

PENTECOST 2

6/6/21

CAVES BEACH

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are ready, O God; we wait for your blessing.

From the experiences of another week, we come to you.

We wait for your blessing.

From the twists and turns of friendship, we come to you.

We wait for your blessing.

From our encounters with temptation, we come to you.

We wait for your blessing.

From our efforts to follow Christ, we come to you.

We wait for your blessing.

And you will bless us, O God, in this our morning worship.

Opening Prayer discipleship Jesus: the Way of

We are strong, as disciples of Christ!

We gain strength as we learn and apply the teachings of Jesus.

We are compassionate, as disciples of Christ!

We look to those who confess the Way of Jesus, and who heal, and comfort, and listen.

We confront the powerful, as disciples of Christ!

We are not intimidated by position, influence, money, or threats.

We are faithful, as disciples of Christ!

We have a life of prayer; we seek to build up a faith community following the example of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN 459 In Christ there is no east or west

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpITJOShix0>

PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING & CONFESSION

Based on Psalm 138

Give thanks to God with your whole heart,

before all things, sing praises to God,

for God's love is steadfast

and God's faithfulness will never fail

When we call, God will answer

and strengthen our will and restore our soul.

All earthly realms will praise God,

when they have heard and understood the words of God.

They shall sing of God's ways and all that God has done

for great is the glory of God.

For though God reigns on high,

God doesn't disregard the lowly;

God is not distant from God's people;

Even when we walk in the midst of trouble,

God is with us

stretching out a hand,

to deliver and protect us.

God's purpose for us is to know and dwell in God's steadfast love,

a love that endures forever.

God will not forsake God's handiwork.

Perhaps we are never really ready for you, gracious God,
never really able to understand how you shook up the world
and upside-downed everyday expectations and ideas.

We confuse promises of an easy life

with those of an abundant and blessed life.

We allow the loudest voices to instruct us

on ethics and integrity and ignore those who

speak words of compassion and peace.

We buy the lie that money and status

is all we need to fix what we believe has gone wrong

and forget that kindness and goodness is your balm to what ails
the world

Forgive us for not looking your way

and seeking your wisdom above all else.

Forgive us for trusting in false promises, rather than having faith in your love.

Fill us with the Spirit of faith and hope and love.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

The love of God is always on offer to us, even though this is an idea that is at the edges of our understanding. Let God's mercy and grace fill your hearts with joy and grant you peace.

READINGS

· 2 Corinthians 4:13-5:1

But just as we have the same spirit of faith that is in accordance with scripture—"I believed, and so I spoke"—we also believe, and so we speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus, and will bring us with you into his presence. 15 Yes, everything is for your sake, so that grace, as it extends to more and more people, may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

16 So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. 17 For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, 18 because we look not at what can be seen but at what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal.

5 For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

· Mark 3:20-35

the crowd came together again, so that they could not even eat. 21 When his family heard it, they went out to restrain him, for people were saying, "He has gone out of his mind." 22 And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, "He has

Beelzebul, and by the ruler of the demons he casts out demons.” 23 And he called them to him, and spoke to them in parables, “How can Satan cast out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. 26 And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come. 27 But no one can enter a strong man’s house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man; then indeed the house can be plundered.

28 “Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven for their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; 29 but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin”— 30 for they had said, “He has an unclean spirit.”

31 Then his mother and his brothers came; and standing outside, they sent to him and called him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him; and they said to him, “Your mother and your brothers and sisters are outside, asking for you.” 33 And he replied, “Who are my mother and my brothers?” 34 And looking at those who sat around him, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother.”

HYMN 272 Come thou long expected Jesus

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEEed0uWnDGs&t=10s>

SERMON

I am not surprised that the passage that we just heard today causes a lot of confusion. It contains at least two very confronting statements which can unsettle people. There is also the issue of Jesus portraying himself as a burglar and if we get caught up in this then we are really in an interesting dynamic.

