

[OPENING PRAYERS AND HOLY COMMUNION ARE AVAILABLE AS A VIDEO HERE](#)

**PART 1 – OPENING PRAYERS**

WELCOME

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

SENTENCE

The words you have spoken are spirit and life, O Lord; you have the words of eternal life.  
John 6.63, 68

PRAYER OF PREPARATION

Let us pray.

Almighty God,

to whom all hearts are open,

all desires known,

and from whom no secrets are hidden:

cleanse the thoughts of our hearts

by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,

that we may perfectly love you,

and worthily magnify your holy name,

through Christ our Lord. Amen.

TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your

mind, and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it:

You shall love your neighbour as yourself. Matthew 22.37–40, Mark 12.30–31

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

In penitence and faith,

let us confess our sins to Almighty God:

Merciful God,

our maker and our judge,

we have sinned against you

in thought, word, and deed,

and in what we have failed to do:

we have not loved you with our whole heart;

we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves;

we repent, and are sorry for all our sins.

Father, forgive us.

Strengthen us to love and obey you

in newness of life;

through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Almighty God,  
who has promised forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith:  
pardon you and set you free from all your sins,  
strengthen you in all goodness  
and keep you in eternal life,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord,  
we beseech you mercifully  
to receive the prayers of your people who call upon you,  
and grant that they may both perceive  
and know what things they ought to do,  
and also may have grace and power faithfully to fulfil them;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

#### PLEASE PAUSE THE VIDEO

**PART 2** — AN ALL AGE VIDEO FIRST OF A NEW SERIES, *WHERE IS GOD?* AND DOWNLOADABLE MATERIAL FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN [HERE](#)

**PART 3** — LOOK UP AND READ THROUGH THE READINGS, LISTEN TO THE [SERMON PODCAST](#) (READ ALONG IF YOU WISH) BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE, AND PRAY THE INTERCESSIONS, TODAY BY REV SUE BROOKS.

#### READINGS

Romans 8:9-17

Psalm 65:8-13

Matthew 12:22-32, 43-45

**SERMON BY REV JENNIE SAVAGE**

**Available to listen online and/or download – access via Pentecost 2020 link and notice also a reasonable library of past sermons for you to listen to as you exercise or meditate...**

Matthew 12:22-32, 43-45

*Let us pray:*

*Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Word;*

*open our hearts and our minds to your Spirit as we reflect and pray. Amen.*

Although I knew it was possible, I felt shocked on Tuesday when the Premier announced the reinstatement of Stage 3 lockdown over Melbourne for the next six weeks.

We are seeing and perhaps experiencing a lot of grief and anger in people's reactions. These emotions work themselves out by wanting to find someone or 'someones' to blame. The media loves to amplify this.

Last week I talked about gentleness.

Gentleness and its twin, patience, are virtues greatly in need in this current time.

Without them, we are the proverbial bull in the china shop, wreaking damage and destruction in our wake.

With that in mind, let us turn to today's gospel.

Reputations.

They can make or break a person.

Bad reputations, caused through malice, is a sin called slander which the Bible has many warnings about in both Testaments.

The ninth commandment is *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.*

It connects with the third commandment: *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.*

If, there, God seeks to protect his own name from dishonour, this ninth commandment seeks to protect the good name of every person whose desire it is to receive such a gift.

In today's gospel following Jesus' healing of a demoniac, while the people present wonder whether Jesus is the Messiah, the Pharisees accuse him of being demonic, a servant of Beelzebul, another name for the devil.

They may believe Jesus is a con. That he has set up this scene with this person pretending to be a demoniac and then miraculously cured.

Why the labels? Are the Pharisees jealous? Or threatened by the people's admiration for Jesus?

Their slander, for that is what it is, is absurd.

Jesus points out how it makes no sense for Satan to cast out Satan.

*Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand.*

These are images of civil war and internal strife which have a long history, past and present, of destruction.

While I want to watch the news to know what is going on in the world, particularly with this pandemic, I hate watching reports of people turning on one another whether it is over the wearing of masks, the issues pertaining to Black Lives Matter, political shots being fired, and the impatience and frustration of many who want things fixed now!

But even when good work is being done, slander will question the motives of the person, or in Jesus' case the source.

