

**Howick Presbyterian Church Service of Worship**  
**Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2020 @ Home**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

*Gentle...yet powerful.*

***Lowly...yet almighty.***

*Shepherd...yet King.*

*In Your gentleness, guide us.*

***In Your power, strengthen us.***

*In Your lowliness, strip from us our selfish pride which only destroys us.*

***In Your greatness, lift us up that we might aspire to greater things.***

*As a shepherd, call us to be Your servants.*

***As a King, call us to be Your royal priesthood.***

*O God, who is our shepherd and our King;*

***O Christ, who was crucified and is now risen from the dead;***

*O Spirit, who comforts and empowers;*

***O great One in Three, Holy Trinity, this hour, set us free to worship. Amen.***

Let's worship God and sing:

**Hymn: HOLY HOLY HOLY**

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
 Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
 Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
 God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
 Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea,  
 Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
 Who wert and art, and evermore shalt be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,  
 Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;  
 Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,  
 Perfect in power, love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
 All Thy works shall praise Thy name in earth and sky and sea;  
 Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
 God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

**OPENING PRAYER**

God of grace,  
 You have made our minds,  
 So help us to know you.  
 You have made our hearts  
 So help us to love you.  
 You have made our voices,  
 So help us to sing your praise.  
 Fill us with your Holy Spirit,  
 So together we may celebrate your glory  
 And worship you in spirit and in truth,

Almighty and loving God,  
 You have given us eyes  
 To see the light that fills this room,  
 Give us eyes to see you in this place.  
 You have made us so we can feel  
 The morning wind on our faces,  
 Help us to sense your presence  
 As we come and worship you.

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**

Happy birthday to Gladys Nancekivell who turned 90 on Tuesday and to Eleanor Leadbetter had a birthday on Wednesday! Today we 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!

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.....

## **KIDS PRAYER**

Dear God,  
 We pray for children everywhere.  
 For homes that will be safe.  
 For people in their lives to look after them well.  
 For good learning and growing while doing school work at home.  
 For courage when they are afraid.  
 For things to smile about, laugh about and enjoy.  
 To learn how to work hard and focus, and also how to play well and rest well.  
 For good role models for them to look up to and learn from.  
 To grow up to be kind, responsible and wise grown ups.  
 To know always that You are with us, You love us, and we are special.  
 To live life like Jesus wants us to.  
 Amen.

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

## **SONG: 10,000 Reasons**

*Bless the Lord oh my soul  
 Oh my soul  
 Worship His Holy name  
 Sing like never before  
 Oh my soul  
 I'll worship Your Holy name*

The sun comes up  
 It's a new day dawning  
 It's time to sing Your song again  
 Whatever may pass  
 And whatever lies before me  
 Let me be singing  
 When the evening comes

You're rich in love  
 And You're slow to anger  
 Your name is great  
 And Your heart is kind  
 For all Your goodness  
 I will keep on singing  
 Ten thousand reasons  
 For my heart to find

And on that day  
 When my strength is failing  
 The end draws near  
 And my time has come  
 Still my soul will  
 Sing Your praise unending  
 Ten thousand years  
 And then forevermore  
 Forevermore

**READING:** Exodus 3:1-10 (NIV)

*Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up."*

*When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!"*

*And Moses said, "Here I am."*

*"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

*The LORD said, "I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt."*

**SERMON – Moses**

In the weeks leading up to Pentecost, I want to touch on three key characters in the old testament and how they point to Jesus.

Today we are starting with Moses.

A summary of the Exodus story. The people of Israel have been in Egypt since the time of Joseph. Around 400 years after the time of Joseph, the current Pharaoh fears the growing numbers of Israelites in Egypt, and so forces the people into slave labour. He also commands the murder of male infants. Pretty horrible time.

In order to protect baby Moses (unnamed at this time), his mother places him in a waterproof basket in the reeds of the river, with his sister Miriam watching at a distance. Pharaoh's daughter finds him, at which time Miriam jumps out and offers to find a Hebrew woman to nurse him (his own mother – very clever!), and then eventually he is returned to the princess and adopted by her. She gives him the name Moses, which means “ I drew him out of the water.”

Moses is raised in Pharaoh's household, though is also aware he is Hebrew, and eventually comes to understand the way his people are being oppressed. One day he murders an Egyptian soldier who is beating one of his people. Even still, his people don't trust him, and now Pharaoh is looking for him because of what he did. Moses flees Egypt to the land of Midian.

There he lives under Jethro, the Priest of Midian, and marries his daughter Zipporah. They have a son together, and Moses becomes a shepherd. At this time he must have thought that his life in Egypt was far behind him. The riches of his household, the oppression of his people, his crime...all a different world – a distant memory.

But back in Egypt his people are crying out to God for deliverance, and things are only just starting to get interesting for Moses.

One day as he is caring for sheep on the mountainside, God reveals Himself to Moses through a burning bush. Moses meets God, and is given an impossible task. To return to Egypt to demand the release of his people. He is given a staff, and the assistance of Aaron, and the promise that God will be with him.

This seems a rather impossible task, for so many reasons.

He has to face his adopted family, with his new family.

Confronting Pharaoh – who would most likely now be one of his adopted brothers.

Facing his Hebrew people, who aren't really fond of him.

Returning to the scene of his own crime.

A shepherd confronting the might of Egypt; one of the greatest Empires in the world. Asking the impossible. Armed with a staff.

You get a sense things are going to get messy.

Moses and Aaron stand before Pharaoh. “Let my people go.” Pharaoh questions this God, and in return puts more cruel work on the Israelite slaves. Things are getting worse.

