**Sunday 12 February 2017**

***Prayer before worship***

*It’s not always comfortable, God, but it is certainly good, that you go straight for the heart. You do not allow us to skate over the surface of life, filling our days with dry legality, and pretend righteousness; No, you come at us from the inside, challenging our thoughts and attitudes, our motives and perceptions; and shaping them into the fuel for change that gives us hearts like yours, and lives that are lived from the inside out. We praise you, O God, for your uncomfortable grace, your transforming Spirit, and for the gift of lives lived with integrity and compassion from the inside out. Amen.*

**Welcome**

**Call to Worship**

We gather in the house of the God who loves us, and who calls us each by name, to learn to live together as God’s family.

***From all walks of life, in every age and stage, we are called into God’s presence.***

May we all take our places together in building up Christ’s body, the Church.  May we learn new ways to join in reaching toward God’s vision for the world: unity and peace, joy and faith.

***May our worship strengthen our souls, and build our lives together as God’s people, one in Christ Jesus.***

**Songs of Praise:** This is holy ground

We worship and adore you

 **All in all**

**Opening Prayer**

Lord, you are indeed worthy

Worthy of us taking time to be here

Worthy of us placing you as priority

Here and now we come to re-set our sights on the love of  God.

This is a good place for it; this is a good day,

God is ready and willing

            to change our minds,

            unscramble our motives,

            and to focus again our purest longings.

This is a good place for it; this is a good time;

here and now we are in the presence of amazing grace;

God is ready and willing

            to bring hope to the disconsolate,

            refreshment to the worn and the weary,

            and new delight to those who walk in the way of the Lord.

God of Christ Jesus and our God, lift us above the mundane to the special, beyond empty platitudes to sincere praise, and awake in us that adoration which is the joy of loving hearts.

You are the God of grace and glory. We are yours, and by the miracle of grace, you are ours. Blessed be your name in all the earth, Amen.

**God @ work:**  Penny Tucker

**Birthday basket**

**Offering and Dedication**

God, our teacher, you graciously provide direction to guide us through Scripture. Thank you for the joy we feel when we do what is right and live according to your ways. By your Spirit, nurture our growth as individuals and as a congregation. Let our community of faith readily share with our neighbors the love of your Son, our Savior. Accept our offerings in his name. Amen.

**Time with the Children**

Last week we talked about the treaty of Waitangi being a covenant we live under… and the way we also live in a covenant with God…

And now we are beginning another new covenant relationship –as you all start a new year at Young Church.

God delights in the learning of his children –however old we are…

We are all learning new things about following the way of Jesus

And so we are going to take a moment to recognise the importance of what happens in our times of learning –that we are all being formed more like Jesus.

As we learn stories from the Bible and see what they mean for us in 2017 we all work together and learn together.

We are very blessed here at Kohi to have such a wonderful team of Young Church leaders

**Lord’s Prayer**

**A Covenant for the New Year**

*As Young Church begins a new year, we take time to renew our commitment to God and to one another as disciples of Jesus and to support one another wherever we are on the journey of faith.*

Following a call, a nudge, a quest, for our lives.

***Following God’s love.***

Help us, God, in the decisions we make every day,

***in the “pegs” or the values that we decide to hang our life on,***

***that we will reflect your love and fairness in our lives and in our world.***

As they year’s activities begin

***We commit to follow the teaching of Jesus in our lives;***

to wrestle with the meanings of the stories in the Bible,

***and try to live them out each day***

***in conversations with family, with people at work,***

***the stranger ahead of me in the check-out line,***

***and in the quiet conversations we have with ourselves each day.***

As Young Church begins another new year

***We commit to supporting our teachers and the children in our midst***

***Encouraging, caring. loving***

***as we all continue to learn together***

I realize that I cannot do this on my own,

***that I am dependent on God’s love and grace in my life,***

***and it is as I receive God’s love for me***

***that I am able to love the “other” whom I meet.***

Help me also to learn what it means to be a prophet,

***God’s voice for right relations,***

***among all those that I share this world with,* Amen.**

 *(adapted from United Church of Canada resource)*

**Song:** Brother, sister, let me serve youi

***Children leave for Young Church programme***

**Powerpoint Reflection:** Psalm 119: 1-8

**Bible Reading:** Deuteronomy 30: 15-20

***15****See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.*

***16****For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.*

***17****But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them,*

***18****I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.*

***19****This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live*

***20****and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

These were the words of goodbye from Moses to the people he had led from Egypt through the wilderness to the verge of the promised land. As he finishes, he offers them an enduring gift and a blessing –calling them to covenant faithfulness to God who has rescued them. Follow the Law of God and things will go well for you as a people. We may struggle with such simplicity as we see the faithful die young... but as we see it in relation to a wider people or nation, it may make more sense. When we follow the ways of God, we will care for the least as well as the most famous or loved... and there will be blessing. The Law of God –Moses explains- works for the good of the people. But as a people we continue to get it wrong, and so we return to our place of confession –let us pray...

