

## God's Faithfulness – Our Good Treasure.

### Gathering

*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.*

### Greeting

### Light Candle

### Acknowledgement of Country

We stand and watch the waves rolling in, shaping the coastline. We look out and see the Dharawal trees standing tall in field and bush. We walk this land that holds the footsteps of countless generations and we acknowledge the traditional custodians, the Wadi Wadi people and their care and connection to this Country.

### Prayer

Good and Gracious God, Source of the evolving Universe, Source of all Life, All creation is charged with your Divine Energy.

Ignite your Spark within us, That we may know ourselves As truly human and holy, Irrevocably part of the Web of Life.

All creation – each star and every flower, – each drop of water and every person, – each and every atom, down to its very electrons, explodes with the revelation of your sacred mystery.

Our minds alone cannot fathom such splendour, Our hearts can only respond in awe, praise and gratitude.

Forgive us, we pray, our ignorance And insecurities which – blind us to your Thumbprint writ large, – deafen us to the sacred space – between two heartbeats, – prompt us in arrogance to demand and dominate, – numb us to the destruction we've caused, – hold us hostage to "either-or" thinking and living.

May we always walk gently upon this earth, – in right relationship, – nurtured by your Love, – taking only what we need, – giving back to the earth in gratitude, – honoring all with reverence, – reconciling and healing, – mindful of those who will come after, – recognizing our proper place as part of, not apart from, your creation.

Grant us the strength and courage, we pray, For such radical transformation into your Kingdom.

Then we, too, with the very stones will shout, "HOSANNA."

(Source: Michelle Balek, OSF, Progressive Christianity)

## **Song**

### **Morning Opens Wide Before Us**

Words; Kathy Galloway, Iona

Tune: Regent's Square (Praise my soul the King of heaven)

Morning opens wide before us  
like a door into the light.  
Just beyond the day lies waiting  
ready to throw off the light,  
and we stand upon its threshold  
poised to turn and take it's flight.

Now the earth in all its glory  
springs to meet the rising sun,  
warms to all who walk upon it,  
cradling all that will be done.  
All our labour, all our living  
mingle and become as one.

We receive God's graceful moment,  
while the day is fresh and still,  
ours to choose how we will greet it,  
ours to make it what we will.  
Here is given perfect freedom,  
every hope in love to fulfil.

As we take first step together,  
passing through the door of day,  
may the love of Christ the Creator  
give us peace in all that we say,  
heart for all that lies before us,  
grace to guide us on our way.

<b>Listening for God's Voice</b>
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## **Bible Reading**

### **Psalm 91 - Assurance of God's Protection**

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,  
who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,  
will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress;

my God, in whom I trust.'  
For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler  
and from the deadly pestilence;  
he will cover you with his pinions,  
and under his wings you will find refuge;  
his faithfulness is a shield and buckler.  
You will not fear the terror of the night,  
or the arrow that flies by day,  
or the pestilence that stalks in darkness,  
or the destruction that wastes at noonday.

A thousand may fall at your side,  
ten thousand at your right hand,  
but it will not come near you.  
You will only look with your eyes  
and see the punishment of the wicked.

Because you have made the LORD your refuge,  
the Most High your dwelling-place,  
no evil shall befall you,  
no scourge come near your tent.

For he will command his angels concerning you  
to guard you in all your ways.  
On their hands they will bear you up,  
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.  
You will tread on the lion and the adder,  
the young lion and the serpent you will trample under foot.

Those who love me, I will deliver;  
I will protect those who know my name.  
When they call to me, I will answer them;  
I will be with them in trouble,  
I will rescue them and honour them.  
With long life I will satisfy them,  
and show them my salvation.

