



**Seacliff Uniting Church**  
**Online Worship & Electronic Resources**  
**Number 16**                      **July 5<sup>th</sup> 2020**



## **Pentecost 5**

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Welcome to the worship this morning.  
We come together at the invitation of Christ  
who invited all those who are weighed down and burdened  
to come and place their load on him  
for his burden is light,  
and he will give us rest.

We come before God with our joys.  
*For this is a place of celebration.*

We come before God with our burdens.  
*For this is a place where we receive strength.*

We come before God with our hopes.  
*For this is a place where our dreams are given life.*

**We come together to worship God.**

### **HYMN: "SING PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING" (TIS 107)**

Sing praise and thanksgiving, let all creatures living  
now worship their maker with gladness and song;  
all glory and honour we come to him bringing:  
O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!

Our lives of his making he brings to their waking;  
in darkness he held us in his gracious care,  
now into the light we are called from our sleeping:  
O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!

Lord, frame our desiring to do your requiring,  
that unto your glory be all that we do;  
and where we have faltered, give strength and give healing:  
O praise to the Almighty, sing praise to our God!

Paul Gerhardt Tr Margaret Barclay Adapted by Colin Alexander Gibson  
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### **PRAYER**

Accepting God,  
we dare to come before you because of Jesus.

Through him we have been assured of your amazing love for us,  
just as we are-  
sin prone, flawed, imperfect, in need of grace.  
We enter into our worship trusting  
your acceptance and forgiveness,  
your kindness and your mercy,  
praising you for your gift of love  
that is ours through Jesus Christ.

*As we come, we confess too  
the battle which rages in each of us;  
the battle between good and evil,  
the battle to choose the right way in our lives.  
We confess that we choose that which is most convenient for us  
rather than that which is your good will and purpose for our lives.*

*Lord,  
we need your forgiveness  
we need your mercy, and  
we need your wisdom.  
Thank you, that in Jesus, all this is ours  
through your grace.  
Amen.*

#### **BIBLE READINGS**

Genesis 2:1-4 and Matthew 11:25-30

#### **PRAYER**

#### **MESSAGE**

*I was walking through the Marion Shopping Centre a couple of years back when I saw a calendar that I almost bought. I wish I had. The text on the calendar read, "Jesus is coming - look busy"*

It seems to me this is one message that we who call ourselves followers of Jesus have taken to heart! If there's one word that seems to sum up life, at least before COVID 19 became a reality, it is 'busy'. We always seem to be on the go with something to do. However, we never seem to get done and always more to do. We see it, for example in the way we greet people; "*How are you? Busy I suppose?*" or response is "*Busy*"

Busy-ness is such a part of life that it seems to me too many people feel guilty if they are not busy. That we ought to be busy is a not so subtle message we receive from many different areas. We see it in advertising: "We'll help you move faster." "Act now. Don't delay"; "Buy now. No deposit. Easy payments."

And while we may praise or even idolize the busy person in our culture, there is a nagging part of us which suggests that this level of feverish activity may not be good for us. And we'd be right; in fact, over busyness can be quite toxic. In the 1950's a cardiologist by the name of Dr. Meyer Friedman, who was researching the causes of heart disease, coined the term "hurry sickness". The pace of life, he concluded, was killing us. (He was also the one who identified what we call Type-A personalities.)

No wonder then that Jesus' invitation in the Gospel sounds so appealing to us. "*Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is*

*light.*” To people who were weary from trying to fulfill extensive religious obligations; to people who were burdened by the overtaking demands of the Roman invaders; Jesus says, “*Come to me... and I will give you rest.*”

And to the weary and burdened of our time; the weary, worn out from the frantic chase after life, exhausted from the search for meaning and purpose, believing it to be found in more, much and many; to the burdened, those crushed under life’s cares and concerns, Jesus says, “*Come to me... and I will give you rest.*”

To enter into this rest is a part of our faithful and radical following of Jesus. The word itself, ‘rest’, takes us back to the creation story where we read that God rested.

It also takes us to (what we call) the Ten Commandments, where the fourth commandment reminds us that God rested and that we too (being in the image of God) are called to rest.

We rest because God rested on the seventh day of creation. The rest to which we are invited is a rest which God initiated and in which God participates. Rest, like maleness and femaleness, like land being separated from the sea, is a part of the structure of created reality. Rest and our ability to rest are part of a faithful life, our life lived in relationship with God. Which means, our lives need not to be marked by frenzy, busy-ness or restlessness. Restlessness, which is so pervasive in our lives and which we seem to view as normative and inevitable is not ordained into our existence. If God can rest without the world falling apart, we can too.

