

## **'How do we, in the New Year and beyond ... Live the Good Life?'**

St Paul's Presbyterian Church, Napier. 29 January 2023 Epiphany 3

### **Opening Sentences: Psalm 15**

Who may be a guest in the sacred space? Who may live on the holy hill?

<sup>2</sup>Whoever lives a blameless life, does what is right, and speaks honestly.

<sup>3</sup>Who does not slander, or do harm to others, or insult their neighbour.

The one who makes firm commitments and does not renege on promises  
who does not charge interest when lending money.

who does not take bribes to testify against the innocent.

The one who lives like this will never be shaken.

### **Gathering**

In light of these political times, a new leadership about to be inaugurated,  
we consider how ethical and spiritually mature leadership  
can be found in our world, here and abroad.

#### **Alternative visions or 'alternative facts'?**

#### **Beatitudes, manifestos, policies, personalities...**

How can everything be brought together,

**so all can live in a commonwealth of justice and peace?**

### **Hymn: So many times** *A hymn expressing awe and wonder*

1. So many times, I gaze in awe and wonder, as our blue earth hangs silently in space. I see the stars, their ancient light, still moving t'wards me now, truth I almost can't face.

*O mighty world, my heart cries loud and free, How great this is, this universe! Let my praise sound for you both loud and free, How great this world, for all, and me!*

2. Great solar power beams forth upon our planet, Maintaining life, an energetic base. The planets orbit on their different axes, and stars adorn the inky black of space  
*O mighty world, my heart cries loud and free, How great this is, this universe! Let my praise sound for you both loud and free, How great this world, for all, and me!*

3. And deep inside, where human eye can't follow are gluons, quarks, so small we can't see. Black holes create mysterious deep dark hollows, dark matter holds us all invisibly.

*O mighty world, my heart cries loud and free, How great this is, this universe! Let my praise sound for you both loud and free, How great this world, for all, and me!*

4. So each is valued, big and microscopic, all play a part in one dramatic act.

So each of us, unknown or mildly famous, Are welcome, each of universe a part.

*O mighty world, my heart cries loud and free, How great this is, this universe! Let my praise sound for you both loud and free, How great this world, for all, and me!*

*Tune: How Great Thou Art (CH4 154, WOV 628)*

**Prayer of thanksgiving and lament (Susan)**

**Midrash of the Lord's Prayer (said together)**

By Mark Hathaway [www.taofliberation.com](http://www.taofliberation.com)

and Neil Douglas-Klotz [www.abwoon.com](http://www.abwoon.com)

**O Silent Sound,**

**whose shimmering music pulsates  
at the heart of each and all,**

**Clear a space in us where thy melody  
may be perceived in its purity.**

**Let the rhythm of thy counsel reverberate through our lives,  
so that we move to the beat of justice, love, and peace.**

**Then, our whole being at one with thy song,  
grant that the Earth may be filled  
with the beauty of thy voice.**

**Endow us with the wisdom to produce and share  
what each being needs to grow and flourish,**

**And give us courage to embrace our shadow with emptiness,  
as we embrace others in their darkness.**

**But let us not be captive to uncertainty,  
nor cling to fruitless pursuits.**

**For from thee springs forth  
the rhythm, the melody, and the harmony,  
which restores all to balance, again and again. Ameyn.**

**Readings**

**Micah 6: 1-8**

The divine one has a case against the people; a dispute with Israel!

<sup>3</sup>“My people, how have I wronged you?

How have I wearied you? Answer me!

<sup>4</sup>In fact, I brought you up from the land of Egypt;

I delivered you from that place of slavery.

I sent Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to lead you...

Recall how you journeyed from Shittim to Gilgal,

so you might acknowledge that you have been treated fairly.”

<sup>6</sup>With what should I enter the holy presence?

With what should I bow before the divine?

Should I enter the sacred presence with burnt offerings, with year-old calves?

<sup>7</sup>Will the Holy One accept a thousand rams or ten thousand streams of olive oil?...

<sup>8</sup>You have been told, O human beings, what is good,

and what the Holy One really wants from you

to carry out justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly before your God.

### **I Corinthians 1: 26-31**

<sup>26</sup>Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters. Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were born to a privileged position. <sup>27</sup>But what the world thinks foolish was chosen to shame the wise, and what the world thinks weak was chosen to shame the strong. <sup>28</sup>What is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing, has been chosen to set aside what is regarded as something, <sup>29</sup>so that no one can boast...

### **Matthew 5: 1-12 The Beatitudes**

**5** When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain. After he sat down his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he began to teach them by saying:

<sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things about you falsely on account of me.

<sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven, for they persecuted the prophets before you in the same way.

*Reader finishes here*

### **Contemporary Reading (read by Susan) Misogyny/Philogyny**

The dictionary says the word is specific.  
Misogyny specifically references a hatred of women.  
Not a woman  
not her over there, or her indoors, or that other girl.

No, all of us. It is quite specific.  
The word originates from two Greek words  
*Misein* – to hate, *Gyne* – woman.  
Both roots can be found in other words, some common, some obscure.

Misogyny is common, but not obscure.  
It is specific.  
I am woman. I am hated.  
Let's make a new word.  
Let's take the root for love – *phil*,

Make a new word:- *philogyny*.  
Let's make that common and not obscure.  
It can be specific too.  
I am woman. I am loved.

### **Response**

For the Word read to us, for the Word among us, for the Word within us, ***We give thanks***

### **Hymn: The church needs a foundation (1<sup>st</sup> two verses)**

*A hymn for the postmodern church*

1. The church needs a foundation, though not of brick or stone  
For buildings are but shelter, from rain or hailstorm.  
They symbolise commitment, they resonate with praise,  
But humans form the true church In these postmodern days.
2. Through Christendom's great worship, the rafters have been wrung,  
We've gazed at stained glass windows, made sure the brass has shone.  
We've consecrated, maintained, we've renovated, but  
religion's modern rituals, are those postmoderns cut.

*Tune: Aurelia (WOV 385)*

### **Reflection**

### **Hymn: The church needs a foundation (2nd two verses)**

3. The commonwealth of spirit Is not built out of wood.  
But by our follow'ng Jesus with praxis that is good  
Postmodern 'church' emerges In fresh expressions, new,  
With talk and acts of justice, Compassion, which is true.
4. In our time now, we follow Jesus upon the Way,  
On terms for us authentic, And honest for this day.  
We see our 'church' re-forming, the Spirit helps it grow;  
We see again, a future Where faith will always flow.

*Tune: Aurelia (WOV 385)*

*Congregation to remain standing*

### **Affirmation for a New Era**

We affirm this world is made for all people,  
that the pursuit of health and happiness  
is both the right of all and the responsibility of all.

**We recall Jesus always looked for the best in those he met  
urging people to go a second mile  
and for honesty in our dealings with each other.**

We recall he saw beyond wealth and privilege  
to what would satisfy the soul.

We recall he lived out Micah's call to seek justice,  
love mercy, and walk humbly on the earth.

**We believe we are called to emulate his actions and attitude,  
to be people of integrity,  
working for the long term good of our community and nation  
and the lasting good of this planet.**

We affirm, as vital tools to those ends  
the importance of hope and of faith and of love  
for all people, in each country on this earth.

**Prayers for Ourselves and others (picture on the screen)**

**Offering Hymn (sung seated)**

**It takes us effort**

*A hymn about orthopraxis and offering*

1. It takes us effort to give things away; Our money, or goods, or our time, many ways. We know we are charged with relieving the poor and charity always demands of us more.
2. It takes great effort to advocate true, for those who need systems to be well renewed; through marches, submissions, we seek human rights, but are distant from those for whom we might fight.
3. It takes much more effort to welcome right in the different, or 'other', those who never win; to make space as equals and share goods with all requires us to relegate our needs to the call.
4. It takes most effort to incarnate the Christ, to work contr'y to this world's great power and might; to be 'with' the other not only do 'for', to be equal humans, equal right to the core.

*Tune: Slane (WOV 445)*

**Offering is brought forward, followed by Prayer**

**Hymn Celebrate the life we're given**

1. Celebrate the Life we're given, grace on grace, where love abounds.  
Celebrate the world around us, blue and green, where birdsong sounds.  
Celebrate sun's rise and setting, 'cross the harbour, over hills.  
Everything reflects true beauty, Love, Joy, Spirit; each heart fills.
2. We choose to live lives of meaning, even when the sky turns grey.  
We choose to continue journeying, Taking brave steps, straight, bi, gay.  
We choose wrestling with doubt or danger, Trials which shade and haunt our way.  
Every moment we're companioned, Love walks with us, every day.
3. We companion others grieving for their children, cruelly killed.  
Hearts reach out in love and comfort to homes where the laughter's stilled.  
May the love of friend and neighbour soothe the heart, and nerve the soul;  
May our world find good solutions, understanding self our goal.

4. Change takes us in new directions, altering our daily view.  
Change of style and life and custom, changing me and changing you.  
Still divine Love remains constant, though we find more that is true.  
Each day opens fresh horizons, breaks out truth that's overdue.  
*Tune: Austria (WOV 577)*

### **Benediction**