

Howick Presbyterian Church Service of Worship
Sunday, 26th April 2020 @ Home

CALL TO WORSHIP

God, our God, how glorious is your name in all the earth!

Your glory is sung by all of your creation!

When we look to the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, we wonder —
 Who are we that you care for us and for this world?

*You are the God of life, crowning us with glory and honor to serve you all our days. O God,
 our God, how glorious is your name in all the earth!*

Let's worship God and sing

SONG: HOW GREAT IS OUR GOD

The splendour of a King, clothed in majesty
 Let all the Earth rejoice
 All the Earth rejoice
 He wraps himself in light
 And darkness tries to hide
 And trembles at His voice
 Trembles at His voice

*How great is our God, sing with me
 How great is our God, and all will see
 How great, how great is our God*

Age to age He stands
 And time is in His hands
 Beginning and the end
 The Godhead Three in One
 Father Spirit Son
 The Lion and the Lamb
 The Lion and the Lamb

Name above all names
 Worthy of our praise
 My heart will sing
 How great is our God

OPENING PRAYER

Creator God, we glimpse your beauty
 in setting sun, mountain top, eagle's wing.
 We sense your power in thunder crash,

lightning flash and ocean's roar.
 Creator God we praise you

Precious Jesus, we see your love
 stretched out upon a cruel cross.
 We stand in awe at your sacrifice,
 pure love poured out for humankind.
 Precious Jesus we praise you

Holy Spirit, we see your power
 in lives transformed, hearts on fire.
 We listen for your still, small voice,
 comforting, guiding, calling.
 Holy Spirit we praise you

Lead and speak to us in this time of worship.

We pray as you taught us to pray together:

*Our Father, who art in heaven,
 hallowed be thy Name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.*

*Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those
 who trespass against us.*

*And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.*

*For thine is the kingdom,
 and the power, and the glory,
 for ever and ever. Amen.*

KIDS TIME AND BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

Hello to any boys and girls who are reading, listening to or watching this!

What was this week like for you? Did you do anything different or exciting? How was home learning this week? What was the best part about that? What was the trickiest part?

Ally is going to read another story for you.....

Today we also celebrate everyone who had a birthday or anniversary this week. We give thanks to God for your life amongst us! You have made this world so much better for so many! This will probably be one of the stranger birthdays you've had but you are still worth celebrating!

KIDS PRAYER

Dear God,

We thank you for the amazing, beautiful world you created. Help us to care for it. We thank you for the wonderful, unique people you have made us to be. Help us to care for one another. We thank you for the incredible, tasty foods you have invented. Help us remember and care for those who are hungry. We thank you for the inspiring stories and teaching in the bible. Help us to share this good news with people everywhere.

Amen.

What do we say each week? "God loves us and we are special!"

SONG: Hosanna

I see the King of glory
 Coming on the clouds of fire
 The whole earth shakes, the whole earth shakes
 I see His love and mercy
 Washing over all our sin
 The people sing, the people sing

*Hosanna, Hosanna
 Hosanna in the highest
 Hosanna, Hosanna
 Hosanna in the highest*

I see a generation
 Rising up to take the place
 With selfless faith, with selfless faith
 I see a near revival
 Staring as we pray and seek
 We're on our knees, we're on our knees

Heal my heart and make it clean
 Open up my eyes to the things unseen
 Show me how to love like You have loved me
 Break my heart for what breaks Yours
 Everything I am for Your kingdom's cause
 As I walk from earth into eternity

READING - Chamberlins

John 21:1-19

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee.^[a] It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus^[b]), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. “I’m going out to fish,” Simon Peter told them, and they said, “We’ll go with you.” So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus. He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

He said, “Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some.” When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, “It is the Lord,” he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards.^[c] When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish you have just caught.” So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” None of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?”

“Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.”

Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.”

The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.”

Jesus said, “Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.” Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

SERMON – Peter and Jesus

Have you ever had one of those moments where a past memory is rekindled, and it inspires you and spurs you into a new season of change?

Maybe a special memory of a time when your faith felt at its most alive and dynamic. Sometimes revisiting these times can be a jump start for a new season.

In the same way, sometimes revisiting a painful memory can be powerful too. Now, I don't mean in a guilt and shame kind of way, but in a way that helps you heal from the pain of that bad memory.

This story is one of Jesus bringing restoration to Peter, by rekindling a beautiful memory and a painful one, and through them bringing healing and new beginnings.

Jesus has already appeared to his disciples twice since the resurrection. Yet for one of them, there is sense of unfinished business. This someone is Peter. He had a moment still burning on his conscience.

That night when Jesus was arrested; that night in the courtyard where Peter denied he knew Jesus three times.

Since then Peter has been in hiding, and then has experienced the enormous joy of knowing Jesus had risen from the dead.

Yet he has not yet resolved what happened that night when Jesus was arrested.

I imagine Peter full with an enormous range of feelings and emotions.

First he goes through the hell of seeing his Lord being arrested, beaten, then his denial of Jesus, and the shame and bitterness that came with that, then knowing he had been crucified, and not being able to be there with John and Mary to stand with him as he died.

