



Westmead Uniting
A Congregation of Parramatta
Mission

Pentecost 6A

Sunday 19th July 2020

BENEDICTION

May God bless you in your going out.

May God bless you in your coming in.

In your sleep and in your waking may you know that God is with you and calls you to share God's love with others.

WELCOME

As Covid 19 continues we continue our worship of God knowing that even when doors are closed and people's lives are disrupted, God welcomes us all.

CALL TO WORSHIP

God knows us inside and out, through and through.
You search us out and lay your hand upon us.

God knows what we are going to say even before we speak.

We praise you, O God, for this wonderful knowledge

The scriptures tell us that whoever we are and wherever we go, God is always with us. So let us come and worship God.

SONG **TiS 130 We plough the fields**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZWHMZsf-Ano> words and music

We plough the fields and scatter
the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand;
he sends the cold in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine,
and soft refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
then thank the Lord, O thank the Lord
for such abounding love.*

We glorify the maker
of everything that is,
who gives to us to care for
the earth, the air, the seas,
who wills that all the peoples
might have their daily bread,
that we might share our plenty
as channels of God's love.

We thank you, gracious giver
of all things bright and good,
the seed-time and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food.
Help us in our thanksgiving
to use your gifts with care,
to serve as friends and neighbours
your children everywhere.

Words Composite version based on Matthias Claudius/Music attrib to Joahanna Abraham Peter Schulz C.C.L.I. No. 237097

SONG **TiS 217 Love divine (with extra verse)**

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hmfqe_8SEI words and music

1. Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven, to earth come down,
fix in us your humble dwelling,
all your faithful mercies crown:
Jesus, you are all compassion,
pure unbounded love you are;
visit us with your salvation,
enter every trembling heart.
2. Breathe, O breathe, Thy loving spirit
Into every troubled breast
Let us all in Thee inherit
Let us find thy promised rest
Take away the love of sinning
Alpha and Omega be
End of faith, as its beginning
Sets our hearts at liberty
3. Come, almighty to deliver,
let us all thy grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
never more your temples leave:
You we would be always blessing,
serve you as your hosts above,
pray, and praise you, without ceasing,
glory in your perfect love.
4. Finish then your new creation,
pure and spotless let us be,
let us see your great salvation,
perfectly restored in thee:
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love and praise.

Words (adapted) Charles Wesley/Music Rowland Huw Prichard C.C.L.I. No. 237097

For our own witness.

God of both our neighbours and our enemies, assist us to be a help, not a hindrance, to them. May our quiet faith steady the wavering, may our sturdy hope encourage the faint-hearted, and our sincere compassion soften those who appear heartless. Through Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Amen

Prayers adapted from Selections from 'Brief Prayers for Australians' Vo. 2 © B D Prewer & Open Book Publishers

OFFERING

With all of our gifts, even with our own life, we offer them to you. May you bless us always, as you have blessed others. May we seek to be merciful to others as you have been merciful to us. And may we share the good news that is ours in Jesus Christ in whose name we pray, Amen.

PASSING OF THE PEACE

May the peace of the Lord be with you
And also with you

PRAYER

Most loving God, you are the God of Creation, and of all people. You know the smallest detail in our lives, and the largest challenges we will face. You are the one who is both Creator and Sustainer of us and all things and we bring you our praise.

You are the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the God of Sarah, Rebekkah and Rachel. And you are the God of all of us.

On this day we are reminded of the goodness that you bring. Yet we are also reminded of the darkness that comes to all of us in life.

Like good seed and bad seed sown together in the same paddock we hold both good and bad in our hearts and lives. We confess you as Lord,
yet the very same tongue speaks ill of others.

We worship you as our God,
Yet we spend more time on the other gods in our lives.

We say you are the way, the truth and the life,
Yet we follow our own way, make up our own truth and deny life.

We need you so much to help us turn our back on the things which cause harm, to others, to ourselves and to our relationship with you.
Please forgive us and help us

So in this time and place we turn to you, O God, trusting that you and you alone can help us be the people we so desire to be.
Change our hearts, bend our wills and guide our steps.

