**Sunday 5 February 2017**

***Prayer before worship***

In his greeting to the church for Waitangi Day, our Moderator Rev Richard Dawson began with a traditional Maori karakia which he prays for and over the whole Church, and asks us to join him in:

*He hōnore, he korōria ki te Atua (Honour and glory to God)
He maungārongo ki te whenua (Peace on Earth)*
*He whakaaro pai ki ngā tāngata katoa (Goodwill to all people)
Hangā e te Atua he ngākau hou (Lord, develop a new heart)
Ki roto, ki tēnā, ki tēnā o mātou (Inside all of us)
Whakatōngia to wairua tapu (Instill in us your sacred spirit)
Hei awhina, hei tohutohu i a mātou (Help us, guide us*) *Hei ako hoki i ngā mahi mō tēnei rā (In all the things we need to learn today) Amine (Amen).*

Richard comments *–“It is fitting, is it not, to pray for the whole nation on what is our nation’s proper birthday – Waitangi Day! It is fitting also to think about what Waitangi means for each of us because one thing is clear, if we don’t take some personal responsibility for making Waitangi truly a part of our own hearts then we will not see the blessing that can flow from a united country and united peoples. This Maori proverb says it well:* ***He waka eke noa.*** *(A canoe which we are all in with no exception.) In other words, we are all in this land together so we may as well start* ***working together******for each other and leave no one behind.*** *This nation was begun with a deep sense that we should create a fair and just society. We should not lose sight of this precisely because there are still deep injustices to be dealt with today. Let us welcome all into our canoe. Let us help all to know they belong here. Let us work while it is still light!”*

**Welcome**

**Call to Worship**:

Who of us can comprehend the mind of God?

Only God’s own Spirit knows every thought.

***Yet in Christ Jesus, the mind of God,***

***like a pure light, has illumined our dark world.***

Light rises in the darkness for those who are true,

The Lord is gracious, merciful and righteous.

***What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,***

***nor the mind of man conceived,***

***God has prepared for those who love him***

**Songs of Praise:** We enter your courts Lord

Beneath the southern cross

**Opening Prayer**

Holy God, dearest Friend,

            you are the light of our seeing,

            the wisdom of our understanding,

            the delight of our loving.

Assist your people

            to trust you so that we may begin to understand you,

           to understand you so that we may better love you,

            and to love you so that we may more eagerly worship and serve you,

And as we head into Waitangi weekend we remember the covenant you offer us

To live lives reconciled with You Lord, and seeking reconciliation in the world.

God of truth, do not spare us your painful light, lest we perish in the darkness.

God of hope, do not spare us your rebuke, les we perish in our complacency.

God of mercy, do not spare us your forgiveness, lest we perish in our despair.

God of abounding grace, do not spare us your healing, lest we perish in our ineptitude.

God our God, grant to each of us a genuine repentance, hearts open to your radical forgiveness, and faith restored to full strength,

And as we are forgiven, bring us into that new day of grace and hope

In Jesus’ name, Amen.

**Birthday Basket**

**Offering and Dedication**

Our Heavenly Father, with great kindness you lead your people. You give wisdom to help us recognize Christ as the Lord of glory. Enlighten us by your Spirit to discern how to use the gifts that you have bestowed on us. May all of our church’s ministries serve as channels of your powerful grace to people in need of help. We dedicate these tithes and offerings through Jesus Christ, our risen Lord. Amen.

**Time with the Children** treaties and covenants

The good news of Jesus came to Aotearoa to bring peace. The Treaty of Waitangi was called in Maori Te Kawenata o Waitangi, the Covenant of Waitangi., reflecting the influence of the gospel on New Zealand. A covenant in the Bible is an agreement between God and people.

It is a special agreement though that is different from a contract.

In a contract, the parties say if you do this then I will do that...

Whereas in a covenant, the parties say, no matter what, I will...