*There’s an old story about the desert monk, Abba Anthony. A pilgrim, having heard of this holy man, went out to the desert to find him. When he arrived he saw Abba Anthony playing with his followers and he became outraged. He thought a spiritual person such as this desert father should be more dedicated. In response to the pilgrim’s criticism, he told the man, who was carrying a bow, to fire an arrow. He did, and then Anthony told him to do it again. And then he asked a third time. He finally asked the pilgrim if he could keep doing it. The answer, of course, was “no”; the bow would break. So it is, said Anthony, with the human person; if you don’t learn to rest eventually you will break.*

But rest is not only a part of faithful living, in our culture which always seems to be on the move, it is also part of our radical witness. We live in such a busy, frantic world that to rest is a revolutionary act, a countercultural stance and a radical witness of faith.

In the Gospels there is the story of a time when the disciples were returning from a mission on which Jesus had sent them. When they returned, still high on their adrenalin rush, Jesus said to them, “*Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest awhile.*” Jesus knew the limitations of human capacity so he said to the disciples, “Enough is enough. You need to get away. You need to relax. If you don’t, you’ll snap.” Following Jesus is not something that can be done in a rush. Jesus knew to take time out and we can’t go faster than the one we are following.

I think much of our busy-ness stems from a sense of emptiness people feel in their lives. In an attempt to relieve this feeling we fill up our lives with incessant activity, as though activity itself gives meaning to our lives. We are drawn to busyness because it makes us feel that somehow our lives matter. The invitation to rest, however, challenges this notion that humans are only valuable for what do. To rest negates the temptation we have to live in this lesser image of the human person and to claim and proclaim our birthright in the image of God. It is that image, not what we do, that reveals our dignity and worth.

However, before we become too comfortable, let’s notice the rest to which Jesus invites us. Just when we think Jesus is offering us a holiday in a time share apartment on the Gold Coast, he invites us to something else; namely to come to him, take his yoke upon us and learn from him. This rest is not an invitation to idleness or inactivity; it is an invitation to discipleship. Is this some sort of cruel joke from Jesus? An invitation to free ourselves from our burdens only to find we are saddled with a yoke?

When the first readers of Matthew’s Gospel heard these words about rest and yokes, they know immediately what Jesus was talking about. There was the political yoke of Roman oppression and the religious yoke of

legalism. We may not experience quite the same weights upon us but it is not uncommon to experience the weight of wondering if we are ever doing enough or ever being enough. There can be nagging voices that tell us we must do more, be better, try harder and prove ourselves worthy. Especially if we want God's love.

Jesus' invitation is to simply stop, lay down our endless list of things to do and to be, the heavy yokes we place upon ourselves, and accept the lighter one Jesus has for us. But in what sense is Jesus' yoke 'easy'?

This familiar saying is often taken to mean that, in contrast to the Pharisees and their legalism, Jesus doesn't particularly care how we live. However, as we read the Gospels, especially sections like the Sermon on the Mount, we find, I think, that following Jesus requires a more rigorous ethic and a more demanding discipleship.

The word 'easy' means 'suitable' or 'appropriate'. What I think Jesus is offering us is not a freedom from any requirements but a corrective to a life to which we are ill suited. Our soul-sick weariness comes from trying to live a life which is not authentically ours, a life which is motivated by compulsions or fear, or a life which seems to be lived in futility. It is the weariness that comes from having nothing to do that really matters.

The invitation of the easy yoke is to a life that has a purpose that demands your all and the best of you. Life's greatest burden is not having too much to do but in having nothing worthwhile to do. Jesus' invitation is not to get away from it all, but to go with him where we are given something significant to do, namely share with him in his continuing ministry in this world.

To accept the yoke of the gentle and humble Jesus is to embrace a worthy task that puts the soul at ease.

So we listen again to Jesus: "*Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.*"

## **OFFERING AND PRAYER**

*Loving God,  
you gave your life for our sake.  
We ask that our lives may reflect your generosity.  
Use us we pray and the gifts we bring  
for the needs of the world.  
Amen*

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Creator God,  
you are the origin of all that is;  
all peace, all wisdom, all truth.  
We turn from our trouble and strife,  
seeking the way of rightness and understanding.

Where there is confusion between nations,  
we pray for understanding.

Where oppression and tyranny destroy the hope of nations,  
we pray for peace.

Where moral decay and inhumanity are commonplace,  
we pray for justice.

Where families are distressed by abuse and hostility,  
we pray for reconciliation and love.

Where people are overcome by illness, pain, and disease,  
we pray for healing and wholeness.

Where your purpose for humankind is thwarted by evil and hatred,  
we dare to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done"

Gracious God, let it be that our prayers may be  
matched by our love,  
our love by our service,  
and our service by our faith.  
Lord, hear our prayer,  
We pray in the name of Christ  
who taught us to pray..

*Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours  
now and forever.  
Amen*

### **HYMN: "HERE, LORD, WE TAKE THE BROKEN BREAD" (TIS 523)**

Here, Lord, we take the broken bread  
and drink the wine, believing  
that by your life our souls are fed,  
your parting gifts receiving.

As you have given, so we would give  
ourselves for others' healing;  
as you have lived, so we would live  
the Father's love revealing.

Charles Venn Pilcher. © F. E. V. Pilcher

### **HOLY COMMUNION**

#### **Welcome**

Welcome to this holy meal.

We come at the invitation of Christ who said:

*"I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."*

## **The Peace**

The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
*And also with you.*

## **The Invitation**

All who are hungering and thirsting  
come and share in this feast.  
You who are parched and dry,  
feeling as though you have nothing to give,  
no purpose, no direction:  
here is living water to give you new life.  
You who are hungering, needing,  
craving a taste of Spirit  
in the midst of the everyday:  
here is food for body and soul.  
You who feel you do not deserve to be at this meal, come:  
for God has invited all people.  
The God of abundant mercy  
invites you to this table.

## **The Institution: John 6:35, 48, 53-58**

### **Prayer**

Gratitude, praise,  
hearts lifted high,  
voices full and joyful,  
these you deserve.

For when we were nothing,  
you made us something;  
when we had no name and no faith and no future,  
you called us your children;  
when we lost our way or turned away,  
you did not abandon us;  
when we came back to you,  
your arms opened wide in welcome.

And, now, when we are hungry and thirsty  
you prepare a table for us,  
offering not just bread, not just wine,  
but your very self,  
so that we may be filled, forgiven,  
healed, blessed,  
and made new again.

So as we do in this place  
what you did in an upstairs room,  
send down your Holy Spirit upon us,  
and on these gifts of bread and wine,

that they may become for us your body,  
healing, forgiving and making us whole;  
and that we may become, for you, your body,  
loving and caring in the world.

We pray in the name of the only One  
who can satisfy our deepest needs.

Amen

### **Breaking the Bread**

Christ's body broken for you.

Christ's life poured out for you.

Let us receive what we are,  
let us become what we receive,  
the body of Christ.

### **Sharing the meal**

#### **Prayer**

Life giving God,  
we thank you  
that the bread of life satisfies our deepest hungers,  
that wine drunk quenches our deepest thirst,  
that time spent silently in the presence of Jesus and each other  
gives life. Amen.

### **SONG: "O LET THE SON OF GOD ENFOLD YOU" (TIS 655)**

Oh, let the Son of God enfold you  
With his Spirit and his love.  
Let him fill your heart and satisfy your soul.  
Oh, let him have the things that hold you  
And his Spirit, like a dove,  
Will descend upon your life and make you whole.

Jesus, Oh, Jesus,  
Come and fill our lives;  
Jesus, Oh, Jesus,  
Come and fill our lives.

Oh, come and sing this song with gladness  
As your hearts are filled with joy.  
Lift your hands in sweet surrender to his name.  
Oh, give him all your tears and sadness,  
Give him all your years of pain,  
And you'll enter into life in Jesus' name.

Jesus, Oh, Jesus,  
Come and fill our lives;  
Jesus, Oh, Jesus,  
Come and fill our lives.

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## **BLESSING**

Holy Spirit, give us  
a mind through which Christ thinks:  
a heart through which Christ loves:  
a voice through which Christ speaks: and  
a hand through which Christ helps.

## **BLESSING SONG: "PRAISE GOD, THE SOURCE OF LIFE AND BIRTH" (TUNE, TIS 768II FAIRHILL)**

Praise God  
the Source of life and birth.  
Praise God the Word,  
who came to earth.  
Praise God the Spirit, holy flame.  
All glory, honour to God's name.

## **FOR REFLECTION**

- Was there anything that stood out for you in the readings, message or service today?
- Are there burdens from which you need rest? What does the promise of Christ's rest mean to you?
- What examples can you think of that demonstrate the gentleness and humility of Jesus? (v29)
- Are you aware of others around you who are carrying burdens? How can you help give them rest?
- What produces tension in you and what gives you rest?

## **TO PONDER**

*Nema Al-Araby, 21st century*

"Make sure you don't carry the burden of the whole world on your shoulders, just in case someone needed them to cry."

*Teresa of Avila, 16th century*

"Love turns work into rest."

*Augustine of Hippo, Confessions, 5th century*

"Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in thee."

*William Wordsworth, 19th century*

"Rest and be thankful."

*Mark Buchanan, The Holy Wild: Trusting in the Character of God, 21st century*

"Mindset of the man too busy: I am too busy BEING God to become LIKE God."