

## ***Making Sense of Relationships***

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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 moving into "ordinary time". Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

#### **Gathering**

Whether your week has been great or hard - or both;  
whether you have been knocked down or are celebrating a great achievement;  
we gather in the embrace of a God who holds us no matter where we are at, and draws us into life and light.

#### **Light Candle**

We light the candle - focussing our attention, allowing ourselves to be drawn to its flame. We look to Jesus, the light of the world, a light that shines even in the darkest of times offering hope and healing.

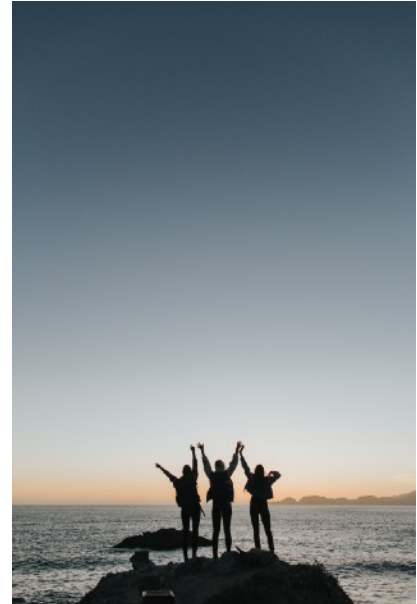


Photo by [\*Ivana Cajina\*](#)  
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#### **Acknowledgement of Country**

The Ancient of Days, breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

From river to ocean

from campfire to hearth

***may the First Nations who have cared for this land be blessed.***

From breath to song

from step to dance

***may those who follow your Songlines***

***guide us on the journey to living honourably in this place.***

From greeting to Amen

from silence to chorus

***may our worship join with the voices of the First Nations of this Land.***

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## Call to Worship

*You might like to hold your hands cupped in front of you.  
Let us pray...*

### *Poured Into Our Hearts*

Like a cup  
like a chalice  
like a basin  
like a bowl

when the Spirit comes  
let it find our heart  
like this

shaped like something  
that knows how to receive what is given  
that knows how to hold what comes to fill  
that knows how to gather itself around what arrives  
as unbidden  
unsought  
unmeasured love.

*A Blessing - Jan Richardson*

From Psalm 9:

I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart;  
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.  
I will be glad and exult in you;  
I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

*Psalm 9:1-2*

## **Sing** - 10,000 Reasons

*So we sing a song inviting us to focus on who God is and to lift our hearts and souls  
towards God in praise and worship...*

*Bless the Lord O my soul, O my soul,  
Worship His holy name.  
Sing like never before, O my soul,  
I'll worship Your holy name.*

The sun comes up it's a new day dawning  
It's time to sing Your song again  
Whatever may pass and whatever lies  
before me  
Let me be singing when the evening  
comes

*Bless the Lord O my soul...*

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger  
Your name is great and Your heart is kind  
For all Your goodness I will keep on  
singing  
Ten thousand reasons for my heart to find  
*Bless the Lord O my soul...*

And on that day when my strength is failing  
The end draws near and my time has  
come  
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending  
Ten thousand years and then forevermore  
*Bless the Lord O my soul...*

*CCLI Song # 6016351*

*Jonas Myrin | Matt Redman*

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## Prayer

Creator God,  
we celebrate the dawn of a new day,  
the promise of a new start,  
an opportunity to have another go.

We only have to open our eyes in this place  
and we experience your beauty and goodness all around us.  
We see oceans and mountains, beaches and rivers,  
we hear the cackle of the cockatoos and song of the magpies,  
we smell the salt in the air,  
we feel the air growing warmer and sense the promise of spring  
we taste the abundance of your earth as it produces food to nourish our bodies.

We give thanks too for the people around us:  
our families, our friends, the folk in our community,  
the people we encounter from day-to-day we live and work and play in this place.  
And as we think of the people we most love and care about,  
we recognise that the way we relate to one another doesn't always reflect your way of love  
and respect;  
we are sometimes harsh in our words and actions;  
we provoke one another - poking and prodding to get a reaction;  
we do what is right when we are being watched but cut corners when we are left alone.

God forgive us,  
and help us to forgive one another,  
as we learn to forgive ourselves.  
Help us to learn from the times we have hurt one another,  
help us to heal from the times we have been hurt.

Help us to shape our relationships on your love for us,  
that everyone we encounter will encounter your way of love and grace for the world.  
Amen.

## Sing - Nothing Is Lost

*The reading we are considering this morning is hard - many of us have experienced broken relationships in different ways throughout our lives. This song reminds us that nothing is lost in God's love, no effort to love is lost or wasted.*

Nothing is lost on the breath of God,  
nothing is lost for ever;  
God's breath is love, and that love will  
remain,  
holding the world for ever.  
No feather too light, no hair too fine,  
no flower too brief in its glory;  
no drop in the ocean, no dust in the air,  
but is counted and told in God's story.

God sees with love and that love will  
remain,  
holding the world for ever.  
No journey too far, no distance too  
great,  
no valley of darkness too blinding;  
no creature too humble, no child too  
small  
for God to be seeking, and finding.