Jesus calls the Pharisees to think about what they are saying.  
Among their number they have exorcists.  
Do they question their ministry?

When I was reflecting on this text a few weeks ago, I thought more about how Christians and churches can be divided among themselves usually because each's vision of the kingdom is too small, it is only about me and my bit, and we end up dividing God's kingdom into various groups of us and them.

I wrote this prayer at the time:

***Lord, deliver us from our stupidity when we attack ourselves because we are not generous of heart, but rather jealous, competitive and fearful. Help us repent from our divisive behaviour. For Jesus' sake. Amen.***

Another theme I have explored lately is that of the 'little ones', the marginalized and the outcast that the Pharisees want nothing to do with.

They are happy to label them as demoniacs and leave them in their pit.

A more merciful view, such as Jesus', realises the demoniacs are helpless instruments of Satan.

It takes a stronger one than Satan to enter his house, bind him and free his prisoners.

Jesus is that stronger one, strong in his gentleness and patience.

As I quoted from Francis de Sales last week: ***Nothing is so strong as gentleness, nothing is so gentle as real strength*** – that is the real strength we need today.

What does Jesus mean when he says:

***Whoever speaks against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven ...***

The Pharisees' accusation of Jesus using the power of Beelzebul is perhaps the example of the latter, but the first part of his sentence sounds like Jesus himself can wear the accusations, and he will on the cross, but perhaps here he is defending those whom the Spirit of God works through and are unrecognised or even reviled.

As earlier illustrations showed, we humans are so good at destroying one another, even within the church. This whole passage could be a lesson for us.

Henri Nouwen nailed it when he wrote regarding human competitiveness, ***because that church is good, that means we aren't***. Those who want their church to emulate another but cannot accept who or what they are, are in fact blaspheming themselves?

Jesus talks about careless words, don't we have a lot of them? By our words we are justified, and by our words we are condemned. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. If there is good treasure therein, good will come out.

The last section on the unclean and evil spirit is confronting.

To think that such a spirit can be exorcised, to only come back indwell the same person multiplying the evil seven times.

The image of a house swept and clean – but empty – is an invitation for squatters or open to another infestation.

This image suggests there is no neutral spiritual place.

In this same chapter Jesus has pointed out that as a tree, your fruit will be either good or poor, for eating or discarding.

If there is this divide, I guess because we are human we often jump from one side to the other, but where do we start lingering?

Healing perhaps can be compared to successfully losing weight, or gaining a degree of fitness or any other improvement in life.

But we know in our experience that if we do not build on it from there, we lose the benefits.

*Use it or lose it* is a pithy truism.

So too I think, our spiritual healing and insights need to be recognised for the treasure they are and nurtured in our hearts.

Let us pray that we may not be blind or deaf to the work of the Holy Spirit in ourselves, in another, in another church or our church, or out in the world.

*May the words of our mouth be of the Spirit's good and abundant treasure which gives life to all. Amen.*

## INTERCESSIONS BY REV SUE BROOKS

Abundant and loving God, use our senses to open our hearts and minds to the richness of scriptures. Help us to receive the gifts you sow so graciously and freely in our lives, and inspire us to share such bounty generously with our neighbours.

God of each, God of all: we pray for our families, those with whom we are drawn together by birth or by marriage or by adoption.

May they receive care and love from you and from us as well.

Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for our friends and neighbours, those with whom we are drawn together by common places of work or learning, by common aspirations and values.

Strengthen the ties between us, and may we find in these relationships the freedom and companionship and community that nurture us and the world around us.

We pray for our fellow citizens, those with whom we are drawn together by birthplace and nation, by regional ties and societal traditions.

Fashion these bonds so to insure the relationships and ideals we claim are paid more than lip-service, so that who we are and have been never closes us to who we may yet become.

Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for the thousands in the world whose lives have been affected by the Corona Virus, for those who have died, for their families and friends, and for the people who are working to create a vaccine to halt the spread this disease.

We pray too for those in Victoria who are victims of this terrible disease, for the many, many who have been placed in lockdown, for those who are now in hospital and those who are trying to recover from this virus.

We pray that they may know patience and kindness with all they meet,

May they also know that these actions are for the betterment of all.

