reached a new low. Vicious attacks on civilians by both sides. The pain just deepens.

Here is a screen shot of a conversation I saw through Messenger on Facebook. It follows on from this news.



Many comments are pointing the finger at Islam and religion as a whole. Some pointing out hatred between peoples. Many making critical comments and making judgements on one section of society or another, several anti-religion, and others critical of the left of politics. Some just lament the way we treat each other.

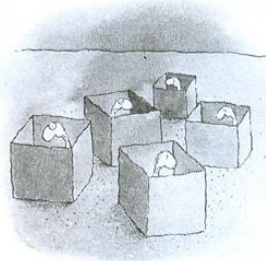
Even though most of us are not directly affected, it is still easy to point the finger and find fault with one side or the other when instead a new way is needed.

Into this we hear,

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Leunig recognised in his prayer; fear divides us; love brings us together.

There are only two feelings.
Love and fear.
There are only two languages.
Love and fear.
There are only two activities.
Love and fear.
There are only two motives,
two procedures, two frameworks,
two results.
Love and fear.
Love and fear.



Leunig – Used with permission.

Into this we hear,

Three things remain, faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love.

Today is the day after the referendum. However, you voted or the reason you chose, we as God's people are called to be a people of reconciliation and healing.

And so we pause and reflect, do we promote and contribute to fear? Do we condemn the other?

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

Do we show and share love? Do we engage others with humility and compassion?

Three things remain, faith, hope and love. And the greatest of these is love.

Pause in silence

You are a people who have received and experienced the message of healing, love and reconciliation. You are a people with a call to be a people of reconciliation. Live then in the Spirit of the one who gave his life to bring peace and love to all.

Introit 745 Seek ye first the kingdom of God.

Chet Valley Churches 2021

<https://youtu.be/FFxZeY2D5tc>

Readings - Psalm 23

¹The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

²He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

³he restores my soul.^[b] He leads me in right paths^[c] for his name's sake.

⁴Even though I walk through the darkest valley,^[d] I fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

⁶Surely^[e] goodness and mercy^[f] shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.^[g]

Matthew 22:1-14

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying: ²“The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding banquet for his son. ³He sent his slaves to call those who had been invited to the wedding banquet, but they would not come. ⁴Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited: Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready; come to the wedding banquet.’ ⁵But they made light of it and went away, one to his farm, another to his business, ⁶while the rest seized

his slaves, mistreated them, and killed them. ⁷The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city. ⁸Then he said to his slaves, 'The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy. ⁹Go therefore into the main streets and invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet.' ¹⁰Those slaves went out into the streets and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad, so the wedding hall was filled with guests.

¹¹"But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing a wedding robe, ¹²and he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding robe?' And he was speechless. ¹³Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot, and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴For many are called, but few are chosen."

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Young at Heart – Psalm 23 – We can be shepherds too. – Rev Tina **The Frozen sheep story.**



You may notice warnings for sheep owners on the Bureau of Meteorology. There are some at the moment. It's Spring and there are lots of lambs in paddocks.

When I was a child aged nine, we lived on Gabo Island and would often have bad weather and the newborn lambs in the paddocks would freeze overnight. My job was to go and find them early in the morning and bring them home and put them in the woodfires warmer at the base of the stove. Their little bodies were often rock hard and frozen. I was amazed when they slowly thawed out and came back to life. After that it was my job to take them back to their mothers or if the mother didn't bond with them again, to feed them until they were self-sufficient. It was a good way of learning to be responsible as a child.

A group of our leaders shared their thoughts about Psalm 23 the other evening. How it brings peace and comfort. How someone to lean on during tough times reminds us of leaning into God when we are in dark valleys. We are supported and guided by God. Knowing God is there gives us the courage to take a leap of faith as a church.

The Psalms' familiar words are comforting. The images help us feel protected. God leads us on the right paths when it seems like some people are messing up our world. We can trust God to be there for us. These are some of the comments people made.

