**Sunday 1 October 2017**

***Prayer before worship:***

*Holy Friend, you ask us to match our deeds with our words, yet our ability to do so appears to be sadly limited. Please send your Holy Spirit into our mind and feelings, that in the deep complexities of our being, there may rise up from within a greater ability to serve you as you deserve, and to fill all our living with your love, Amen.*

**Songs**: Come to the Water

There is a River

The Lord’s My Shepherd

**Welcome**

**Call to Worship:**

Jesus has called us here this day.  
***We are here, although for some of us it was not an easy choice***Often what we say and do are very different.  
***Help us follow God’s will, not with lip service, but with true humility.***  
Come, now is the time to worship.  
***Now is the time of healing, restoration, and hope.***

**Prayer**

Holy God, we thank you for the breath we draw at this moment, and for all that keeps us alive and enables us to know ourselves as a pulsing, mysterious being.

We rejoice that in our deepest self is embedded a fragment of glory, which refuses to capitulate to any kind of evil, and that rises up out of the ashes of failure with renewed courage.

We thank you for Jesus whose incomparable life and death makes that spark of glory within us leap with joyful anticipation for things yet to come.

We rejoice in the glory of your Holy Spirit that is not put off by our fragmented glory, but is a Friend who never despises or wearies.

And we are grateful for the church, sustained by your spirit and the Word of Christ Jesus, where we find fellowship with others who nurture a similar faith.

We thank you for all the rocky experiences where our spiritual thirst has been met by your living water, and we have been rejuvenated.

We rejoice that there is a greater glory to come, which we cannot begin to imagine, yet which will draw us closer to what you have intended for us since the foundation of the universe. For all these things we are so thankful Lord.

And in our thankfulness we also ask that this morning will be a time in which you touch each one of us –that we may –in offering our lives to you –be transformed more into your likeness. That we will be challenged; that we will grow; that You will mould us in your image.

We bring our lives to you, asking that our worship may arise from love and be shaped by love, and be directed towards that larger loving which is our soul’s desire. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

**Song: Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing**

**Children’s time**

Has your mother or your father ever asked you to help out around the house by doing some chores? (of course ☺)

This morning I am going to tell a story about a father who had two sons named John and William. One day dad walked into John's room to find him building a model airplane. "John, we had a lot of wind last night and there are leaves scattered all over the yard. Would you please rake the leaves and put them in these trash bags?" dad asked.

"Aw Dad, I don't have time to rake the leaves. I am working on this model airplane and I really want to finish it today," John answered.

The father turned and left the room and went to look for William. He found William watching TV. "William, there are a lot of leaves in the yard. Would you please rake the leaves and put them in these bags?" dad asked.

"Sure, I'd be glad to," William answered.

"Great!" said dad. "I'll leave the rake and the trash bags in the yard."

After his father left, John began to think about what he had asked him to to do. "I can rake the leaves and still have plenty of time to finish my model airplane later," John thought to himself. He went outside and began raking the leaves.

When dad returned home, he saw John raking leaves. "Where is William?" dad asked.

"I don't know. The last time I saw him he was watching TV," John replied.

When dad went into the house, guess what he saw? There sat William, still watching TV! I wonder which of the two sons pleased his father? John, who said he wouldn't rake the leaves, but did -- or William, who said he would rake the leaves, but didn't? ....

Jesus told a similar story to show how different people obey what God has called them to do. Two sons were asked by their father to go and work in his vineyard. One son answered, "No," but went and worked. The other son answered "yes" and did not go. Jesus wanted us to realise that what we do is more important than what we say we will do.

Jesus wants us to answer, "Yes," when he tells us to "Love one another," but what he really wants is for us to love one another! Jesus wants us to answer, "Yes," when he says,"Follow me," but what he really wants is for us to follow him!

That's the kind of child I want to be. Isn't it the kind of child you want to be?

Let’s pray - *Lord, sometimes we say, "Yes," but our actions say, "No." Help us to be faithful to do what you have called us to do. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

**Song:** There’s a River of Life

**Reading :** Philippians 2: 1-13

**Prayer of Confession** God does not seek to condemn but to save. So let us confess our sin in prayer. Most merciful God, we are not completely useless sinners, devoid of all light and love. To loathe ourselves would be to blaspheme your name as our Loving Creator

Nor are we hopelessly locked within our flawed genes and the vicious circles of world evil. To cynically settle for repeating old mistakes without hope of change, would be to blaspheme your name as our Loving Saviour.

