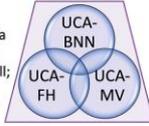




**Whitehorse
Uniting
Cluster**

The Uniting Church in Australia
Congregations of: Blackburn
North / Nunawading; Forest Hill;
and Mountview (Mitcham);
in a shared ministry together



Sunday 11th September 2022

Introit – YouTube Hymn - O Thou who Camest from Above

Choir St Michaels all Angels, Bassett
North Stoneham & Bassett Parish 2020

<https://youtu.be/qZSvW-6XXnw>



Image from Revised common lectionary

Welcome

May the worship be a blessing to you

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge those who were here before us, the first inhabitants of this place
We honour them for their custodianship of the land on which we gather today.

Call to Worship

Lord, send us to find your lost sheep
So, all may rejoice in heaven and on earth

Lord, help us seek out the lonely, the grieving, the hurting, those who have drifted away or those unable to come, the weak and those with health issues, and help us bring them back to your home

So, all may rejoice in heaven and on earth

Prayers

Lord, you seek us and call us to serve you
Even when we are tested, we remain steadfast in our faith
As we follow your ways, we cling to you and remain patient
We trust in you and know you will comfort and help us
You will make our paths straight

Lord, we will stay steadfast in our faith and put our hope in you

Lord, we wait on you and hope for good things,
for lasting joy, grace, mercy, and love.
Lord, you help us persevere in our faith, for we know we will never be forsaken by you.

Lord, we will stay steadfast in our faith and put our hope in you

Lord, we can call upon you when we feel faint-hearted.
We can trust in you and because of you, we do not lose our nerve, we never give up and we hang in there

Lord, we will stay steadfast in our faith and put our hope in you

We know you are always there for us as we strive to keep your ways and seek to please you.

Lord, we will stay steadfast in our faith and put our hope in you

Confession

Come before the Lord in reverence and silence with all that's on your heart

Silence

Hear then Christ's words of grace to us
"Your sins are forgiven"

THANKS BE TO GOD

YouTube Hymn: O let the Son of God Enfold You 2021

Orchard enterprises and Oasis Worship

Music and lyrics by John Wimber

From Heart of Worship Vol 3

2020 Classic Fox records

<https://youtu.be/kLqTNhxwzKI>

Reading – Luke 15:1-10

15 Now all the tax-collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ²And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, 'This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

³So he told them this parable: ⁴'Which one of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and go after the one that is lost until he finds it? ⁵When he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders and rejoices. ⁶And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and neighbours, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost." ⁷Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who need no repentance.

⁸'Or what woman having ten silver coins,^[a] if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? ⁹When she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbours, saying, "Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost." ¹⁰Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.'

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Young at Heart



Image from Revised common lectionary

Have you ever lost something of value?
Has the Lord ever come to seek you out when you have felt lost?
Ponder for a moment about what it felt like for you.

YouTube Hymn - Love is his Word

The Choir of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral
From the CD Angels, Saints and Nations sing 2020
Herald AV

<https://youtu.be/C-BtAdRqoGs>

Sermon – Rev Tina

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, amen



Image from Revised common lectionary

What a contrast!

Here are the grumbling Pharisees and Scribes, judging Jesus. They are judging Jesus for eating at a banquet with people they considered riff raff and sinners. They are setting rules for who is in and who is out. They have the wrong mind set.

Jesus speaks to them, saying these sinners and tax collectors he eats with were once lost and now are found and everyone in heaven is rejoicing and cheering them on. They have the right mindset. Everyone is in. No one is excluded.

The elephant in the room is the Pharisees and Scribes haven't got it! They exclude themselves. It is not about who is in and who is out of God's kingdom. Once again Jesus challenges the status Quo. Everybody gets to go into heaven. All are valued and loved. Love is more important than dotting the "i's" and getting things right and perfect and ordered with a whole lot of rules. The Pharisees and Scribes don't get to decide who gets into heaven. God decides who gets into heaven.

Another elephant in the room is: Who is really lost here?

Perhaps the word “grumbling” points towards those lost in a wilderness called “the desert of Sin” for forty years and who grumbled against Moses and God. They grumbled because they feared they would starve. What did God do? Provided manna in the desert. Here they are grumbling because of Jesus’ table fellowship with people they hated. The tax collectors who collected taxes for the Romans who occupied Jerusalem. If Luke’s gospel was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70CE, after the chief priests were taken captive to Rome, it would have been a miserable time for the Jewish people. During Jesus’ time in Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple had not yet happened. Whichever time it was, tax collectors took taxes from the people for the Romans and benefited themselves. They were despised.

Jesus tells a story about a wealthy person who owned 100 sheep. He leaves 99 sheep in the wilderness, most likely with slaves or labourers who worked for him as shepherds, to go and look for one sheep who is lost. This parable wouldn’t matter to the Pharisees or Scribes. They would be thinking the shepherd was silly going after one sheep. He could have sent a labourer or servant to find it. But they do not understand that it is about God who loves that lost sheep and goes out looking for it. It is of value to God. The tax collectors and sinners would have understood. They felt lost amongst their own people and would come to know they are loved, and God wants them.

The Pharisees don’t get it. They are concerned about the many rules they set for how food was prepared, who ate with whom, what people ate and who cooked it and how it was cooked and who got to eat it and sit at the table. They understand Jesus is challenging their rules and the status quo.

