



Trinity Sunday Worship for Whitehorse Cluster 30th May 2021



Introit: You were in this place – Robin Mann (in recording)

Call to Worship – Rev Peter

Listen...

In the quiet...

In the rough and tumble of living...

Do you hear the rumble?

Do you hear the whispers?

Look...

In the dark...

In the bright light of the day...

Do you see the dance?

Do you see the movement?

For creation declares!

All life moves in an interweaving dance of joy and celebration!

It is good.

And comes together in worship in grace, love and fellowship.

Prayers of Adoration, Invocation and Confession – Rev Tina



Lord Our God

You come to us calling for a response

“Whom shall I send?”

With hearts burning

We respond

“Here I am Lord”

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Our God

Jesus our Lord

We hunger

We come

With our many questions

How can these things be?

You Lord,

Speak into our hearts

Revealing the truth

Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord Our God

Holy Spirit,

Leading us in the dance of life

Bearing witness with our spirit

You are Children of God

Heirs of God

Joint heirs with Christ

May we be glorified

As we suffer

May we be filled with God’s love

To become a blessing for others

Come Holy Spirit

Come upon us today

Lord our God

If we have not loved you with all our being

And others as ourselves

If we have not loved others as you love us

Forgive us

Transform our hearts
 Help us make a fresh start, a new beginning
 And in the silence Lord
 We bring to you
 All that's on our hearts
 Forgive us and give us grace to forgive others
Silence
 Hear then Christ's Word of Grace to us
 Your sins are forgiven
Thanks be to God

YouTube - God of Creation by Craig Mitchell 2010

Vocal – Amelia Koh-Butler

Sourced from Vimeo

<https://vimeo.com/461406456>

CREATION BEGINS – a poem by P Cannon

The beginning
 Word
 Spirit
 Life
 The dance begins

Interweaving between chaos and order
 Movement and community giving birth
 And it is good
 Ah, very good

Wonder
 Delight
 Joy
 Love
 Brush strokes full of colour

The story teller bringing meaning
 A conversation of change and dynamism
 Journey begun
 Ah, very good

Readings

John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. 2He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do apart from the presence of God.” 3Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” 4Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” 5Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. 6What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ 8The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” 9Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” 10Jesus answered him, “Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? 11“ Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen; yet you do not receive our testimony. 12If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? 13No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16“ For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17“ Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Amy-Jill Levine; Marc Zvi Brettler. The Jewish Annotated New Testament (pp. 181-182). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

Romans 8:12 – 17 ©2000 Nathan Nettleton www.laughingbird.net

The truth is, brothers and sisters, that we owe nothing to the preoccupations of our former life. We need no longer have our lives dictated by the mindless pursuit of fashionable dreams and selfish desires. After all, the attraction was fatal. But thanks to God’s Spirit, we can now be rid of all that — give it a decent burial and get on with our new lives. All those who dance to the Spirit’s tune are God’s beloved children. We were not sold into slavery where we would grovel timidly in the dust, afraid to put a foot wrong. Rather we were adopted into a family full of love and joy. Like eager children crying, “Daddy! Mummy!” we come running to God, and with loving arms, God’s Spirit gathers us up, demonstrating clearly to whom we belong. And since we are children of God, we are actually on the same footing as Christ. With him we will inherit all that has been kept in trust for God’s children. But we have to take the good with the bad, and we know the price he paid. We need to be willing to cop it on the chin with him now if we want to share the glory with him later.

Post-reading: ‘Lord, may your Word live in us’.

Young at Heart – Rev Tina



I saw a story in *The Age* this week about an elderly Jewish man who died during a demonstration in Israel where stones were thrown at people. He was an organ donor and a Palestinian woman received one of his kidneys. She had been waiting for a kidney for over ten years. She said: People say he was a good man. She hopes to visit his family to thank them. She hopes for peace. She gives thanks she is alive, because of him

Today is Trinity Sunday. I've found this image of the three faces of God intriguing. It's on a carving called the Holy Rood at the back of St Paul's Cathedral. It reminds me that we often try to make God in our own image. Yet, God in the Old Testament is mystery and power: "I am who I am", Yahweh and in the New Testament God is love.

This week's gospel speaks of the freedom of the Spirit. The wind blows where it will. Which means we are free. Jesus is the mediator who stands between God and us. He is God with us and reveals God to us.



Another image that speaks to us about God is Rublev's icon of the Trinity. It's from the story of Sarah and Abraham, where three strangers come to them and Sarah and Abraham offer them hospitality, only to be told they are being called by God in their old age to have a child who will bring them blessings, where they will have as many ancestors as stars in the sky. Sarah laughs. They even call their child Isaac, which means laughter. God works in our lives in amazing ways.

