

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

**PART 1 – OPENING PRAYERS**

WELCOME

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good.  
His steadfast love endures for ever!  
Grace and peace be with you  
and also with you.

SENTENCE

Jesus said to them, ‘Who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.’ Matthew 16.15–16

LIGHTING THREE CANDLES

We light a light in the name of the Maker,  
    who lit the world and breathed the breath of life for us  
We light a light in the name of the Son,  
    who saved the world and stretched out his hand to us  
We light a light in the name of the Spirit,  
    who encompasses the world and blesses our souls with yearning  
We light three lights for the trinity of love:  
God above us, God beside us, God beneath us:  
the beginning, the end, the everlasting one.

CANTICLE: GREAT AND WONDERFUL

Great and wonderful are your deeds:  
Lord God the Almighty.  
Just and true are your ways:  
O ruler of the nations.  
Who shall not revere you  
and praise your name O Lord?:  
for you alone are holy.  
All nations shall come and worship in your presence:  
for your just dealings have been revealed.  
To the One who sits on the throne and to the Lamb:  
be praise and honour glory and might  
for ever and ever. Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

My brothers and sisters, not out of dread and fear, but believing that God is faithful to forgive, let us rid ourselves of what we need to carry no longer.

Merciful God, we have sinned in what we have thought and said, in the wrong we have done and in the good we have not done.

**We have sinned in ignorance: we have sinned in weakness: we have sinned through our own deliberate fault.**

**We are truly sorry. We repent and turn to you.**

**Forgive us, for our Saviour Christ's sake, and renew our lives to the glory of your name. Amen**

**May God forgive you, Christ befriend you,  
and the Spirit renew you and change your life. Amen.**

#### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

**Creator God,  
you have made us for yourself,  
and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in you:  
teach us to offer ourselves to your service,  
that here we may have your peace,  
and in the world to come  
may see you face to face;  
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

#### **PLEASE PAUSE THE VIDEO**

**PART 2** — AN ALL AGE VIDEO PART 4 OF *WHERE IS GOD?* FOCUSING ON FINDING GOD IN OUR EVERYDAY LIVES 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 SARNIA BIRCH

#### **READINGS**

**Romans 12:1-8**

**Psalms 138:1-3, 7-8**

**Matthew 16:1-12**

**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 16:1-12

*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.*

Earlier in the year, Sav and I walked up Arthurs Seat from the bottom of the hill and ended up at The Eagle Café eager for a reward of coffee and cake. I do love cake, though I it is better I not eat it too often. At The Eagle I peered into the display fridge with delicious anticipation, *which one would I have?*

Having made my decision I went to the cashier to order and was told it was self-serve, to go and get the cake out myself. Sav pointed out the 'self-serve' sign that was right in front of the display that somehow, I completely missed as I zero-ed in on the cakes themselves!

Well, I'm not the only one who does not see what is right in front of their eyes! What we look for, though, is not always right there in front. Sometimes we truly have to search, make an effort to find not only an object or a person, but also truth and meaning.

In today's text from the gospel, the Pharisees and the Sadducees come and asked Jesus for a sign from heaven. Apparently, they are testing him. It never goes down very well when people demand a sign in the Bible. While some do demand God provide proof by means of a sign, God asks human beings to step out in faith.

The scene before this text is a three day walk out pass the Sea of Galilee and up a mountain. What is interesting about this scene, apart from the feeding of four thousand men plus women and children (and yes, that is pretty interesting in itself), is that those 4,000 plus people, the crowds, followed Jesus all the way out there.

Remember me saying before about needing to search, make an effort to find what we are looking for? And I think they found it. During those three days on that mountain with Jesus, many were healed, all were fed from seven loaves and a few fish, and the people praised the God of Israel.

And *then* back in the town, the Pharisees and the Sadducees come and asked Jesus for a sign from heaven! It is sort of laughable. They have no idea, because of course they would not get up and follow Jesus for three days.

Is this their fault? Perhaps they had commitments?

Jesus challenges them on interpreting the signs of the times. *An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.* What does that mean?

Very simply, Jonah was sent to Ninevah by God to tell them to repent, to turn to God because their ways were evil.

That's it in a nutshell. Repent! Turn to God!

The signs of the times always call us to turn to God. Turn to God in joy. Turn to God in times of trouble.

The signs of today: pandemic, divisions, protests, natural catastrophes, injustice and other evils ... There is plenty of troubles for us to turn to God, repent, and humbly ask for deliverance. There is much in our world that is wrong. We cannot deny it.

In Nineveh it was business as usual until Jonah's message was heard. Our business has been rudely interrupted by this pandemic and on top of it plenty of other issues and calamities. Are they not signs to turn to God and to pray?

Jesus left them (The Pharisees and Sadducees) and went away. The signs have been done, they either heed them or go on their own way of destruction. Trouble is, their ways of destruction do not only affect them but others, and Jesus warns his disciples: ***Watch out, and beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.***

I feel a bit sorry for the disciples here as they get confused. In recent days Jesus has *twice(!)* fed thousands with very little bread, ***their bread!*** Bread has yeast, therefore Jesus must be planning another feast and they forgot to bring any at all!

Jesus is talking about that in one sense, he is talking about them as signs they have been privileged to behold, but watch out, the Pharisees and Sadducees will be sowing doubt in people's minds as they cannot abide Jesus' popularity with people.

