

You sweepers, diplomats, writers and artists,
grocers, carpenters, students and shop workers,
homemakers, mystics, aid workers and lawyers



Give to God your thanks and praise.

You Māori, Pākehā, women and men, all who inhabit the long
white cloud, all saints and martyrs of the South Pacific



Give to God your thanks and praise.

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THE SENTENCE AND PRAYER OF THE DAY

When they call to me, I will answer them;
I will be with them in trouble,
I will rescue them and honor them.
With long life I will satisfy them,
and show them my salvation.

Psalms 91:15-16

**God of power,
in Christ you come to us as a servant;
the greatest becomes the least.
In our world which values privilege and power
may we find the humble way,
sharing our resources
witnessing to your love. Amen.** ³

THE GOSPEL

Mark 10:35-45

² NZPB p 63, adapted. Setting: Matthew Howes.

³ NZ Lectionary 2021

HYMN

**Let all creation dance
in energies sublime,
as order turns with chance,
unfolding space and time,
for nature's art
in glory grows,
and newly shows
God's mind and heart.**

**God's breath each force unfurls,
igniting from a spark
expanding starry swirls,
with whirlpools dense and dark.
Though moon and sun
seem mindless things,
each orbit sings:
"Your will be done."**

**Our own amazing earth,
with sunlight, cloud and storms
and life's abundant growth
in lovely shapes and forms,
is made for praise,
a fragile whole,
and from its soul
heaven's music plays.**

**Lift heart and soul and voice:
in Christ all praises meet
and nature shall rejoice
as all is made complete.
In hope be strong,
all life befriend
and kindly tend
creation's song.**

*Words: Brian Arthur Wren (b. 1936), based on Psalm 148
Tune: Darwall, John Darwall (1731-1789). TiS 187*

THE SERMON

Bishop Bay Ross

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā hau e whā, tēnā koutou katoa.

Greetings to you all in ministry units around the Diocese as most of us continue to gather in virtual ways for corporate worship. I am glad to join you to offer this sermon today, conscious of the long haul that this lockdown is creating for us. Thank you for persevering and for continuing to support one another in all sorts of ways, including by being together in worship. We are reading from Hebrews on Sunday mornings at present and I am mindful of a verse in chapter 10 which in the face of hardship reminds believers not to neglect gathering together and encouragement of one another.

I extend special thanks to clergy and leaders in your worshipping communities who are working hard to make that possible, so please encourage them and support their efforts for you. In all things, we seek to continue to glorify God in our lives.

Vaccination is the issue on everyone's lips. As I write this sermon, the country is preparing for a Super Saturday of vaccinations and even holding a "Vax-a-thon" to go alongside it which is a throw back to my childhood. Recording ahead means that, unlike normal preaching, I won't be able to see how that has gone and add in any quick comments.

There is no question that the vaccination programme is now the major strategy for moving our nation to a point where we can adjust to living with Covid-19 as part of our ongoing reality. At the moment, for Aucklanders especially, there is a big incentive to cooperate with that because it gives us some hope of light ahead that our lives can regain some normality, and that more people can go back to work on full pay, and that the businesses that employ them will still be there.

It's not as simple as it sounds, because across the country we have vaccine-averse and vaccine-hesitant people, along with those who for a variety of reasons are struggling to access a vaccination or are experiencing exclusion from the programme.

The best advice we are being given to help reach this final group is to work personally with them. It's a little bit like the best approach to sharing our faith. It is not to stand on a platform and preach to strangers, nor to constantly convey messages designed to scare people, but to sit down quietly with another and explain why this is important to me and answer the questions the other may have in a spirit of trust and care.

Times like these do bring out the best and worst in people. The journey Jesus made to Jerusalem in the final weeks of his life did that. There is a whole series of moments where disciples don't quite get what Jesus is trying to tell them, but they realise it is a critical time, and the stress of it means they don't always do the right thing. We read today of the request of James and John, the other disciples' response to it, and Jesus' advice to them about a different way to approach it all.