Firstly we have the image of Jesus who would normally be seen as having no limits to his forgiveness. After all he forgave a thief and murderer as he was dying on the cross. Now He tells us that there is in fact something for which there is no forgiveness.

There would probably not be anyone who preaches who has not shuddered when reflecting on this issue. They wonder about whether they have committed some sort of blasphemy which would bring down eternal damnation?

Secondly there is the image of Jesus as a massive supporter of family values publicly rebuking his own family and putting them in a place in the world below that of his followers. This is would possibly not be quite as shocking today as it used to be when people lived in close knit family societies in Jesus' times.

Today we have so many competing demands on our time and energy that we are far removed from the massive constraints which used to bind us together in close knit family based systems. The kin based social systems of first century society in the middle east were never broken or ignored. Now we often wonder whether there is any family loyalty any more.

Over the next few months we will be mainly concentrating on Mark's Gospel and it is the shortest of the Gospels. Mark's message is short, sharp and straight to the point. That also applies to today's reading.

We now need to flesh out these statements by putting them in context. This passage is at the start of today's reading and already Jesus is challenging societal norms. He has just called His twelve disciples and commenced His preaching and healed quite a few people as well as casting out the odd demon. This has already attracted the attention of the local authorities as He has not asked their permission and is not doing things according to their rules.

In this passage Jesus' family is concerned about Him as they thought that He may be under the influence of some demon Himself. In those times mental illness and demonic possession were seen as the same issue. This had caused his family to feel the need to come and whisk Him away so He could be taken home and 'kept out of harm's way.'

Mark has the habit of breaking away from one story to jump into another and then he hops back again. This is often confusing the casual reader. However as we look at the Gospel closer it becomes clear that he sees each story clarifying the other. In this passage we hear from the religious hierarchy before we have Jesus respond to His family's attempt to control Him.

Jesus clearly rejects the inference that His actions are under the influence of demons. He argues that He is under the influence of a force far more powerful than the most powerful demon called Beelzebub who was considered the prince of demons.

How often do we hear public references to demon possession in everyday conversations on the street? This sort of demeaning of people who don't fit with some sort of societal norm does still go on today. A few years ago in the AFL there was an indigenous round where the contribution of First Nation people to the AFL was recognised and celebrated. There is a similar practice in the NRL as well.

During one such game a few years ago Adam Goodes from the Sydney Swans briefly celebrated a fantastic goal by doing part of an Aboriginal War Dance. His actions seemed to set off the crowd and there was a lot of booing and also derogatory remarks from the commentators. It did not take long for all of the critics to come out and roundly condemn his actions.

This then began to be a common practice to try to unsettle him. Being proud of his heritage, Adam refused to be shamed out of this cultural celebration and in fact he continued to do it. This was brought out in a documentary about him and how the

ongoing treatment of him lead him to eventually walk away from that sport.

It seems that people were happy to acknowledge the contribution that First Nation players made to sport here in Australia but there was some sort of expectation that these people should feel grateful for their opportunities and not make any display celebrating that culture. How often have we seen a soccer player or a cricket player make the sign of the cross without any adverse comments from those watching?

As in the case of Adam Goodes, and with Jesus and His ministry, there seems to be some sort of over-riding community expectation that such an 'upstart' should just buckle under and do only what 'they' expect. Some people feel that their culture should be dominant and there is no room for other sorts of cultural expression. Therefore we denigrate and boo such people, trying to make them conform to predominant societal norm. For too long time we have tended to demonise those who we see as different.

On the other hand we all know the angst which occurred when the government first started to remove the citizenship of people who chose to link with terrorist organisations and deport them. The approach here being different in that these people had chosen to reject completely our culture and values wanting to completely destroy our society for some violent quasi religious ideals. In this situation we are removing from them the idea that they are part of 'us' and their demands that they alone have the 'answers.'

The deciding factor here is whether treat others with respect. With someone like Adam Goodes we have to be able to reflect and learn that we are seeking to only remove those who would damage our society rather than those who simply seek to expand the breadth of society to include things like First Nation culture.