We pray for those who are enforcing these lockdowns that they may also know patience and kindness too.

Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

We pray for those who are part of this church community and in the whole Christian Church, those with whom we are drawn together by a common faith and uncommon grace

We pray for the many people in churches who have been affected by this disruptive time, the groups who are now not able to meet, and those who are lonely and alone. May they know that we love them are praying for each of them.

May we thrive in ministry, may we expand in mission may we deepen in spirituality, and may we grow closer to one another and you.

We pray for those who are fashioned in your image, with whom we are drawn together in one family.

Free us to recognize the stranger as no stranger, but sister and brother; and to see the joy and need of any as the cause for our rejoicing and compassion.

Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer.*

Disruptive God, your ways are not the ways of the world.

We are often moved by your ways as we live our life,

Challenge us to see the world according to your plan not ours

Help us to seek justice, instead of resting in the comfort of tradition.

Guide us so that we too may disrupt the world by your love.

We ask you of your goodness, Lord, to comfort and sustain all who in this transitory life who are in sorry, need, sickness, or any other adversity.

We give thanks for the lives of Constance Spencer who died on June 23, and for Len Trowse who died on 6 July. We pray for their family and friends. May Constance and Len rest in peace, and rise up in glory.

We bless your holy name for all your servants who have died in the faith of Christ. Give us grace to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of your heavenly kingdom. Lord, in your mercy, *hear our prayer*.

Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial,  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours  
now and for ever. Amen.

**PLEASE RESUME THE VIDEO FOR HOLY COMMUNION**

GREETING OF PEACE

We are the body of Christ.  
His Spirit is with us.  
The peace of the Lord be always with you.  
And also with you.

OFFERTORY PRAYER

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation.  
Through your goodness we have these gifts to share.  
Accept and use our offerings for your glory  
and for the service of your kingdom.  
Blessed be God for ever.

HOLY COMMUNION.

The Lord be with you,  
And also with you.  
Lift up your hearts;  
We lift them to the Lord.  
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God  
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

You are worthy, our Lord and God,  
to receive glory and honour and power,  
for you created all things,  
making us in your own image.  
We praise you for your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ,  
who by his death on the cross and rising to new life  
offered the one true sacrifice for sin  
and obtained an eternal deliverance for his people.  
Therefore, we lift our voices to praise you, saying,

Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.

And now we thank you for these gifts of bread and wine; may we who receive them, as Jesus said,  
share his body and his blood.  
On the night he was betrayed, he took bread and gave you thanks. He broke the bread and gave it to  
his friends, and said, 'Take and eat. This is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'  
After supper he took the cup and gave you thanks.  
He shared the cup with them and said,  
'This is my blood poured out so that sins may be forgiven.  
Do this in remembrance of me.'

Christ has died,  
Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.  
You have gathered us together to feed on Christ and to remember all he has done for us:  
Fill us with your Spirit that we may follow Jesus in all we do and say, working for justice and  
bringing your peace to this world that you have made.  
Accept our prayers through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Blessing and honour and glory and power,  
are yours forever and ever. Amen

#### THE BREAKING AND SHARING OF THE BREAD AND WINE

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ.  
We who are many are one body,  
for we all share in the one bread.

#### DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

#### POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Living God,  
in this holy meal you fill us with new hope.  
May the power of your love,  
which we have known in word and sacrament,  
continue your saving work among us,  
give us courage for our pilgrimage,  
and bring us to the joys you promise.

Most loving God,  
you send us into the world you love.  
Give us grace to go thankfully and with courage  
in the power of your Spirit.

**AFFIRMATION OF FAITH based on Ephesians 3**

***Let us declare our faith in God:***

We believe in God, the Father,  
from whom every family  
in heaven and on earth is named.  
We believe in God the Son,  
who lives in our hearts through faith,  
and fills us with his love.  
We believe in God the Holy Spirit,  
who strengthens us  
with power from on high.  
We believe in one God;  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

***[Based on Ephesians 3. New Patterns of Worship (CofE) p166]***

**BLESSING**

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge  
and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord;  
and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and  
remain with you always. Amen.

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:  
In the name of Christ. Amen.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Liturgy from From A Prayer Book for Australia Copyright © Broughton Publishing 1995