



Kaurihohore Historic Church

P O Box 4118, Kamo, Whangarei 0141



Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 3 April 2022 – Lent 5

Our service today has been prepared by Richard Smith, one of our Lay Preachers.

We are saddened that we are unable to welcome those into our midst who do not have Vaccine Passes. We will continue to provide emailed, posted or hand-delivered service outlines for those unable to participate in person, and also to find creative ways of doing Church so all are included in some way.

To prepare for sharing in this service I invite you to arrange 7 candles which can be used in the weeks leading up to Easter. Light 2 of them before you begin your Worship time.

Welcome

Welcome to worship at Kauri this morning, or wherever and whenever you are sharing in this service. We are trying to reflect the inclusive nature of the love Jesus showed us as the way of God's kingdom in how we worship, despite the difficulties posed by the presence of the Covid virus in our community. We hope you can feel safe and included wherever you are.

This morning we continue our Lenten journey as we metaphorically accompany Jesus on his determined way to Jerusalem. He has been warning his disciples it is not the triumph they are expecting. They don't get it, but one woman does. Today we consider her story and reflect on the themes of sacrifice and salvation.

Come, then, let us prepare to worship.

Call to Worship

The prophet Isaiah announces that God has proclaimed,

"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."

The Lord, the Creator, calls to us saying, “Look I am making a way in the wilderness.”

God is Spirit and we who worship are called to worship in Spirit and in Truth.

Jesus, following the call of God, set his face to go to Jerusalem.

We come to find his way of life, to follow the Way he called us to.

As he promised the Spirit of the Lord will strengthen and lead us.

We are here to quench our thirst from His rivers in the desert.

Opening Prayer

Holy and Loving God, we come together in this time of worship to share in the Lenten Journey knowing that it leads Jesus to the cross but not yet quite understanding where it is taking us. Calm our fears and anxieties, open our eyes and ears, help us to tune into your call to love you with all our being and hence to love our fellow human beings and your creation as you call us to.

Hymn HFTC 540 Help us to help each other, Lord,

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=help+us+to+help+each+other++charles+we+sley+you+tube&view=detail&mid=765A6D80E1BA36F86ED5765A6D80E1BA36F86ED5&FORM=VIRE>

Prayer for Centring and Renewal (based on a Lenten candle liturgy by Jeanyne Slettom)

We have come together this morning to continue our journey. We have shared in our gathering as a community of faith for worship. Now we begin to focus on where we have travelled and where we are headed as we look at the lit and unlit candles before us. As Autumn continues to bring daylight later in the mornings and dusk earlier in the evenings, so on our Lenten journey we grow more aware that the darkness is increasing.

I invite you to close your eyes . . . and consider the word, “sanctuary.” A sanctuary is a place set aside for sacred things. It is a place of refuge and protection. This building, this special space, this room is a sanctuary. The season of Lent is a kind of sanctuary, extended in time. And one of the things Lent teaches is that each of us too, is a sanctuary. There is inside us a place for sacred things, a place where God abides.

(Silent time.)

As we extinguish this light, we acknowledge the darkness and pain of injustice and hostility, of war and oppression in the world.

(A candle is extinguished.)

Let us pray:

Loving God, we open our hearts to you. We invite you into our inmost being, only to find you already there. Strengthen us in our quiet places and then lead us into the work of justice and peace. Amen.

Hymn FFS 79 (verses 1-5) “Who will carry the cross with me?”

Who will carry the cross with me?
Asks the Christ, the Son of God,
Who will carry the cross with me,
Walk the way of love?

Who will turn then and follow me?
Asks the Christ, the Son of God,
Who will turn then and follow me,
Hear the call and come?

Who will live every day through me?
Asks the Christ, the Son of God,
Who will live every day through me,
Showing fruits of grace?

Who will eat of my bread with me?
Asks the Christ, the Son of God,
Who will eat of my bread with me,
Broken and renewed?

Who will give up their life for me?
Asks the Christ, the Son of God,
Who will give up their life for me,
And surrender all?

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 43:16-21

Philippians 3:4-14

John 12:1-8

Hymn AA 130 Teach us, O loving heart of Christ,

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UoHWI80aDo8>

Teach us, O loving heart of Christ
what only love can say:
"Father, forgive" and still forgive
the blindness of our way.

Torn is the world you came to save --
it bleeds from hands and side,
slow is your Church to bear the scars
where suffering love has died.

We have not healed our neighbour's hurt
nor learned our neighbour's tongue:
across the span of creed and race
your song is not yet sung.

We have not found your way of peace
when lack of peace is death:
We have not fed with word or bread
the hunger of the earth.

Christ in whose hands were thrust the nails
and yet for us could pray --
forgive the things we have not done,
the words we do not say.

Food for Thought

Today on our journey with Jesus through the season of Lent there is a flash of light in the gathering darkness. The first person to catch on, to actually hear what Jesus has been saying. A woman opens her ears and responds to the message. Her response? To anoint Jesus with the sacrifice of a year's earnings worth of perfumed ointment. At last, someone has cottoned on, has glimpsed the way in the wilderness, has sipped the river in the desert; has realised the way ahead involves self-giving sacrifice.

This morning I invite you to reflect on this theme of sacrifice and what it has to do with the life of salvation as Jesus was proclaiming it in the kingdom of God. Isaiah pictures the salvation of God as a way in the wilderness and as rivers of water in the desert.