Then only 2 days later Peter experiences something which will blow his mind even more. The one who he loved, who he denied, the one who died, is now alive.

His mind can barely cope with the joy, the awe, the greatness of what had happened. So the cross was part of Gods plan after all? So Jesus had to die?

Peter would have been trying make sense of what all these things meant, especially for him and the other disciples. What would their risen Jesus ask of them to do now, once he had left them? What path lies ahead? What of the Kingdom Jesus talked about? What of taking up their crosses? And would a similar fate lie ahead of them?

But in the middle of these thoughts, one would have occupying his mind a lot.

What does Jesus think of me after what happened that night I betrayed him?

Have you ever had a similar thought after a moment of weakness? I wonder what Jesus thinks of me now?

For those of you unaware of Peter's background, he was a pretty significant fellow. He was one of the first disciples called to follow Jesus. He was one of the key figures in the 12.

Jesus had first called Peter while he and his friends were cleaning the nets after a night of fishing without reward.

Then along comes this great new teacher everyone is talking about. Jesus from Nazareth. He asks Peter if he can borrow a boat to use as a pulpit, because a huge crowd had gathered to hear him speak.

After speaking, Jesus says to Peter, named Simon at this time, "Put out into deep water, and lower your nets for a catch."

This was really an invitation for Peter to follow Jesus into what would be the deep waters of life. Where there would be dangers and also rewards – fish to catch – people to save.

And as the nets fill with fish, Peter says, "get away from me Lord, I am a sinful man." Jesus says, "don't be afraid, from now on you will be fishing for men. Follow me."

The great catch that day was not the fish – it was Peter. He was captured by the call of his Lord.

Interesting that the saviour of the world should choose such simple, broken men to be on his dream team.

Peter, like the other disciples, fumbles his way through following Jesus. They spend a lot of time trying to work him out, and often getting him quite wrong. Their view of a messianic military leader to overthrow the Romans and restore the kingdom of Israel is not holding up to the message Jesus brings.

For many of the disciples they still aren't sure who Jesus is.

Matthew 16:13-20 One day, at Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asks them, "who do you say I am."

And in what would be one of the defining moments of Peter's life, he speaks up and says. You are the Christ – the messiah.

This was a hugely significant moment in Peter's life – this recognition of who Jesus was, and Jesus in return affirms Peter, and his role in the building of his church.

Peter you are the rock. And upon this truth I will build my church.

Peter must be feeling pretty good right now. He must have been feeling like top of the class.

Yet this belief, this claim would go on to be tested in the future, in what would be Peter's darkest hour.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed and arrested, he says to Peter, you will deny me three times.

Peter is adamant - there's no way that's going to happen. No way. I'm the rock remember.

Yet later on, Peter finds himself sheepishly following the arrested Jesus, and the roman soldiers, as they go from trial to trial, until in a courtyard by a fire someone recognizes him.

“You also were with Jesus of Galilee,” she said.

70 But he denied it before them all. “I don't know what you're talking about,” he said.

71 Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, “This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.”

72 He denied it again, with an oath: “I don't know the man!”

73 After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, “Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away.”

74 Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don't know the man!”

The rooster crows, and Peters shame is complete. He runs away in deep deep sorrow.

Some rock of the church he turned out to be. Can't even stay true.

Peter goes from making a declaration at Ceasarea Philippi, to making an opposite declaration in the courtyard of the high priest.

Yet, somehow Jesus knew he would do it. Still Jesus loved him.

2 significant things have happened since this moment. Jesus death and resurrection.

Peter is feeling so much right now; this morning that Jesus appears on the beach.

The reconciliation

The scene for the reconciliation between Peter and Jesus is strangely familiar to us.

They are on the lake, and the disciples have been out fishing again, and again they have caught nothing.

Then this man appears on the shore, and invites them to put their nets out again – again strangely familiar.

The nets begin to burst, yet again, as they had 3 years earlier. And then John clicks – “It is the Lord!”

Here it is, happening all over again.

Peter does not hesitate - but jumps in the water and makes his way to shore. He needs to be with Jesus.

On the beach Jesus has prepared a fire and some breakfast.

They eat together, and after the meal Jesus and Peter have their moment – The moment I guess Peter has been waiting for for quite some time now.

The fire may be a comfort, but it's also a reminder of the setting of his denial.

He is confronted with two memories. His beautiful calling, and his painful denial.

His feelings may have been similar to what they were back when this happened the first time when Jesus called him. Back then Peter had said "Go away from me Lord, I am a sinful man." Peter probably felt the same all over again. "I let you down. I sinned. I stuffed up. You probably shouldn't have me around."

What Jesus says to Peter is remarkable. What Jesus doesn't say is even more so.

He doesn't say, "I told you you would deny me didn't I? What happened Peter? – you coward! – you're meant to be the rock!"

Instead, he invites Peter to declare his love for him three times, one for each denial, not to make him feel bad, but to give Peter an opportunity to openly declare his love.

