

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

In you, O Lord my God, have I put my hope:
in you have I trusted, let me not be ashamed.
Psalm 25:1

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.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Lord God, you created this world, and made us in your own image. Forgive us when we turn away from you.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Lord God, through your Son you overcame evil and death. Rescue us from slavery to sin.
Christ, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.

Lord God, by your Spirit, you restore us to fellowship with you and with one another.
Breathe your love and freedom into our lives.
Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Almighty God have mercy on you,
forgive you your sins,
and keep you in life eternal. Amen.

THE GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God,
you declare your almighty power
chiefly in showing mercy and pity:
mercifully grant us such a measure of your grace
that, running in the way of your commandments,
we may obtain your gracious promises,
and be made partakers of your heavenly treasure;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

PLEASE PAUSE THE VIDEO

PART 2 — AN ALL AGE VIDEO PART 12 AND FINAL OF *WHERE IS GOD?* FOCUSING ON FINDING GOD EVEN WHEN WE THINGS SEEM UNFAIR 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 JOAN ROWNEY.

READINGS

Job 4:1-7; 5:8,17-19; 6:1-13 (*The Message*) – the First Reading, read by Andrew and Stewart, can be found at the beginning of the Sermon Podcast.

Eliphaz and Job.

Then Eliphaz from Teman spoke up:

Would you mind if I said something to you? Under the circumstances it's hard to keep quiet. You yourself have done this plenty of times, spoken words that clarify, encouraged those who were about to quit. Your words have put stumbling people on their feet, put fresh hope in people about to collapse. But now you're the one in trouble—you're hurting! You've been hit hard and you're reeling from the blow. But shouldn't your devout life give you confidence now? Shouldn't your exemplary life give you hope? Think! Has a truly innocent person ever ended up on the scrap heap? Do genuinely upright people ever lose out in the end? If I were in your shoes, I'd go straight to God, I'd throw myself on the mercy of God. So, what a blessing when God steps in and corrects you! Mind you, don't despise the discipline of Almighty God! True, he wounds, but he also dresses the wound; the same hand that hurts you, heals you. From one disaster after another he delivers you; no matter what the calamity, the evil can't touch you—

Job answered:

If my misery could be weighed, if you could pile the whole bitter load on the scales, It would be heavier than all the sand of the sea! Is it any wonder that I'm screaming like a caged cat? The arrows of God Almighty are in me, poison arrows—and I'm poisoned all through! God has dumped the whole works on me. Donkeys bray and cows moo when they run out of pasture—so don't expect me to keep quiet in this. Do you see what God has dished out for me? It's enough to turn anyone's stomach! Everything in me is repulsed by it—it makes me sick. All I want is an answer to one prayer, a last request to be honored: Let God step on me—squash me like a bug and be done with me for good. I'd at least have the satisfaction of not having blasphemed the Holy God, before being pressed past the limits. Where's the strength to keep my hopes up? What future do I have to keep me going? Do you think I have nerves of steel? Do you think I'm made of iron? Do you think I can pull myself up by my bootstraps? Why, I don't even have any boots!

Psalm 25:1-9 (NRSV)

Matthew 21:23-32 (NRSV)

SERMON 'JOB AND ELIPHAZ'

Let us pray

*Lord, we thank you for the gift of your Word
and as we think on the matters raised,
open our hearts and our minds to hear you. Amen.*

Intro to reading from Job

The reading from Job has been read by Andrew and Stewart from 'The Message', which is a translation of Scripture in not only contemporary, but colloquial language by Eugene Peterson. I have found, particularly in these dialogues in Job, the language becomes much more alive in Peterson's translation. You can hear the heat, the passion, the agony, and all the other emotions that are battling away as Job and his friends try to reason why such evil could befall a person like Job. I recommend buying The Message as an extra version of Scripture for your bookshelf and reference.

Sermon series intro

In our lectionary, a few readings from Job come around every year. They are typically the beginning and end of Job and miss out all of the middle. And because of that, we take a shortcut in understanding this remarkable book.

