

Tamworth City Uniting Church

Worship for Sunday 7th June 2020

TRINITY SUNDAY



Acknowledgement of Country

As you enter this time of worship please acknowledge the custodianship of this land by the Kamilaroi peoples - the traditional owners of this land and pay respect to their elders – past, present and emerging.

Call to Worship

In mystery and grandeur
we see the face of God
in earthiness and the ordinary
we know the love of Christ.

In heights and depths
and life and death:
the spirit of God
is moving among us.

Let us praise God.

Song *Praise with joy*

Praise with joy the world's Creator, God of justice, love and peace,
source and end of human knowledge, force of greatness without cease.
Celebrate the Maker's glory, power to rescue and release.

Praise the Son who feeds the hungry, frees the captive, finds the lost,
heals the sick, upsets religion, fearless both of fate and cost.
Celebrate Christ's constant presence – Friend and Stranger, Guest and Host.

Praise the Spirit sent among us, liberating truth from pride,
forging bonds where race or gender, age or nation dare divide.
Celebrate the Spirit's treasure – foolishness none dare deride.

Praise the Maker, Son and Spirit, one God in community,
calling Christians to embody oneness and diversity.
Thus the world shall yet believe, when shown Christ's vibrant unity.

TiS 179 John L Bell and Graham Maule. Copied under CCLI Worship No. 604439

A Meditation *Holy Love, Beginning and End*

Holy Love, beginning and end, beyond all names:
giver of food and drink, clothing and warmth, love and hope,
life in all its goodness –
We praise and adore you.

Jesus Christ, Wisdom and Word:
lover of outcasts, friend of the poor, one of us, yet one with God,
crucified and risen, life in the midst of death -
We praise and adore you.

Holy Spirit, storm and breath:
building bridges, breaking chains, waking the oppressed, making us one,
unseen and unexpected, untameable energy of life –
We praise and adore you.

Holy Trinity, forever one, whose nature is community;
sun-bounded dance of love:
in whom we love, and grow, and know our neighbour,
life in all its fullness, making all things new –
We praise and adore you.

Prayers of Confession

God, creator of all the wonders which make up this world...
You made the world – its inhabitants, flora and fauna to live in community.
Forgive us for treating our part of the world as a commodity to be used rather than a gift to be
cherished. Forgive our failure to care for and protect this lovely land, its oceans, rivers and
lakes, and the air that we breathe each day.

(silent confession)

God, bearer of our humanity in Jesus Christ...
forgive us when we fail to live out Jesus' commandment to love one another as he loves us.
When we judge another person by the colour of their skin, by their possessions or their
achievements, rather than accepting them as they are - as we all are - persons loved and
accepted by you.

Forgive us when we fail to build up the communities of which we are part: are our families,
our church, and the wider community.

(silent confession)

God, giver of the Holy Spirit which lead sand guides us into all truth ...
forgive us when we betray the truth of the gospel through our lack of integrity and our abuse
of ethical and moral principles .

(silent confession)

God, Creator, Redeemer, Life-giving Spirit, fill us anew with your creative power that we
may be reborn in your image, glorifying you in and through who we are and what we do and
say in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Song *Come as you are*

‘Come as you are: that’s how I want you.
Come as you are; feel quite at home,
close to my heart, loved and forgiven.
Come as you are: why stand alone?’

‘No need to fear, love sets no limits;
no need to fear, love never ends;
don’t run away shamed and disheartened,
rest in my love, trust me again.

‘I came to call sinners, not just the righteous;
I came to bring peace, not to condemn.
Each time you fail to live by my promise,
why do you think I’d love you the less?’

‘Come as you are: that’s how I love you;
come as you are, trust me again.
Nothing can change the love that I bear you;
All will be well, just come as you are.’

TiS 693 Deidre Brown. Copied under CCLI Worship Licence No. 604439

Psalm 8

O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.
Out of the mouths of babes and infants you have founded a bulwark because
of your foes, to silence the enemy and the avenger.
When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;
what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.
You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,
all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.
O Lord, our Sovereign,
How majestic is your name in all the earth!

The Gospel *Matthew 28:16-20*

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority on heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age.'

Message

Our reading from Matthew includes words that have been the impetus for generations of Christians in preaching the message of God's love and God's kingdom: 'Go therefore and make disciples of all the Gentiles'. And they are words which have echoed down through the centuries – calling communities of faith to baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. If you have been baptized – your baptism could be said to be a direct result of these words of Jesus, spoken over two thousand years ago.

Let's start with a bit of an introduction to our passage.