And then Jesus says to Peter – "feed my sheep."

Jesus way of saying to Peter, "You are still the right man for the job; I believe in you."

When Jesus calls Peter the first time by the lake, it is to be a fisherman of people. This time, as Jesus calls again Peter, it is to be a shepherd to Gods people.

Jesus talks about the death by which Peter would glorify God, and then offers again the same call – the call that is for each one of us. "Follow me." The call remains for Peter, even after all that had happened. Jesus still believes in him.

Within 7 weeks, Peter would go on to preach the sermon of his life in Jerusalem, bringing 3000 to faith in Jesus. They would form the nucleus of the early church.

He would stand before Caiaphas, and his preaching would shake the foundations of the Roman empire.

Finally Peter would be killed. Crucified upside down. Historical accounts claim that when being crucified Peter requested to be crucified upside down as he didn't feel worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord.

A simple, broken, bumbling man. God uses such people to change the world.

A man who understood grace.

Maybe that's why he had been appointed to be the leader of the church.

Because he understood grace. He understood what it meant to be broken, and still used by God. He understood unconditional love.

And this is what we need in leadership of our churches. Not the perfect, high and mighty ones who look down on others. But those who have experienced and know grace.

Whose voice are you hearing?

When you have messed up, when you have gone off the path.

What is God saying to you?

Coz I think that a lot of people confuse Gods voice for the voice of their parents or their teacher, or their minister, or an authority figure of some sort.

We imagine God in heaven with his arms crossed looking down at us with a frown and shaking his head, ready to smack us on the hand.

Many people today refuse to go home to God, because they believe that he is the angry father waiting to heap on guilt and shame.

Scripture however shows us a very different picture.

The God who runs to welcome home the disgraced son.

The God who understands us, who understands why we sin and keep doing so.

Maybe he's simply saying, "Do you love me?" - "Follow me"

What is a follower?

A follower is an everyday person. People like you and me.

Someone who steps out of the boat enthusiastically, but will often lose sight and start sinking.

Someone who makes rash comments, like "Shall we call down fire upon them Lord?"

Someone who sometimes misunderstands Jesus.

Someone who declares Jesus as Lord one day, and the next denies him.

Someone who, despite these things, God can use to do remarkable things.

We stumble our way through, but he works through us to do far more than we ever could imagine.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION – *Cherie Moran*

Loving God

How privileged we are to be able to call you “our God” – the God who loves us unconditionally and who cares about us wholeheartedly.

Lord we are called to pray for others. At the moment the prayer basket seems very full of people that we can be praying continually for. There are so many people Lord who are giving of themselves selflessly so that we might stay safe and strong.

We bring some of those people to mind in this moment:

We pray for our Prime Minister – Jacinda Ardern as she continues to do an amazing job of holding us safely, leading our country with dignity and confidence. Lord be ever close to her and to her family – Clarke Gayford, Neve, and the bubble that surrounds them at this challenging time. Keep them safe and well connected to each other in whatever way that needs to happen.

We pray for Ashley Bloomfield as he heads the team that needs to make clear decisions each day about what is needed most in the health sector on an hour by hour basis. Lord keep his energy levels and his concentration on maximum but enable him to find and use small moments to recharge his batteries with you. Pray too for his family bubble as they too make sacrifices on our behalf.

We think Lord of the essential workers who have worked tirelessly to keep our country safe in every way – those that function on the frontline of water and power supplies, those that keep us connected with internet and phone communications, those that care for the sick – especially those who are suffering from Covid-19. Lord it is easy to think we are winning this battle, but for those who are experiencing the ravaging symptoms of this virus they know only too well that the battle is not yet behind us. Keep us all mindful of this as we seek to honour the barriers that we face. Give us the grace to face our limitations with understanding.

We pray finally for the educators throughout our country as they prepare to unlock their school doors next week with all the unknown challenges that they might face. We Pray for parents that they will act with wisdom as they decide how they will manage their children next week when we move to Level 3. We pray for our precious children that they will feel safe and confident and that they will be protected from the anxiety that we as adults can so easily pass on to them.

Lord these are times we simply do not understand but the one thing we do understand is that you are with us on the journey and that we can trust you to be walking alongside of us and at times we know you will gently pick us up and carry us if that is what we are needing.

This we pray in Jesus name AMEN

Amen.

Thank you for joining together this morning in worship.

Let's close this time and sing, Just as I am.

CLOSING HYMN: Just as I am

Just as I am, without one plea
 But that thy blood was shed for me,
 And that Thou bidd'st me come to Thee,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come

Just as I am, poor, wretched, blind,
 Sight, riches, healing of the mind,
 Yea, all I need, in Thee to find,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come

Just as I am, Thou wilt receive,
 Wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
 Because Thy promise I believe,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

Just as I am, Thy love unknown
 Has broken every barrier down
 Now to be Thine, yea, Thine alone,
 O Lamb of God, I come, I come.

BLESSING

And now may the Lord bless you and keep you: The Lord make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you: The Lord lift up his countenance upon you, and give you peace.

Amen.