

How do we, in the New Year and beyond... trust the Journey?

St Paul's Napier 15 January 2023 Epiphany 2

Gathering (from Psalm 40)

My cry for help **has been heard.**

I have been lifted me out of the watery pit, **out of the slimy mud.**

my feet have been placed on a rock, **given secure footing.**

I have been given reason to sing a new song, **praising the sacred.**

May many see, **so that they might trust in the journey.**

How blessed is **the one who trusts in the journey**

and does not seek help **from the proud or from liars.**

Let us sing a new song of praise and joy this day!

Hymn: Our delight is in the broadness

A hymn of delight in the world

1. Our delight is in the broadness of the world dawn brings to sight;
Harbour, beach and islands' structure, plain and hilltop, mountains' might;
Thanks be giv'n for nature's beauty, celebrate each new day's light.
2. Our delight is in the living of each moment every day,
working, playing, walking, sleeping, being family, straight, bi, gay;
Grace be giv'n for every minute, wisdom for each interplay.
3. Our delight is in the sharing with all creatures, this our place;
moths and birds with stunning markings, dolphins moving with sweet grace;
Thanks be giv'n for all creation, celebrate each life, each space.

Praise, My Soul (WOV 68)

Prayer of Thanksgiving and Lament

Thanksgiving

⁴I always give thanks for you because of the grace given to you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For you were made rich in every way in him, in all your speech and in every kind of knowledge— ⁶just as the testimony about Christ has been confirmed among you— ⁷so that you do not lack any spiritual gift...
(then Susan continues with the prayer)

Readings

Isaiah 49 selected verses: Delivery of the Exiles

49

³The words were heard in my heart of hearts:

"You are my servant, through whom I will reveal my splendour."

⁴But I thought, "I have worked in vain;

I have expended my energy for absolutely nothing."

But I will be vindicated and rewarded.

⁵for now I see, I was formed even before birth to be a servant of the sacred story —

... so that Israel might be gathered;

and I will be honoured, for the sacred is my source of strength—

⁶The question is asked "Is it too insignificant a task for you to be a servant,
to re-establish the tribes... restore the remnant?"

You will be made a light to the nations,

so you can bring deliverance to the remote regions of the earth.”

⁷This is what the Protector of Israel, their Holy One, says
to the one who is despised and rejected by nations, a servant of rulers:
“Kings will see and rise in respect, princes will bow down,
because the Holy One of Israel has chosen you.”

Hymn: Ancient words ring through the aeons

A hymn to celebrate prophets

1. Ancient words ring through the aeons, urging, chiding, giving praise.
Prophets all, both men and women, led the people through life's maze.
They were those who lived the message of the true life, spirit-filled.
They were leaders through life's passage, leading with a courageous will.
2. Living simply, prophets focus on the truth and how to live;
They read well the hearts of people, speaking from the Word,
they give warnings, guidelines for true living, bravely they speak truth to power.
They see through pretence and posture, they see when our leaders cower.
3. Knowing truth requires right action, speaking out, and staying true,
to the prophets' ancient notions, knowing me and knowing you.
May we now, like them, envision worlds where real compassion reigns,
where love shows its many faces, where true justice is sustained. *Tune: Hyfrydol (WOV 173)*

John 1:29-42

New English Translation

²⁹On the next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! ³⁰This is the one about whom I said, ‘After me comes a man who is greater than I am, because he existed before me.’ ³¹I did not recognize him, but I came baptizing with water so that he could be revealed to Israel.”

³²Then John testified, “I saw the Spirit descending like a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. ³³And I did not recognize him, but the one who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘The one on whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining—this is the one who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.’ ³⁴I have both seen and testified that this man is the Chosen One of God.”