And so God sends the plagues, not only as a warning to Pharaoh, but to display God's true power over the false gods of Egypt. The great showdown between YHWH and the gods of Egypt begins.

The Nile to blood.

Frogs

Gnats

Flies  
 Death of livestock  
 Boils  
 Hail  
 Locusts  
 Darkness

The plagues contrast the power of the God of Israel with the Egyptian gods, invalidating them. This was judgment on specific gods associated with the Nile, fertility and natural phenomena.

All the gods of Egypt would be judged through the tenth and final plague: Exodus 12:12 *"On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals, and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD."*

The Israelites are instructed to wipe the blood of a spotless lamb across their doorposts so that the Angel of Death would "pass over" their home.

And so in this final act of judgement, as Pharaoh's own son passes away, he finally lets the people go, and the impossible dream is coming to pass. The people are freed from slavery through the power of God through Moses.

As the people leave Egypt, Pharaoh decides to pursue them to destroy them, and pushes them to the Red Sea. But God has not finished doing impossible things, and as Moses raises his staff in this most famous moment, the sea's part and the people safely cross to the other side. In the final act of judgement upon the evil of Egypt, the army is washed away.

The impossible dream is accomplished, though there will be more to the story with the journey to Sinai, and then wilderness wanderings to the Promised Land.

But God does it – though Moses back at the burning bush couldn't get his head around it – God uses people to help achieve his purposes, even when they seem impossible.

Moses goes on to be the greatest leader of Israel – the giver of the Law of God. He is seen as a mediator between God and the people.

However, Moses also foreshadows Jesus in his role as a law-giver, as a mediator between God and his people and as a prophet who declared the will of God. Jesus brought to perfection the work begun through Moses.

The New Testament writers want to emphasise that Jesus is even greater than Moses, and that Jesus' life, ministry and teaching fulfil the work of Moses.

Jesus is placed up a mountain where he delivers his famous Sermon on the Mount. This is supposed to connect the Jewish reader with Moses – up a mountain, giving the law. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives his interpretation of the Law, not to abolish it, but to fulfil it.

Earlier in the year we look at the Transfiguration of Jesus; a moment where Jesus' identity and mission is affirmed by God on a mountaintop in the company of Elijah and Moses.

Finally, the image of Jesus of as the new Moses figure is at it's most powerful in the Easter story.

It is no coincidence that the saving work of Jesus coincides with the celebration of Passover. At this festival, the people remembered the way that God saved them from captivity in Egypt, through the blood of the lamb upon their doorposts, and through Moses leadership.

Jesus' saving work is understood through this same lens. It is his blood which saves the people from death, and it is he who leads people from slavery to sin and death to freedom.

Jesus too seems to be given this impossible task – to come back to life again. However, in the power of God all things are possible.

Also, the symbol of seemingly ordinary things comes back here again. A bush on a mountainside, a shepherd with a tainted past.

In Jesus, God becomes an ordinary human being – not of noble birth – but to a poor family in a desperate time.

God is using what seem to us to be ordinary things, and people – bushes on a hillside, the poor, the criminals, and through that world, he is changing all the world.

So may you never think little of yourself – for God believes in you and that you can do great things.

Not only that, the story of Moses reminds us that time and time again, God will work through people, to help those who cry out for help.

This is why we don't just pray, and then leave it all up to God. We don't pray – *“O God, just make those homeless people's lives all better.”* Instead we should pray, *“God, would you send the right people to help them – and give me the courage and strength to go if its me you choose.”*

If God puts an impossible task or dream before you – do not be afraid – for you are in the company of giants who have been given such tasks.

Our God can do the impossible through you.

Let us pray.

## **BREAD AND WINE**

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

O God our Healer, show your compassion for the whole human family that is in turmoil and burdened with illness and with fear. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Hold in your gentle embrace all who have died and may die this day. Comfort their loved ones in their despair. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Grant us your spirit of love and self-discipline so that we may come together, working to control and eliminate the coronavirus. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Make us vigilant, attentive, and proactive in the eradication of all diseases that create suffering and often result in death for many people. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Heal our self-centeredness and indifference that makes us worry only when the virus threatens us. Open ways beyond timidity and fear that too easily ignore our neighbour. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Strengthen and encourage those in public health services and in the medical profession: caregivers, nurses, attendants, doctors, all who commit themselves to caring for the sick and their families. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Inspire, give insight and hope to all researchers focused on developing a vaccine. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Sustain all workers and business owners who suffer loss of livelihood due to shut-downs, quarantines, closed borders, and other restrictions... protect and guard all those who must travel. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Guide the leaders of the nations that they speak the truth, halt the spread of misinformation and act with justice so that all your family may know healing. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Heal our world, heal our bodies, strengthen our hearts and our minds, and in the midst of turmoil, give us hope and peace. Hear our cry, O God, **Listen to our prayer.**

Remember all your family, the entire human race, and all your creation, in your love. **Amen!**

Thank you for joining together this morning in worship.

Let's close this time and sing, Be Thou my vision

### **CLOSING HYMN: Be Thou my vision**

Be Thou my Vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art  
Thou my best Thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, and Thou my true Word;  
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;  
Thou in me dwelling, and I with Thee one.



Be Thou my battle Shield, Sword for the fight;  
Be Thou my Dignity, Thou my Delight;  
Thou my soul's Shelter, Thou my high Tower:  
Raise Thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.

Riches I heed not, nor man's empty praise,  
Thou mine Inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,  
High King of Heaven, my Treasure Thou art.

High King of Heaven, my victory won,  
May I reach Heaven's joys, O bright Heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my Vision, O Ruler of all.

**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.**