So what do you know about the Treaty of Waitangi?.... (who has been learning about it at school this week?) Show the copy of the treaty...

One of the wonderful things about the treaty is how involved the missionaries were in making it happen.

**Read the story of Tarore and her book (or Patuone (book 4 Of the Chronicles of Paki series).** Patuone was known as a peace maker. He was one of the chiefs who signed the Treaty of Waitangi. ...Then join in the prayer Richard Dawson asked us to pray –from order of service

**Lord’s Prayer**

**Song:** National anthem

***Children leave for a DVD (Young Church begins for 2017 next Sunday)***

**Remembering our Epiphany verse...** Psalm 27: 1

*The Lord is my light and my salvation—
    whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life—
    of whom shall I be afraid?*

**Bible Reading:** Isaiah 58: 1-12

**Prayers of Confession**

God, through the prophet Isaiah, has required believers to practice what they preach. It is written:

This is the religion I choose:

            To cut the bonds of wickedness,

            to untie the ropes of the yoke,

            to set the oppressed free,

            to break every yoke,

            to share you bread with the hungry,

            and your house with the homeless.

And that can only bring us into a place of constant repentance and renewal. So let us pray...

God of truth, do not spare us your painful light, lest we perish in the darkness.

God of hope, do not spare us your rebuke, les we perish in our complacency.

God of mercy, do not spare us your forgiveness, lest we perish in our despair.

God of abounding grace, do not spare us your healing, lest we perish in our ineptitude.

God of the saints and prophets, God our God, grant to each of us a genuine repentance, hearts open to your radical forgiveness, and faith restored to full strength, Through Christ Jesus our Saviour, Amen.

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

Know this for certain: Christ is not only our tutor but our loving redeemer. Those who come to him in sincerity and truth shall never be cast away.

In his name I declare to you: Your sins are forgiven! Thanks be to God!

**Song:** Holy Spirit come

**Bible Readings:** Matthew 5: 13-20

1 Cor.2:1-12 (& 13-16)

***Matthew 5:13-20 (NIV)***

***13****“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

***14****“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.****15****Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.****16****In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

***17****“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.****18****For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.****19****Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.****20****For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

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| ***1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (NIV)****2 And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+2%3A1-12%2C1+Corinthians+2%3A13-16&version=NIV" \l "fen-NIV-28396a" \o "See footnote a)] 2 For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. 4 My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, 5 so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power.**6 We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. 7 No, we declare God’s wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written:**“What no eye has seen,  what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived”[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+2%3A1-12%2C1+Corinthians+2%3A13-16&version=NIV#fen-NIV-28404b)*]—    the things God has prepared for those who love him— 10 these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.**The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who knows a person’s thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.12 What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.****13****This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+2:13-16" \l "fen-NIV-28408a" \o "See footnote a)]****14****The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.****15****The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments,****16****for,**“Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?”[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1+Corinthians+2:13-16#fen-NIV-28411b)*]**But we have the mind of Christ.* |

**Sermon:** Discipleship 1: How we think as disciples

In Matthew 5 after the beatitudes we hear these amazing words –*You are the light of the world.....A person does not light a lamp then put it under a bowl. Instead they place it on a lamp stand, where it can provide light to all in that house.*

Notice our epiphany image is continuing... light to the world.

Here is Jesus talking to his disciples about what it means to be a disciple. It means something that transforms us as we participate with Jesus.

The disciples are told they are the light of the world –a big call –that is equally said to us as his disciples –which seems quite a challenge in our world today that seems pretty full of shadow and darkness.

And then the passage goes on to say - *if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. -*It seems that who we are on the inside matters –a whole lot.

But this is a kind of tricky concept –the idea of salt without flavour, as I don’t know about you, but I have never known salt to lose its saltiness –and when I looked it up I discovered that any scientist will tell you sodium chloride is extremely stable and actually cannot lost its flavour. So what is Jesus saying?