Hymn 659 The Lord is my Shepherd, Brian Boniwell.

Brian Boniwell Music 2015

https://youtu.be/4sZaJpllj_c?si=HERZnimZSik-XGK-

Sermon - The dress code for God's Banquet – Rev Tina

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, amen.

Imagine if there was a dress code for us to come to church.

People were expected to wear hats, suits, and ties when I was a child. Before that it was people's Sunday best.



Perhaps each culture has an unspoken dress code in different nations where Christians gather for worship.



This is a painting of people worshipping. It's on the wall at Flynn Memorial Uniting Church in Alice Springs, Australia. It sends a message to the locals that all are welcome and loved.

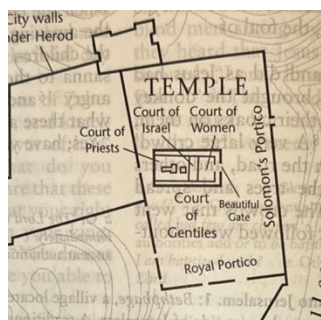
Today we hear about a man who didn't comply with the right dress code for a wedding.

When we are invited to an engagement party the invitation often says semi-formal or smart casual and weddings often say formal. It costs a lot of money to outfit ourselves for such occasions. It costs a great deal for parents or couples to pay for their wedding, often thousands and there are so many expectations to be fulfilled.

But Jesus' parable concerns more than dress codes.

Let us look at it in context.

Over the past few weeks, we have been listening to a series of Jesus' parables spoken in the Temple. Previously Jesus had entered the Temple and confronted those in the Temple who had turned it into a marketplace, instead of God's place. He returns a few days later and the people come to him and are healed while the chief priests and scribes watch. Again, he leaves the Temple and spends the night at Bethany. When he returns to the Temple the chief priests and elders confront him when he is teaching and ask him: By what authority are you doing these things and who gave you this authority? Jesus responds by telling them the parables about the two sons, and the landowner who planted a vineyard which you heard last week. Now we hear another parable, as did the chief priests and elders.

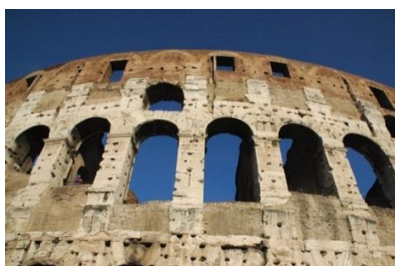


There was a dress code in the Temple. The chief priests wore robes, including a blue robe called an ephod with pomegranates of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, all around the lower hem, with bells of gold between them and an apron-like breastplate with gold and jewels. They wore it in the holy place beyond the Temple curtain where only priests could go to be in God's presence and within the Temple.

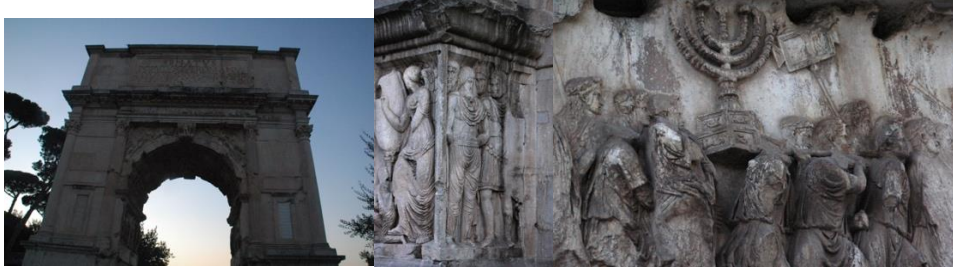
So, when Jesus told this parable and mentioned the dress code required for God's banquet the chief priests would have understood Jesus was referring to them.



