



# Kaurihohore Historic Church

P O Box 4118, Kamo, Whangarei 0141



## Kaurihohore / Kamo Co-operating Parish Sunday 6 March 2022 – Lent 1

*Our service today is led 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 over the next few weeks leading up to Easter. Light them all 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.

Today is first Sunday of the season of Lent, the time when we prepare to join Jesus in his pilgrimage to the cross. The colour we use to designate this time of preparation is violet or purple. This year we are focussing on the gospel of Luke in the readings we share most Sundays. Today's theme is fulfilling the covenant by sharing the bounty of God and seeking His forgiveness where we have fallen short of loving Him. We are called to treat other human beings as equally His children and the world as His creation. Come, then, let us prepare to worship.

**Call to Worship** - based on Psalm 91:1-2.

You who live in the shelter of the Most High,

**Who abide in the shadow of the Almighty,**

Will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress;

**My God, in whom I trust."**

Lent is a season of prayer, let us practice this precious discipline.

**Lord we come before you this morning seeking your presence.**

Lent is a time for fasting, let us give up our fear, selfishness, and greed.

**Lord help us turn our backs on all distractions from loving.**

Lent is an opportunity to echo God's generosity, giving to those in need.

**Lord guide us to express our gratitude through sharing your gifts.**

### **Opening Prayer**

Loving Lord, as we begin again this Lenten journey to the death and resurrection of Easter, journey with us through the wildernesses of our lives. Be with us as we face the times of testing that we may endure and grow through them.

Enable us to follow Jesus as we seek to become your living body in this world you died to save.

**Eternal Spirit, Earth-maker, Pain-bearer, Life-giver,  
Source of all that is and that shall be,  
Father and Mother of us all,  
Loving God, in whom is heaven:**

**The hallowing of your name echo through the universe!  
The way of your justice be followed by the peoples of the world!  
Your heavenly will be done by all created beings!  
Your commonwealth of peace and freedom sustain our hope and come on earth.**

**With the bread we need for today, feed us.  
In the hurts we absorb from one another, forgive us.  
In times of temptation and test, strengthen us.  
From trials too great to endure, spare us.  
From the grip of all that is evil, free us.**

**For you reign in the glory of the power that is love, now and for ever.**

**Amen.**     (*The New Zealand Book of Prayer / He Karakia Mihinare o Aotearoa*)

### **Hymn HFTC 525 Lead Us, Heavenly Father, Lead Us**

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=lead+us+heavenly+father+youtube&docid=608040697872523963&mid=F7F3E1154D1BD03AADDFF7F3E1154D1BD03AADDFF&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

### **Prayer for Centring and Renewal**

(based on a Lenten candle liturgy by Jeanyne Slettom)

We have come together this morning for renewal—in worship and as a community of faith. We've joined in our call to worship, prayer and hymn. But now the time for reflection and stillness is upon us. It is the first Sunday in Lent—the season for journeys of the heart. Close your eyes. Be still. Listen. We are entering a holy time. The Lenten candles have been lit, but over the next six weeks the light will slowly fade into darkness. For we are retelling the story of Jesus' betrayal and suffering and death. We do this not to be morbid, but because in the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, God is revealed—in the amazing transformation of death into life, in endings transformed into beginnings, and in dead-ends that become a source for new possibilities.

This is the sacred centre of our faith—the truth made manifest in Jesus Christ—that God is in each and every one of us, quietly transforming us and the world. In his pain and suffering, Jesus speaks to every pain and loss we have endured and offers us the promise of transformation.

It's an old story, but it still has the power to reveal, to heal, and to redeem. Jesus is at the heart of our faith, in the depth of our souls. He is waiting for us, inviting us to leave ordinary time and follow along with him on the journey that brought him to the Cross. Listen in silence, for Jesus is calling you.

(Silent time.)

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

(A candle is extinguished.)

**Loving God, as we journey through this holy season of Lent, give us strength and courage to make the changes that are needed in our lives. Open our hearts and minds to your steadfast presence and help us to put our trust in you.**

## **Hymn FFS 79: Who will carry the cross with me? (verse 1 only)**

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?

### **Scripture Readings**

This morning's first reading is from the Hebrew scriptures. It follows on from last week's focus on the covenant between God and his chosen people. It comes from the seventh century BC after the fall of Assyria and reflects the requirements of the covenant as revised in the final phase of the monarchy in Jerusalem. It reminds the people that God freed them from slavery and gave them the land as his part in the covenant, but in return they are required to use it, and the fruits of the land, to fulfil their side of the covenant by sharing as He has shared with all who have need.

**Deuteronomy 26:1-11**

**Luke 4:1-13**

**First-fruits and tithes**

**Jesus is tested in the wilderness**

### **Food for Thought**

The book of Deuteronomy is a revised version of the teaching in the earlier books of the Hebrew scriptures. This revision was developed after the Northern Kingdom of Israel had been defeated and taken into exile by the Assyrians and then in due course the Assyrian civilisation had declined. The scholars from the Southern Kingdom of Judah, who developed this revision had one key question they were seeking to explain, "How could God have let his people of Israel be defeated and taken prisoner?" Their answer was clear, 'the people of Israel had violated the covenant with God, so he had punished them.'

How had they violated the covenant? By failing to care for God's children and the land as they had been told to. Read the book if you want to know more.

In today's section we are reminded that when the harvest was gathered the first produce gathered was to be put in a basket and offered to God to be shared with the Levites, who did not receive land, and any foreigners living among them, because they were also without their own land on which to grow food for themselves.