What we do know is that back in the time of Jesus, salt was used in many different ways –as a purifier, preservative; seasoning, and disinfectant.. and so it was very valuable –even being used as a currency form for trade at one time –which is why our word salary comes from the same root as salt.

And because of that value of salt, there were also those charlatans who would mix in other products with the salt to make it go further and make more money... so in that way the salt would indeed have lost its flavour.

But salt that is salt through and through though, will not lose its flavour. Superficial appearance will never be enough. Like salt, what matters is what is on the inside. We can “appear” Christian like salt would appear like salt on the table –but it is when it is tasted that the reality is known. What matters for us as disciples of Jesus is how we are actually salt –the way we are feeding people, how we are a cleansing presence, the flavour we bring to our communities –they will be the defining factors about our Christian life. -Whether or not we actually bring salt and light to those around us in shadow.

And Jesus was convinced that we *are* the light of the world –not that we *should* be but that we *are* –whether we think we are or not. -Because it is actually not about our own individual light –it is about the light of Jesus –as we accept Jesus into our lives, we offer the light of Jesus to the world.

The Pharisees taught that if you did certain things, followed certain rules, then you could bring some light to the world... and we can so easily get caught up with this attitude –and end up with the sense that we can never live up to what is being asked of us. We will always feel some sense of failure. And with this perspective tends to come a sense of judgement and bitterness upon those who do not follow these rules. And it becomes even more complicated when we disagree about what is on the list of rules.

But in contrast to the Pharisees -Jesus says let me be the light through you. I will gift you the light and you will then share it. I will give you what you need to be the light and the salt. And you will see the fruits of the Spirit grow in your life, from the inside. We are freed from the burden of good deeds, and invited into a way of love.

And Paul describes the way of love as grace, not work –given, not earned.

So we are left with this kind of awkward situation that our light and saltiness doesn’t depend on the good acts we perform –we cannot go through the checklist and say yes, I visited my neighbour, yes, I gave to the poor and yes, I said my prayers so I am bringing light... instead Jesus says. It starts with you getting to know me –and as you do that you will change from the inside... and you will do those things –visiting your neighbour, and giving to the poor and saying your prayers, but it might actually look quite different.

This is the start of discipleship. The saying to Jesus, yes I want to follow you. -I want to spend time with you and learn from you and live the way you want me to. Not saying yes to a checklist of rules. It is the realisation that what we do by ourselves is good and kind but what we do in Christ is discipleship.

And Jesus says that his disciples will not enter the kingdom of heaven unless their righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees... it seems a strange comment... for the Pharisees obeyed the law scrupulously... so we clearly need to understand righteousness as more than obedience to the law. Jesus is clarifying that righteousness instead of being about ticking boxes of behaviour, is now seen as participating in the work of God, in Jesus.

And while we may hear the words of the text speaking to us individually –in the Greek the “your” in “your righteousness” is plural –it is collective –it is referring to all the disciples together. It is about what we do and who we are as a community, not just as individuals. Our righteousness is tied up with the righteousness of those disciples alongside us. Together we are in Christ.

But what does that really mean –being in Christ?

Being in Christ gets some pretty strange interpretations sometimes. And I suspect we often make it into something way more pious and impossible than it is in reality.

So let me say a few things to start about discipleship –firstly it is not something we can do in secret –once a light is hidden it is no longer light... a candle cannot stay burning when it is covered. There will be a little smoke and then there will be nothing...

So, we cannot keep silent –whether it is about the atrocities happening in our world, or the abuse we may witness, or the neighbour we know is struggling or the person we know needs our prayer. Whether we pray, or visit or cook or fix or listen or march or give... so many different ways that we may live out what is happening on the inside –but firstly we need to understand that what is happening on our insides is important.

The motivation behind our actions is important. It goes back to love.

Love is the root of the matter –not some airy feeling, but the commitment to God and to the world –all people –with no limits.

