

## HURC – MID-WEEK SERVICE – 22 JULY 2020

Led by Nigel Crisp

### Welcome

Behold we meet in person, face-to-face to worship God here in this familiar place.

I thought I should begin with the word ‘Behold’

- because this was something Bryn brought out in Sunday’s online worship,
- drawn from Jacob’s close encounter with God in the dream at Bethel.
- The staircase to heaven – the illustrative connection between heaven and earth.
- *“Behold I am with thee” God said “and will keep with thee in all places where ever thou goest.”*
- A promise for Jacob – a promise for us.

Jacob was feeling **dislocated** from God

- and that image of the stair case to heaven illustrated a line of communication to God.
- And as Bryn pointed out,
- for us “God’s ultimate line of communication [for us of the New Covenant] is Jesus.”

Indeed a key word in the thread / the throughline of Sunday’s reflection was dislocation

- or the confidence/knowledge that God is there in our feelings of dislocation
- (at least that is what I picked up).
- Dislocation
  - be it the world community and its politics,
  - be it Jacob’s situation,
  - be it situations in own living,
  - be it our worship unable meet together face to face,
  - be it times on our personal journey in this life and with Jesus.

Hopefully in my beholding

- I haven’t become too dislocated with the message Bryn was putting across.

Let us pray and then we will behold words of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians

## Prayer

Father God

We give thanks for the opportunity we have to reflect and celebrate this day.  
As we begin a journey to meet more widely face to face

- after these recent months of being physically apart.

May we be surrounded by a deep sense of your presence,

- the source and sustainer of all that exists.

As we spend time together may your Spirit of Wisdom inspire and challenge us.

Let us lay down all that burdens us,

Let us let go of all that pre-occupies us,

Let us sense that forgiveness and grace love and inspiration knowing and being known by your sacred presence that is the heart of the universe.

In the quiet of this time we reflect upon the ministry of Jesus, you with us and what it signifies for us now in this wonderful but troubled world.

Let us listen in the silence of this sacred time together.

May silence invigorate our questioning

May our faith be enhanced by our connection with others as even in our various separations at this time, we are bound together by care and affection.

Let us give thanks for the community in which God's Spirit is found and known.

In Jesus Name we pray, Amen

## Behold a Reading from 1 Thessalonians 5

*(These are instructions from Paul – key phrases have be floating on the screen as you arrived.)*

<sup>12</sup> We beg you, our friends, to pay proper respect to those who work among you, who guide and instruct you in the Christian life. <sup>13</sup> Treat them with the greatest respect and love because of the work they do. Be at peace among yourselves.

<sup>14</sup> We urge you, our friends, to warn the idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. <sup>15</sup> See that no one pays back wrong for wrong, but at all times make it your aim to do good to one another and to all people.

<sup>16</sup> Be joyful always, <sup>17</sup> **pray at all times [pray continually] [pray without ceasing]**, <sup>18</sup> be thankful in all circumstances. This is what God wants from you in your life in union with Christ Jesus.

<sup>19</sup> Do not restrain the Holy Spirit; <sup>20</sup> do not despise inspired messages. <sup>21</sup> Put all things to the test: keep what is good <sup>22</sup> and avoid every kind of evil.

<sup>23</sup> May the God who gives us peace make you holy in every way and keep your whole being—spirit, soul, and body—free from every fault at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>24</sup> He who calls you will do it, because he is faithful.

## Reflection

<Throughline: To find the God's gift of prayer in every foot step every action every thought we take on our journey of faith.>

Behold in these words from Paul is the word of God.

- For the folks at Salonika and for us who may at times feel dislocated in all sorts of ways, these are words intended to locate us back
- and are given to encourage us
- to ensure we are back on that journey with Jesus.

And in the short time we have let us look to those words in verse 17 - various translated

- pray at all times
- pray continually
- pray without ceasing

Which is about finding God's gift of prayer in every foot step, every action, every thought, we take on our journey of faith.

Indeed it's God's ultimate line of communication that is Jesus.

And yes prayer is about being in the quiet

- talking to God
- listening to God
- being silent with God
  - but it's also about being in prayer mode in what every we are doing
  - whether we are busy or idle
  - on the verge of frustration or just being relaxed
- whatever - God is there with us
- the line of communication is there and happening
- time of prayer is going on / continuing / not ceasing..

