

A song to sing or to read: *Where wide sky rolls down*

Where wide sky rolls down and touches red sand
where sun turns to gold the grass of the land
let spinifex, mulga and waterhole tell
their joy in the One who made everything well.

Where rain-forest calm meets reef, tide and storm
where green things grow lush and oceans are warm
let every sea creature and tropical bird
exult in the light of the life-giving Word.

Where red gum and creek cross hillside and plain
where cool tree-ferns rise to welcome the rain
let bushland, farm, mountain-top, all of their days
delight in the Spirit who formed them for praise.

Now, people of faith, come gather around
with songs to be shared, for blessings abound!
Australians, whatever your culture or race
come, lift up your hearts to the Giver of grace.

*Words by Elizabeth J Smith (Copyright EJ Smith)
Melody probably by William Croft 1678-1727*



Closing Prayer

Loving Father, as we return to live our days in this wonderful, mysterious world, guide us to accept our tasks, callings and responsibilities with the attitude of Jesus – seeking to humbly serve, to love our neighbours, and do all we can to be good tenants of your world. Give us patience and grace in all our dealings and contact with others. Fill our homes with love and trust. Let your peace be with us.

The Grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God, and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen

With thanks to Rev John Mason for preparing today's reflection



Church in a Bag Sunday 4 October

Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

Let us bow in the hush, the silence of our home, as we seek the presence of the Lord. We believe that we can be your people, O God of love and peace. Refresh our faith and hope this morning, that the strains and pressures of life may not weaken our commitment to walking in the way of Christ.

Rekindle our trust that amid the tumult and confusion of these virus days, we may hold fast to our confidence that this is your world and that it is undergirded by your Eternal Purpose. On this Holy day we remember the compassion, the strength of character, the forgetfulness of self, the vile sacrifice and death that Jesus our Lord displayed.

Speak your words of hope and trust to us this morning as we join in the prayer and celebration of our Lord's Praise.
Amen

A Prayer of Confession

Loving Father, we do not bow in this time of worship because we are worthy or have done anything especially deserving of your love. But we are here now because we long for your breath, your hand, to cleanse and blow from our lives the frosty cruel words or thoughts, the prejudices, the judgements, the selfishness, the greed, and all the other evil things that cause us to let you down. You know us all together. Hear us now in this time of silence as we make our humble confession and seek forgiveness.

Jesus declares our sins are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

Amen



Reading: Matthew 21: 33-46
What sort of tenant are you?

Reflection

This Parable of Jesus set for today is one of the most important in the Gospel Records. It is a story about God and His World and how we live our lives. The owner is God. The vineyard is God's World. The tenants are easily recognised and the Servants sent are those outstanding Prophets who have inspired us down through the long history of mankind.

The first message for us is that we are greatly privileged to live in this beautiful fertile, wonderful world – this Earth with all of its potential for good, for love, for sharing, for recreating itself, for change. In the Bible's attempts to tell of earth's creation at every stage it says "And it was good".

Here we are again going into spring with wonderful things happening around us. We may have some worries about the Virus and sometimes things are difficult. But we are not tenants of some broken down flea house, some sleazy slum. No. We can feel it in our bones – the world is a remarkable, wonderful place.

And we are unfettered tenants. We have human freedom. Jesus says the owner has gone away; left us to run the property; left us in charge.

The greatest threat we face on this glorious earth with which we have been entrusted is that of our being bad tenants. Thank heavens in recent times we have recognised the need for conservation to protect our environment. We had forgotten about the environment. We have ravaged the earth's resources for greedy profits. We have polluted the atmosphere, filled our oceans with plastic and toxic disposals. It is our freedoms that are destroying our world. Bad tenants are called to account.

We need to hear the message about our human failure. The Owner sends a report on the work and condition of his property. And what do they receive? The messengers are attacked, stoned, even killed. And this does not happen just once, but again and again. They will do anything to avoid their responsibilities. Sadly, it is believed that freedom is free from responsibilities or accountability. Indifference abounds. We see it, for instance, in the approach of some to the responsibilities of COVID-19.

The message we must take on board from our reading today is the amazing wonder of our Landlord – God. Think about His patience. Again and again He gives the second chance to change, to do the right thing, to mend our ways.

I don't know about you, but I would have called in the police straight away! But Jesus says He grieves over the cruelty, the greed, the violence, the evil. God's patience seems to know no bounds. Hear this morning the incredible Gospel Story about God's love and hope for His children. God says, "I will send in my Son to them. It may be that they will respect Him".

Take it in this morning – the immense love God has for we Bad Tenants. That is us.

What sort of a tenant are you?