What is most amazing about this icon is there is an invitation to us to come and sit at the table with God and be a guest of God. There is a place for each one of us to enter into the mystery of God as Trinity where we are caught up in the relationship of love that exists between God, Jesus and the Spirit. Each one of us can choose to embrace God's love and live it out in our lives

Maya Angelou wrote this poem about “Love’s Exquisite Freedom”

We, unaccustomed to courage
 exiles from delight
 lie coiled in shells of loneliness
 until love leaves its high holy temple
 and comes into our sight
 to liberate us into life

Love arrives
 and in its train come ecstasies
 old memories of pleasure
 ancient histories of pain
 yet, if we are bold
 love strikes away the chains of fear
 from our souls

We are weaned from our timidity
 in the flush of love’s light
 We dare be brave
 and suddenly we see
 that love costs all we are
 and will ever be
 yet it is only love
 which sets us free.

YouTube – Come Down O Love Divine – Fernando Ortega

<https://youtu.be/2DbytPhyJzo>

Hymn: God Send us the Spirit – Helen Jackson (in the recording)

Reflection – Rev Pete

Who is Nicodemus?

If we are reading the Gospel of John as an ongoing narrative, we would have arrived at this reading following a confronting scene of Jesus in the temple throwing over tables and driving out money changers. He disrupts the economy of religion where Caesars coins are changed for temple coins in order to purchase sacrifices to purify the faithful. One issue is that to make Caesars coins you need to trade with the Romans, which is not morally right, which means you need sacrifice which negates the whole thing. That would mean that anyone who refuses to trade with the Romans would not have the income to purchase sacrifices in the temple. When Jesus disrupts this system he upsets the temple elite.

He also challenges them to destroy “this” temple and I will raise it up in three days. The temple is where God and Humanity are supposed to coexist, but greed and selfishness has corrupted it. What Jesus is talking about is his body as the temple, the walking, talking embodiment of God, and that his body will be destroyed by selfish fear-driven greed, but wherever God dwells will always rise again.

It is at that challenge that the temple elite start to plot his death. It is also a time of Passover, where Israel remembers who it is and what the cost of freedom from Egypt was. Imagine the tension in Jerusalem as people retell the story of God who wipes out Egypt’s power, telling the story, singing the songs all while under Roman occupation. It is no surprise that most of the violent uprisings by the Jews occurred during Passover.

In our reading today we have Nicodemus, in the midst of the tension between the Jewish elite and Jesus, in the midst of the tension of the occupied promised land during Passover, under cover of darkness, coming to Jesus to learn.

There are a number of interesting aspects to this reading, the first one is Nicodemus the Pharisee, who was a community leader. Many of the authors of the bible like to make sure you know things by telling you twice. In this case we are told that Nicodemus is a Pharisee just once, but the important thing is that he is a leader twice over. Nicodemus was a Greek name used by the Jews to indicate a leader. John tells us this particular Pharisee is a leader-leader, not just a leader. This leader of leaders, who is a Pharisee, comes to Jesus at night.

I have been listening to Amy-Jill Levine lately and she has a whole lecture justifying the important role of the Pharisees in the shaping of modern day, post-temple Judaism. She makes the point that the Pharisees were the forerunners to today’s Rabbinic role. The task of a Pharisee was to meditate on Torah, study Torah argue Torah like a lawyer and then bring that wisdom to the community. Much like the Uniting Churches expectation that the clergy will be the resident theologian, bringing the scripture into a living format. Much like the clergy though, the Pharisees are often elevated into an unreasonable authority. Much like when Uniting Church clergy are elevated into authority they can be trapped, feeling that any weakness or doubt can cripple their congregation, or in the case of a Pharisee, their community.

Most of us have felt something like that. I find it important to apologise to my children when I get something wrong, because I want my children to see that reconciliation is more important than authority. I once heard a comedian say that he is terrified of the day that his children realise he is not superman. This is the kind of pressure on Nicodemus, the superman, the leader of leaders, the Pharisee.

It is this reason that he comes to Jesus at night. If you have heard me preach before, you have probably heard me say that righteousness is the intent and capacity to do justice in the light and the dark, in private and in public. That is the baseline for lived Torah, to be morally righteous. Nicodemus comes to Jesus under cover of darkness and in that darkness acknowledges Jesus as Rabbi, as teacher, as someone he must learn from.

Nicodemus the Pharisee, leader of leaders comes and asks Jesus in his authority as a teacher, to educate him. He could not come during daylight because the community expectations had trapped him, because his role of authority was so rigid that he could not admit that he had questions too.

Imagine our federal minister for Refugees asking Refugees for a solution, or the minister for Women asking Brittany Higgins or Grace Tame to help her in her role or a Premier apologising for mistakes made in hotel quarantine. Our modern model of leadership has trapped our politicians in a Nicodemus moment. It has done the same with teachers, with clergy and with sports coaches. The Nicodemus model of leadership has us so fearful of admitting our shortcomings that our leaders can only ask questions in private, after dark, so that nobody can know they are not superman.