**Prayer of Confession**

First and Last,

Creator of the world,

Redeemer of all things,

Maker of covenants,

Source of grace;

You are the light of the minds that know you,

You are the strength of those who serve you

You are the rest of those who go in search of you;

Beside you there is no greater.

In our worship of you, we come and we pause;

we rest from our work and responsibilities,

and we rest from our play and from our fantasies,

to enjoy you,

to enjoy your beauty,

to enjoy your world and our life in you.

You call us to walk in your light, but we too often choose darkness.

Hear us now as we recall our sins before you.

You give life but too often we are tempted to follow ways that are deadly.

Holy God, you have called us to freedom,

but we bind ourselves with fear.

You have called us to new directions,

but we cling to the path we know.

You have called us to reach out in love,

but we draw inward for protection.

You have called us to choose you and life

but we choose ourselves and death.

Forgive us, O God,

help us to trust you,

and lead us to wholeness and peace.

**Assurance of Forgiveness**

As the Israelites stood at the frontier of the Promised Land, God offered them a choice. They were invited to choose life and to choose blessing by being faithful and obedient to God’s command. This is not a one time opportunity; God’s call to life and blessing is refreshed each day. Accept the life that God is offering you today. Be forgiven, forgive others and be set free to live abundantly. Amen.

**Song:**  Thank you Jesus for your love to me

**Bible Readings:** Matthew 5: 21-37

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

Matthew 5: 21-37

You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not murder'; and 'whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, 'You fool,' you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.
   You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.
   It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
   Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

**3**Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. **2**I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. **3**You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? **4**For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?

**5**What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.**6**I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. **7**So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. **8**The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. **9**For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building.

**Sermon** Discipleship 2: How we act as disciples

**Hymn:** Teach us O loving heart of Christ

**Prayers of Intercession**

God of surprises, continue to have mercy on your church.

Let your Spirit move among the ranks of its many denominations,

by your fire forge links of love,

by your wind impel it into service for your world.

Where it is in error, convert it.

Where it is indifferent, re-awaken it.

Where it is corrupt, cauterise it.

Where it is persecuted, fortify it.

Where it is insightful, faithful and loving,

            bless it with your holy joy.

God of high hopes and deep comfort, be with your world family

for whom this day brings hardship, tragedy, sickness, road accidents,

homelessness, or broken hearts.

With your light guide them.

With your hand uplift them.

With your Spirit comfort them.

With your grace save them.

With your love enfold them.

With your peace garrison their hearts and minds against all evil.

God of surprises,

should any of us become switched-off to the sufferings of others,

should any of us retreat into selfish and safe pre-occupations,

confront us again with the Cross,

deliver us from either dithering, or from rash actions,

and tutor us how to best be your agents of justice and mercy.

Through Christ Jesus our hope and our joy, Amen.

**Hymn:** Be Thou my vision

**Benediction and sung Amen**

We go in the Spirit of Jesus Christ

To see what needs to be done and to do it graciously,

to accept what cannot as yet be done, and to relax easily,

and to help others to take courage, without patronising them,

And may the limitless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

the indiscriminate providence of our loving God,

and the comforting yet disturbing friendship of the Holy Spirit,

be with you all today and forever more, Amen.

**Sermon** Discipleship 2: How we act as disciples

Three words are really important to our thinking and planning here at Kohi Presbyterian… they are - belonging, believing, becoming… we want this place to be somewhere everyone feels like they have a part to play –that they belong –whether it is at mainly music or coffee circle or prayer group or messy church or Sunday morning worship or minecraft or GI dinners… And I think we do okay at that –welcoming and making space.

And then there is believing –somehow as part of this involvement in the thing we call Christianity –this faith journey we are on, there are things we as a church invite you to believe –to believe in Jesus –his life death and resurrection, to believe we were created for a purpose, to believe that we are loved utterly by the God who created us, to believe that the Holy Spirit is present to guide us and form us, to believe that we are each called to be part of the way God chooses to build this new kingdom of grace and justice and love here in our world.

And then we come to becoming… because it is relatively simple to say yes I belong here in this community, and perhaps even, yes I believe these things… but becoming –that is when the rubber hits the road; when we are called to live out what we think… that is discipleship.

Two weeks ago I talked about being a disciple as being a learner –a follower of Jesus, learning to live the way he wants us to. Then last week we looked at discipleship as starting on the inside rather than starting with a list of behaviours expected of us… that as Christians we see through the eyes of Jesus to the world we live in.

And today we are looking at the kind of behaviour that comes with discipleship.

In our gospel reading we have heard the importance of integrity. –That living right starts from our thoughts and decisions.

Jesus is clear-

*You have heard it said…you shall not murder or you will be judged, but I say if you are angry or insult someone you will be judged… relationships are so very important, so if you are making your offering here in worship and things are not okay with someone –go and sort it out. Seek the way of reconciliation.*

*You have heard it said… you shall not commit adultery, but I say if you look at someone with lust you have already sinned in your heart…*

*You have heard it said… if you divorce your wife give her the certificate… but I say anyone who divorces, other than due to infidelity, or even marries someone divorced, commits adultery.*

*You have heard it said… do not promise falsely, but I say do not make an oath at all, simply let your yes be yes and your no be no.*

Difficult words!