### **Jeremiah 32:1-15 – Jeremiah buys a field**

The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of King Zedekiah of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar. At that time the army of the king of Babylon was besieging Jerusalem, and the prophet Jeremiah was confined in the court of the guard that was in the palace of the king of Judah, where King Zedekiah of Judah had confined him. Zedekiah had said, 'Why do you prophesy and say: Thus says the LORD: I am going to give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; King Zedekiah of Judah shall not escape out of the hands of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be given into the hands of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him face to face and see him eye to eye; and he shall take Zedekiah to Babylon, and there he shall remain

until I attend to him, says the LORD; though you fight against the Chaldeans, you shall not succeed?'

Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came to me: Hanamel son of your uncle Shallum is going to come to you and say, 'Buy my field that is at Anathoth, for the right of redemption by purchase is yours.' Then my cousin Hanamel came to me in the court of the guard, in accordance with the word of the LORD, and said to me, 'Buy my field that is at Anathoth in the land of Benjamin, for the right of possession and redemption is yours; buy it for yourself.' Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

And I bought the field at Anathoth from my cousin Hanamel, and weighed out the money to him, seventeen shekels of silver. I signed the deed, sealed it, got witnesses, and weighed the money on scales. Then I took the sealed deed of purchase, containing the terms and conditions, and the open copy; and I gave the deed of purchase to Baruch son of Neriah son of Mahseiah, in the presence of my cousin Hanamel, in the presence of the witnesses who signed the deed of purchase, and in the presence of all the Judeans who were sitting in the court of the guard. In their presence I charged Baruch, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Take these deeds, both this sealed deed of purchase and this open deed, and put them in an earthenware jar, in order that they may last for a long time. For thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land.

## **Reflection**

This week we jump to the 32nd chapter of Jeremiah- so far the whole of Jeremiah's story has been misery with God reminding the people of their sin and that there will be punishment; saying again and again that he's had enough, no more chances. Then we come to chapters 30 – 33 and things change, these chapters are known as the Book of Consolations. Has God suddenly gone soft? Is he fickle and indecisive? No. He is faithful even when His people continue to turn away and do the wrong thing. There will be consequences for their ongoing disobedience and it's not far away!

The outposts of Israel's military defences have been conquered. The army of Babylon has surrounded Jerusalem and the siege in its second year. Conditions in Jerusalem are horrific with disease and despair everywhere, even to the point of starvation breeding cannibalism. In the next few months, the gates will be battered down and the walls will be breached, the army defeated, and the civic leaders killed, the city sacked and the temple burned to the ground. The people will be deported to Babylon and the Land of Promise will be empty and desolate - for a very long time!

But God's view is far reaching, the time will come when they will return to the land, more importantly, the time will come when their hearts will return to the LORD. God doesn't wait until they cry out; when they cry out the promise will already be there before them. We understand that idea- when we pray we often find that God's answer, direction or instruction is already there in the bible. And we certainly see that in Jesus' life, death and resurrection - at the right time He sent Jesus the ultimate, living sign and promise of God's faithfulness.

So today we find Jeremiah in the midst of a situation that is going from bad to worse. He has been constantly warning that the people need to turn back to God or Babylon will defeat them. Finally, King Zedekiah has had enough and imprisons Jeremiah. This is

where God tells Jeremiah that his cousin is going to come to see him. When Hanamel comes, Jeremiah sees this as God's promise being fulfilled. But what about this land sale? There are things here that don't make a lot of sense in 2022.

The other place you might remember hearing the same kind of language is in the book of Ruth. Naomi and Ruth have come back from Moab to Bethlehem. Ruth has been gleaning in Boaz' field and on the night of the harvest lies down at Boaz' feet – it all sounds a bit strange to us – but Boaz recognises that this means Ruth is willing to marry him. Understanding the laws of redemption Boaz knows there is one kinsman closer than him, so he goes to him explaining that Naomi is selling some land and asks if he is prepared to redeem the land, and by default, Ruth. The other kinsman refuses and so Boaz fulfills the legal requirements and Ruth becomes his wife.