“Nobody can see the Kingdom of God until they have been born from above.” When we subscribe to our earthly manifestations of Power and authority we are being born from below. This notion of being born from above is not so much a kingdom beyond the clouds that is only truly accessible when you die, it is pointing to an understanding of God that transcends human authority and power. Human authority and power are usually established and controlled through violence and fear. It manipulates authority and power away from the community and establishes it in the hands of the few, like Nicodemus.

When we imagine what “above” means in terms of born from above, there are a few important images that we need to hold on to that will help create an image for us. I like to use the word transcendent rather than above, but even that does not give the right shade of mystery to what this concept inspires. When God leads the Hebrew people through the desert in the Exodus story, God appears as a pillar of fire, that flame then rests on the tabernacle as the sign that God is dwelling among the people. There is always light in the darkness, there is always God above and in front calling the faithful onwards through the wilderness and towards the promised land. Being born into that imagination of Gods calling and dwelling, calling away from Egypt, a place of slavery where people are commodified and monetised, away from a place where power and money moves into the hands of those born into entitlement, away from a place where a people call out in sorrow because they are trapped in hunger. Think of those members of our human family squashed under a modern Egypt, think our Chin family, our Palestinian friends in Gaza, those forced into insecure housing while the property speculators line their pockets, think of children who see their capacity to live on this planet mortgaged for the economy of the few, that is life under Egypt. Egypt does not offer life from above.

We have a leader of leaders, a Pharisee, coming by darkness to Jesus and being challenged to let go of the kingdom of men and embrace being born from above.

Imagine the predicament of Nicodemus in this situation. He is torn between the expectations of his role in his community, his status as a leader of leaders and the legal responsibilities of being a Pharisee, yet he is courageous enough to come to Jesus because he seeks knowledge and teaching, but he cannot admit this publicly. He is challenged to forgo his man-made power and authority and give himself over to the mystery of being born from above.

For us, how many of us revel in the power and privilege of our earthly kingdoms. Our knowledge, wealth, health, social status are the markers of our earthly kingdom. This kingdom is not mystery, it is a well-trodden path, walked by Egypt, walked away from in the Exodus, but we keep returning to this temporary world. We are like Nicodemus, blessed with social status and privilege, social expectations and power, now asked to transcend them and embrace life from above, as mysterious as the wind and embedded with life that lives beyond our human kingdoms.

We are called by God into eternal life, life that has always been and will always be. Life that is found beyond human limitations of our social structures and places of privilege, beyond self-preservation and limited visions of life. We are called into this eternal life that is punctuated by doing what is morally good, eating with the hungry, weeping with those who mourn, sharing shelter with those who sleep in the rain. This eternal life requires us to sacrifice what we cling to as we seek to live more deeply into the mystery of God.

YouTube - Kyrie Eleison -

Church Music – Pete Rivett, - Jo Boyce and Friends, CJM Music

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=575a9FuWpdo&list=PLmRxR8y_N_n8mRLlunrIJ_mx3pTxVFAlc&index=15

Song: Light a Candle – Craig Mitchell (in Recording)

Prayers of the People

David Adam – from Radiance of his Glory (Adapted)

Light a candle after each prayer

Say – Lord Hear our Prayer

Holy God, holy and strong One, holy and Mighty One, you give us life, you give us yourself.
 Help us to give our lives, our love, ourselves to you.
 We pray for pilgrims and those who are hungry to know you
 For all those who are new Christians
 For those longing for a deeper unity within the church

Light a candle after each prayer

Say – Lord Hear our Prayer

We pray for creation that groans for salvation
 For places destroyed by pollution and mass extinction of God's creation and creatures
 For those in the world dying from Covid-19, poverty and natural disasters
 For all those suffering due to wars and oppression

Light a candle after each prayer

Say – Lord Hear our Prayer

We give thanks to those who have shared their lives with us and who have loved us
 We pray for those who have guided us and been an example
 We pray for those we are estranged from
 We pray for young people at this time
 We pray for those who do not have a safe and warm place to live

Light a candle after each prayer

Say – Lord Hear our Prayer

We pray for all those caught up in the latest lockdown
Families, workers, businesses, homeless

We pray for those who are lonely, experiencing mental health challenges, receiving treatment for cancer or having operations

**Light a candle after each prayer
Say – Lord Hear our Prayer**

The Lord's Prayer

**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 forever. Amen

Candle Prayers

We silently light candles and pray for a loved one or our own needs



**Light a candle after each prayer
Say – Lord Hear our Prayer**

Benediction and Commissioning

Person 1: In God we are conceived.

Person 2: In the stuff of earth we are formed.

Person 1: In hope we are born.

Person 2: In partnership we are called.

Person 1: In love we live.

Person 2: In Wisdom we are sent.

All: In faith we go.

Hymn: TIS 779 May the feet of God – Helen Jackson (in recording)