

Acknowledgement of country

This morning we are on the country that holds my heart and holds my story, few generations that it is, but it has held the stories of Wadi Wadi people back into the mists of time. I have gathered some symbols of this lovely place; things that were important to those who walked before us; shell, stone and water; symbols of nurture, security and life and as we gather together we acknowledge the traditional custodians and ask God's blessing on them.

As I thought about the symbols I realised that they also speak of another country, another place we belong. The shells, representing food- Jesus said I am the living bread come down from heaven. The stone represents the solid foundation we can depend on- no matter where we go, there's nowhere we can go that is out of sight of God. And water, the symbol of life itself.

Coming into Your presence...

In you, O LORD, I take refuge;

let me never be put to shame.

In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;

incline your ear to me and save me.

Be to me a rock of refuge,

a strong fortress, to save me,

for you are my rock and my fortress.

Sing: Be Thou my vision

Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, Save that Thou
art.

Thou my best thought, By day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.

Be Thou my Wisdom, And Thou my true
Word;
I ever with Thee And Thou with me, Lord;
Thou my great Father, I Thy true son;
Thou in me dwelling, And I with Thee one.

Riches I heed not, Nor man's empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, Now and always:
Thou and Thou only, First in my heart,
High King of Heaven, My Treasure Thou
art.

High King of Heaven, My victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright
Heaven's Son!
Heart of my own heart, Whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God,

we confess to you now that we have sinned.

We confess the sins that no one knows
and the sins that everyone knows.

We confess the sins that are a burden to us
and the sins that do not bother us

because we have grown used to them.
We confess our sins as a church.
We have not loved one another as Christ loved us.
We have not forgiven one another as we have been forgiven.
We have not given ourselves in love and service for the world
as Christ gave himself for us.
Forgive us, O God.
Send the Holy Spirit to us,
That the Spirit may give us power to live as by your mercy, you have called us to live.
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

(Adapted from Pilgrim Uniting Adelaide)

Readings

Jeremiah 1: 4-10

Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,
'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations.'
Then I said, 'Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy.' But
the LORD said to me,
'Do not say, "I am only a boy";
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.
Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
says the LORD.'
Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to
me,
'Now I have put my words in your mouth.
See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to pull down,
to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.'

Luke 4:21-30

Then he began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' All
spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They
said, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb,
"Doctor, cure yourself!" And you will say, "Do here also in your home town the things that we
have heard you did at Capernaum." ' And he said, 'Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in
the prophet's home town. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of
Elijah, when the heaven was shut up for three years and six months, and there was a severe
famine over all the land; yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath
in Sidon. There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of
them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.' When they heard this, all in the synagogue
were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the
hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed
through the midst of them and went on his way.

Sing: Make me a channel of your peace

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord
And where there is doubt true faith in You

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there is despair in life let me bring
hope
Where there is darkness only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
It is in giving to all men that we receive
And in dying that we are born to eternal life

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul

Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life let me bring
hope
Where there is darkness only light
And where there's sadness ever joy

Message

The trouble with prophets is they generally end up dead!

- God's word to Jeremiah is don't be afraid, I will put my words in your mouth- you don't have to decide what say, it's MY word
- Are we listening for God's word?
- Jeremiah and Jesus are both speaking words that put people off side, challenge the status quo, demand truth not just saying what people want to hear
- Jesus started out with nice words, words from a favourite prophet that everyone knew and longed to see happen. But as Jesus keeps talking people start to squirm.
- How do we do that?
- Last week Nathan challenged us to be involved in truth telling. How do we speak the truth in love? Not in anger to deliberately hurt and injure - that won't ever heal the original hurt and wound.

Scraped knees and broken hearts. The worst words I ever heard were 'We're going to have to clean that out.' I'm sure you remember hearing those words. You've been out playing with your friends and fallen over. You pick yourself up, clean up as best you can and go home for a bandaid and some sympathy and instead you hear those awful words. But couldn't we just put a bandaid on mum.. it's not that bad.. can't we just wait and see.. do it later. But no amount of protesting would help, once mum had that look in her eye there was no point arguing. Out would come the first aid stuff - why did it always smell so bad? As soon as you opened the cupboard. Warm water with salt in it and the first aid scissors to cut the cotton stuff and then the water dripping down my knee and tears dripping down my face. 'We've got to clean it out, I know it hurts but it won't heal unless all the dirt is gone, we've got to clean it out.'