And it is interesting to note in terms of being salt is that salt must be dispersed or dissolved to be used –it is a process of surrender –surrendering control, security, and self. That is the basis for our discipleship –knowing and following Jesus –the one who gave himself completely.

And that is what Paul was saying –in our reading from 1 Corinthians when he says -

*I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.*

As we delve into what he is saying, Christ crucified is not just what Paul sees –it is not about just looking at the cross and that alone –for Paul the cross –Christ crucified- has become the way by which he sees.

It is like the difference when you visit the optician –and you look at the chart of letter on the wall through those weird lenses... The cross acts more like the lens than that which is being looked at. It is the way we see the world. Through the eyes of ultimate love and sacrifice.

That is the way we gain the mind of Christ –by knowing him. Christ who was willing to go to the cross.

We spend time with the Bible as it tells us more of who Jesus is...

We spend time in prayer as we listen to Jesus...

And that forms us. It moulds us.

Discipleship is based in the relationship we have with Jesus –and just as we all form relationships in different ways, we will each have a relationship with Jesus that looks different from others.

That is where we start though.

If we want to be disciples of Jesus –if we are saying yes to his call on our lives... then we are to spend time with Jesus. And that doesn’t have to mean joining a monastery.

It means we will spend time in prayer and reading the Bible, but also that we will spend time thinking about Jesus, talking about Jesus, asking questions –with our fellow disciples.

So when for example, we look at what Trump is doing in the world –we pray and we read –but we also talk to our fellow disciples about our response –we let the Bible speak to us and challenge us... we listen... and we let Jesus be the Word that continues to speak. We work together to be accountable as we do this, so we do not fall into the trap of the Pharisees and simply look to a set of rules. We unpack what righteousness is together and how Jesus unpacks it -as he does in the Beatitudes.

If we are –like Paul –willing to say that all else will succumb to knowing Christ and his cross... then we will change –from the inside.

And as we read on in 1 Corinthians 2, Paul makes this contrast between wisdom and foolishness, now focusing on our wisdom being based in God’s wisdom. Paul tells us that it is God who reveals things to us through the Holy Spirit -so we cannot claim credit for revelation –it all comes from God.

And as learned as Paul was, he recognised that what God reveals to us is what really matters, rather than what we reason out or learn.

As Jonathan Swift (of ‘Gulliver’s Travels’) said, “Reasoning will never make a man correct an ill opinion, which by reasoning he never acquired.”

It seems that this is even more relevant today in a society labelled post-truth. People believe all sorts of crazy things, holding untenable positions and recent research tells us that when people are given facts to correct erroneous views held, the people do not tend to change their opinions, but instead become still more entrenched.

Paul isn’t saying that what we believe as Christians is not reasonable –or able to be reasoned –but he is saying that we come to faith by the action of God rather than our own action.

God does not want us to simply have a head-faith –neatly reasoned out -it needs to enter our heart too. Discipleship involves our minds and our hearts.

And as Paul puts it –*God’s wisdom is a mystery –*we will never in this life fully comprehend. But that is not to say we don not need to think as Christians. Think about what we believe and how we should behave and respond.

But it seems to me that the reality of our busy lives, we don’t actually spend much time in those conversations and with those thoughts... thinking through what we believe, how we think and why... and that is why it is so important to gather together –here at worship each week, and at other times in small groups where we can talk things through in a place of accountability, prayer and encouragement.

I suspect you know where this is going –the importance of making space to work at the relationship we have with Jesus –in community.

Living out our faith is not about being some religious watchdog in which we keep a check on the fulfilment of the law... whether inside the church or out there in the wider world, it is choosing to lives lives of a completely different quality that touches others with grace because it knows what it is to be touched by grace. Lives that involves us thinking and sharing our thoughts with others.

Discipleship starts on the inside- and Jesus invites you –come follow me and learn the mind of Christ. So be it, Amen,

**Prayers of Intercession**

God of love, have mercy on the world of human affairs where the gap between the advantaged and disadvantaged seems to be ever widening.