James and John wanted places of honour and importance, and the other disciples became jealous and angry as a result. This in spite of the fact that Jesus has been telling them things like the first being last, those who act with the trust of small children being greatest, and his own willingness to die for the good of others.

Jostling for position, jealousy, anger, misunderstanding. They are all things we have to strive to overcome as we build community life. It can be very hard to perceive when those things are present, when the stakes are high and people are convinced by their own position and driven by the outcomes they believe are so critical. Sometimes the line is easy to cross and so become the rulers who lord it over others or the great ones who are tyrants over them.

Oh, and before people begin to speculate, I am not making a comment here on the government or any person leading in covid response. I would not want their job for all the communion wafers in Christendom. It's not about judging others, but about looking at ourselves and where our responsibility rests in being part of a community response to this or to any challenge we face together.

So yes, I have been vaccinated, and I did so for a number of reasons. Some of them are self interest, like for the sake of my own health and well-being if I did catch the virus and so that when the time comes I am not excluded from activities in the community. But I also did it because I believe that a wider community good is served by being part of the percentage we need to reach. For me that is about a community ethic of which I believe Jesus speaks when he tells of the great being servants, and the first being a slave to all, and when he speaks of his own destiny being about life-giving service. Jesus gives his life for the salvation of us all, and so sets a path for the kind of spirituality that should mark out the life of the Christian Church and each person in it.

So whether it be vaccinations, or the number of refugees we welcome, or ensuring the homeless have a safe and warm place to sleep, or protecting our planet for the sake of the generations who come after us, as followers of Jesus Christ, the one who came not to be served but to serve, we are people who have a commitment to seek the good of others, the common good of the community as a whole.

This approach by James and John shows us that a desire to seek whatever we want and what we think is good for us, is the wrong starting place. The references Jesus makes to cup and baptism were probably about the suffering that lay ahead of him. For us they can also be about the sacraments by which we are united with Christ and sustained in our life in Christ. We do well to ponder what it means to stand with Christ in the midst of the suffering and the need of others, and act for their good before our own.

I imagine those disciples were afraid of a future that Jesus spoke of and which they could not understand. Fear of the unknown can drive us to self-interest and to jealousy and anger. Let us not be afraid. Let us seek to allay the fears of those who are. We carry the peace and hope of Christ within us, gifts of God to us, and through us to others. Let us be as Christ, alongside others, building a healthy community, finding our way together.

PSALM 121

Chant: Henry Walford Davies (1869-1941)

I lift up my eyes to the hills, but where shall I look for help?

My help comes from the Lord, who has made heaven and earth.

The Lord will not let your foot stumble,
the one who guards you will not sleep.

The one who keeps watch over this people
shall neither doze nor sleep.

The Lord is the one who will guard you,
the Lord at your right hand will be your defence,
so that the sun shall not strike you by day,
nor yet the moon by night.

The Lord shall preserve you from all evil,
yes it is the Lord who will keep you safe.

The Lord shall take care of your going out, and your coming in
from this time forth and for ever.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Kua akona nei tātou e tō tātou Ariki, ka ĭnoi tātou:

E tō mātou Matua i te rangi,

kia tapu tōu Ingoa.

Kia tae mai tōu rangatiratanga.

Kia meatia tāu e pai ai ki runga ki te whenua,

kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.

Hōmai ki a mātou āiane he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.

Murua ō mātou hara,

me mātou hoki e muru nei,

i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.

Aua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;

engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:

Nōu hoki te rangatiratanga, te kaha, me te korōria,

Āke, ake, ake. Āmine.

THE BLESSING

THE DISMISSAL

May the streets of our city be holy ground under your feet.
Go into the city, walking in faith and hope.

Amen. We go in the name of Christ.

ORGAN VOLUNTARY

Grand chorus in march-form, Op. 84 *Alexandre Guilmant (1837-1911)*