But Lord, we do know that there have been times when we have been seduced by the evil of the world, and to some degree we have added to the frustration and pain of life.

We have not always been able to avoid selfish ambition or vain conceit, and sometimes humility has been hard to find in our lives. We have looked to our own interests above the interests of others and we are sorry.

But you have never ceased to love us, never forgotten our names, never ceased to recognise the potential for greatness that lies within each of us, never stopped working for our rescue and for our healing and fulfilment.

Please continue your work of redemption. Forgive our sins, cleanse us from the taint of evil, and deliver us from our individual weaknesses. In the times when temptation comes close, help us to be aware of what is happening and to name evil for what it is. Amen!

**Assurance of Forgiveness** My sisters and brothers, embrace your salvation. Once you have honestly made your confession, and prayed for forgiveness, don’t insult God by returning to past sins and poring over your shame. Let the past go. Embrace the future without burden or anxiety. For you “know in whom you have believed, and that he is able to keep safe all you have committed to him until the Great Day” of final victory comes. Thanks be to God!  Amen!

**Song:** Be Still for the Presence of the Lord

**Readings:** Exodus 17: 1-17

Matthew 21: 23-32

**Sermon**

**Song with offering:** Breathe on me Breath of God

**Dedication of Offering:**

Faithful God, we gratefully acknowledge that you are the giver of all things.  You call us to share these gifts so that we may experience the joy and humility of giving to others.  We pray that this very act of offering our gifts to you will enable us to be obedient disciples of your work.  We are blessed to receive and to offer the message of salvation -Jesus Christ is Lord.  Praise your holy name!  Amen.

**Intercessory Prayer**

Lord we come before you now with our prayers for others.

Great Lover of the world, we pray that the meek may be encouraged and the proud may be humbled, and that the losers may be comforted and boastful winners may be discomforted.

We pray that the thin-skinned may be encouraged and the tough-hided become more sensitive, and that the downtrodden may be uplifted and the oppressors may be overthrown,

We pray that the suffering may receive relief and the unthinking and heedless may be made more aware, and that the drug addicts may find release and the power-freaks may be kept in check

We pray that the lonely may find friends, and the much admired and praised may be saved from believing such adulation, and that the dying may see God’s face in the darkness, and the grieving may find Christ in their tears and loneliness,

We pray that those who feel sorely tempted may be held safe, and those who don’t even recognise temptation be given a wake-up call, and that the secular world may be saved from despair, and that the church may be saved from self-righteousness,

We pray that those thirsty for faith may permit Christ to find them, and that believers may permit Christ to regularly invade their comfort zone,

Source of all light and life and holy joy, bless all who pray to you this day, and bless also those who do not know how to pray. Through Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen.

**Lead into Communion / Song**: Take our Bread

**Communion**

Let's pray together:  
We come to church hungry, Lord!

We are hungry for comfort, hungry for love,  
hungry for a new way of living, hungry for your word.  
Thank you for giving us this place and this time to worship, and we are eager to taste your goodness in community, with our brothers and sisters. Bless us as we feast on the Bread of Life today. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

I invite you to this table in the name of the One who said, “I am the bread of life.” This is the table of our Lord Jesus Christ;  
it is here that we remember how he gave his body and his blood to save us. On the night he was betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ took bread  
and after giving thanks to God, broke it and gave it to his disciples  
He said, “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Let’s pray together:

We give you thanks, Lord God, for Jesus Christ, who you sent to save us and redeem us, and be the messenger of your will. He is your Word, inseparable from you. You sent him from heaven, to take on our humanity and yet show us more of You. In fulfilment of your will he stretched out his hands in suffering to enter into our suffering and transform it into life. Of his own free choice he suffered in order to bring an end to death and to shatter the chains of the evil one, to trample underfoot the powers of hell and to lead us into light. And so we give you all honour and all glory –with Christians through history and around the world, we gather at your table.

And we ask that you will send your Spirit upon us so that we may know that all who eat and drink at your table  
in our congregation and around the world are one body, one holy people.

*[The bread is distributed]*  
The bread of life, Jesus’ body, broken for you.

After supper Jesus took the cup of wine;  
and after giving thanks, gave it to them and said,  
“Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant  
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.  
Whenever you drink it, remember me.  
  