We pray for all victims of this injustice:

For the sick and the injured who cannot afford the latest in medical technology.

We pray for the hungry millions who have been denied the benefits of genetically improved grains, fruits and meats.

Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.

We pray for indigenous minorities whose health and education prospects lag far behind the general population.

We pray for the unemployed who have been cast aside by the electronic revolution in industry and commerce.

Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.

We pray for the second and third generation of refugees who are still living in camps that were set up in the previous century.

We pray for small nations who are being exploited or shut out of markets by the strong and aggressive.

Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.

We pray for the poor who cannot afford to pay the cost of obtaining justice in courts of law, or are unable bear the cost of life-saving surgery.

We pray for the lonely souls, who live, work, suffer or sorrow in solitude, without family to surround them our friends to support them.

Lord of love, enlarge our love of truth, justice and peace.

God of justice and mercy, keep your church faithful and compassionate.

Do not permit us to become so concerned with keeping our ecclesiastical wheels turning that we neglect to love our neighbour even as Christ Jesus has loved us.

In his name we pray. Amen

**Hymn:** Come to the celebration

**Communion**

Let us lift up our hearts.
   ***We lift them to the Lord.***
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
   ***It is right to give our thanks and praise.***
It is indeed right to give you our thanks and praise, O God,
for your mercy and justice are a light in our darkness
and your Word outlasts even heaven and earth which you have created.
Before the ages, your wisdom destined us for glory
and you have revealed your depths to us through the Spirit.
When we failed in righteousness and turned our worship into a mask
hiding our oppression, contempt and disregard of others,
you rejected our fasts and prayers
and sent prophets to denounce our rebellion and call us back to your ways.
In your child, Jesus, and him crucified,
we have seen the light of the world, and found a spring of healing that never fails.
You raised him from the dead, and through him, gave us your Spirit.
who has begun the rebuilding of our integrity
on the ancient foundations of justice, mercy and compassion.
Therefore with all the company of heaven and earth
we praise your holy name saying:
***Holy, holy, holy Lord,***
***God of  power and might,***
***heaven and earth are full of your glory.***
***Hosanna in the highest.***
***Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.***
***Hosanna in the highest.***
We recall the nature of his saving love at this time,

remembering how on the night he was betrayed,

he took bread and blessed it,

and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,

"Take, eat, this is body, given for you".

We remember, too, how in the same manner he took the cup and gave it to his disciples saying,

"This cup is my blood, the blood of the new covenant, poured out for you.

As often as you drink it, do so in remembrance of me".

Loving God as we look upon your table - the table you invite us to and at which you feed us as a mother feeds her children - with words of love and acts of tenderness, we give you thanks for all the life giving deeds that

you perform, not only within our hearts, but in the words and deeds of others. Loving God, send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts, that the bread we break may be for us communion in the body of Christ, and the cup of blessing which we bless may be for us communion in the blood of Christ; that being built up in love we may be strengthened in the unity of the faith and come to the fullness of the stature of Christ our Lord. Amen

**The Distribution of the Elements**

*Communion will be offered to you in your seats; please wait for all to be served so we may share this gift together.*

The body of Christ broken for you

The blood of Christ given for you

**Prayer**

Gracious God, we give you thanks for refreshing and renewing us in this meal with the life of Jesus, your Son, our Lord. Strengthened by his life - the food of eternal life - we go from here to be eager bearers of his word and willing followers of his way. In Jesus’ name we pray. Amen

 **Hymn:** Take my life and let it be

**Benediction and sung Amen**

All your ways and all your hours are in the hand of God.

Therefore, go out with confidence.

May Christ’s light so shine,

that all may see our loving deeds

and glorify our God whose love is everlasting.

The One who has begun good things in you,

does not accept the word ‘defeat.’

Thanks be to God!

And may the Love of God underpin you,

the fire of the Spirit indwell you,

and the saving grace of Christ always redeem you,

this day and always, Amen.