Why do bad things happen to good people? is the typical theme attached to the book of Job.

I am thinking the question: ***What does it mean to us all, the sufferer included, when suffering occurs?***

The typical thinking is that there is a reasonable cause. What is being inflicted is a consequence of one thing or another.

The book of Job confronts this full on. At the start there is this whole set up of God having a bet with Satan, the Accuser who asks, does Job serve God gratuitously? Is his piety the result of his prosperity rather than the other way round? You can afford to be good when life is good.

The heavenly decision decides to take on that question by removing Job's prosperity. Once that is done, the retributive principle has been broken, for the most pious man on earth is now among the most wretched. Job loses his children, his home and business, and then is covered by disease. He is left sitting on an ash heap holding a piece of pottery to scrape his sores. Not a pretty picture.

Yet through this, Job did not sin, not once did he blame God or say anything against him. And Job's friends, when they first came, simply sat with him in silence for seven days. And then Job got sick of being a martyr, and started to talk.

Boy, did he talk! And then so did his friends.

The dialogues between Job and his friends make up 33 chapters of this book as they thrash out ***what the hell is going on here***. Ok, we don't expect everything to be always smooth sailing, but why?

Why are there thorns on a rose?

Why do joints stiffen?

Why do sensible plans go nonsensically off course?

Why do the innocent suffer?

Why are there genetic defects in newborn children?

Why have so many died before they had a chance to live?

If God is good, why is there so much which seems to be - ungood?

Many of our religious answers come out in catch phrases, clichés or platitudes. They may be technically true, but they are then tested by the living reality and are found to come up short.

When the reality *is ... (dot, dot, dot – fill it in with your scenario)*, we have to contend with reality, ask the why questions, and then work out: how does our understanding of God *fit* with what's going on here?

A woman I studied with went through a very difficult time.

Her world seemed to fall apart. Her husband lost his job, and couldn't find other work, he became extremely depressed and had a breakdown. On top of that, one of her children had chronic fatigue. The relationships between them all became very tense. How could this happen to them? Their whole life was so *Christian*. Their suffering seemed so undeserved.

We can feel blessed by not having things happen to us that happen to other people. And if such things happen to us, then it seems a terrible mistake, or we've taken a wrong step somewhere and have to make up for it.

This is the angst going on in Job. Job's friends struggle to find the reason behind Job's suffering, and a way to fix it, to find an escape from his affliction. They need to know to feel better themselves!

Job's comforter #1 - Eliphaz

If you were to describe someone as being like one of Job's comforters, you are not giving them a compliment! Job's comforters are known as making things worse, not better.

They have their religious answers and scriptural answers, that turn out to be quite unsatisfactory and questionable.

Today we meet Eliphaz: Eliphaz is eloquent and sensitive in the way he addresses Job. Out the three of them, he is the one who obviously took a counselling course.

He challenges Job, but in positive ways. *Look how you have helped others, now let yourself be helped. Now it is you who are in trouble and hurting. "Think! Has a truly innocent person ever ended up on the scrap heap? Do genuinely upright people ever lose out in the end?"*

Eliphaz might also be being sarcastic. But it appears that he wants to give Job some hope and exhort him to patience.

God is merciful and just. Perhaps there's a matter of discipline here. No man is *really* fully righteous before God.

Why, he says, our bodies are here today and gone tomorrow, they're composed of mud and are fragile as moths. (4:20)
Mortals are born and bred for trouble as certainly as sparks fly upwards. (5:7)

Yet God is famous for great and unexpected acts of mercy.

Eliphaz lists how God puts wrongs to rights, and surely, somehow, Job's situation fits in with all this. *So if I were you*, says Eliphaz with great aplomb, *I'd go straight to God and throw myself on his mercy.*

So, according to Eliphaz, Job's slipped up somewhere, his sufferings are most likely transient (temporary) and he is being offered a formula fix. Even the most innocent of humans, like Job, must expect to suffer deservedly on occasion. But don't worry, it's not permanent, God will forgive you. Hmmm. Perhaps Eliphaz should get a refund from that counseling course.

