

## ***God Revealed - as Reversing Expectations***

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### **Gathering**

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*Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.  
This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green cloth** or scarf to signify that we are in a time of “celebration”.  
Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

#### **Light Candle**

We light a candle to centre us and to draw us towards Christ.  
The writer of the gospel attributed to John assures us:

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

*John 1:5*

#### **Acknowledgement of Country**

As we gather in this place, between the mountains and the sea,  
we give thanks for the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation.

We acknowledge the commitment their ancestors made,  
across the generations, to nurturing this land.

Together, may we walk into the future,

recognising the sacred footsteps that continue to lead us to the promise of [God’s Way].

*Amelia Koh-Butler, Wide and Deep, p.11*

#### **Call to Worship**

Gathered,  
not in order of rank, title, or wealth,  
but blessed by the God for whom all are equal.

Gathered,  
not because we are special or live life mistake-free,  
but blessed by the God for whom all are equal.

Touched today  
by the Spirit of God,  
whether here in-person or worshipping with the online resources.  
Blessed by the God for whom all are equal.

*Spill The Beans, Issue 41, Resources for 13 February 2022, p.116*

Psalm 1:

<sup>1</sup> Happy are those  
who do not follow the advice of the wicked,  
or take the path that sinners tread,



or sit in the seat of scoffers;  
<sup>2</sup> but their delight is in the law of the Lord,  
and on [God's] law they meditate day and night.  
<sup>3</sup> They are like trees  
planted by streams of water,  
which yield their fruit in its season,  
and their leaves do not wither.  
In all that they do, they prosper.

Blessed are you who follow God's way.  
You are like a tree planted by streams of water.  
We need not fear when heat comes,  
nor be anxious in times of drought.  
Like such a tree, we trust in God.  
We know that God always watches over us.  
Come, let us worship God:  
who is the source of life in all seasons.

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 13 February 2022, p.171*

**Sing** - Hear Our Praises (P&W 858)

*We sing a song of praise and hope - may our song of God's love fill the air...*

May our homes be filled with dancing,  
may our streets be filled with joy;  
may injustice bow to Jesus  
as the people turn to pray.

*From the mountain to the valley  
hear our praises rise to you;  
from the heavens to the nations  
hear our singing fill the air.*

May a light shine in the darkness  
as we walk before the cross;  
may your glory fill the whole earth  
as the water o'er the seas.

*From the mountain...*

Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!  
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

*From the mountain...*

*Words and music: Reuben Morgan  
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**Reading:** Jeremiah 17:5-10 (Marion Rattray)

<sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals  
and make mere flesh their strength,  
whose hearts turn away from the Lord.

<sup>6</sup> They shall be like a shrub in the desert,  
and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,  
in an uninhabited salt land.

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,  
whose trust is the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> They shall be like a tree planted by water,  
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,

and its leaves shall stay green;  
in the year of drought it is not anxious,  
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

<sup>9</sup> The heart is devious above all else;  
it is perverse—

who can understand it?

<sup>10</sup> I the Lord test the mind  
and search the heart,  
to give to all according to their ways,  
according to the fruit of their doings.

### **Prayer - Praise and Confession**

Creator of all that is,  
you formed the earth and the seas,  
you set the rivers in their course,  
you crafted the mountains.  
You planted trees and flowers for us to enjoy.  
You breathed life into animals, birds and insects.  
And you placed us in their midst and invited us to share this earth and to care for its life.  
We praise you for the abundance and beauty we enjoy in this place.  
We praise you for the gift that is our community.

Faithful God, you call us to build communities that reflect your love and way for all the world. But we struggle...

When we hoard things and do not share,  
forgive us, loving God.

When we think we have it made and do not need anyone else,  
forgive us, loving God.

When we laugh at others' misfortune, and say "it serves them right,"  
forgive us, loving God.

When we care more about what others think of us, than in doing what is right,  
forgive us, loving God.

When we would rather follow our own way than yours,  
forgive us, loving God.

