

## **Welcome**

### **Acknowledgement of Country**

**We acknowledge that this land is God's land, and God's Spirit dwells here. We pay our respects to the elders, past, present and emerging of the Bidjegal people who have cared for this land in time beyond our dreaming. This land on which we live and move was and always will be Aboriginal Land**

### **Lighting the Candle of Christ**

**God is here!**

***God is always here!***

**God is with us!**

***God is always with us!***

### **Saying who we are ...**

**We are a congregation and community ...**

***Who welcome people of all cultures and lifestyles,***

***Who create a safe place for the community, and***

***Who share the journey of life and faith.***

### **Sing: *Bless the Lord* Jacques Berthier TiS 706 2x**

Bless the Lord, my soul,  
and bless God's holy name.

Bless the Lord, my soul,  
who leads me into life.

### **Call to Worship**

Come all who are weary,  
come all who have suffered and  
all who are suffering now.

May you find here a place to lay down your burdens and receive solace.

### **Opening Prayer**

Loving God,

you see the trials that we face;  
you know the burdens that we carry.  
Be with us today as we allow a time of sadness, grief, and lament.  
Help us to know you are here, even in the darkest times.  
**Amen.**

**Sing: *Bless the Lord* Jacques Berthier TiS 706 2x**

**Bless the Lord, my soul,  
and bless God's holy name.  
Bless the Lord, my soul,  
who leads me into life.**

### **Prayer of Confession**

Gracious God,  
There are times that in our hurt we have lashed out at others.  
There are times that in our hurt we have ignored our own needs.  
There are times that in our hurt we have created more hurt.  
We are sorry for this.  
*(Provide a time of silence)*

**Sing: *Bless the Lord* Jacques Berthier TiS 706 2x**

Bless the Lord, my soul,  
and bless God's holy name.  
Bless the Lord, my soul,  
who leads me into life.

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***Have mercy upon us, loving God, according to your grace in Christ Jesus.***

***Pity our folly, uncover our self-deceits, forgive our sins, and put away from us  
the enervating burden of guilt.***

***Restore us to our right minds, reorder our wants and wishes, and re invigorate  
our faith and hope.***

***Stretch our love so that we may be able to forgive others just as you have  
forgiven us.***

***Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen!***

### **Words of Grace**

Come now and know that you are loved.  
Come now and know that you are valued.  
Come now and know God's peace.  
**Amen.**

## **I BELIEVE**

**Although I may spend all my days with disjointed relationships around and conflicts within me, I believe in ultimate reconciliation.**

***I believe in the reconciling of all things through the grace of Christ.***

**Personal relationships shall not remain locked in alienation forever.**

***Misunderstanding and suspicion shall not always subvert openness.***

**Resentment and revenge shall not prevail over forgiveness.**

***Tyranny and exploitation, shall not perpetually trample on justice***

**Violence, terrorism and war, shall not always outgun peace.**

***Carelessness and apathy shall not forever diffuse compassion.***

**Personal and political deceits shall not overwhelm integrity.**

***Prejudice and discrimination shall never strangle goodwill.***

**Graft and corruption shall not put paid to honour and trust.**

***Ignorance and blind dogmatism shall not finally divide and rule over truth.***

**Because I believe in Christ, I believe that love will have the last word.**

***I believe in reconciliation.***

***I believe in grace.***

***I believe in love.***

***I believe in God.***

**Sing: *Santo, santo, santo* TiS 723 (Spanish/English/Spanish)**

***Santo, santo, santo.***

***Mi corazón te adora!***

***Mi corazón te sabe decir:***

***Santo eres Señor!***

*Holy, holy, holy.*

*My heart, my heart adores you!*

*My heart knows how to say to you:*

*Holy are you, Lord.*

*Santo, santo, santo.*

*Mi corazón te adora!*

*Mi corazón te sabe decir:*

*Santo eres Señor!*

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## **We Pass the Peace**

### **A Reading from the Hebrew Scriptures**

**Job 1:1, 2:1–10**

**1** There was once a man in the land of Uz whose name was Job. That man was blameless and upright, one who feared God and turned away from evil.