Job's reply

Job tries to explain to Eliphaz what it's really like for him.

He needs his friend to listen more, not talk more. Job cannot make sense out of the *amount* of suffering he is going through. What misdemeanor could be equal to this?

He wants his friends to know what he is feeling, not to give him answers that make no sense to the depths that he finds himself in. Further on Job declares to Eliphaz: 'Confront me with the truth and I'll shut up,

show me where I've gone off track? Honest words never hurt anyone, but what's the point of all this pious bluster?' (v.24-25) Eliphaz trivializes Job's suffering. And Job won't have it.

It seems to me that Job has quite a robust image of God, a God before whom one does not have to pretend, but can be honest and tell it how it is.

And in this God, Job has hope, despite what is going on.

Throughout his anguished outpourings he prays, he asks God to remember him, to honour him, to not let him go beyond endurance where he would be tempted to blaspheme. He calls upon God to not be too late. He pleads with God for reason, *Even suppose I'd sinned – how would that hurt you?* How does a little sin impinge on the greatness of God? Why doesn't God just forgive? Job believes he can, and that God ultimately does not want to lose Job.

One thing to note in Job, is that his hope is not a human creation of hopeful circumstances which Eliphaz was trying to construct. Eliphaz was piling up promises of multiple blessings, restored fortunes and health, protection from future threats, long life and prosperity. But Job is not asking for any of those things, just simply the presence of God. And if not that, a simple death to release him from his godless hell.

Nothing is changing for Job. There are no sparks, no little lights, no easing up. He is deep down in the pit, crying, mourning, hurting, despairing and isolated.

The start of the journey

It is hard to see someone in a position like that. And you want to be able to offer some hope. You want to find a quick solution so that it will be all over, and life can resume as before. But it's not like that.

Significant suffering, that for which there is no end in sight, whose effects are going to remain for the rest of one's life, the memory if nothing more (for Job his children will not come back), this significant suffering is only the start of a journey.

And it is a journey that will change you, reshape your faith, and it is a lonely journey because friends do not understand and do not feel what you are feeling. The reshaping, the changing is going on within. The real struggle of it all is with God.

To think that suffering is apart from God, because God does not suffer is a misconception. For us, who live well after Job, and who have known Jesus in his humanity and suffering, we now know, *technically*, that God is not aloof, not apart from the trials of humanity, not a mere spectator, but participates in and with us. We know *technically*, yet this does not resolve our problem, or fulfil our hopes of escape from affliction.

We want God to intervene, take over, put it to rights. But when God doesn't, we undertake a journey to seek out why. We will continue this journey with Job over the next two weeks.

I finish with this prayerful poem by Michael Leunig:

*When the heart
is cut or cracked or broken
do not clutch it
let the wound lie open.*

*Let the wind
from the good old sea blow in
to bath the wound with salt
and let it sting.*

*Let a stray dog lick it
let a bird lean in the hole and sing*

*a simple song like a tiny bell
and let it ring.*

*Let it go. Let it out.
Let it all unravel.
Let it free and it can be
a path on which to travel.*

(When I Talk To You, Michael Leunig)

**Let us travel in the company of Jesus Christ,
our Lord and Saviour. Amen**

INTERCESSIONS BY JOAN ROWNEY

Loving Father,

We thank you for your kindness and care particularly in this time of Covid19. We thank you also for the improvement we have seen in the daily number count and for the hope that it may lead to a softening of our restrictions. We pray for all those who have been touched by this illness and for those who care for them – doctors, nurses, health workers, friends and family. Dear Lord, we pray also for those whose responsibility it is to work towards a positive end to this pandemic - our politicians, and all their staff. Our Police Force, those who have been brought in from our Army Reserves, hospitals, aged care homes and their staffs. We also pray for the many sufferers overseas where the numbers affected are so high and for the scientists and their like who are working to provide us with an effective vaccine.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Compassionate God,

