

A song to sing or to read: For You, Deep Stillness

For you
deep stillness of the silent
inland
For you
deep blue of the desert skies
For you
flame red of the rocks and
stone
For you
sweet water from hidden
springs
From the edges seek the heartlands
And when you're burnt by the journey
May the cool winds
of the hovering spirit soothe and replenish you
In the name of Christ



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Children's Challenge

Try to draw a picture or a diagram of John 14 Verse 20 – Jesus said “I am in my Father, and you are in me and I am in you”.

Closing Prayer

Our Lord and our God, we thank you for the encouragement we find as we read your word. We ask for guidance and how to use our time and how to apply your truth to our everyday lives and may we be reflectors of your light.

Amen

With thanks to David Pattinson for preparing today's reflection

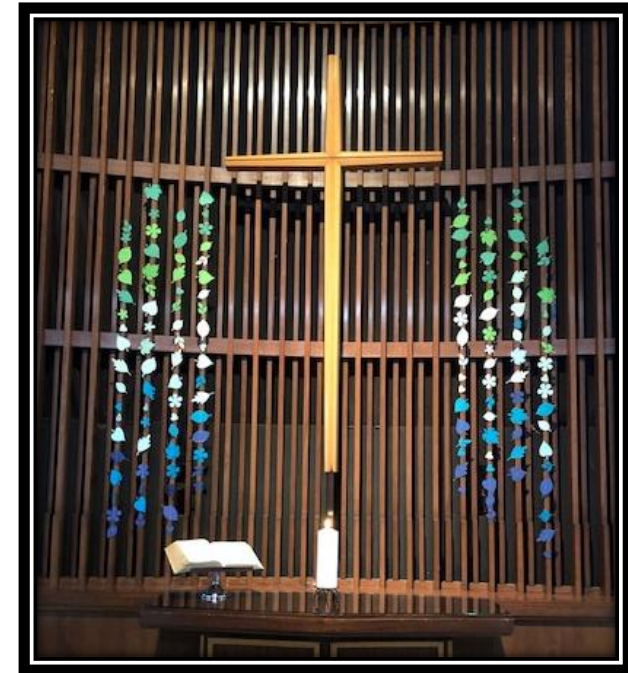


Church in a Bag
Sunday 17 May
Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

Although we are not together physically, we are connected in a very special way through our love for our Lord and his Word.



Preparation

We give thanks for the opportunity to turn our thoughts to God today although the world is in turmoil and change has been thrust upon us, may we take time to focus on the only unchangeable we know. The Word of God – the written Word and Jesus. May we be encouraged by the Holy Spirit to hold fast to the promises in scripture and be encouragers of the way, the truth and the life.



First Reading: John 14:15–21 "Promise of the Holy Spirit"

Reflection

Last week's gospel reading started with the heading "Jesus comforts his Disciples" and it is that well known passage we often hear at funerals "Do not let your heart be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me **"Fear not or do not let your heart be troubled"** appears many times in the Bible. How very relevant to all of us in this uncertain time in which we now find ourselves.



In chapter 11 of John we read about Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. This event really upset the Pharisees so they reasoned and decided to kill Jesus. Jesus had warned the disciples of his death. He was preparing them but they "didn't get it". He predicted his betrayal and Peter's denial of him.

Last week we read in John 14:1-14 which probably sounded confusing to his disciples especially when he said "I am the way, the truth and the life. No-one comes to the Father except by me". Was he saying he was like a turnstile or a revolving door? In exasperation he says "at least believe in the evidence of the miracles themselves". It was to be about 50 days before the Holy Spirit fell on them and the real understanding of their role in all this dawned. Without the Holy Spirit none of this makes much sense.

The first verse of today's Gospel reading starts with 'If'. If you love me, you will obey what I command. If is a little word with a big meaning. It tells us that there is something else to listen for, because there are options or results, eg If it doesn't rain, we will have a drought. Jesus says "If you love me, you will obey what I command and I will ask the Father and he will give you another counsellor to be with you forever – the Spirit of Truth".

It is interesting that the word command appears so much in the Bible. God didn't give Moses the Ten Best Suggestions; he gave him Ten Commandments. It is a strong word although not a word we use every day. It's unusual to have 'love' and 'command' in the same sentence. We don't love by command. We love because someone or something seems attractive to us.

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:13–22

Reflection

As we read this passage, keep in mind the three words of Paul – faith, hope and love.

We find again fear mentioned in the warning "Do not fear what they fear, do not be frightened". Although the content of this passage is about "suffering for doing good", the fear not theme of scripture is relevant for us and our world as our normal is overturned. There are so many questions in people's minds: Will be able to buy food? How will we pay the rent? Do I send the children to school? Have I washed my hands well enough? Is the virus near me? No-one knows all the answers but we must of course be vigilant and take precautions as we are advised and don't give up hope as verse 15 says. "But in your heart set apart Christ as Lord, always give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect."

The last sentence of this reading (verse 22 in The Message) says "Jesus has the last word on everything and everyone, from angels to armies. He is standing right alongside God and what he says goes".