Lets pray together:  
Lord, give us clean hearts, forgiving hearts, praising hearts.  
As we drink this, we join with our brothers in sisters in heaven and on earth,  
giving thanks to you in an endless song of praise. Amen.

*[the juice is distributed]*The blood of Christ was shed for you.

**Concluding words:**We have come to the Lord’s table,  
we have eaten the bread of heaven.  
The Holy Spirit will transform us from within  
so that we can see with Jesus’ eyes,  
hear with Jesus’ ears,  
speak with Jesus’ mouth,  
feel the world as Jesus feels;  
to taste and see that the Lord is good.  
Able to go into the week ahead,  
nourished by the Bread of Life.

**Final Song: Calvary**

**Notices**

**Benediction**

We never leave this house of prayer on our own.

Our help is in the God who made heaven and earth!

So may the love of God go with you into tomorrow,

And may you know the love of Christ for you,

And the fellowship of the Spirit around you,

Today, tomorrow and always. Amen!

**Sermon**

It’s a strange conversation –there is Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem –this is after the triumphal entry has happened and things are starting to heat up... The upper echelon of the Temple hierarchy –these chief priests and elders of the people –this group of men who come from a long running priestly lineage, who have plenty of wealth and plenty of power –who are collaborators with the Roman powers, this group of supposed temple authority are wanting to get a handle on what this new man Jesus is on about... is he going to bring them trouble...? They are keeping a closer eye on him now... and they are asking a key question –under whose authority is he acting?

It is quite a common question really –one that seems to be asked a lot in our political situation at the moment... who should have authority as our government is formed? Who actually has authority –and who gives them that authority? We like authority to be clear... and well deserved...

So the ones who supposedly were *the authority* come up to Jesus while he is teaching in the Temple... and they ask him... by what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?

And Jesus says –well, I will also ask you a question –and if you answer me, then I will answer your question...

And so he asks –John’s baptism –where did it come from? -From heaven or from human origin?

So these bigwigs get into a huddle and try to determine their answer... and as they try, they realise that whatever they answer, they are going to get into trouble –if they say John’s baptism is from heaven, they realise that they are leaving themselves open to be challenged as to why they have not therefore believed John... but if they say his baptism came from human origins, the people –who generally believe John is a prophet, will be really mad with them.

So they opt out and tell Jesus they don’t know... they have no answer.

And Jesus then says so I won’t answer your question either...

but then he goes on to say... what do you think -

There was a man who had 2 sons... and on he goes with the parable... of the two sons –the first son asked to do a job for his father and says no... the second son says yes... but while the second son then does nothing, the first son chooses to do the task after all.

And Jesus concludes with the question –which son did what his father wanted?

They can answer that question... the first son...

And then Jesus cuts to the quick –tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. You didn’t believe John –but they did...

Perhaps in effect, Jesus answers their question after all –the authority is found when the gospel is lived out –when the Word becomes flesh.

The parable is a challenge to their behaviour... they are compared to the behaviour of those with no status –those seen as the sinners, but who eventually choose to follow the ways of God –and when they do, actually get on and live out the reality of their decision. Whilst these chief priests and elders –gifted with status and a long heritage of priestly blood... are all talk and no action.

And as with any good parable –we are invited into the story... and we are challenged to see where we find ourselves. Are we the first son or the second? The one who has the right answers or the one who gets up and does the job?

Over the last weeks leading up to the election, we have had many promises made to us by politicians...

Everyone seems to have promised something...

But as much as I hope they are real, I cannot help but be at least a little bit sceptical... Are they empty promises I ponder...

Empty promises like the words of the second son in the parable of Jesus... perhaps made with good intentions, but then so many reasons why it doesn’t get lived out in reality.

I remember a significant sermon in my student days some decades ago now... by Tony Campolo –a sociologist and preacher from the United States. It was a sermon written for Good Friday and it had a much repeated line –said with a thick Southern drawl –that went

*It’s Friday... but Sunday’s a coming.*

As you could probably imagine, he was emphasising that yes there is pain, but it will pass; yes there is the cross, but the resurrection is real.

It was a message of immense hope.

And as I was preparing for preaching today, those words came back to my mind...

But they were no longer words of hope, but of challenge... and the days had changes... in a far more ordinary kiwi accent, the sentence went like this -

It’s Sunday, but Monday’s a coming!

Because here at church we make all sorts of wonderful promises -

When it’s only talk... and empty promises... we can say things on Sunday, but what happens on Monday?