Nothing is lost to the eyes of God,  
nothing is lost for ever;

Nothing is lost to the heart of God,  
nothing is lost for ever;

God's heart is love, and that love will remain,  
holding the world for ever.  
No impulse of love, no office of care,  
no moment of life in its fulness;

no beginning too late, no ending too soon,  
but is gathered and known in God's goodness.

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### Listening for God's Voice

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**Reading:** Colossians 3:18-25

<sup>18</sup> Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. <sup>19</sup> Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.

<sup>20</sup> Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord.

<sup>21</sup> Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart. <sup>22</sup> Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord. <sup>23</sup> Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, <sup>24</sup> since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you serve the Lord Christ. <sup>25</sup> For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality.

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

Let us pray,

God, sometimes the Bible is just hard...

We need your wisdom - so open our hearts and minds to what you want to show us.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Passages like this make a preacher nervous.

Apart from being hard to rationalise in our contemporary world, passages like this come with a whole lot of baggage - interpretations, usually selective in their nature, that have caused great hurt and pain.

This passage also speaks to a part of our lives that is both closest to us and, for us, our most private. The relationships in our homes, between marriage partners, between parents and children, are often the ones we most fiercely protect and are fiercely protective of - that is, we are most private about and don't like anyone offering an opinion about, let alone the church poking its nose in...

So there is a temptation to either jump straight over them, either because it is just too hard, or because we have convinced ourselves that they are no longer relevant.

But I don't think either of those responses is adequate.

This is not about the church casting judgment over our relationships - it is about how we wrestle with these ancient texts for what they teach us about our discipleship and the way of Jesus.

And, rather than ignoring or dismissing these passages, they give us an opportunity to think about how we interpret these parts of the Bible in our world today?

What was the writer trying to say when it was written?

What is the context?

And so, what might we draw from it today?

So we return to the question about who wrote this letter?

Remember, scholars are fairly equally divided in opinion as to whether this was genuinely written by Paul or whether it comes a bit later.

If this is written by Paul, he has more to say about the relationship between husbands and wives, children and slaves in the letter to the Ephesians (Ephesians 5:21-6:9).

This passage in Colossians seems to be a short-hand version of a much deeper exploration in the other letter.

For both of them, the practical advice they give is their attempt to describe the out-working of placing Jesus Christ at the centre of all that we do, say and are.

In Ephesians, the whole discourse precedes on the basis of the insistence that we are “subject to one another out of reverence to Christ” (Ephesians 5:21).

In Colossians, the advice stems from the insistence in the previous verses that we are clothed with “compassion, kindness, humility, meekness,...patience... and love” (Colossians 3:12-14); and the encouragement to remember that whatever we do, we do, “in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God...through him” (Colossians 3:17).

So when we think about how we conduct ourselves in our most personal and deeply-felt relationships, those with our families, our first focus is on the life and love of Jesus Christ - the self-giving, boundless, all-embracing love of Jesus Christ. And if we can reflect that love with the ones we care about the most, with the ones we spend most of our time with, then we “receive our inheritance” as the writer to the Colossians puts it (Colossians 3:24), that is, we begin to know and experience the way of God in the world, God’s kingdom, God’s realm is known in our midst.

So just a couple of things to think about as we wrestle with this text:

- much pain is caused if we hold women to the instruction of verse 18 and do not hold men to the instruction of verse 19 - or, to put it another way, for both partners in a marriage, verses 18 and 19 go together. And to ensure that I am being clear - these verses clearly denounce violence of any form in the home - no-one is to be treated harshly or provoked (3:19, 21)
- the idea of being “subject to” (3:18) is not so much about being “under” or “oppressed by” as it is an ordering - a teaching given in a society that was dependent on “order” to function. Today, I would argue, this kind of ordering is neither necessary nor helpful - because we understand today a much more expansive idea of equality across all kinds of difference such as gender, race, class, religion, sexuality - and so to suggest that any human needs to be “subject to” another, is much more nuanced today by an assumed commonality in our humanity. And I would suggest that Jesus’ life and teaching points us towards a mutuality and common humanity that is not captured by this kind of language
- and lastly verse 25: “For the wrongdoer will be paid back for whatever wrong has been done, and there is no partiality.” It is so tempting to hold onto this either as a weapon or as an excuse to not act when we see violence in relationships - kind of like, “don’t worry, God will get them in the end”. No - we are called to speak out and to call it out when we see violence or abuse in any form, when we see one human being suffering at the hands of another. Remember the foundation is the centring of the love of Jesus - and the challenge to hold in tension: love that challenges and seeks justice, and love that refuses to treat someone badly because they have done wrong.

So as we think about our relationships at home - let us give thanks for those relationships that are life-giving and reflective of Christ’s love for the world and consider how we can be

a part of fostering such relationships - both for ourselves, and for the people around us - because we need to remember that while these relationships are often intensely private, they don't exist in isolation. In our marriage service liturgy, we recognise that marriages are one of the building blocks of our community - not the only building blocks - but one of them. So the way our relationships reflect the love of Christ are an important part of the foundations of our community.