**2** One day the heavenly beings came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan also came among them to present himself before the Lord. **2**The Lord said to Satan, “Where have you come from?” Satan answered the Lord, “From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking up and down on it.” **3** The Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man who fears God and turns away from evil. He still persists in his integrity, although you incited me against him, to destroy him for no reason.” **4**Then Satan answered the Lord, “Skin for skin! All that people have they will give to save their lives. **5**But stretch out your hand now and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse you to your face.” **6**The Lord said to Satan, “Very well, he is in your power; only spare his life.”

**7**So Satan went out from the presence of the Lord, and inflicted loathsome sores on Job from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head. **8**Job took a potsherd with which to scrape himself, and sat among the ashes. **9**Then his wife said to him, “Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God, and die.” **10**But he said to her, “You speak as any foolish woman would speak. Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?” In all this Job did not sin with his lips.

## Psalm 26

<sup>1</sup>Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.

<sup>2</sup>Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and mind.

<sup>3</sup>For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you.

<sup>4</sup>I do not sit with the worthless, nor do I consort with hypocrites;

<sup>5</sup>I hate the company of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.

<sup>6</sup>I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar, O Lord,

<sup>7</sup>singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all your wondrous deeds.

<sup>8</sup>O Lord, I love the house in which you dwell, and the place where your glory abides.

<sup>9</sup>Do not sweep me away with sinners, nor my life with the bloodthirsty,

<sup>10</sup>those in whose hands are evil devices, and whose right hands are full of bribes.

<sup>11</sup>But as for me, I walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me.

<sup>12</sup>My foot stands on level ground; in the great congregation I will bless the Lord.

**Sing: *The Lord is my light* Jacques Berthier TiS 747 5x**

The Lord is my light,

my light and salvation:

in God I trust,

in God I trust.

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## A Reading from the Christian Scriptures

### Mark 10:2–16

<sup>2</sup>Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” <sup>3</sup>He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” <sup>4</sup>They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” <sup>5</sup>But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. <sup>6</sup>But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ <sup>7</sup>‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, <sup>8</sup>and the two shall become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. <sup>9</sup>Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

<sup>10</sup>Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. <sup>11</sup>He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; <sup>12</sup>and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

<sup>13</sup>People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. <sup>14</sup>But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. <sup>15</sup>Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.” <sup>16</sup>And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

## Offering

We offer these gifts as a sacrifice. May they be used with wisdom for your work in this place.

**Amen.**

## Reflection

### **Sermon: Job’s wife was right!**

by Avril Hannah-Jones

### **Reflection for North Balwyn Uniting Church**

**3<sup>rd</sup> of October, 2021**

### **Job 1:1, 2:1-10**

Today we hear from the beginning of one of my favourite books in the Bible. I know I say that about a lot of books, you might have discerned by now that I love spending time in the Bible, but the Book of Job really is something special. We do not know exactly when it was written, sometime between the seventh and fourth centuries BCE is our best guess, and we do not know who wrote it. I believe we know *why* it was written. The Revised Common Lectionary gives us readings from the Book of Job now because, like many of the Psalms and the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Songs, it is classified as wisdom literature. But the Book of Job is *anti-*

*wisdom* literature. Unlike the psalms and proverbs that promise that those who are righteous will prosper, the argument of the Book of Job is that misfortune can strike anyone, even the most faithful.

The opening and closing parts of the book may be based on a traditional folk tale. Job is a wealthy and righteous man, with ten children and ‘seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and very many servants’. One day God boasts to Satan about the righteousness of Job, and Satan replies that of course Job is righteous; he has been rewarded for it. So the Lord tells Satan, ‘Very well, all that he has is in your power; only do not stretch out your hand against him!’ Satan kills Job’s ten children and ensures that all his wealth is stolen.

*Then Job arose, tore his robe, shaved his head, and fell on the ground and worshipped. He said, ‘Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.’ In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing. (Job 1:20-22)*

Then we come to today’s reading, in which the Lord allows Satan to attack Job’s health, as well as his family and his wealth. Now Job is left sitting among the ashes, but still he refuses to curse the Lord for his misfortune.

Satan only appears in this opening folktale; he disappears from the rest of the book. It is important to note that this Satan is not ‘the devil’ of the later Bible. ‘Satan’ is not a name. The character in Hebrew is *ha-satan*, which means ‘the adversary’ or ‘the accuser’. The satan is the prosecutor in God’s court, a servant of God, who can only torment Job because God allows it. The Book of Job addresses the question of why human suffering happens, and there is no suggestion that it happens because

there is an equal and opposite power to God who causes evil against God's will.