Jesus eats with sinners who are welcome because of God’s abundant grace in providing for his people. They are welcome because they have turned away from behaviour that keeps them far from God and hurts their people. They have put old ways of behaving behind them, like Matthew did. Jesus treats them like kin, where for him, table fellowship was about intimacy and welcoming all to the table. Their status has been reversed due to their repentance and turning back to God.

The parable about the lost sheep is about how God responds to the lost. Being lost could easily happen to anyone. Someone may have made a bad choice and like a roller coaster they kept making choices until they found themselves in a dark place. That is when and where Jesus found them and called them back to God, where they were healed and redeemed by God.

The second parable is about a woman who loses a silver coin, a denarius or Roman coin which was how much was paid for a day of labour by a labourer. She spends all day looking for it because it would pay for a lot. She may not have been wealthy, for when she finds it, she celebrates with her friends and neighbours. Now the tax collectors and sinners knew the value of money. Jesus was speaking their language and he would have changed their hearts, where even if one repented and turned to God, Heaven would rejoice. Perhaps the Pharisees and Scribes would not have understood this parable. Perhaps they remained lost.

I wonder who is seeking whom?

The gospel has God taking the initiative. Yet, it seems a two-way street. A response is needed. A movement of the heart where someone turns to God and decides to seek God in return. All of us can make bad choices in life that leave us feeling lost and far from God. Many of us may have experienced being lost and found by God. It’s a moment of grace. An unforgettable moment where those who experience it feel totally loved by God. Valued.

Perhaps you set someone free by redeeming them and leading them back to God after doing something for them, such as eating with them or inviting them to church and sitting beside them. Perhaps it was more of a blessing for you than them, where you felt found by Jesus. The gospel challenges us to seek those who are lost, whether it is due to their choices or circumstances beyond their control or illness or lack of resources. The gospel challenges us to see them as God sees them and welcome them home to God’s place, our congregation, where they can feel valued and loved and welcomed by God and by us. Being lost isn’t always about sin. It’s also about feeling excluded or unwanted or lonely or broken or needy or not belonging. All of us can feel a little lost sometime in our life. All of us may remember a friendly loving face welcoming us home as all we needed and longed for, along with an invitation to return to Jesus’ home, a congregation, where we found God’s love and healing. Invite someone today.

The Lord be with you.

**YouTube Hymn- Sister Act 2 (Finale) Lauryn Hill
Joyful Joyful with Lyrics (Ft Whoopi Goldberg) 2009
Bound\$Earth**

https://youtu.be/OaEH1e_DLm0

Offering prayer

(about offering up ourselves and giving thanks to God for all we have)

Lord and giver of every good thing we bring to you our lives and gifts for your kingdom
all for transformation through your grace and love made known in Jesus Christ our Saviour, amen

Prayers of the people – Derek Moore

Let us come before God in prayer.

Today we pray for the nations of Ghana and Nigeria – countries with long and complex histories. We pray for the wellbeing of their populations during the current pandemic, and for religious tolerance between their peoples. In the Ecumenical prayer cycle, we pray for St Alfred’s Anglican Church in Blackburn North and in our Presbytery for the Gospel Hall, St Michael’s, and Wesley congregations in Melbourne. Lord, please bless all of these faith communities and be with them in their worship and restricted outreach. We uphold to you the staff and residents of St Hilda’s College, Melbourne University. We pray for their physical, mental and educational wellbeing. May the chaplains at St Hilda’s enrich the lives of all they interact with at this College.

Lord, please strengthen us so that we can continue to endure these difficult times, including those amongst us who have recently or are about to change their place of residence, irrespective of whether it is to their own accommodation or to a residential facility. We pray for courage and resilience for those undergoing such lifestyle changes.

You are all invited to join me in the Lord’s Prayer:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is 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

YouTube Hymn - Amazing Grace

Gary Downey 2011

<https://youtu.be/CDdvReNKKuk>

Blessing

We go in Peace

in the love of God

in the Power of the Spirit

May the Lord Bless and Guard us

May the Lord make His face shine upon us

and be gracious unto us

As we bring Christ’s love

and peace to the world.

Amen

779 May the Feet of God – tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhiG-Vj8CGU&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=40>

Pastoral Care Tips – Rev Tina



Dreaming, Adapted from Joan Chittister: The gift of the Years, Growing Older Gracefully

Never abandon your dreams. Our spirit is eternal and never grows old. Often in our dreams we still see ourselves becoming all we desire. Age doesn't fossilize us. This is due to fear and being set in our ways. If we want to stay fully alive, we need to nurture our dreams and hopes.

Life grows us. Life shapes us. Life converts us. We can change at any age. Change our values and perspectives and think differently of the world, of others and of ourselves.

We can hold fast to our ability to dream and do our bit, at any age. We can contribute and make the world a better place. There is a time when we stop making excuses and start believing God can still work through us. We can be like Abraham and Sarah. God has a promise and purpose for all of us. We can make the world a better place and leave a legacy at any age. It's not about energy and doing things. It's more about being in God.

Lord, help us dream about what life could be like if enough of us demanded changes that birthed new ventures for you. Remind us our dreams are not finished, they are just beginning. Work through us Lord, our hearts, and bodies, where we see you in one another. Bless us Lord. Amen