The climactic appearance of the risen Jesus to the eleven disciples in Galilee, is found only in Matthew's Gospel and draws together major themes of his gospel.

In our passage for today Jesus, whose story has been told throughout the gospel, appears as the risen Lord who is worthy to be approached in an attitude of homage or worship.

Jesus, whose teaching ministry has been emphasised by Matthew, commissions his disciples to carry on his teaching mission. A mission that wasn't about beliefs, but one that was about a way of being. Jesus taught what it was to live a kingdom life of compassion, of accountability, of servanthood, of justice and of love.

Christological motifs that have been developed over the course of the gospel, come to maturity in our passage:

the Son of Man affirms that all authority has been given to him, the Son of God directs that the Gentiles be baptized in his name, and Emmanuel – God with us, promises to be with his followers until the end of the present age.

The theme of discipleship, which has been of such importance throughout the gospel, also reaches a maturity here. At times throughout the gospel, the disciples have been characterized as showing 'little faith'. Here, whilst initially hesitant about recognizing their risen Lord, they are given a commission from Jesus. A commission that authorizes them to continue his work – not only to the Jews, but to the Gentiles - those people who were non-Jews. This commission meant they were to look outside their mainly Jewish-Christian group to seek new members from non-Jewish communities. It may well have marked the beginning of a new chapter in the history of the community for whom Matthew was writing.

This is a well-known and important passage. It was important for Matthew's listeners and readers, but what does it have to say to us – Jesus' 21st century disciples.

As we think about what it might be saying to us, I want us to think about the question, 'What does it mean to make disciples?'

I remember when I first made a conscious decision to commit my life to Jesus that I started reading a number of books about people who had given their life in service to God by undertaking missionary work. There were a couple of books about people going to the indigenous communities in the Amazon to convert them to Christianity, and I read and re-read them avidly. The stories - which included sacrifice, people living in danger of their lives and the telling of the Christian story in places where it had never been preached, were enthralling, and they fired me up to perhaps consider doing something like this. In my naivety, this was what going to the ends of the earth and making disciples was all about. If we look at the history of colonization across the globe and of the ways many well-meaning Christians have taken this command of Jesus, we know what untold damage has often been done to indigenous cultures.

Prior to this, an approach that I had witnessed about making disciples was by a lay preacher, who preached in the church I grew up in. He threatened people with hell-fire and brimstone if they didn't repent and give their lives to God. In other words, become a disciple. Unlike the stories of those missionaries, this didn't do too much for me, but it was obviously his way of making disciples.

Of course neither of these examples is what lies at the heart of making disciples.

I want to give some suggestions about what I think the making of disciples is about. They are not exhaustive, nor are they in any order of importance. I encourage you to do your own reflecting and add to the list.

For me, making disciples is about enabling people to learn about Jesus in ways that suit their context. There is no 'one size fits all'.

Making disciples is about teaching of Jesus' love and compassion to others, by the way we live our lives and by teaching biblical stories in ways that reflect the latest biblical scholarship.

Making disciples is about walking with and alongside people – seeking to understand, building relationships and learning from them.

Making disciples is not about coercion. Rather, it is about freedom – the freedom of not trying to control someone, but of giving free reign to God's Spirit to move when and where it will.

Making disciples is about building a community of faith that is the embodiment of God's kingdom life – a kingdom exemplified and taught by Jesus:

A community where hospitality is evident. A hospitality that says, 'Whoever you are, wherever you come from, or whatever you have done in the past, you are welcome here.' A hospitality where people give of themselves in service to others. A hospitality that is generous and overflowing.

A community where love and compassion are abundant and judgmentalism has no place.

A community where God's life-giving, affirming and encouraging Spirit is evident.

A community where the forgiveness of God is evident in the relationships forged.

A community that prays – for each other, for the wider community of which it is part and for the world.

A community that has a commitment to caring for the creation of which it is a part.

A community that is a safe place - where people are encouraged to share their experiences of God and life without fear of being thought stupid or wrong.

A community that engages with, and learns from its wider community and the world, in ways that are life-giving and affirming.

A community that seeks justice for those who are pushed to the margins and which is not afraid to speak up and act when necessary.

A community that reflects the relational aspect of the Triune God - where there is no hierarchy, but rather an intertwining of different gifts and personalities which, when working together, seamlessly make a whole.

A community that knows how to celebrate, how to grieve and how to live life fully and abundantly.

These aspects of making disciples have at their very core the reconciling and transforming life, witness, death and resurrection of Jesus whom we follow.

If we are to be true to our calling then we are called to make disciples – just as he did.