*(silent prayer)*

*Adapted from Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 13 February 2022, p.174*

Forgive us and help us to reshape ourselves to be ever more a reflection of your image in the world. Amen.

### **Assurance**

As we heard from Jeremiah:

<sup>7</sup> Blessed are those who trust in the Lord,  
whose trust is the Lord.

<sup>8</sup> They shall be like a tree planted by water,  
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,  
and its leaves shall stay green;  
in the year of drought it is not anxious,  
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

God hears our prayer and as we trust, we sink our roots deep into the river of life, nourished and strengthened to produce fruit in good times and in tough time. So wriggle your toes and bury them deep in God's love.

**Sing** - The Deeper River (AOV 2-6)

*This is likely not a familiar song so feel free to simply listen and contemplate the words. It is a bit of an extension of the imagery we have heard in the readings from Psalm 1 and Jeremiah - the idea of sinking our roots deep into the living water Jesus offers to us.*

There's a river running deep within the  
silence of our souls  
where the quenching, healing waters carve  
their art.  
At its source a spring of living water surging  
and sustained;  
it's the voice of Jesus waiting for the  
listening of our hearts.

*When the living waters flow in us,  
when the living waters flow again,  
they will carry us  
they will wash us down  
they will quench our thirst again.*

At times the river of our life winds  
wandering away.  
Sometimes the rapids tumble restlessly.  
Comes the time to stop and find the deeper  
river running strong,  
to drink refreshing waters and to hear the  
Spirit's song.

*When the living waters...*

Hear the the call to thirsty people,  
there's no need to thirst again.  
To the weary, come beside still waters lie.  
Full of goodness, full of mercy,  
our cup will overflow,  
when the call of that deep river is a voice  
we've come to know.

*When the living waters...*

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### Listening for God's Voice

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**Reading:** Luke 6:17-26 (Marion Rattray)

<sup>17</sup> [Jesus] came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>18</sup>They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. <sup>19</sup>And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

<sup>20</sup> Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

'Blessed are you who are poor,  
for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup> 'Blessed are you who are hungry now,  
for you will be filled.

'Blessed are you who weep now,  
for you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup> 'Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice on that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup> 'But woe to you who are rich,

for you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup> 'Woe to you who are full now,  
for you will be hungry.

'Woe to you who are laughing now,  
for you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup> 'Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

For the Word of God in Scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us,  
***Thanks be to God!***

### **Reflection**

Spirit of Life, move amongst us now,  
and open our hearts and minds to the wonder of God's way for us and all of creation.  
Give us courage to challenge ourselves to be always reaching for a way of life that reflects  
who God calls us to be. In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

We pick up Jesus' story this week in the middle of Luke 6 with an account of Jesus' teaching that parallels Matthew 5 and what we call the Sermon on the Mount. Luke's version is more like the "Sermon on the plain".

Jesus has called his disciples - including Peter, James and John, and also Levi, the tax collector. And he has been teaching and healing.

He has already upset the Pharisees on a range of levels - not the least for his perceived breaches of the laws of Sabbath - he had healed someone and he had allowed his disciples to pick corn to eat.

Now he moves to a "level place" - he comes down from the mountain where he has been praying and meets the crowd ("a great multitude" from all over the region (6:17)) where it is level.

His teaching, according to Luke, is direct - not spiritualised as in Matthew's version - rather, it is much more concrete. And it is clearly constructed as dualistic reversals. The blessings and the woes - the encouragement and the warning.

This is what God's kingdom, God's way is like:

Blessed are you who are poor for you belong in God's kingdom. (6:20)

Woe to you who are rich, for you have already had your reward. (6:24)

Blessed are you who are hungry for you will have your fill. (6:21)

Woe to you who are full now for you will come to know hunger. (6:25)

Blessed are you who are weeping now for you will get to laugh. (6:21)

Woe to you who laugh now for you will mourn and weep. (6:25)

Blessed are you when you are hated and defamed on account of your trust in Jesus, leap for joy for your reward is great in God's kingdom. (6:22)

Woe to you who haven't offended anyone because you are like the false prophets (6:26).

