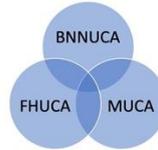




# Whitehorse Uniting Cluster

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



## Worship at home for 7<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Before beginning today's Worship at home, you are invited to pause and consider all those who have gone before you. Give thanks to God for them. Include the elders, past, present and future of the Wurrundjeri people who have cared for the land on which you live. Commit yourself to work towards healing and reconciliation of all peoples, showing grace and compassion.

### Call to Worship

Come into this place!

Bringing your stories and your heartaches, your hopes and your questions.

We come to worship God!

Know that this is a good place for all to be, safe in the embrace of God.

Yes, we have come to worship God!

### Opening Prayer

God of hope, lead all who are vulnerable to places of sanctuary  
where life may be sustained and hope may be found.

Bind us together in love as a community of your people,  
and strengthen us to serve you in all we say and do. Amen.

### We sing the song from TIS 693 'Come as you are' tMt video

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ\\_XiYJKnQM&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=29](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NZ_XiYJKnQM&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=29)

**Mark 12:38-44** *New Revised Standard Version*. 1989. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers

<sup>38</sup> As he taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, <sup>39</sup> and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honour at banquets! <sup>40</sup> They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

<sup>41</sup> He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. <sup>42</sup> A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny.

<sup>43</sup> Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. <sup>44</sup> For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

**Psalm 127** ©2000 Nathan Nettleton [www.laughingbird.net](http://www.laughingbird.net)

*If you are with someone else, read the Psalm together responsively.*

Unless you've commissioned the building project, LORD, attempting construction would be futile.  
Unless you're in charge of security, LORD, our gates and guards are a waste of effort.

***We could work ourselves to the bone for nothing;  
first on the job in the morning, last home at night,  
and what would we have to show for it?  
Nothing but heartaches and ulcers.***

You, LORD, long for us to slow down.

***We can relax and trust in your loving care.***

You have given us children, a gift to remind us to play;

***time with them is worth more than overtime on double pay.***

Good relationships with our children are the best insurance  
when trouble comes and threatens to wipe us out.

***The respect of our children will give us more joy  
than any pat on the back from the boss.***

When we give time and love to our children,  
we will always be able to hold our heads high,  
no matter who denounces our lack of “productivity”!

**Pause and make a note of your questions and thoughts from the readings.**

### **Prayer of Confession**

When we choose to worry, we lose sight of hope.

When we choose to grumble, we lose sight of joy.

When we choose to fear, we lose sight of love.

When we are worried and grumbling and afraid, we lose our sight.

God of every vision, help us to see and to choose what is good. Amen.

### **Words of affirmation**

Hear the assurance of our God:

“And when you call for me, I have already answered.

And when you call for me, I am already there.” Amen.

### **Sermon: What a tough one!**

Have you seen any of Sammy J’s sketches on ABC TV of late? He does a comedy sketch on Thursday nights just before the 7pm news. If you missed it, you can catch up on iView. If you know how, put this sermon aside for a moment and go and watch the latest episode and episode 18 from series 4. Actually just about any episode will do or even one from the old Clarke and Dawe series. Even any of the cartoons about our leaders published in any of the newspapers will do as well.

What they all have in common is they are able to cut to the chase and highlight the double standards of our politicians in a very funny way. They highlight the important issues and lampoon our leaders’ failures. Doesn’t matter which side of politics – they really cut to the chase.

Our readings for today do that as well. The Psalm highlights just how important our families are over business and career. Our families ground us and challenge us. It doesn’t matter if our families are models of excellence or dysfunctional, we still find our lives revolving around them. The lockdowns we have just come out of reinforce the importance of relationships and connectedness over achievement, wealth, status and success. Mark, both in this passage and the previous stories, challenges us to let go of these and to move into a new realm.

In the story just before today’s, Jesus encounters a teacher of the law with whom he is mightily impressed! – just after conflicts with other lawyers and of all people, his own disciples. Here the lawyer recognises what really matters – relationships, with God and people.