God calls us to be the people of faith in our community... and on Sunday we say yes Lord... then Monday comes... and it is not so easy... we have other priorities... we get busy... we forget the priorities of God all too easily...

What happens when life gets hard? Real life, when the kids are grumpy, workmates are a pain, traffic is awful, money is a struggle, ordinary hard stuff we face... let alone when the extra hard things get added in –like illness, or loss of a job, or failure...

It’s Sunday but Monday’s a coming.

Which brings me to our Old Testament reading from Exodus.

The Israelites are out there in the wilderness –finally free from slavery, but now thirsty. And so they quarrel and they grumble. Just like when they were hungry they moan about what is and they romanticise what was. They question of God is really with them. Moses doesn’t know what to do, so God tells him to go with some elders and his staff out in front and strike the rock –water will come out for them to drink. So he does and it does... you may read that and think yeah right... but Moses had spent 40 years in the semi-desert on the Sinai Peninsular, and he had learnt how to survive –he knew how to strike a rock at a particular place for water to flow. God’s command was not absurd. It was wisdom at work.

And when their thirst is quenched, the people are strengthened enough to fight the attacking Amalekites -with Joshua leading them, and while Moses held up his hands on the top of the hill. Aaron and Hur had to help him hold his hands up because when he got tired and lowered them his soldiers began to lose the battle. And so together they won the battle –each needing the other.

Sunday was all well and good –victory from Egypt, led through the Red Sea triumphantly... but then there was Monday –no food... then no water... and the people jump to the assumption that God is not present.

How wrong were they.

Thirst and other hardship is no sign of God’s absence. We are called to believe God is present on Monday just as much as on Sunday.

It’s Sunday, but Monday’s a coming.

Will we still recognise God in our midst tomorrow?

Because it is as we see God in the hard parts of our life that we will have the strength to continue as followers of Jesus.

It is as we turn to God in our thirst that we will be led to the place of refreshing water.

Do we dare seek out the source of living water tomorrow as much as today?

It’s Sunday, but Monday’s a coming.

How are you going to live tomorrow?

For it is tomorrow that will show which son we are.

It is tomorrow that will show the true authority we are living under.

It is tomorrow that will show our true identity.

It’s Sunday, but Monday’s a coming.

**Matthew 21:23-32New International Version (NIV)**

**23**Jesus entered the temple courts, and, while he was teaching, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him. “By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you this authority?”

**24**Jesus replied, “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. **25**John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?”

They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ **26**But if we say, ‘Of human origin’—we are afraid of the people, for they all hold that John was a prophet.”

**27**So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Then he said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.

**28**“What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work today in the vineyard.’

**29**“‘I will not,’ he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

**30**“Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, ‘I will, sir,’ but he did not go.

**31**“Which of the two did what his father wanted?”

“The first,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. **32**For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.

**Exodus 17New International Version (NIV)**

**17**The whole Israelite community set out from the Desert of Sin, traveling from place to place as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. **2**So they quarreled with Moses and said, “Give us water to drink.”

Moses replied, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you put the Lordto the test?”

**3**But the people were thirsty for water there, and they grumbled against Moses. They said, “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to make us and our children and livestock die of thirst?”

**4**Then Moses cried out to the Lord, “What am I to do with these people? They are almost ready to stone me.”

**5**The Lord answered Moses, “Go out in front of the people. Take with you some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. **6**I will stand there before you by the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink.” So Moses did this in the sight of the elders of Israel.**7**And he called the place Massah[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+17%3A+1-17+++++++++++++&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1991a)] and Meribah[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+17%3A+1-17+++++++++++++&version=NIV#fen-NIV-1991b)] because the Israelites quarreled and because they tested the Lord saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

**8**The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. **9**Moses said to Joshua, “Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands.”

**10**So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. **11**As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. **12**When Moses’ hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up—one on one side, one on the other—so that his hands remained steady till sunset. **13**So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword.

**14**Then the Lord said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven.”

**15**Moses built an altar and called it The Lord is my Banner. **16**He said, “Because hands were lifted up against[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+17%3A+1-17+++++++++++++&version=NIV#fen-NIV-2000c)] the throne of the Lord,[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+17%3A+1-17+++++++++++++&version=NIV#fen-NIV-2000d)] the Lord will be at war against the Amalekites from generation to generation.”