This was all part of the way God provided for the people- not with Centerlink, but with this complex set of rules about what happens when someone is in financial difficulty and needs help. In part, *“If your kinsmen becomes poor and has to sell part of his land, his closest relative shall come and redeem what his kinsman has sold” (Leviticus 25:25)* Land is important, so if you need money it must first be offered to your kinsman so it can be retained within the family and when the year of jubilee comes it is returned to the owner.

Coming back to today's scripture, Jeremiah's kinsman wants to sell this land and so he comes to Jeremiah. But the land has already been occupied by the enemy- who would buy a field under those circumstances? Actually, what sort of kinsman would suggest it? But Jeremiah is looking at this God's way, verse 8-9 “I knew it was the word of the Lord so I bought the field...” he doesn't just agree, he pays what is asked AND does it all in public where everyone will see it.

He makes a point of sealing the deeds in a clay pot - who remembers the pictures of the Dead Sea Scrolls? Clay pots sealed up two thousand years before. Jeremiah knows that he will be long gone before the land is redeemed but he wants everyone to understand that God's promise is sound, it can be counted on, even when there are storms and suffering ahead.

You may have seen the time capsule that Queen Elizabeth II placed in the QVB that won't be opened until 2082. This week WIN news ran a story on the graduation of Yr12 at Wollongong High School. On their final day of school they were given the letters they had written as 12 year olds - I wonder what their responses were? Did some of them remember what they had written, is this something they have thought of along the way, something that has helped direct their life already? Some of them had probably long forgotten or the words held no particular significance. What were the dreams of a 12 year old? How did they think the intervening years would unfold?

Have you ever done something like that? I have taken part in a couple of retreats where we were encouraged to write a reflection or prayer that was then mailed to us some months later. It can be challenging to read your own words and then look at what you have done with those thoughts, dreams, plans. Has there been a time when you felt God was speaking to you, setting the course for your future? This week I asked a few people if they would like to share something of their experience...

Are there situations in your life where God is calling you to do the right thing, the upright thing, the not so popular thing, something that's going to be really obvious or stand against the crowd? Is He asking you to keep on being faithful in your prayers even when it seems

nothing is changing, the enemy is already in control? Last week as I was preparing the service, I was suddenly brought up short. Many years ago, there was a time when I was praying in a very concerted and deep way about a certain situation, time was moving on and nothing was changing, in fact the whole situation seemed to be getting worse. Eventually other things took over and my prayers became focused in different directions. Last week I suddenly realised that even though I had got tired and stopped praying, God's faithfulness had not stopped. He had been faithful, had heard the heart of my prayer and many years later I can see that those prayers have been answered.

Verse 16 tells us that once all the public conventions had been observed Jeremiah turns back to prayer "Ah, Lord God, you are the one who has made the whole earth, the universe, vast beyond our understanding. Single-handed, you have brought everything out of nothing, by your own powerful hand. Nothing is beyond you, nothing is too much, too hard, too difficult. Nothing, absolutely nothing." (that's the Marion paraphrase ☺)

Stan Mast says, When it seems as though there is no hope for you or your church or your nation, remember that God put his money where his mouth was, as the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. God bought the farm so that we could have a place in the new heaven and the new earth.

Perhaps this week you would like to sit down and write yourself a letter, or a letter for someone special, perhaps your family, sharing how you have seen God at work in your life, or the vision you have for the future, or your prayer for them. Seal it up and post it or put it somewhere for the future – make your own clay pot – your statement about God's faithfulness, because as Jeremiah reminds us "Nothing is too difficult for You!"

## Responding

### Prayer for Others

#### Offering

We've been reminded this morning that God stands by the promises – as we look out into the vast universe beyond our sight, as we see birds returning in lockdown cities, as we see endangered species being nurtured and returned to the wild, we see God's faithfulness at work. We are called to be part of that – even when it seems that challenges are too big, the problems too great. We bring our gifts and offerings, knowing that God is faithful.

## Sending

### Sending and Blessing

Go simply, lightly, gently.

Go with obedience. Go with love.

And the blessing of God –

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, be with you now and forever.

Amen.

Marion Haigh  
25<sup>th</sup> September 2022