Matthew's community were Jewish converts to Christianity and would have understood what Jesus meant about God's prophets being killed and Jesus being killed by the religious leaders including the chief priests. They knew about Christian leaders and followers being killed by the religious and political authorities, beheaded, and also killed in the Colosseum. They considered the destruction of Jerusalem as a punishment, where the Romans took the priests back to Rome as captives and stole the Temple treasures. This is a Roman Arch celebrating Titus's conquest of Jerusalem. He later became Emperor.



The history and context of the parable helps us understand the ancient world. For the people, the parable is about the kingdom of God and the final messianic banquet and who is in and who is out.



In the Temple only the priests got to go inside the holy of holiest places. No one else was able to come close to God, according to their rules. Everyone else was excluded. In the parable it is inferred they didn't take God's invitation seriously and killed those who came to invite them and remind them to come to the Wedding Feast. God destroys their city, then invites everyone to the wedding feast, all races, all people, good and bad, are welcomed to the kingdom.

But someone came to the wedding feast who didn't prepare themselves. They were not wearing a wedding robe and they were seized and thrown out of the banquet into a dark place.

This is for the crowds who are listening.
This is not about a dress code.
It is a reversal of who is in and who is out.

Matthew's community would have understood those who had prepared themselves for God and are right with God are welcome to the Wedding feast, to the end times Banquet. Their wedding robes symbolised them having prepared their hearts and lives for God. They would have understood becoming a Christian was about being prepared to change their hearts, their life, and their actions, where they got themselves right with God and in right relationship with God.

Centuries later we stand here today wondering what this gospel and moment in history means for us.

Perhaps the gospel reminds us of the importance of getting our hearts right with God by living out Jesus' love commandment. By being his hands and feet. By putting our faith into practice.

This means if God is love, we are called to act with love. Many people find God in others through their love and kindness to them.



This is a poster advertising the National Beanie Festival at Alice Springs. The theme in 2010 was a head full of love.

Jesus calls us to have a head and heart full of love.

Paul in Romans speaks of the Holy Spirit pouring the love into our hearts. This happens every time we pray and spend time with God. When we pray our heart becomes as wide as the ocean.

We can think love, be love and act with love.

All people are invited, and all have a place at the table. All are welcome. All are loved by God, and all are called to love like Jesus loves.

Love is our dress code.

Quiet moment



The Peace

The Peace of the Lord be with you
And also with you

Hymn – 658 - I the Lord of Sea and Sky

Katie Roselia Music 2020

<https://youtu.be/5zURbVI3xp0?si=LcFuKPCQFWBWBVkw>

Offering prayer

Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom all for transformation through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen.

Prayers of the People - Margot Kemke

Dear Heavenly Father, we come together with thanksgiving for your many blessings to us and we acknowledge your love and care for us all. You have created a rich variety and abundance of life and have given us the responsibility for sustaining this. Encourage us all to preserve what we've been given and to share with others who have so little. We thank you for our freedom, our equality and our ethnic diversity. May we always protect this with humility and justice for all.

We pray for all the people in our world. Many are suffering because of natural disasters – fires, floods and earthquakes which have created homelessness, sickness and death. Many are suffering because of conflict – wars and power-grabbing of one nation over another. Corruption and civil disturbances are also happening in some countries and ordinary citizens are suffering. O Lord, be near to all these people – take away the fear and prejudices, comfort, support and protect them, we pray.

We pray for peace around the world – a peace we don't seem to be able to manage on our own. Strengthen our resolve to do what is right, to be tolerant, patient, to love unconditionally and to listen to your wisdom through our prayers and our obedience to you.

We pray for the leaders of all nations that they will govern with wisdom, integrity and compassion for their people.

Here in Australia, we pray for our leaders, - federal, state and local – that they may also govern and make decisions which will benefit everyone and care for our environment. We pray for all those who care for those who cannot care for themselves. Our medical staff, our teachers, our social workers, our firemen and servicemen and all who give a bit extra to help others. Encourage and support them, we pray.

