



Church in a Bag

Sunday 9 May

Dubbo Uniting Church



A Gathering

Creator of all, we praise and thank you.
For all the creativity we find surrounding us
and in ourselves
for your respecting of the struggles of your creation
and for the awareness of your grace
which flows forth eternally
in all that is.

We thank you for Jesus Christ
who walked within all our realities
stood in the centre
of our betrayals
and with all integrity
claimed the glory
of life hard won
marked
with the blood
of our pain.

God in the torn apart
God in the wholeness
God in the emptiness
God in the fullness
You are always
God with us.

An abstract painting with a central cross shape. The cross is formed by a vertical red line and a horizontal blue line. The background is a mix of green, yellow, and white. The text "oh how He loves us" is written across the cross in a stylized, glowing font.

oh how He loves us

Readings: John 15:9-17

Reflection

Today's reading forms part of Jesus' long discussion with his disciples before his death. Jesus' words resonate through the centuries to inform our time and our discipleship. If we are really to hear what he is saying to us, we may have to face a change in our thinking.

Most of us were taught that being loving is the essence of Christian living. The emphasis in these verses, and indeed throughout scripture is on our being loved. It is from taking in love that the energy to give out love must come. There is a conviction among psychologists that people are constituted and maintained by love. When this does not happen, disastrous things can happen to a human being.

When we stop and think about it, we can usually see how significant people in our lives, like parents and friends, play a very creative role in our lives. They do this by accepting our weakness and our foibles, seeing beyond these to all the good in us. This good they affirm by appreciating all that we are, and encouraging all that we may become. They ask us to believe in their love for us and to believe in ourselves as loved and lovable. So significant people reflect back to us who we are and all that we mean to them. They put us in touch with a positive image of ourselves and in this way make and sustain us in life.

Too often the religious life is presented as a series of shoulds, oughts, and must. But today, Jesus comforts his struggling, fearful and anxious followers telling them, in effect, to relax. You didn't choose me. I chose you. And he chose us so that we could respond to his command to love - to love as he loved.

That means that love is a matter of giving, not getting; it means that loving is a matter of acting for the benefit and satisfaction of others, not ourselves. Love is thus not self-ish, it is self-giving, and only in that way can it be self-creating.

So, let's thank God for all the people and the gifts, that have helped to create us. We are not here through our own efforts but rather through the gifts of many others: people who loved us and showed us the way, people like our mothers, for instance ... maybe? We didn't choose our mother figures. But look how God has blessed us through them. We didn't even choose Jesus. He chose us and he intends to bless the world through us.

"As the Father has loved me" says Jesus "so I have loved you; abide in my love. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last...I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."

Prayer for Mother's Day

Lord, on this day set aside to honour and remember mothers, we give you thanks for our mothers. We are grateful that you chose to give us life through them, and that they received the gift of life from your hands, and gave it to us.

Thank you for the sacrifices they made in carrying us and giving us birth. We thank you for the women who raised us, who were our mothers in childhood. Whether birth mum, adopted mum, older sister, aunt, grandmother, stepmother or someone else, we thank you for those women who held us and fed us, who cared for us and kissed away our pain. We pray that our lives may reflect the love they showed us, and that they would be pleased to be called our mums.

Lord, we thank you for the gift of motherhood. We thank you for the many examples of faithful mothers in scripture, like Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and Lois. Hear now the first names of other women who have inspired us by their motherly examples . . .(name them in silence). We are mindful this day of all these women, and especially Mary the mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, who had the courage in faith to say "yes" to Your calling. May we be able to emulate these examples of faith. And may they model for all the rest of us what it means to be your disciple. Bless our good mother figures on this special day; in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen

A song to sing or to read: Now thank we all our God

Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices
who wondrous things has done in whom his world rejoices
who from our mothers' arms has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love and still is ours today.

O may this bounteous God through all our life be near us
with ever joyful hearts and blessed peace to cheer us
to keep us in his grace and guide us when perplexed
and free us from all ills of this world in the next.

All praise and thanks to God who reigns in highest heaven
to Father and to Son and Spirit now be given
the one eternal God whom heaven and earth adore
for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

Music and lyrics in the Public Domain.



Closing Prayer

We are the people of God, called to listen and to heal each other. We will grow strong if we are together. We seek to name the truth and to live in our community moving towards a common dream. In all that we say, do and live, may it bring freedom for all. And so, we go together in peace to love and serve Christ in our world. May God the Creator go on creating with us; God in Jesus Christ, journey in our midst; and the Spirit lead us in the dance of life.

Amen

With thanks to Rev Mel Graham for preparing today's reflection



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