We pray for your Church both here and overseas, that those in our church and others who are called on, can bring your word and loving support to all in need with all the strength and faith you have given them. We thank you for our Archbishop Philip, Bishop Paul, and clergy including our Vicar Jennie and all those who continue to bring us your word and hope. We also give thanks for the many modern and electronic means by which we can still receive our church services, have meetings such as Zoom and read our weekly newsletters. Hope is such a necessary and wonderful gift of our Lord Jesus at a time when we can feel overwhelmed by the measures here in Victoria. To know that we are part of the whole Body of Christ is to feel loved and blessed. We know that you will never leave us.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Faithful God, we pray for the Church throughout the world. We remember all who minister to us, working to spread the mission of building upon our Christian faith. With current restrictions upon us due to the pandemic, we give thanks for alternative forms of worship through on-line and Internet options.

Here, in Mount Eliza, may Rev. Jennie, Sam and Libby continue with enthusiasm thus ensuring that our Church is indeed alive. We are thankful for their dedication.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Understanding God,

We pray for those who at this time, are ill or have friends or family members who they are concerned for ... We pray also for the many unemployed, the lonely, and those who are subject to mental health problems particularly for those whose conditions are made worse by the restrictions. We thank God that Spring is coming. To see the blossoms and the green tips of leaves is to be truly blessed.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Gracious God,

We humbly thank you for life, health and safety, for freedom to work, leisure to rest, and for all that is beautiful in creation and human life. But, above all, we praise you for our Saviour, Jesus Christ, for his death and resurrection; for the gift of your Spirit; and for the hope of sharing in your glory. Fill our hearts with all joy and peace in believing.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Faithful God,

We give thanks for those of our Parish who have gone to God before us, in this past week Lesley Freeman and Elspeth Welsh. We also remember Richard Howland whose anniversary of death falls this week.

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.

It is right to praise you, faithful God, always and everywhere, for with your only begotten Son
and life-giving Spirit, you are the one true God from everlasting to everlasting.
At the dawn of time you wrought from nothing a universe of beauty and splendour, bringing light from
darkness and order from chaos.
You formed us, male and female, in your image, and endowed us with creative power.
We turned away from you but you did not abandon us.
You called us by name and searched us out, making a covenant of mercy, giving the law, and teaching
justice by the prophets.
And so we praise you, joining with your faithful people of every time and place, singing the eternal song:

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

When the fullness of time was come, you sent your Son to be born of Mary. Bright image of your glory,
he learnt obedience to you in all things, even to death on a cross, breaking the power of evil, freeing us
from sin, and putting death to flight.
You raised him from death, exalting him to glory,
and the new day dawned.

On the night he was betrayed your Son Jesus Christ shared food with his friends, his companions on the way. While at table he took bread, blessed, and broke it, and giving it to them, said: 'Take, eat; this is my body.'

He took a cup of wine, and, giving thanks, he gave it to them, and said, 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Do this in remembrance of me.'

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

Therefore, living God, as we obey his command,
we remember his life of obedience to you, his suffering and death, his resurrection and exaltation, and his promise to be with us for ever.

With this bread and this cup we celebrate his saving death until he comes.

Accept, we pray, our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving, and send your Holy Spirit upon us and our celebration that all who eat and drink at this table may be strengthened by Christ's body and blood to serve you in the world.

As one body and one holy people, may we proclaim the everlasting gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom, with whom, and in whom, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory is yours, eternal God, now and for 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.

POST COMMUNION PRAYER

Gracious God,
we thank you that in this sacrament
you assure us of your goodness and love.
Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving
and help us to grow in love and obedience
that we may serve you in the world
and finally be brought to that table
where all your saints feast with you for ever.

Father,
we offer ourselves to you
as a living sacrifice
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Send us out in the power of your Spirit
to live and work to your praise and glory.

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.