In this passage we come across Jesus being labelled as demonic so he simply responds with the statement: “How can Satan cast out Satan?” Drawing on the ancient hierarchy model Jesus asks how any kingdom can survive when it is in conflict with itself.

We could equally cast our minds back to the number of nations in recent times which have descended into turmoil when they are deeply divided. It is only when a nation acknowledges the differences within and builds on that diversity that it can grow and survive. Satan could not survive if he was in conflict with himself.

It is all too easy here to get diverted from the central issue. Jesus is not talking in ignorance about Satan being divided. Let’s hear the whole verse again: “If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come.” Jesus is simply saying that as we remove our focus from Satan to God we remove that crushing power.

So often we can get caught up in debates about satanic powers and labelling others who might be a bit different accordingly. The word Satan actually means the ‘accuser.’ The tendency of labelling others with such a word is in itself demonic. We become the ‘accuser!’

Society all too often tries to ‘protect’ itself from those who are different but not really a threat by labelling them in a derogatory way. When we label them as evil ones and demand that they be rejected and forced to conform we are in fact taking part in a demonic process. What is actually coming out is the evil within our own hearts and that needs to be brought out into the open so that God’s light can shine upon it so that there can be healing and forgiveness.

The demonic actions leave us with a bitterly divided society which can so easily spiral into violence and chaos. We would then be living in a society which is bitterly divided into the ‘good’ and the ‘bad,’ the ‘clean’ and the ‘unclean,’ the ‘sinner’ and the

‘saint.’ As those divisions trickle down deeper and deeper into our society the response of those rejected or alienated becomes more violent and intractable. Like Jesus said; “If Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come.”

For so long the way that people addressed differences was to build a wall of distrust and hatred. There was the tendency to separate ourselves from those we suspected of being different. The rationale being that the division was the only way to survive.

In Mark’s Gospel they rejected Jesus and accused Him of being demonic precisely because He was challenging the old divide and conquer concept.

Jesus sees a different way. We are all part of humanity and parts of the same group. Instead of looking at ourselves in opposition to others He opens up the doorway to love and forgiveness which can accommodate everyone. In God’s Kingdom there are no outsiders and no insiders. We are all on the welcome guest list. We are all welcomed with generous love and mercy.

Of course this does tend to offend those who set themselves up as to sole experts on what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. It was no wonder that they saw Jesus as a threat and tried to brand Him as demonic.

We can see the evidence here why rejection of God’s Kingdom is unforgivable. By rejecting the forgiveness of the Kingdom they are in fact rejecting the very act of ‘forgiveness’ itself.

Now we are getting there. When we hear Jesus refer to rejection by God we tend to jump to the conclusion that these people can never have forgiveness when in fact what is being revealed by Jesus is that He is simply rejecting the act of not forgiving. Those who reject the act of forgiveness cannot

simultaneously be forgiven. For example, if I reject food when it is offered I will eventually starve to death.

So now we turn back to the other part of this passage, Jesus' family. When they arrived outside the house where He is teaching we can now see where the Gospel writer is taking us. We hear: "Who are my mother and my brothers? Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother." While this might be a shock to second century people hearing from Mark it is in fact bringing home a very important point.

Jesus is refusing to become any part of the old way of dividing and conquering. It is not a matter of an arbitrary view of the 'good' and the 'bad.' His ties to those around Him are more than just family bonds.

There is no inner group and no place to put 'outsiders.' His approach is so unprecedented in that His anti-family approach is seen as demonic. However we are learning that when we blindly give our loyalty to one group at the expense of others we are simply fanning the coals of the fires of hatred and fear. Jesus message was simply that everyone was His sister and brother and mother. In this process there is healing for the deepest of wounds and mercy reigns.

As we come to celebrate the sacrament of communion shortly let us resist the tendency to only bless those who we see as acceptable and open our hearts to all of God's creation. The only things which Jesus calls on us to reject is the act of rejection and exclusion.