In the most wonderful name of Jesus, our Lord and our Saviour,
Amen.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

God comes to us as a Redeemer. The one who brings us back to life. Hear then the words of Jesus the Redeemer, Your sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

READINGS

Genesis 28: 10-19

¹⁰ Jacob left Beersheba and set out for Harran. ¹¹ When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night because the sun had set. Taking one of the stones there, he put it under his head and lay down to sleep. ¹² He had a dream in which he saw a stairway resting on the earth, with its top reaching to heaven, and the angels of God were ascending and descending on it. ¹³ There above it stood the LORD, and he said: "I am the LORD, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying. ¹⁴ Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. All peoples on earth will be blessed through you and your offspring. ¹⁵ I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go, and I will bring you back to this land. I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you."

¹⁶ When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it." ¹⁷ He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

¹⁸ Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. ¹⁹ He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

This is God's word,

Let us give thanks to God

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

The needs of the world are too many and large for us. But not for God.

Let us pray.

For our nation.

Creator of the universe, at night the sign of the Cross rises and sets over our land. Grant that the hour may come when the Man of the Cross will be welcomed into every heart, and into every street, office, school, court and parliament. May the love of Christ flourish and His values transform our land.

For the homeless.

God of the "Son of Man who had nowhere to lay his head," please be with all who will sleep outdoors tonight in the cold. Bless the efforts of those agencies who try to help them. Please make us more determined to build a society and world where everyone who wants shelter can obtain it. Help us to be more alert to the ways we can make a difference and let us be willing to not only pray but to act when we can.

For aboriginal communities.

We pray, Holy Friend, that you will help our nation to deal wisely and justly and compassionately with the indigenous people of this land. We pray with deep yearning for that wonderful tomorrow when aboriginal citizens will be largely numbered among our pastors and theologians, our scientists, prime ministers, high court judges, and among our teachers, guides and dearest counsellors.

For those who suffer.

Immortal Love, rest your suffering children on pillows of Divine compassion, and with fingers of supreme tenderness dislodge the seeds of disease, illness and injury. In daylight hours encircle them with human kindness, and in the long night hours surround them with that holy warmth of your Spirit which nothing can deny.

SONG **Nearer my God to Thee**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rwLI5nY5WPI> words and music

1. Nearer, my God, to thee, Nearer to thee!
 E'en though it be a cross that raiseth me.
 Still all my song shall be nearer, my God, to thee,
 Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
2. Though like the wanderer, the sun gone down,
 Darkness be over me, my rest a stone,
 Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God, to thee,
 Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
3. There let the way appear, steps unto heav'n;
 All that thou sendest me, in mercy giv'n;
 Angels to beckon me nearer, my God, to thee,
 Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
4. Then with my waking thoughts bright with thy praise,
 Out of my stony griefs Bethel I'll raise;
 So by my woes to be nearer, my God, to thee,
 Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!
5. Or if, on joyful wing cleaving the sky,
 Sun, moon, and stars forgot, upward I fly,
 Still all my song shall be nearer, my God, to thee,
 Nearer, my God, to thee, nearer to thee!

Sarah F Adams C.C.L.I. No. 237097

STORY **The Gathering**

Sometimes we forget. We forget the things that we want to remember, and we remember the things we do not want to. Yet when we are together, there is more we can remember- and in this we can celebrate.

A woman and her husband had been people of faith for countless years. So many years they had gathered at the church with others- to worship God and to join with each other as a family of faith. Children had been brought for baptism, couples had been married and others had come and gone in the gathering space.

The couple's family had grown and the years had passed yet when they came to church they knew they belonged. There were times when they couldn't be there - when they were away or when one of them was sick, but they always came back. It was a place of welcome and a place of meaning.

Yet, as the onset of dementia crept up on one of them, they still came to worship. One day the one with dementia forgot why they were there, even forgetting the core basis of faith. Even though they could not remember, the community gathered around them. They could and would remember, and together they would carry the memories of faith, and grow new memories for others to hold. Together, as they gathered around the communion table, they ate and drank as a family, knowing that no matter what happens - God was with them and they would always be held together - even though people came and went - they were part of the story of the gathering.