In our story for today, Jesus again highlights the gap between *talking the talk and walking the walk*. And it is a walk that goes beyond what we notice.

The widow is not notable. The wealthy donors are. Their donations are large and can assist many people. However, Jesus cuts to the chase. He sees things differently. Like the blind beggar Bartimaeus, he casts off all to God and trusts. The wealthy donors are still able to live their lives comfortably and nothing changes. They can rely on their success and abilities. They don't have to trust in God.

This reminds me of the recent story we heard of Jesus' encounter with the wealthy man who asked how he might enter the Kingdom of God. He went away sad because Jesus told him to sell all he had, give to the poor and then follow him. Wealth and status gets in the way of God's reign.

The treasury money was supposed to support ones such as this woman, yes the widows, orphans and needy. Ironically it is the widow here doing the supporting. The wealthy hold their place and leave the Temple the same as they entered, unaffected by God's presence.

This passage, as with the whole of Mark's Gospel, should make us uncomfortable. It challenges our social and community framework of achievement, goal orientation, hard work, success, status, wealth and ambition. Our politicians seek to appeal to the "battlers" and to those wanting to "climb the ladder of success".

Jesus is not interested in that. He is interested in you. He is interested in those who are struggling. He is interested in those we push to the side. He is interested in the homeless, the unemployed "bludgers", the pensioners, those with mental health issues, those with chronic illness and those who are struggling in their relationships.

He invites us to a change of lifestyle. Not a tree change but one where people matter. One where what we have is not ours but for the ones God cares about. This goes for our money. Yes and our abilities, skills, time and knowledge. We are to be a bit like the church treasurer I knew who saw all the money he oversaw as belonging to the mission of God and not his to control.

So what is God's call upon you? What do you need to throw off to be a disciple? So how much do you need to give to demonstrate God's reign like the widow? Wow!... That is tough!

### **We sing the song from TIS 288 'Not the Powerful, not the Privileged'**

**Prayers for Others** from © Jeff Shrowder, [www.thebillabong.com](http://www.thebillabong.com) and "The disadvantaged", "Prayers for the twenty-first Century", © B.D. Prewer & Open Book Publishers, used by permission

By your Holy Spirit, O God, warm the lives of those we name on our lips and in the silence of our hearts; celebrate with those open to your abundance; bring comfort to those among us and around us who are hurting, and encouragement to those for whom the light of life shines less brightly.

*(Pause to name people)*

God of love, have mercy on those where the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged seems to be ever widening. We pray for all victims of this injustice that your ways will be shown in and through your people:

For the sick and the maimed who cannot afford the latest in medical technology.

For indigenous minorities whose health and education prospects lag far behind the general population.

For the unemployed who have been cast aside by the electronic revolution in industry and commerce.

For the second and third generation of refugees who are still living in camps that we set up in the previous century.

For the ordinary people who cannot afford to pay the cost of obtaining justice in courts of law.

For the poor who cannot afford to pay the cost for the best medical and surgical help.

God of justice and mercy, keep your church faithful and compassionate. Do not permit us to become so concerned with our own weaknesses that we neglect to love our neighbour even as Christ Jesus has loved us.

In his name we pray.

Amen

**Say the Lord's Prayer as you prefer or:**

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

And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil

For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours, now and forever.

Amen

**We sing the song from TIS 745 'Seek ye first'**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFxZeY2D5tc>

**Blessing and benediction**

(adapted from ©2000 Nathan Nettleton [www.laughingbird.net](http://www.laughingbird.net))

Go out and share God's love with all with integrity.

Do not slave for things that are not life-giving, but trust in God's provision,  
and give generously of all you have.

And may God watch over you and provide for you;

May Christ Jesus be to you a restorer of life;

and may the Holy Spirit lead you in the ways of humble generosity.

***We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,***

***In the name of Christ. Amen.***

**We sing the song from TIS 779 'May the feet of God'** tMt video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YhiG-Vj8CGU&list=PL5dbbdzyKBag-mEd9qTgdyYNQLIsLD2rC&index=39>