Prayer is a way of ordering our life.

Let me quote you some words I picked up from Pilgrim Uniting Church in Adelaide South Australia.

The New Testament speaks of prayer as something we can do “without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). This means that prayer must be more than just a few words addressed to God from time to time. It must be a way of ordering our lives – every breath, motivation, attitude, and action.

The words we speak in prayer are simply the “exercises” we do to learn to pray with our entire lives, and the essence of this “life-prayer” is to live from a place of trust.

Our requests for transformation of people and places that are suffering teach us our own God-given capacity for compassion.

Our cries of grief at the injustice in our world teach us to trust God’s reign of love and justice, and to trust our ability to live values and purposes of God’s reign in our own lives.

As we pray, we discover that God is not apart from us in some distant heaven, but rather that God is within us and among us – closer than breathing. As we pray we are reminded that we are connected to every person, every creature and every part of this world we share – we are all created and loved by God. As we pray we discover that our lives have a meaning and that we are able to make a contribution to the healing and saving of the cosmos by the way we live each day.

The gift of prayer is not that it enables us to escape the world’s suffering, but that it drives us toward one another in order to heal and embrace each other. As we allow prayer to change us like this we discover that we can trust God who created us for love, we can trust one another as we learn to love, and we can trust ourselves to grow in love.

When we refuse to settle for a world of distrust, we can instead choose to embrace the gift of prayer and find the courage to risk living from the trust it seeks to teach us.

Let us seek God’s gift of prayer in every foot step every action every thought we take on our journey of faith.

And now let us spend some time in quiet gentle prayer, listening to the rhythm of our breathing. Offering words of thankfulness, and seek a sense of connection with every person, every creator, and every part of this world we share.

<pause>

Breathe in the breath of God  
Breathe out your cares and concerns.

Breath in the love of God  
Breath out your doubts and despairs

Breath in the life of God

Breath out your fears and frustrations.

Sit quietly before the One who gives life and love to all creation

Sit in awe of the One who formed us in our mother's womb

Sit in peace surrounded by the One who fills every fibre of our being.

### **Prayers of Solidarity**

Let us continue in prayer together with our prayers for others.

Let us pray.

Father God,

We pray for ourselves,  
for struggles we face, the pressures we feel,  
and the burdens of our hearts,  
that we may touch your hope  
and renew our courage.

*We pray for our neighbours,  
for people exacerbated by lockdown,  
for people living with mental illness  
for people who are unwell,  
for people in hospital with covid and other illnesses  
and for health workers who care for them,  
for people confined to their homes and care homes  
and for all who are charged with their care.*

We pray for  
for all who face difficult decisions,  
for people who grieve the loss of a loved one,  
for all who live with loneliness.

*We pray for our country and our world,  
for leaders who are pressured and anxious.  
We pray for a spirit of cooperation  
and the avoidance of blame and criticism.*

We pray for people seeking asylum  
who long to find a home,  
for the oppressed people of the world,  
who seek healing and justice.

*We pray for our world,*

*for places of war and famine,  
for places where covid 19 is spreading without check,  
where resources are few and political leadership is failing.  
for people who work in unjust conditions  
for people who have enough and believe they have little.*

May seeds of care and justice, equality and peace,  
be sown in our lives,  
the lives of our neighbours,  
the life of our country,  
and the life of our world.

*Let us pray in silence for people and places known to us, where comfort, justice  
and healing are needed.*

Let's conclude our prayers by saying together the prayer Jesus taught his  
disciples:

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 the Power and the Glory  
for ever and ever  
Amen...

### **Final words & Blessing**

Let us go forth into the world  
in the knowledge that we are God's body,  
that hope for a new world is in the blood of our veins,  
that the struggle for justice is the beat to which our hearts respond,  
and that God's promise is the very stuff of which our bones are made.  
And may the love of God give us grace;  
the God in Christ give us mercy;  
and the Spirit lift up our hearts

Amen

(Some material and ideas from the ministry of Uniting Churches of Australia at  
Adelaide and Melbourne are acknowledged.)