Just like Jacob, standing in a place where heaven and earth met, cared for by angels, we also stand together - no matter where we are, and we are cared for in the word, in the prayer and in the sharing of a meal.

Today in our worship we are not all together in one place, but we are gathered in who we are and where we are. So, we come together in different ways and in different places to bring memories and create new memories.

So let us, as we are able, join together in a meal. As we gather, even separate, we eat and drink the food that is in our own homes- just as Jesus shared a meal with his friends. And we trust that even in this strange time of Covid, God's Spirit unites us all.

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right that we should always give thanks to you, O God for making your love evident since the very beginning of time when you spoke the word which brought the world into being.

We give thanks that you are not a distant God,
But one prepared to respond to the cries of those
seeking refuge and strength in times of trouble.
You eased their fears by speaking words
of hope and justice to them through the prophets.

You communicated your love anew
by entering our history in the person of Jesus Christ.
He spoke words of healing and wholeness and love;
love - which like yours - is unending and unconditional.
And so, with all the company of heaven and earth
we rejoice before you and praise your holy name saying:

***Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.***

⁴⁰ "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear.

This is God's word,

Let us give thanks to God

SERMON 'Stairway to heaven'



READING

Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43

²⁴ Jesus told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. ²⁵ But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. ²⁶ When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

²⁷ “The owner’s servants came to him and said, ‘Sir, didn’t you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?’

²⁸ “‘An enemy did this,’ he replied.

“The servants asked him, ‘Do you want us to go and pull them up?’

²⁹ “‘No,’ he answered, ‘because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. ³⁰ Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.’”

³⁶ Then he left the crowd and went into the house. His disciples came to him and said, “Explain to us the parable of the weeds in the field.”

³⁷ He answered, “The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels.

And so, O God, we give thanks that you gave your Son Jesus Christ, to be for us the way, the truth, and the life. At his baptism in the Jordan your Spirit came upon him declaring him to be your beloved Son. With your Spirit within him he resisted temptation; proclaiming justice to all peoples, good news to the poor, release to the captives, sight for the blind, and liberty for those who are oppressed.

He emptied himself of self-serving power, and filled with the empowering love of your Spirit, he loved people to the uttermost limits of love, giving himself over to death to defeat the power of evil.

On that never-to-be-forgotten night, the night of his betrayal, as he sat at the table with his friends, he took bread, gave you thanks, broke it, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Take, eat, this is my body which is given for you.” When supper was over, he took the cup, gave you thanks, gave it to his disciples, and said: “Drink from this all of you; this is my blood, poured out for you and for all, for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me.”

On that never-to-be-forgotten day when you raised him from the dead, he was recognised by his disciples in the breaking of the bread, and in the power of your Holy Spirit your people have continued in the breaking of the bread and in prayer. When we eat this bread and drink from this cup we experience anew the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ .

Remembering his death and resurrection, and his promise to be with us always, we pray that you will send the power of your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts, blessing this sharing of bread and wine, Christ’s life in us. Send us as your witnesses into all the world, empowered by your Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord in whose name we are bold to pray

***Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who sin against us.***

***And lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For yours is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
Forever and ever, Amen.***

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The bread we break is a sharing in the body of Christ.
The cup we take is a sharing in the blood of Christ.
The gifts of God for the people of God

THE DISTRIBUTION

Please take what has been broken and eat.
Please take what has been poured and drink.
In this food and drink, Christ is with you.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Gracious God, we praise, worship and adore you for the food received at your table. You have sent your Holy Spirit among us, to make our eating and drinking here a memorial of our Lord Jesus Christ. We go from here, strengthened, refreshed, and empowered by your Spirit to make our living and working, our loving and doing and thinking, a true and joyful memorial of him. We look to that day when, with the great company of witnesses that surround us, we may eat and drink and be glad with him in the glory of your kingdom. This we pray in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SONG Blessed assurance

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDeiy9-t2GE> words and music

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels, descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.
Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love

Words Frances J Crosby/Music LicenSing No. 604575 / C.C.L.I. No. 237097