We pray for our church – for our own ministers and lay-leaders and those of other denominations. We pray for all Christians around the world and ask that you will sustain and encourage them as they preach your word and care for their own communities. We pray for members of our congregation who are in assisted accommodation, who are unwell, lonely, bereaved, or depressed. Bless them all and may they feel your love, understanding and healing.

Finally, O Lord, we pray for ourselves – that we will always listen to you and be guided by you every day.

A prayer of St Augustine –

O Loving God, to turn away from you is to fall, to turn towards you is to rise,
 and to stand before you is to abide for ever.

Grant us, Dear God, in all our duties your help, in all our uncertainties your guidance,
 In all our dangers your protection, in all our sorrows your peace.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn 665 Jesus Christ is waiting.

Chet Valley Churches 2020

https://youtu.be/CSzEviUc_o?si=-kAIRXKhScIjEuqJ

Sending out

Pat Bennett, *Bare Feet and Buttercups*, (Edit. Ruth Burgess), Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow.
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In this new place, in this new church,
 May you be blessed in the opening of your doors to the stranger.
 May you be filled in the sharing of your bread with the hungry.
 May you be enriched in the giving and receiving of love and laughter.
 And may the God of grace,
 Gift you with all grace as you build his kingdom here on earth.

Hymn 755 you shall go out with Joy.

St Francis United Church 2022

<https://youtu.be/HHBzooZ6JGI?si=-aMC1DUJy30melmV>

Pastoral care tips – Rev Tina



These are resurrection ferns. They grow in central Australia and look like they're dead. However, with some heavy rain like we've had recently, they spring back to life and send up green shoots everywhere. Never lose hope in your dreams. They may look dead but with the right timing and conditions they will spring back to life and send up new shoots of hope everywhere. Doors will open. Believe in God. For us what is impossible is possible for God.

The other day at our team meeting Rev Rod and myself were discussing Psalm 23. We have heard it so many times and the words are so familiar they are written in our hearts.

Rod shared an interpretation of Psalm 23 that was about hairdressers. How many of us have been to hairdressers and barbers over the years and found them great listeners? I haven't experienced a grumpy hairdresser. They all have great personalities and people skills. It's a great experience having my hair done. I feel pampered. I'm sure you've had your own experiences. This is it:

PSALM 23 by Pat Rivett

The Lord is like my hairdresser,
 She makes me to lie my head down,
 and massages it with warm, pleasant waters.

Her gentle hands, and the soothing scent of shampoo and conditioners,
 They restore my soul,
 And lead me into paths of relaxation, and powerless-ness, where I come closer to you.

She leads me away from the worries of my everyday life,
 and in this vulnerable state, I am able to talk to her about them,
 and she listens to even the smallest of my concerns.
 Her kind words, and her soothing hands, help me to put things into perspective.

Even though my hair gets thinner and greyer,
 She is never patronizing,
 But treats me seriously and with dignity ...
 My delight runneth over.

She even prepares a cup of tea for me, in the presence of other customers,
 who are patiently waiting for their appointment,
 to remind me that there are times when we all need special T.L.C.,
 which we need to accept graciously, as it is offered.

She is a good hairdresser, and the style she has created for me
 will last, and will allow me to walk into the future with renewed confidence,
 and a new sense of humility.

I have been blessed in her presence.

Surely her goodness and gentleness will go with me, out into the world,
 and I shall dwell in that goodness and gentleness forever.

Amen

A little bit of Joy

Handel's Hallelujah Chorus Live at the Sydney Opera House ABC Classic 2020

https://youtu.be/weFJHtcxJt0?si=gLffeE_7KOOAWPG4

I am tired

Ruth Burgess, Bare Feet and Buttercups, (Edit. Ruth Burgess), Wild Goose Publications, Glasgow.

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I am tired, God.

I am ready to sleep.

Let me sleep in your cradling.

Let me rest in your joy.

I give to you, my worries.

I give to you, my dreams.

Watch over me in blessing.

Watch over me in love.