Earlier in the gospel, Jesus used the image of yeast for the work of the kingdom of heaven: a small amount of yeast miraculously leavens several measures of flour. But now he refers to yeast as a negative metaphor, like the worm that makes the apple bad. Yeast or leaven, in Judaism, came to be a symbol for making bread less pure. This interpretation came from their major feast of the Passover when all leaven has to be cleared out of the house. The special Passover meal commemorates the time when the people of Israel left Egypt in such a hurry that there was not time to bake leavened bread, so they ate it unleavened. That was their night of deliverance.

Jesus' disciples realise they are being told to beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. What is this teaching? I don't think it is about heresy, as in theological arguments or theories. It is more likely an accommodation to evil, something more subtle which entangles and ensnares. As religious authorities in those times, the Pharisees and Sadducees were extremely compromised with the set up of the Roman Empire. Jesus was a threat to them as he and his teaching threatened to upset the proverbial applecart. Accommodation to Rome meant playing it safe.

C.S. Lewis' *Screwtape Letters* is a masterpiece in explaining the evil of accommodation to worldly powers rather than God. Such accommodation leads to a fall into false comfort that says, ***it really doesn't matter, or we can't do anything about it.*** So, we shun rigorous commitment and allow ourselves to become diluted. How then, do we remain rigorous?

The importance and rigour of prayer is something, especially at this time, to turn to. In prayer may we take the time and distance in following Jesus and to recognise the true signs of the kingdom of heaven, of where God is working in our midst.

And may our minds be sharpened in prayer to tell the difference, in our moral and spiritual life together, between the signs we must observe and those we would do better to ignore.

***Let us pray***

***O Lord,***

***Help us not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that knowing your will our whole lives may become a sacrifice of praise, holy and acceptable to you. Amen.***

## **INTERCESSIONS BY SARNIA BIRCH**

Heavenly Father, we bring to you our prayers for your broken world.

We pray for your people in distress across the world because of the coronavirus pandemic.

To people who are sick, bring healing. To people who are displaced, isolated or cut off from family, friends or work, bring comfort and companionship. To children at school from home or in child care, bring acceptance and confidence. We pray for teachers and carers as they learn new ways to work.

Work with nurses, doctors, paramedics, support and administrative staff, especially those known to us, as they care for the sick and protect them from harm.

Give skill and fruitful research to scientists as they search for treatments, prevention and a cure.

To public health authorities, give wisdom to decide the best ways to manage both this crisis and our anxieties. To us in isolation, give patience, determination and initiative.

When communities are fearful, give a calm spirit, and kindness to neighbours and strangers.

Through this testing time, and through all the risks we face together, teach us once again how we can love one another as you have loved us.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we bring our prayers for your church, especially for our parish while we are physically separated from each other, that we will foster our care for each other and continue a sense of community. We give thanks for the technology and expertise which allows us to meet and worship together while in our homes.

We pray for wisdom for the Wardens and Parish Council, for strength for Jennie, Sam and Libby as they minister to us in isolation and for connection through our small groups and friendships.

Help us Lord to use our gifts in your service, to know that you are always and ever near us and that your love for us never fails.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we bring our prayers for our community, for those who are alone, for those in danger at home, for the homeless and neglected. May we be willing to play our part in bringing comfort and justice.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we bring our prayers for all who are hurt. We pray for comfort and healing for those whose bodies are in pain or whose minds are confused; those who are friendless or grief-stricken; those without hope for the future; those especially who are separated from family support.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Lord, we remember those who have died, especially recently Don Byrne, and Margaret Milne and others whose anniversaries occur near this time. May we come at our end to the fullness of joy in your presence.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

We ask all this in the name of Jesus, 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.

We offer you praise, dear God, and hearts lifted high,  
for in the communion of your love  
Christ comes close to us  
and we come close to Christ.  
Therefore with the whole realm of nature around us,  
with earth, sea and sky, we sing to you.  
with all the saints before and beside us, we sing to you.  
we join in the song of your unending greatness.  
Holy, holy, holy Lord,  
God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.  
Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is our brother Jesus,  
who walks with us the road of our world's suffering,  
and who is known to us in the breaking of bread.

On the night of his arrest Jesus took bread and having blessed it he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples, saying, This is my body, given to you.

In the same way he took wine and having given thanks for it he poured it out and gave the cup to his disciples, saying, This cup is the new relationship with God, sealed with my blood. Take this and share it. I shall drink wine with you next in the coming Kingdom of God.

Christ has died,  
Christ is risen,  
Christ will come again.

Hear us, O Christ, and breathe your Spirit upon us  
and upon this bread and wine.

May they become for us your body, vibrant with your life, healing, renewing and making us whole.

And as the bread and wine which we now eat and drink are changed into us, may we be changed again into you, bone of your bone, flesh of your flesh, loving and caring in the world.

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.

#### AFTER 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.

Father,  
You sent your Son to bring us truth  
and your Spirit to make us holy;  
open our hearts to exalt you,  
open our lives to reveal you,  
our one true God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

#### BLESSING

On our hearts and on our houses, The blessing of God.  
In our coming and our going, The peace of God.  
In our life and our believing, The love of God.  
At our end and new beginning, Be arms of God to welcome us and bring us home. Amen.

#### DISMISSAL

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.  
In the name of Christ. Amen.