He has shone the light of truth on our deeply entrenched culture of Satan casting out Satan, and called us all into one new worldwide family in which all of us, as forgiven and healed sinners, are gathered as one another's brothers and sisters and mothers for the glory of God and the life of the world.

HYMN 650 Brother, sister, let me serve you

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEEed0uWnDGs&t=10s>

PRAYERS FOR THE OFFERING

Spirit of love,

let the goodwill with which we give these gifts remain with them as they make their way to places and people that will receive them. May they be a force for good.

PRAYER OF THE PEOPLE

We pray for and give thanks

for those who sustain and strengthen us on our journey of faith:

Community members who concern themselves with our welfare and look out for our wellbeing.

Teachers, preachers and prophets who study God's word

and seek to shine light on it, so our understanding of God's will for us,

and the world, increases in clarity and depth.

Peace makers and those who stand up and speak out

when they see oppression and injustice.

Those who pray and calmly seek relationship with God in contemplation.

Those who create music so we have songs of praise to sing,

those who find words describe God's goodness so we have prayers to pray

and can voice our gratitude to God in our worship.

Those who remind us of the joy of life and the beauty of creation.

Those who remain faithful and model to us the value of longstanding devotion.

Good God,

Be with us as we pray.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours

now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 690 Beauty for brokenness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JEEed0uWnDGs&t=10s>

COMMUNION

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.

Thanks and praise, glory and honour are rightly yours,
our Lord and our God,
for you alone are worthy.

In time beyond our dreaming
you brought forth light out of darkness,
and in the love of Christ your Son
you set man and women at the heart of your creation.

By the gift of the Spirit
you bring to completion the work of your Son

You lead us in truth
and give us power to proclaim the gospel to the whole world.

And so we praise you with the faithful of every time and place,
joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation in the
eternal hymn:

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.***

We thank you that you called a covenant people
to be a light to the nations.

Through Moses you taught us to love your law,
and in the prophets you cried out for justice.

In the fullness of your mercy
you became one with us in Jesus Christ,
who gave himself up for us on the cross.

You make us alive together with him,
that we may rejoice in his presence
and share his peace.

By water and the Spirit
you open the kingdom to all who believe,
and welcome us to your table:

for by grace we are saved, through faith.

We bless you, Lord God, king of the universe,
through our Lord Jesus Christ,

who on the night of his betrayal

took bread,

gave thanks,

broke it

and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take this and eat it.

This is my body given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

In the same way, after supper,

he took the cup,

gave thanks,

and gave it to them, saying:

Drink from this, all of you.

This is my blood of the new covenant

poured out for you and for everyone

for the forgiveness of sins.

Do this, whenever you drink it,

for the remembrance of me.

With this bread and this cup

we do as our Saviour commands:

we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.

Pour out the Holy Spirit on us

and on these gifts of bread and wine,

that they may be for us the body and blood of Christ.

Make us one with him,

one with each other,

and one in ministry in the world,
until at last we feast with him in the kingdom.
Through your Son, Jesus Christ,
in your holy church,
all honour and glory is yours, Father almighty,
now and for ever.

Amen.

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.

Receive this holy sacrament
of the body and blood of Christ,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

DISTRIBUTION

PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

Creator of all,
We give you thanks and praise
That when we were still far off
You met us in your Son and brought us home.
Dying and living, he declared your love,

Gave us grace, and opened the gate of glory.
May we who share Christ's body live his risen life;
We who drink his cup bring life to others;
We whom the Spirit lights give life to the world.
Anchor in us the hope that we have grasped;
So we and all your children may be free,
And the whole earth live to praise your name;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

AMEN

HYMN 530 Now let us from this table rise

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewC6vndZv_M

BENEDICTION

We leave this place renewed and restored,
reassured of the grace of God that never rests
and remains with us all our lives.

Let the songs of praise we have sung guide your way
and the prayers we have prayed strengthen you in the days to
come.