



**uniting
church**
Kiama Jamberoo

Healing Service Thursday 23 April, 2020

Sit somewhere comfortable and let yourself come into the presence of God, knowing that others, some we know and some we don't, are doing the same in their homes, on their balconies, in their gardens or their quiet God spot. I have a favourite chair, I call it my prayer chair. I do more sitting in it than praying but it is a spot I come to when I need or want to come to God.

If possible have a small jug of water and a bowl, a candle and perhaps a holding cross.

We pray together:

Opening Prayer

(based on Psalm 62:5-12)

**Our souls wait in silence;
our hope rests in God
our rock
our salvation
our refuge.**

**We will not be shaken.
In this time of worship,
we pour out our hearts
because we trust in God's steadfast love.**

~ written by Joanna Harader and posted on **Spacious Faith**.

Bible readings:

Hosea 6: 1-3

1-3 "Come on, let's go back to GOD.

He hurt us, but he'll heal us.

He hit us hard,

but he'll put us right again.

In a couple of days we'll feel better.

By the third day he'll have made us brand-new,

Alive and on our feet,

fit to face him.

We're ready to study GOD,

eager for God-knowledge.

As sure as dawn breaks,

so sure is his daily arrival.

He comes as rain comes,

as spring rain refreshing the ground." (The Message)

Reflection

A video of this reflection can be found here: <https://vimeo.com/410880824/e07e25f446>

In his book, "Knowing Doubt", John Ortberg tells us a story:

"Sheryl went into a salon to have her nails manicured. As the beautician began to work, they began to have a good conversation about many subjects. When they eventually touched on God, the beautician said: "I don't believe God exists!"

"Why do you say that?" asks Sheryl who has MS.

"Well you just have to go out on the street to realise God doesn't exist. Tell me, if God exists, would there be so many sick people? Would there be abandoned children? If God existed there would be neither suffering or pain. I can't imagine loving a God who would allow all these things."

Sheryl thought for a moment. She didn't respond because she didn't want to cause an argument. The beautician finished her job and Sheryl left the shop.

Just after she left the beauty shop, she saw a woman in the street with long, stringy, dirty hair. She looked filthy and unkempt.

Sheryl turned, entered the shop again and said to the beautician, "You know what, beauticians do not exist!"

"How can you say that?" asked the surprised beautician. "I am here. I just worked on you. I exist."

"No." Sheryl exclaimed, "beauticians do not exist, because if they did, there would be no people with dirty long hair and appearing very unkempt like that woman outside!"

"Ah, but beauticians do exist," she answered. "The problem is, people do not come to me."

This story is one we may understand well for ourselves. We may sometimes find ourselves like Sheryl, listening to others say they don't believe in God because if God really existed then there wouldn't be illness, death, grief, suffering and sorrow and struggling to find a way to comfort them, show them God. This is particularly true now, when the whole world is in great distress from the pandemic of COVID 19.

Sometimes we may find ourselves like the beautician arguing that if God was really a God of love then why does He let bad things happen. At this time, we must stay in our homes, we must isolate ourselves from others, we must not see our family, our friends and those for whom we care. We miss the freedom to gather, to be close, to feel alive in the presence of others.

Both of those voices are real and valid. We ask why does God allow these things to happen and at the same time acknowledge that God is present with us. In John 16:33, Jesus is speaking with his disciples just before his betrayal and arrest. He says "in this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." And in Matt 28, Jesus final words to his disciples, and all of us, are these, "And surely I am with you, to the very end of the age."

For me, that's the point. I can't prove that God is real and I can't explain why some lives are truly tragic while others seem to live lives which seem unscathed by troubles. What I can do is hold onto Jesus' own words that he has overcome the worst the world has to offer and in is with us in the midst of our troubles, our trials, our joys, in the midst of our very lives. And even when that doesn't seem true, even when I am angry with God for something he could have or should have done, I need to hear the "Sheryl" voice looking for a way to make God

real for me and for others. In the midst of our relationship with God, there is mystery... and there is faith.

Paul Robeson, a famous American Concert and Opera singer of the 20th century took a well known Negro Spiritual and wrote the following words. The song is called "There is a balm of Gilead." He wrote this "Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again."

This is God in the mystery. Being with us, on our worst days of discouragement and despair and yet reviving us to keep on, keep going, keep seeking the ways God is present in our lives and the lives of those who care for and about us. And when we do, being thankful that He is there to the very end of the age.

If you can access YouTube there is a wonderful choir version of this song

<https://au.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=there+is+a+balm+in+gilead+lyrics#id=22&vid=54fb3aadd733bf395f43e95049f800c2&action=click>

Music for reflection and the following guided response can be found here:

<https://vimeo.com/410874612/2c4b9e109b>

There is a balm in Gilead

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul

Sometimes I feel discouraged
And think my work's in vain
But then the Holy spirit
Revives my soul again.

There is a balm in Gilead
To make the wounded whole
There is a balm in Gilead
To heal the sin-sick soul

Using the jug of water and the bowl, pour some water into the bowl, pour it slowly and let it run over your fingers, taste it, feel it, enjoy its refreshment.

Using the water from the bowl, make the sign of the cross on your forehead.

God's peace be with you. Amen

Our final blessing:

Prayer for Healing and Comfort

Eternal God, to whom all may come through your Son,
lay your healing hand upon all those who are sick.
Make your loving presence known to those who are lonely.
Give your strengthening power to those who are weak.
May those who lack be filled,
those who mourn be comforted,
those who worry be calmed
and those who seek forgiveness find it in Jesus Christ;
through whom we pray. **Amen.**

~ written by Michael Seward. Posted on **The Jubilate Group** website.