Each one, reverses the expectations about the world they knew - echoing the song Mary sung about Jesus in Luke 1 - and echoing through the ages to us, today - challenged still by words that reverse our expectations about how the world works.

For us, money talks, money is power, and our society is structured in a way that allows “the market”, the power of money, to determine what we eat, what we where, where we live, what jobs we can take - almost every aspect of our practical living. But there is a problem with that - the very people for whom God is concerned, the poor, the hungry, can't participate in “the market” - if you have no money, you can't choose where to spend it! And our democracy is not help - look what happens when a candidate or party runs on a platform that will spend money on the poor - no-one wants to know, especially since we all know that the money has to come from somewhere and mostly we don't want it to come from us... Harsh? Perhaps - but I don't think that is an entirely unfair assessment of our political system.

But the world God intends, has created us for, is one where the poor are taken care of, the hungry are fed, the grieving are comforted, and where people who are now condemned for their faith in God's way will find reward and satisfaction. More than that, the people who think they are comfortable and well-off and and who ignore the plight of the poor and hungry, they will find themselves desperately uncomfortable.

And it is about now that most of us here begin to squirm a bit - or we ought to... There is no doubt that most of us here today are relatively well-off, rarely hungry and mostly well thought of in our community. Perhaps the part we identify with most closely is the one about weeping as I think most of us know what it is to weep - for someone we have lost, for relationships that have broken, sometimes even for the world that is not as we hope it might be and the powerlessness that we feel in all that.

But what do we do with the rest?

Right now, as a church, we are thinking about who God calls us to be and how we can be about God's mission oil the world? Part of this is about how we use the buildings that are entrusted to us?

So what happens to our conversations if we said we would take seriously God's call to ensure the poor are cared for, and that people who are hungry are fed?

What does it look like for us to challenge the ways our community values money and measures success?

Perhaps we need to be more outspoken, even offensive, when it comes to issues of poverty, hunger, homelessness and the privilege given to some but not all? The thing is, in order to do that, our actions have to match our words - so if we want to call our community, our government, even our friends and family, to account for ignoring the plight of the most vulnerable in our community, then we have to be willing to match our words with our own actions - so - how can we offer support and care to people who are vulnerable in our community?

And, as Jesus managed to offend both his own people, the Jewish authorities, as well as the wider community, so we may need to offend each other from time to time in order to call each other to focus again God's way, on the order of the world, the kingdom, God calls us into.

Let me give an example. Do you know why I don't think we, the Christian church, should be supporting the Religious Discrimination Bill? It is not only because of the way it treats gay and transgender people as an exception - although that, in itself, is heinous - it is because the Bill seeks to protect the already powerful in ways that seem to me to be unthinkable to Jesus as he teaches on the plain (in Luke 6). Neither the Christian church, nor any other faith group, needs protection to show the expansive, radical, inclusive love of God - that is not Jesus' way. Jesus acknowledges that sometimes showing love will upset people, generally those who enjoy privilege and power.

Paul writes in Galatians 5:23 - "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things."

This teaching of Jesus here (Luke 6), speaks directly to those who would want to protect themselves and/or their own patch. That is not what God's kingdom is about - God's kingdom is for everyone, and most of all, for those whom the rest of the world has forgotten, overlooked, or deliberately tried to trample.

Here at this table, we catch a glimpse of the wonder that is God's embrace. All of us, each one, has a place here, belongs here, is loved, valued and honoured. Poor and rich, hungry and full, weeping and content, defamed and thought well of - each one and all of us, gathered seeking God's way of love and grace. And each time, someone comes into this circle, no matter what, space is made, we all shuffle over a bit to ensure there is room. As we share here this morning, may we live into the glimpse of heaven we share in - may we be forming a community where the expectations of the world are turned on their head in order to ensure that all are loved and the most vulnerable amongst us are nurtured, nourished and valued.