The implication for the people of Judah, of course, was clear and echoed again and again by the prophets of the time, like Jeremiah.

Care for and provide for all those without, or you too will face the judgement of God. King Josiah's reforms did begin well but subsequent rulers didn't follow through and the result was the exile of the people of Judah to Babylon.

We regard these ancient writings as scripture, not because that's what happened in history, there are plenty of other history books we could read instead, but because it is still true and contains important lessons for us and every generation.

For example; I wonder if we would be seeing the horrific invasion of Ukraine by Russia if the Ukrainian government had paid greater attention to the feeling of alienation of the largely Russian speaking industrial workers in the Eastern Donbas region as their Ukrainian speaking compatriots in the rest of the country enjoyed the increasing affluence of their more Westernised lifestyles and changing economic fortunes?

Or would we have seen such turmoil around parliament over the last few weeks if we had ensured that those who lost their jobs through vaccine mandates had been offered suspensions until the outbreak was over and alternative employment so they could still earn a living in the meantime?

So, with this understanding of the centrality of the sacred covenant relationship between God and His people, let us now turn our attention to the story of Jesus in the wilderness. What is Luke trying to say about Jesus as Messiah?

The first test was about bread. Jesus replies quoting Deuteronomy Chapter 8:3, "He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord." Later in that chapter it spells out the centrality of the sense of humility required, at verse 17 "You may say to yourself, 'My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me.'

But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today." In this reply Luke is affirming that Jesus was totally and humbly relying on God not on his human strength.

This point is reiterated in the second test. This test was about power. Jesus replies quoting Deuteronomy 6:13, "Fear the Lord your God, serve him only and take your oaths in his name. Do not follow other gods," Jesus consistently turned his back on using power over people to coerce them but never swerved away from consistently asserting the sovereignty of God.

The third test is about privilege. Jesus again replies quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, “Do not put the Lord your God to the test as you did at Massah. Be sure to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and the stipulations and decrees he has given you.” The reference to Massah is about the Israelites questioning whether God really cared as they were thirsty, and God was pictured as being pressured to prove his loyalty all over again.

From these tests we could take it that Luke is asserting that the true nature of Jesus’ Messiahship is not about satisfying physical needs for their own sake, or becoming arrogant, but focussed always on humbly acknowledging God as Lord of all life, never coercing or manipulating people but always being respectful of others and remaining loyal to our calling to avoid privilege by sharing the gifts of God with all God’s people and taking proper stewardship of his creation. This affirms the nature of God, as Jesus is seen to reveal him, as a self-emptying or kenotic God, seen essentially and ultimately in the crucifixion. But that’s for later in this Lenten season where our journey is headed.

But what might this mean in day-to-day real life?

I wonder what Jesus would say at our giving the unemployed a monetary benefit rather than taking the trouble to find something each person can do to make a contribution to society and feel valued and included in the process. Are we essentially saying they can live by bread alone?

I wonder what Jesus would say about our negotiating trade deals that allow imported goods produced in low wage economies to replace those made by workers in our own country? Or offering seasonal employment to Pacific Islanders while employers in their own countries cannot find labour? Are we using our economic power to follow other gods rather than the God of justice?

I wonder what Jesus would say about our having enough covid vaccinations to inoculate our whole population two or three times over while many in the poorer Asian and Pacific countries and especially in Africa have very low vaccination rates. Is this a case of our asserting privilege as a rich Westernised nation with powerful connections?

These are not the classic ‘sins’ we are used to considering in our individualistic thinking way, but on our journey through this Lent I invite you to reflect was Jesus ever really challenging only individuals to walk humbly with God? Or was his call to look at ourselves in a much more community wide view to see the effect of the whole society of which we are a part on those who are marginalized and without, like the Levites and aliens who did not own land in the age of the Deuteronomic writers. I hope we can share in a challenging conversation as we walk the journey to Jerusalem this Lent.

## **Prayers of the People**

We give thanks O Lord for the land we live in, the peace and prosperity of our community, and for the health we enjoy and the health services we have access to. We are grateful to have food, houses, clothes, and safety, for the chance to worship, to think and to communicate as we choose. We give thanks for the lives and suffering saved by the action of our government, health workers and those who have maintained essential services. We give thanks for those generous people who have opened their homes to refugees. Guide us through our Lenten journey to learn how to share the privileges we enjoy with those who are the Levites and aliens of our 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 we take so easily for granted. Help us to grow our awareness and understanding of those marginalized and left without.

We hold before you those impacted by climate change, sea level rise, drought, floods and 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 begin 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 531 O Jesus, I Have Promised to Serve You to the End**

<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=o+jesus+i+have+promised+you+tube&&view=detail&mid=4C05FBBCF1C70DB525324C05FBBCF1C70DB52532&&FORM=VDRVRV>

## **Commissioning and Blessing**

After forty years in the wilderness God brought his people into the promised land but charged them to keep covenant with him by sharing their bounty with those who were not so privileged. After his Baptism God led Jesus into the wilderness where he was tempted to abandon his call to obey the commission to call the people to repentance and to return to the covenant relationship with God. Today and throughout this season we are called to follow Jesus, to fulfil our covenant relationship to love God and to love others as we love ourselves.

Take up whatever cross you are called to carry and join the sacred journey, and the Lord God will bless you.

**Thanks be to God. Amen**