All four of the gospels in the Bible have a version of the story of a woman who anoints Jesus. In Mark, the earliest gospel to be written in its present form, the woman is not named but she is the only one of all the disciples who Jesus has told of his coming death and resurrection who hears and believes him. Marcus Borg and Dom Crossan put it this way, “She alone, of all those who heard Jesus’ three prophecies of his death and resurrection, believed him and drew the obvious conclusion. Since you are going to die and rise, I must anoint you now beforehand, because I will never have a chance to do it afterward.”

In John’s gospel the woman is named as Mary, the scene is a dinner in the house of Lazarus with Martha serving and Mary anoints Jesus’ feet and wipes them with her hair. Bishop John Robinson says that John is probably using a source or sources with better historical information that was not available to the other gospel writers as he often includes details the others miss.

All the gospels however depict Jesus travelling to Jerusalem to confront the political and religious authorities. The anointing shows Mary has caught on that to follow Jesus she has to participate in the challenging confrontation by participating in sacrificial action with Jesus, not the easy-out of substitution by Jesus. The nature of the kingdoms of this world, the world of Empire, is domination and exploitation, of rich and poor, of powerful and powerless, of high-status elites and low-status nobodies. The nature of God’s kingdom is equity, as children of the one Father, loving each other as themselves, sharing God’s gifts as each has need. The early church communities displayed this radical way of living by sharing their goods and caring for widows and orphans whether they were church members or not. This new way of being in caring community caught on and spread. You can read about it in the book of The Acts of the Apostles. It transformed thousands of lives and it still is, especially among the poor and powerless.

This is eternal life, this is salvation, but it doesn’t just happen it requires a radical transformation of each person and of the society they belong within.

Paul addresses this transformed way of life when he says, “Yet whatever gains I had; these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.” In the eyes of Jewish society at the time Paul had it all, he was top status, circumcised on the eighth day, as specified in the law, impeccable ancestry, of the tribe of Benjamin, with regard to Jewish religious Law blameless. You couldn’t get better than that, absolutely top drawer on the social standing ladder. Yet Paul says, “I throw it all in the rubbish bin to gain Christ.” He discards his high status in order to engage in the life of the resurrection community, the Body of Christ.

It's a comfortable life belonging in the privileged elite, but it comes at the cost of having to hang on to and build your status. Discipleship calls us to abandon that hanging on and requires we give whatever power we have to those around us to serve in love with no regard for social standing. Then we are called to work to transform the society around us to reflect the will of God. Doing that in the face of all the forces of wealth, power and privilege costs. That is where we are called to sacrifice, giving whatever we have, to build the kingdom of God into the experience of ordinary human beings everywhere, enabling the earth to be restored to the glory of creation. It will never be easy, but it is worth more than everything and brings depth of purpose and meaning to life that no accumulation of wealth or status could ever bring. Our pilgrimage approaches its final stage. Are we strong enough, brave enough, foolish-in-the-eyes-of-the-world enough to follow Jesus into Jerusalem? Have our eyes been open enough, our ears attentive enough to catch the message, its not triumph but sacrifice that lies ahead? Will we join with Mary and Paul in following Jesus' way of sacrifice to transform lives and the world into the Kingdom of God? Or will we like his disciples scatter in fear at the first sign of confrontation with the evil of this world? Our journey continues. Will you follow?

Dedication Prayer

Loving God, in Jesus you showed us your example of self-giving,
In the woman who anointed him you have given us another example.

Receive and bless our giving of all that we are, our treasures, our time, our talents, and our mistakes and learning, that they may enable your love to be known and your transforming compassionate forgiveness experienced among your whole creation. Amen.

Prayers of the People

We give thanks O Lord for life and health, for a safe country to live in and for the peace and prosperity of our community. We are grateful to have food, houses, clothes, and security, for the chance to worship, to think and to communicate as we choose. We give thanks for the lives and suffering saved by the actions of our government, health workers and those who have maintained essential services through this time of pandemic. We give thanks for those generous people who have opened their homes to refugees and those who have given generously to support the displaced and dispossessed. Guide us through our Lenten journey to learn how to give generously of our treasures in loving deeds and time.

We especially give thanks for

We pray Lord for all those who are suffering, living in fear, seeing their hopes wrenched from them, for all those who don't have the advantages and privileges we so easily take for granted. Help us to grow our awareness and understanding of those marginalized and left without, those who feel unheard and uncared for. We hold before you those impacted by climate change, sea level rise, droughts, floods, landslides, fires, pollution, and extinctions. This morning we pray too for our brothers and sisters, fellow human beings caught up in violence, in their homes, their neighbourhoods and countries, all around the world including both Ukrainians and Russians in the war in Europe.

We especially pray for

Loving Lord as we come toward the end of our Lenten journey, travel with us, opening our hearts and minds to hear your word and to learn to live your Way.

Hear the cry of our lips and the yearning of our hearts, O God.

Amen.

Hymn HFTC 118 My Lord, you wore no royal crown;

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgE8UZXBzqc>

Commissioning and Blessing

After calling his chosen people out of slavery in the empire of Egypt, God provided for them in the desert for forty years before leading them into the promised land to found a new society of justice, with God as their ruler. Jesus came proclaiming again the call to realise the kingdom of God and resolutely set his face to travel to Jerusalem to confront the forces of Empire there. In this Lenten journey, we are called, like Paul, to put aside worldly status and privilege and build a resurrection community where all are valued as God's loved children with no worldly distinctions. For those who grasp this vision it is worth more than a year's wages. For Jesus, it cost him his life. We are called to give what we have, to build this community here in this place and this time.

Take up whatever cross you are called to carry and join the sacred journey, knowing that God is doing a new thing, making a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, and the Lord God will bless you.

Thanks be to God. Amen