

Healing Service **Thursday 27 August, 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.

If you would like to, look at the Bible readings from today's service:

Exodus 3: 1-18

Psalm 63

Matthew 16: 13-17

Let's begin with a prayer:

God who sent us the Word, made into flesh,
the One who was himself wounded by words,
and wounded others with his own well-chosen barbs,
today we pray for the words that will fill the day.

May we receive words of hope to bolster us, words of peace to connect us,
words of truth to anchor us in reality.

May the words that we speak to others be full of compassion, inspiration, and truth.

And may we find rest from all other words

in the presence of your Word with Us. Amen.

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We come mindful of the many people who are struggling today. Struggling with loneliness, with fear and anxiety, grieving loss; the loss of a loved one, loss of time with family, loss of community, loss of security. So many hearts in need of the healing touch of God. We come knowing that we are in need of healing, that we are struggling with those same things, knowing that we need to feel the healing touch of God today. We gather and hear words from long ago, words that still carry our cries today;

Psalm 63: 1-8

You have been my help, and in the shadow of your wings I sing for joy.

My soul clings to you; your right hand upholds me.

You might like to listen to these familiar words:

You are my hiding place,
You always fill my heart with songs of deliverance,
Whenever I am afraid I will trust in you...
Let the weak say, "I am strong in the strength of the Lord."

<https://youtu.be/4sKGTzn1qT4>

The Loch Ard was a clipper of the Loch Line which was one of the busiest companies sailing from England to Australia. The Loch Ard left on the 1st March with a crew of 37 and 17 crew. At the end of May the Loch Ard was caught in bad weather on the southern coast of Victoria.



At 4am on the 1st June the fog lifted revealing the sheer cliffs. Captain Gibbs realized the danger. They tried to drop the anchor but the ship hit the rocks. The masts collapsed preventing the lifeboats from being launched. The crew tried to help the passengers with lifebelts and anything that would help them float. In 15 minutes the Loch Ard went down.



One young seaman, Tom Pearce, took to the water clinging to an overturned lifeboat. The tide swept him out to sea, about four hours later he was finally able to make it to shore. Exhausted by the ordeal, Tom heard a young girl calling. He took to the sea and found Eve Carmichael clinging to a chicken coop and spar of timber. Grabbing her night gown in his teeth he swam back to shore with Eva who was almost unconscious. He found a cask of brandy amongst the ship's cargo that was washing up on the

beach and managed to revive her. Together they scrambled up the sandstone cliffs and Tom found a cave for them to shelter in. The next day he set out to try and find help, finally meeting two of the workers from Glenample Farm. They took him to the homestead and he then led a group of men back to rescue Eva and search for other survivors.

In the meantime, after the trauma of the wreck Eva was alone, waiting. In the wreck she had lost her parents, brothers and sisters, she was the only one to survive. Terrified that she would be discovered by the 'savage natives' she had heard stories of, she left the cave and tried to find somewhere safer to hide. Tom led the search party to the cave, found it empty and they began to search for Eva. Eventually she was found, almost comatose, whispering Tom's name. Reunited, the girl clung to him, 'You saved me. You saved me.' With all that had happened, in the midst of her fear, she knew who she could count on.

That's you and I, that's our friend or loved one, our neighbour, the stranger we have never met; alone, afraid, facing circumstances that are overwhelming. We need to know where to turn, who we can depend on. Lord, today we need a hiding place, in the midst of a broken frightened world, we need a hiding place. Today we need to know that You are there, that You are faithful, that we can count on You. We need to know You are holding us in the palm of Your hands.

Back in Exodus chapter 3, verses 1-18 we find ourselves with Moses on the mountain of Horeb, looking at a fire that's burning, but at the same time not changing. Moses goes closer to find out what's going on and as he does, he hears a voice saying, "don't come any closer, the ground on which you are standing is holy ground."

You know the story. God tells Moses that He has heard the cries of His people and has chosen Moses to lead them out of captivity. Moses reacts much the same way you and I would. WHAT? You want me to go where and do what? And even if I did go back, they're not going to listen to me. I can't stand up and speak in front of a nation or in front of Pharaoh – especially not in front of Pharaoh – you do remember that don't you... umm... and who are you anyway? I don't even know what to call you!

Max Lucado, the well known American theologian and writer, says that in these verses God says to Moses, "I am," and then spends the rest of the bible explaining what that means. When you mention someone by name in a conversation you will often hear a number of different things about that person.

'Oh, that's my ... sister, neighbour, friend, old teacher...'

'always so... friendly, understanding, difficult, ready to help, hard to deal with...'

Our experience of people is often quite different and sometimes hearing someone else's experience gives us a new perspective. Sometimes it's only as we walk with someone for a long time that we learn who they really are. That applies to our relationship with God too. It's as we walk with Him, or perhaps allow Him to walk with us, that we begin to plumb the depths of who He is and how much we are loved. When we are lost and confused, we find a Guide; when hurt and broken, we find a Healer; when we feel weak and unequal to the task, we find our Rock and our Strength.

When you look at your own hand it's a bit like a road map of your life, where you've been, where you're going. Can I encourage you to take some time, now or in the days ahead, to think about what your hand, your fingers, might have to say about who God is for you – to recall those times when have you heard Him whisper "I am..."

Your thumb; Times when you were feeling discouraged and uncertain and God gave you a 'thumbs up', a word of encouragement just when you needed it, a call from a friend, a smile from a stranger.

The pointer finger; Have there been times when God has pointed you in the right direction? Given the guidance that you needed; set you on a path that you didn't plan but now you can see how He has guided and provided each step of the way.

The tallest finger; Have there been times when, like the children of Israel, you've been caught in a battle and needed to know that God is your banner? When has He been your peace in the midst of chaos?

The ring finger on our hand speaks of deep love and commitment - what have you learnt about God's faithfulness? "I have loved you with an everlasting love, I have called you, and you are mine."

The little finger; Last of all is the little one. So often we feel unequal to the task, we need a solid rock to cling to, a fortress to protect us, a lifeline to hold us fast.

That little finger has something else to say. In our gospel reading last week Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do you say that I am?" When we know who it is that we're counting on, we're ideally placed to share that knowledge with those around us, to encourage them to look at their hands and remember who they already know God is.

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' 14And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 15He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' 16Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' 17And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.

Matthew 16:13-17

Let's pray,

Loving, healing, sustaining God, help us to hold onto who we know You are, where we have seen Your faithfulness and provision. In the midst of the storms we are encountering right now, be a light in the darkness, the hand that saves, the One who holds and carries us when our strength is gone. Quiet our hearts so we can hear the whisper of Your voice as day by day You show us who You are and remind us how much we are loved by You. Amen.

Marion Haigh