You know as I've got older it seems like my mum might have been onto something. When harsh words are spoken, when difficult decisions have to be faced, when relationships are in tatters I hear mum's words again, 'we've got to clean it out.' And I don't want to do it now any more than I did when I was a kid. But when the truth is not spoken and faced up to, when people clam up, turn

away, refuse to talk, then the hurt and bitterness festers and things get worse, divisions happen, people are afraid to trust again, the angers poisons and colours everything.

Does that remind you of anything? Having treated our first nations people so badly we want to just find a bandaid big enough to cover everything and move on. Here we are, more generations have passed and we're still allowing the government to decide how and where and on what our indigenous peoples can spend their own money. When was the last time someone told you that you could only shop in one store in town? You might say well yes, but it's all about looking after the children, children and who are six times more likely to be removed from their families, making sure they are safe and well looked after.

There are so many misconceptions out there, and a whole lot of absolute lies. If you have grown up hearing one story after another of families being separated, children being removed, if all the grown ups in your life are struggling with the effects of that pain, unable to get steady work, living in substandard housing, facing hateful comments and names everyday, watching as your friends are taken into foster care and hearing their stories of abuse and neglect- not with their family but in the foster home. What impact would that have on you and on the way you respond to other people, to government agencies, to Christians and the church that was complicit in so many of those stories and continues to murmur vague platitudes.

Are we ready for words that are not easy? are we ready to struggle with our own uncertainties and discomfort? Are we ready to face the challenge of talking to people in a grace filled way that allows them to grapple with the past and the things we all have trouble understanding and coming to terms with?

Perhaps the place to start is to say out loud what we DO believe.

A creed for Australia

We believe that this ancient land with its unique creatures is a precious gift from a loving God whose mercy is over all creation.

We believe in God's care for the people who treasured it through un-numbered generations; the One who grieves in their suffering and rejoices in every noble aspiration.

We believe in God's compassion for the patchwork of refugees who for two hundred years have come to this continent looking for a place to call their home.

We believe in God's steadfast love for this nation and all its children; that he is creating a new people from many races, colours and gifts, to fulfil a high destiny.

We believe that the best way forward is the way revealed by Christ of faith, hope and love, where no needy person is neglected and no bidding of the Spirit ignored. (Source: Bruce D. Prewer)

Prayers of the people, Leaning in by Christopher Grundy

This gentle, sung prayer of intercession invites us to pray for others while breaking down the sense of "us" and "them" that is often the pattern of such prayers.

We pray for the lonely ones knowing that some of us are lonely
and we pray for the heartbroken ones knowing that some of us are heartbroken
All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention
joining in your way of love in the world

We pray for the wounded knowing that some of us are wounded
and we pray for the regretful ones knowing that some of us are regretful
All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention
joining in your way of love in the healing

We pray for the starving ones knowing that some of us are starving
and we pray for the imprisoned ones knowing that some of us are imprisoned
All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention
joining in your way of justice in the world

We pray for the dying ones knowing that some of us are dying
and we pray for the newly born ones knowing that some of us are arriving
All our hearts and minds are leaning in with clear intention
joining in your way of love in the world Amen.

Sing: Yesu, yesu

Kneels at the feet of his friends,
silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them.
*Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love,
show us how to serve the neighbours we have
from you.*

Neighbours are wealthy and poor,
varied in colour and race,
neighbours are near us and far away.
Jesu, Jesu...

These are the ones we should serve,
these are the ones we should love,
all these are neighbours to us and you.
Jesu, Jesu...

Loving puts us on our knees,
silently washing their feet,
this is the way we should live with you.
Jesu, Jesu...

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Benediction

May the road stretch endlessly before us.
May blue skies and the sun smile upon us.
May gentle rain refresh us.
May we find rest in the shade of gum trees.
May good friends accompany us along the way.
May you know the presence of God as you journey.
May Christ be your companion
And may the Spirit lift up your life.
And the people said...Amen.

(Helen Warmingham)

Marion Haigh
30 January 2022