Let us pray,  
Gracious God, blessed or warned, sometimes we are not sure which we are.  
Perhaps, living Lord, we are both.  
Blessed or warned, gather us all in your love and grace.  
And prompt us to be alert to your warning as we share in your blessings.  
In Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

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## Responding

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### **Prayer for Others** (Michele Broad)

Wise and generous God,  
we take time today  
to do as the old hymn suggests, and 'count our blessings',  
naming them silently, one by one, and giving thanks to you,  
the source of all that is good,  
and of the deep-down happiness for which we long.

We give thanks for the obvious blessings, never to be taken for granted:  
for good health when we have it,  
and access to medical care;  
for food in our bellies and a safe place to live; for people who care about us  
and for whom we can care;  
for freedom to dress and speak and worship as we choose, without fear of persecution.

But we are grateful also for the curious blessings recognised as such only with hindsight:  
for losses that help us see what really matters;  
for vulnerability that enables us to reach out in love;  
for our weakness that forces us to depend on you;  
for brushes with death that have helped us value life more.

Loving God, you want all your children  
to live lives that are full and worthwhile,  
and we pray for those for whom each day  
is a struggle to survive, never mind thrive;

for those who are trapped in poverty  
and cannot see that ever changing;  
those who so not have enough to eat,  
and those who overeat to bury their unhappiness;  
those who are shamed and humiliated  
for being who they are,  
and those who do the shaming.

God of justice and mercy,  
there is so much that is  
wrong with our world,  
which is also your world.

We long for the coming of the Kingdom that Jesus talked about so much,  
and by whose standards he lived his life on earth:

giving in order to receive;  
letting go in order to find;  
dying in order to live.

Not lightly, but as honestly as we can,  
we pray for that Kingdom to come,  
knowing that if our prayer were to be answered,  
it might cost us dearly.

Grant us your blessing, we pray,  
and enjoy the chaotic turmoil that ensues as we discover exactly what that means.  
Amen.

*Spill The Beans, Issue 41, Resources for 13 February 2022, p.117*

### **Holy Communion**

*If you would like to share in Communion and are unable to join with us in-person, please let Rev Kath or Rhonda Back know. We would love to bring Communion to you in your home at a time that suits you.*

### **Offering**

As we have been fed, so we take a moment to reflect on what we have seen and heard and experienced together this morning.

#### *Prayer*

God of Grace,  
as we consider what we offer, what we bring to this adventure of life together,  
we pray that our money, our time, our talents will be used to:  
care for the poor,  
feed the hungry,  
weep with the grieving and  
encourage each other when our actions are ignored or despised.  
Give us wisdom and courage to keep our priorities aligned with yours, we pray. Amen.



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## Sending

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### **Sing** - Let Us Talents And Tongues Employ (TIS 537)

*This song speaks of using our skills and our words to share the joy of life with the world around us, ever mindful that there is always more than enough.*

Let us talents and tongues employ,  
reaching out with a shout of joy;  
bread is broken, the wine is poured,  
Christ is spoken and seen and heard.

Christ is able to make us one,  
at the table he sets the tone,  
teaching people to live to bless,  
love in word and in deed express.  
*Jesus lives again...*

*Jesus lives again,  
earth can breathe again,  
pass the Word around: loaves abound!  
Jesus lives again,  
earth can breathe again,  
pass the Word around: loaves abound!*

Jesus calls us in, sends us out  
bearing fruit in a world of doubt,  
gives us love to tell, bread to share;  
God-Immanuel everywhere.  
*Jesus lives again...*

*Words: © Frederik Herman Kaan  
Jamaican folk melody*

### **Benediction**

May God bless you with discomfort  
At easy answers, half-truths, and superficial relationships,  
So that you may live deep within your heart.

May God bless you with anger  
At injustice, oppression and exploitation of people,  
So that you may work for justice, freedom and peace.

May God bless you with tears  
To shed for those who suffer pain, rejection, hunger, and war,  
So that you may reach out your hand to comfort them  
And turn their pain into joy.

And may God bless you with enough foolishness  
To believe that you can make a difference in the world,  
So that you can do what others claim cannot be done  
To bring justice and kindness to all our children and the poor. Amen.

*A Franciscan Benediction*

Rev Kath Merrifield  
13 February 2022