And where relationships are strained or broken, where we carry hurt for relationships that didn't work out for whatever reason, may we offer grace and healing to one another, as we receive the grace Jesus extends to us (exemplified here at the table), and may we offer support and encouragement to begin again, to try again, to build relationships that reflect the love of Christ in the world.

Let us pray...

God of Love,

We know that relationships, even our most precious relationships, can be hard work.

Where relationships are strained, give us courage to take the first steps towards reconciliation.

Where the pain is still raw, touch us with your healing.

Where our families and friends are struggling, may we be good listeners and even better pray-ers.

Where our communities are divided, may we be bearers of peace and insist on justice.

And keep us wrestling with the words of Scripture, give us wisdom, a depth of understanding and renewed commitment to reflecting your way in the world we serve.

Amen.

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## Responding

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### **Prayer for Others** (Helen Laidlaw)

*It is a privilege to pray for you all and I ask that as I pray that I mirror what is in your thoughts: your needs, anxieties, delights, illnesses, and fears.*

Our wonderful Creator, Father, Mother Earth –

Thank you for Jesus who has opened so many doors into our understanding of faith and our spiritual lives.

At first though, I want to quote Stan Grant: Host of the ABC's Religion and Ethics Report. "Science accelerated the world's population, has shrunk our world, made us richer and brought us closer together. Yet science has put in our hands the capacity to destroy life on the planet. This is our deal with the devil."

If it is in our hands what can we do about it? Each of us can pressure the powers that run our country to make better choices re emissions and care for our environment. And we can be generous to support those who are caring for those most impacted by climate change. We eat so well so it is almost impossible to imagine famine and babies dying of hunger. Help us to keep our hand in yours to so we use our power well.

Also the science we have achieved allows people to spread hatred and lies, and I pray for those who are caught up in that world that they may realise the harm they are doing and change.

I want to pray for our congregation and friends as they face the difficulties of aging, of illness, of decision-making for the future. Help us to live each day with our hand in yours, following your directives. Give us the ability to recognise each day as an extra benefit, and

share that with others. Also help us to remember to thank others for their positive impact on our lives.

This is such a big world and there are so many tensions as countries flex their muscles. We pray for Taiwan, for Ukraine, for Russians who are jailed for speaking out. We pray for the African countries which are suffering the worst of climate change and Covid.

We pray for the Indigenous people of Australia as they seek for our recognition of their many cultures and many nations. May the government move swiftly to bring a treaty and parliamentary recognition for them.

We also pray for the refugees attempting to fit into our community. Deal with our ignorance and biases. It is wonderful that the Biloela Family are permanently here, but help us to recognise the suffering of so many needing refuge.

Thank you for the many gifts we enjoy. I thank you for Kath and Narelle and their care of us, and for the many people who take leading roles in organising and taking responsibility for our church. Bless them all!

In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **Sing** - Feed Us Now, Bread of Life (TIS 538)

Feed us now, Bread of life,  
in this holy meal;  
let us know your love anew:  
we hunger for you.  
Feed us now, Bread of life,  
come and live within;  
let your peace be ours today,  
Lord Jesus, we pray.

Piece of bread, cup of wine:  
Lord, this food is good:  
love and mercy come to us,  
your promise we trust.

Piece of bread, cup of wine:  
who can understand  
how his mercy works in these?  
Yet, Lord, we believe.

God is here, O so near,  
nearer than our thoughts.  
Stay with us where'er we go;  
Lord, help us to grow.  
God is here, O so near,  
in this heaven's meal.  
May we always feed on you –  
on the bread that is true.

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### **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**

*We make space now to think about what we have heard and seen today and consider our response.*

*As we make our offering - we remember again that this is not just about money - either here in the plate or through a bank transfer - this is also about how we are generous with our time and energy and gifts.*

God,  
we offer our time, our talents and our money -  
all we have is yours.

Help us to use what you have given us to share your story and your love in the world.  
Amen.

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## Sending

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**Sing** - Companions On The Journey (Seasons 8-8, vv1,2)

*We are companions on the journey,  
breaking bread and sharing life;  
and in the love we bear is the hope we  
share  
for we believe in the love of our God,  
we believe in the love of our God.*

We have been gifted with each other,  
and we are called by the Word of the Lord:  
to act with justice, to love tenderly,  
and to walk humbly with our God,  
to walk humbly with our God.  
*We are companions on the journey...  
(repeat)*

No longer strangers to each other,  
no longer strangers in God's house;  
we are fed and we are nourished  
by the strength of those who care,  
by the strength of those who care.  
*We are companions on the journey...*

*Words and Music: Carey Landry*  
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### **Sending and Blessing**

As you go about your tasks this week,  
put your whole self into it and  
do everything in the name of Jesus Christ, your Lord.

And be blessed with the creative breath of your Maker,  
be blessed with the reconciling love of your Saviour,  
and be blessed with the wonder and wisdom of your Holy Companion and Friend.

Rev Kath Merrifield  
14 August 2022