And we have Jesus' promise that as we do this, he will be with us: 'And remember, I am with you always to the end of the age.'

Last week we celebrated Pentecost where Jesus' promise of his Spirit was realized within the lives of those first disciples. As we live out our calling to make disciples, may we too experience God's living Spirit within us – encouraging, equipping, teaching and leading us.

Statement of Faith

Holy God,
dwelling in spaces beyond the boundaries of our existence
and deep within us,
source of all light and life,
we believe in you.

Jesus Christ, Son of God,
living in our midst,
restoring to us the beauty of our humanness,
entering every reality of our experience,
one with us and one with God, in ultimate reconciliation,
we believe in you.

Holy Spirit,
moving power like breath of wind through life,
enabling, recreating, interpreting,
ever pointing to newness and hope,
we believe in you.

God in three revelations,
God in all time, God in all space,
we respond to you through the community of faith, the church,
in lives lived in the confidence of forgiveness,
and with the vision which flows from our belief in the resurrection,
which is now, and is yet to come. Amen.

Dorothy McRae McMahon, *Echoes of our Journey*, JBCE

Song *Father, Lord of all creation*

Father, Lord of all creation, ground of being, life and love;
height and depth beyond description only life in you can prove:
you are mortal life's dependence: thought, speech, sight are ours by grace;
yours is every hour's existence, sovereign Lord of time and space.

Jesus Christ, the man for others, we, your people, make our prayer:
let us love as sisters, brothers, all whose burdens we can share.
Where your name binds us together you, Lord Christ, will surely be;
where no selfishness can sever there your love we all may see.

Holy Spirit, rushing, burning, wind and flame of Pentecost
fill our hearts afresh with yearning to regain what we have lost.
May your love unite our action, nevermore to speak alone:
God, in us abolish faction, and through us your love make known.

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Prayers of the People

Contributed by Rob Duns

O Gracious and loving God
Join us together here today to worship you, to glorify you.
We pray that your Spirit be upon us.
We give thanks for the new life made possible for us; for the difference Jesus, our Saviour,
has made, and is making, in our lives.
We thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit .. and for the power possible to us to be the
people of the Spirit.
We pray for your Holy Spirit to come, be with us now, fill our hearts, kindle in us the fire of
your love, empowering us to be the people you want us to be.
Dear Lord come to us at this time and in this place
We pray that your presence can be felt here and elsewhere where needed.

Come to those in poverty and despair,
Come to those in fear and rage,
Come to those suffering abuse and violence,
Come to those too hurt to speak,
Too frightened to appear,
Too scared and without hope.
Come to those where anxiety, resentment, or pretense exists,
To those too weary to care,
To those too greedy to share,
To those indifferent to be neighbourly, caring.
In the world where suffering, despair and fear exists,
open a new way forward and a new beginning:

By your power, you give a future,
By your goodness, you give hope,
By your mercy, you make new.
So we bid you this day to come and give hope and birth anew.
Fill us with your presence and your guiding Spirit.
Reach into our ordinary lives, fill us with your presence.
Colour us with your guiding Spirit, to a life of trust and relationship with you.
Close off our doubts and our negativities
Let us be filled with your Spirit, to make a difference.
To our family, our church, place of work, our neighbourhood and our city.
Dear Lord hear our prayers. Amen

Song *Community of Christ*

Community of Christ, who make the cross your own,
live out your creed and risk your life for God alone:
the God who wears your face, to whom all worlds belong,
whose children are of every race and every song

Community of Christ, look past the Church's door
and see the refugee, the hungry, and the poor.
Take hands with the oppressed, the jobless in the street,
Take towel and water, that you wash your neighbour's feet.
Community of Christ, through whom the word must sound –
cry out for justice and for peace the whole world round:
disarm the powers that war and all that can destroy,
turn bombs to bread and tears of anguish into joy.

When menace melts away, so shall God's will be done,
the climate of the world be peace and Christ its Sun;
our currency be love and kindness our law,
our food and faith be shared as one for evermore.

TiS 473 Shirley E Murray. Copied under CCLI Worship Licence No. 604439

Blessing

God be the road on which you travel:
He the mountains on which you are tested and challenged
He the wells at which you find healing and peace.

Christ be the light by which you travel:
He the vision which informs and enlarges you
He the lodestar shining in your darkest nights.

The Spirit inspire you as you travel:
She the restlessness driving you onwards
She the stillness leading you to the heart of God.

The Trinity, the Three, go with you as you travel;
and may your journey begin, continue and end in them.

Amen!

Pat Bennett. From *Fire and Bread*, ed. Ruth Burgess, Wild Goose Publications.