The other character we see in this first section of the book is Job's wife. She also then disappears; and for most of the book we are left with Job and his friends. Job's wife is a hero. She might not seem heroic; she only gets two sentences: 'Do you still persist in your integrity? Curse God and die,' and 'patient' Job rebukes her for it. But think of the context! She, like Job, has lost her ten children to death. Her response is much more appropriate and much healthier than her husband's.

One commentator, F. Rachel Magdalene,<sup>[1]</sup> says that what is happening to Job is torture. Everything he has and everything he is, is being destroyed. He loses his wealth. He loses his household. He loses his children. He loses his health.

Interestingly, after the first series of losses we're told that, 'In all this Job did not sin or charge God with wrongdoing'. After Job is inflicted with loathsome sores we're only told that, 'Job did not sin *with his lips*'. Maybe he 'sinned' internally by charging God with wrongdoing in his thoughts. That would certainly be understandable.

The aim of torture, Magdalene writes, is for the person being tortured to lose *their* understanding of the world and replace it with the torturer's understanding. If you have ever read George Orwell's *1984* you will probably remember the last paragraph, after the protagonist has been tortured to the point that he begs the torturers to hurt his girlfriend instead. The book ends:

*He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn, self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.*



The aim of torturers is to get the tortured to love Big Brother. In the case of the Book of Job, that would mean Job accepting that his torture is legitimate punishment; that he has sinned, and that God is appropriately reproving and disciplining him. As we will see, Job never accepts this, which is why I call this book 'anti-wisdom' literature. But in the introduction that we hear today Job comes close to it with his: 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there; the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord,' and 'Shall we receive the good at the hand of God, and not receive the bad?'

Job's wife's suggestion, 'Curse God, and die,' suggests one form of resistance to torture – martyrdom. Rather than accepting the worldview of the torturer, the person being tortured can refuse to live in the torturer's world and die. If accepting that God is right to punish Job is giving in to the satan's torture, cursing God and dying, as Job's wife suggests, is a form of resistance.

Another commentator I read this week, Murray J. Haar, wrote a midrash, a reflective story, on the Book of Job in the light of the Holocaust. He has a twentieth-century Job, a non-Jew as the biblical Job was, observe a mass murder in a small Polish village. After the massacre, Haar writes:

Job began to see where he had gone wrong in the land of Uz, his home. He remembered that when it had come time for him to stand face to face with the Almighty he backed down before God. In the end, Job realized that he had submitted to God, not out of wisdom or renewed faith, but out of fear.[2]

Haar argues that nothing in scripture can stay the same after the Shoah. Everything must be reread in light of the death

camps. Reading Job through the Holocaust we can see that we should not accept the bad from God's hands as well as the good. It would be unfaithful to accept a god who conspired with ha-satan to torment Job, a God who 'sent' the evils of the holocaust. Job's wife is right; Job should charge God with wrongdoing; he should curse the God who has sent him evil.

Job does not accept his wife's faithful and proper suggestion that he curse God. What we are going to see over the next three weeks is Job enacting another form of resistance to his mistreatment. He not merely complains; his complaints form a civil legal suit against God. God is punishing him without reason; Job demands that God answer for it. It is the Amnesty International option. And luckily, because God is a somewhat reasonable torturer, unlike the Nazis and all too many human torturers, it works. That is where the metaphor breaks down, because in the Book of Job God is both the ultimate source of the torture and the court to which Job appeals, both Augusto Pinochet and the International Criminal Court. But the important thing is that Job resists. Despite what he says to his wife in today's reading, Job spends the rest of the book most definitely not simply receiving the bad for the Lord as well as the good. His wife may be speaking 'as any foolish woman would speak' but she also happens to be right.

We will see Job's rejection of his mistreatment, and God's response to Job, over the next few weeks. We will hear one book of the Bible challenging all those portions of the Bible that say that all the ways of the righteous will prosper. (See, for instance, Psalms 1, 18, 25, 34, 37, 58, 92, 97, 112; Proverbs 3:33, 10:6, 11:8, 12:3, 12:21, 13:21, 15:6, 21:21, and many more.) The Book of Job is an amazing piece of work, and I am

going to enjoy exploring it with you over the next few weeks. If only we knew who wrote it, and could give them credit! Amen.

[1] F. Rachel Magdalene, 'Job's Wife as Hero: A Feminist-Forensic Reading of the Book of Job' in *Biblical Interpretation*, 2006.