³⁵Again the next day John was standing there with two of his disciples. ³⁶Gazing at Jesus as he walked by, he said, “Look, the Lamb of God!” ³⁷When John's two disciples heard him say this, they followed Jesus. ³⁸Jesus turned around and saw them following and said to them, “What do you want?” So they said to him, “Rabbi” (which is translated Teacher), “where are you staying?” ³⁹Jesus answered, “Come and you will see.” So they came and saw where he was staying, and they stayed with him that day. Now it was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

Contemporary Reading

Affirmation of the Word then and now

Events often have ineffable quality
impossible to capture in words
Ancient women and men experienced more
than words on scroll or page ever detail;
So we know scripture comes to us
filtered through minds and hearts
contexts and circumstances.
In the events of our own lives
we can be moved by feather-light touches of grace
or tossed about in a maelstrom of meaning
or pain twists our gut in rictus agony;
So we know divine words form in us
without sound or vocabulary,
shaped by who we are now.
Spoken or unspoken, the Word forms in us now

as it formed long ago in people like us, yet not like us.
We sense its truth in feelings too deep for words
or thoughts too complicated for grammar;
So we know the Word is all around us and within
In this, in all of us, is the Word.
Thanks be given.

For the Word among us
For the Word read to us
For the Word within us

We give thanks

Hymn: Let us reach down deep inside us

A hymn about finding the Self within

1. Let us reach down deep inside us, to the place where quiet reigns;
Find the Self who lives inside us, knows our joy and knows our pains:
Let our ego stand aside there, shadow sharing space with light.
Let our inner selves rejoice at how Love shines in darkest night.
2. Wind and fire and earthquake pass, but Spirit is not found in them;
Still, small voice is hardly heard, but brings Love which does not condemn.
In lives buffeted by windstorms, rocked by quakes, and scorched by fire,
stillness brings surprising solace as we find there, hearts' desire.
3. Sacred calm means minds can settle, hearts grow quiet, souls grow still;
Busy thinking slows its rhythm, gives compassion chance to fill.
Even long-forgotten scars heal as new balm brings a new way;
Every space, and every crevice fills, as Love arrives to stay.

Tune: Gaelic Traditional Melody Arranged by John Bell. (FFS 10 (i))

Reflection

Hymn: The woman came

A hymn about encounter

1. The woman came along that day for water from the well. The other women had gone home, they didn't want to know her well, she was left out, all alone, she was left out, alone.
2. She found a stranger sitting there, on her well's stony rim. He was a man, and she was not, she didn't think she'd talk to him, he and her sort didn't talk, he and her sort don't talk.
3. But they discussed, and argued long on water, life, and prayer. He challenged her, she challenged him, they met, connected then right there; Things would never be the same, they'd never be the same.
4. We do not know what encounters wait to meet us on our way. How strangers can reset our lives, how we can learn anew each day that the Spirit is within, the Spirit is within.

Tune: Repton (WOV 519 (ii))

Remain standing for the collection ?? and affirmation

Affirmation and Recognition of Faith Found in Epiphany

We recognise those moments of epiphany – we've all had them – when we have suddenly realised everything has changed. When we have seen deep down inside us and found there what we did not expect.

Instead of the dark, greedy, grasping selfishness we have been warned of all our lives, we have discovered within, instead, light. Light which children's drawings sketch around angels light which softly glows with compassion and welcome, beckoning us to own our inner rich resource which is so like God as to be no different from that we call divine.

We recognise, in those moments of discovery, in those glimpses of the truth, we can never be the same again, even if the waters are deep and dark we will be led through them by a loving guide who is, sometimes, us.

And thankfulness rises deep within.

Prayers for ourselves and others (using pictures on the powerpoint)

Hymn: The year is ever turning

A hymn of the year and the journey

1. The year is ever turning, Spring welcomes back the light.
The heat of summer fades, then in autumn birds take flight.
In winter, darkness closes and temp'ratures grow chill,
Yet warmth will always be ours, for love is primary still.
2. Among New Zealand's foothills our hearts are overcome,
The stars and planets tell us creating's never done;
Aurora (the australis) streaks through the evening sky;
At this, like Spirit's myst'ry, we question "How?" and "Why?"
3. In bright sunlight we wander on hill and track and road;
Walking with one another we carry each one's load;
Tall tussocks brush our ankles, steep gradients test our heart,
The journey takes us onward; of cosmos, we are part.
Tune: Ewing (WOV 346)

Benediction

3 fold Amen?