It is not just what we do it is the motivation behind the action that is just as important.

But ultimately –however we look at it- we get to the point of action… somehow what happens inside us is lived out in our day to day lives.

There is a certain expectation of behaviour that results from this ethics of love.

And when we read these words from Jesus, I suspect there are some of you who will have targeted in on the words about divorce –and be waiting for me to make some comment.

I am fortunate being in the marriage I am –despite its ups and downs, Richard and I are in it for the long haul. Divorce is not something I need to consider personally. But amidst the reality of our society in which marriage can be given up on way too easily in an ignorance of the big picture stuff of relationships, I have also known too many relationships which for a range of reasons were unhealthy to continue.

But I don’t believe that this passage is there so that those who have gone through such painful relationships will feel worse –this passage is for all of us to know our own failings. That we all get things wrong –whether in marriage or in any other area of our lives.

Some Christians make a really big deal about sexuality and fidelity. Others make a big deal about attitudes to wealth and giving. It is too easy to pick out a particular issue that we are not so bad on and make that the key issue… But when we read the words of Jesus we see how high and broad the bar is really set –and we cannot help but see our own inadequacy.

The reality is that we’ve all been on the wrong side of anger, bitterness and jealousy. Who among us hasn’t thought at least one person as a fool?  We know all too well the temptation to pursue acts of religious devotion while allowing broken relationships to continue unchecked and untransformed. That is why we go back to the act of confession week after week after week. Because Scripture is not there to be used against one another –it is there to help us see ourselves. –And then move forward. Because we are not left in that place of our own folly. We are forgiven and gifted the opportunity to have another go.

And then when we turn to 1 Corinthians, we enter into this conversation between Paul and the early church in Corinth. He sees their immaturity in the faith –Paul talks about it in terms of still drinking milk rather than moving on to solids.

Maturity of faith is looked at by Paul in terms of what it isn’t.

The Corinthians had developed plenty of habits and practices that were inconsistent with a mature expression of Christian discipleship as outlined in the Sermon on the Mount. Immaturity is shown in fighting, jealousy, selfishness, and worshiping leaders instead of the Lord. It’s not a comprehensive list, but it is long enough to make his point.

Now we know that disciples are not simply those who attend worship or give financially, but are those who answer a call to follow Jesus in their daily lives. But that decision to follow is only the beginning –there is a whole life of growing ahead. We still will have times of misunderstanding the mission Jesus is calling us to –the first disciples show us this reality. Paul found it easier to say what discipleship wasn’t rather than what mature discipleship looks like.

What we see in these words and in the words from Paul is that there is this huge connection between discipleship and maintaining relationships.

Discipleship is not something done alone –something only to do with what we think and then how we behave. It is about how we relate.

So Paul is clear –if you find yourself doing some religious act and realise you have a broken relationship –guess where your priority should be? Leave the offering, and go fix the relationship. Jesus was all about reconciliation –with God and with one another. It doesn’t mean we all have to think or believe the same, but it does mean we have to be reconciled –to see that the other is also a child of God and we are in this together.

So you may think that when I write a sermon on how we act as disciples, there might be a list of appropriate acts we are all to do… but it is never going to be that easy –for in that we would simply be following the ways of the Pharisees –back to ticking those boxes. We are called to live lives of love.

Anyone can write a list of behaviours… but what we are invited to do in discipleship is let Jesus speak to each one of us about our own behaviour –to invite his comment on what we are doing –how we are living, and be open to change and transformation. And I believe in a God who will touch each one of us individually if we let Him. God will nudge or invite or niggle or perhaps something more confronting –to move us toward the lives He would have us live.

And if you really do want a list of behaviours, go back to Matthew 5 –the sermon on the Mount –for in the Beatitudes Jesus affirms about 25 values. But be aware, you can’t pick one out and ignore the rest…

As we grapple with the words of the Bible and what they mean for us, as we grapple with prayer and how we enter into a deeper relationship with God through it, as we talk to others about how we are going, and as we live out of those things… then how we act will change. Then we will be the light we are called to be in our community –because we will stop and listen, because we will care, because we will take and give time… but the actual acts will be different for each one of us.

So be it, Amen.

**THE DISCIPLE SHIP**
([Matthew 5: 21-37](http://bible.oremus.org/?passage=Matthew+5:21-37&vnum=yes&version=nrsv))

Built of the leaky wood of our imperfections,
nailed together with hopes and best intentions,
sails of prayer hoisted into baffling wind,
our ship small, but committed to begin

its journey of faith, we steer into the waves
toward goals of love and justice Jesus gave.
Misty as distant islands they might seem,
and though the waves and winds across our beam

sometimes toss us backward, and our tack
sometimes so wide we struggle to stay on track,
our little ship will sail on, held together
through all calm or stormy weather

by the merciful grace of God. For it’s Christ’s
work we’ve set ourselves to do, Christ’s
course of sacrificial love we sail –
our guiding compass the cross. It does not fail.

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