[2] Murray J. Haar, 'Job After Auschwitz' in *Interpretation*,

**Sing: *For everyone born, a place at the table* Shirley Murray (Seasons 4-14)**

**For everyone born, a place at the table,  
for everyone born, clean water and bread,  
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,  
for everyone born, a star overhead,**

**For woman and man, a place at the table,  
revising the roles, deciding the share,  
with wisdom and grace, dividing the power,  
for woman and man, a system that's fair,  
*and God will delight when we are creators  
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:  
yes, God will delight when we are creators  
of justice, justice and joy!***

**For young and for old, a place at the table,  
a voice to be heard, a part in the song,  
the hands of a child in hands that are wrinkled,  
for young and for old, the right to belong,**

For just and unjust, a place at the table,  
abuser, abused, with need to forgive,  
in anger, in hurt, a mindset of mercy,  
for just and unjust, a new way to live,  
*and God will delight when we are creators  
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:  
yes, God will delight when we are creators  
of justice, justice and joy!*

For everyone born, a place at the table,  
to live without fear, and simply to be,  
to work, to speak out, to witness and worship,  
for everyone born, the right to be free,

For gay and for straight, a place at the table,  
a covenant shared, a welcoming space,  
a rainbow of race and gender and colour,  
for gay and for straight, the chalice of grace,  
*and God will delight when we are creators  
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:  
yes, God will delight when we are creators  
of justice, justice and joy!*

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## **Announcements**

### **Prayers for Others**

Loving God,  
there is so much suffering in the world today.  
*Hear us as we pray.*

For those suffering the impacts of war and conflict,  
***have mercy, we pray.***

For those suffering from racism, colonialism, and other injustices,  
***have mercy, we pray.***

For those suffering from misogyny and patriarchal systems,  
***have mercy, we pray.***

For those suffering from homophobia and transphobia,  
***have mercy, we pray.***

For those suffering because they have lost children,  
***have mercy, we pray.***

For those suffering because they are not able to bear children,  
***have mercy, we pray.***

For those suffering because they have lost family, friends and loved ones,  
***have mercy, we pray.***

*Add stanzas that fit for your worship community.*

Let us have a time of silence for all those suffering who have not been mentioned;  
we offer these prayers.

Gracious God, **have mercy, we pray.**  
Loving God, **have mercy, we pray.**  
Creator God, **have mercy, we pray.**  
Amen.

**Sing: *Pulsing Spirit* Delores Dufner Seasons 7-27**

**Pulsing Spirit, rippling river,  
source of mercy's tender might.  
Gentle power, humble glory,  
subtle, ever dancing light.  
Healing Wisdom in us flowing,  
now reveal our human worth.  
Play beneath the muddied waters,  
come renew the face of earth!**

**Spirit free, unbounded motion,  
beauty's mirror, heart's delight.  
Gift abundant all around us,  
flood the world with life and light.  
Fountain ancient, ever springing,  
play in new, creative ways.**

**Lift us, stream of lavish loving,  
high on waves of joyful praise!**

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## **SENDING OUT**

### **Blessing/Benediction**

Whatever burdens you are carrying today, as you leave this place, may you know that you are loved, worthy, and a child of God.

If your days seem short and the tasks too many, learn quietness from the unhurried Christ.

If opponents should harass you and friends unintentionally hinder you, learn from Christ's grace.

If fresh challenges frighten you and disciplines pain you, learn from Christ's courage.

If success comes to you and others thank or applaud you, learn from Christ's humility.

If you should hit rock bottom and feel hopeless, learn from Christ's cross and resurrection.

The bountiful grace of our Saviour  
the unconditional love of our Creator,  
and the generous friendship of our Inspirer,  
will be with us  
from this day forth, even for evermore.

***Amen!***

**Sing: *Shalom chaverim* All Together 194**

**Shalom, my friends, shalom, my friends,  
shalom, shalom.**

**Shalom, my friends, shalom, my friends,  
shalom, shalom.**

**Shalom, haverim, shalom, haverim,  
shalom, shalom.**

**Shalom, haverim, shalom, haverim,  
shalom, shalom.**

**Share peace, my friends, share peace, my friends,  
God's peace, God's peace.**

**Share peace, my friends, share peace, my friends,  
God's peace, God's peace.**

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