**MACEDON RANGES PARTNERSHIP SERVICE**

**13th – 15th November 2020**

You may like to follow our service on our video. You can find it on our Worship Services page on our website at <https://www.macedonrangesunitingchurch.org.au/worship-services> or on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/rXLcs-qD4l0>. Our service invites you to read the scriptures, pause, meditate and pray. Allow the stories told to lead you. We suggest reading the passages when suggested below. We are touching on several of the scripture readings in one way or another this week.

If you would like to look at previous videos on our YouTube channel, go to <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCb4hzdO-YgzmrIRVC-oby_w>.

**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY**

We acknowledge all the Aboriginal Groups who have cared for and nurtured the land on which we meet: the Wurundjeri; Woi Wurruung; Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung.

We acknowledge their leaders: past, present and emerging for it is in them that Australia’s future lies.

You are welcome here, as we reflect in different rooms and districts, States and Countries around the world, our spiritual connectedness through Christ Jesus, is remembered.

**WELCOME**

The elders of our first peoples remind us to remain connected to the land, to the creation in which we walk and live and find sustenance. Their connection and that of their descendants teach us to listen and be responsible. This week is NAIDOC week, reminding us as Australians of our debt to our first peoples and the call to reconciliation. As Uniting Church peoples, we commit to this journey as an expression of the Good News of healing and life in Jesus.

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

As you pause and worship today, what is it you see?

Where is God?

What do you see?

Do you see God in the land, in the creation on which you stand?

Do you see God in the smiles and faces of those you meet, those excited to see you?

Where is God?

What do you see?

Do you see God in the healing of sickness and of the community?

Do you see God in the journey towards reconciliation in broken relationships?

Do you see God in the comfort in grief?

But where is God’s presence?

What about when we are the subject of criticism and contempt of others?

What about when we are given a hard time?

Where is God’s presence?

Do you see God in being meek, in your grief, in your poverty in your persecution?

**THE PSALM: read Psalm 123**

**PRAYER** *– a response to the Psalm*

God of hope, love and grace. Help us see you as you see us. Help us to see you when all seems for nought. Help us to see you when struggles overwhelm.

And as we rejoice in the blessings given, may we truly worship you as life giver and sustainer. Amen

**THE GOSPEL READING: read Matthew 25:14 – 30**

**SOME QUESTIONS IN RESPONSE TO THE GOSPEL**

Why did the merchant give the talents to the servants in the first place?

Why did the three servants do very different things?

What would you have done if you received talents from the merchant?

**OUR READINGS FOR TODAY**

Take a moment to read our other readings for today: Judges 4:1 – 7 and 1 Thessalonians 5:1 – 11. We refer to the story from Judges in our reflection.

**REFLECTION: Resources, Gifts and Talents** *by Rev Linda Young*

So often as Christians who have read and listened to the Scriptures, often for most of our lives, we have a sense of familiarity around the more common and well-known texts. Today we have one very well-known parable of the talents from the New Testament and a lesser known story of Deborah the Prophet from the Hebrew Scriptures. So, what can we draw from these two passages that perhaps we have not seen before?

The Parable has for centuries been used to show the merits of financial savvy. Using what physical resources we have in a fluid and expansive way in order that wealth may grow. But what if the resources were more about our investing in God’s people, God’s community, God’s justice and mercy? What if it was about trusting that God has given us all that we have and that in taking a risk in investing in others, we were fulfilling the boots of ‘a good and faithful servant’?

I wonder what would have happen, if in this Matthean parable one of the servants had lost on one of their investments. I wonder if the very act of taking a well-considered chance and losing, would have warranted a ‘good and faithful servant’ response from the master?

In the Hebrew Scriptures we find the amazing prophet, Deborah. She is one who has used her God-given skills and talents to lead Israel through traumatic times and warfare. She holds court under a palm tree, rather than in the synagogue her male counterparts would be residing, in an easily accessible place. In a culture where a woman’s role was to get married, have children and run a household, Deborah was prophesying under a palm tree on a daily basis, casting judgements and bringing God’s wisdom and countenance available for the people. Being counter cultural brings much risk and potential for ridicule but there she is, Deborah, a prophet of God.

So, what about us? What about you and me and the resources, gifts and talents we have been given? How can we use what we have been given, having our eyes set on God and hour ears open to the needs of others, to expand the community and life-giving acts of God? It’s more than just money, yet that is important. It is about being good stewards with what we have been given. What risks are we willing to take and what stand are we willing to make that we might fulfilL the mandate given to us in the Hebrew Scriptures and then emphasised by Jesus, to “Love one another as I have loved you.”(John 15:12) What does being a ‘good and faithful servant’ mean for us, individually and as the body of Christ, in 2020?

May this word bring challenge and inspiration during this time as we begin to regain our freedom and ability to meet with each other, post COVID-19.

God bless

**SOME QUOTES IN RESPONSE TO THE READINGS AND REFLECTION**

*John M Buchanan, in “Daily Feast; Meditations from Feasting on the Word”, Year A*

 “The greatest risk of all, it turns out, is not to risk anything, not to care deeply and profoundly enough about anything to invest deeply, to give your heart away and in the process risk everything. The greatest risk of all, it turns out, is to play it safe, to live cautiously and prudently…

There is an entire other lens through which to view the human condition. It is called sloth, one of the ancient church’s seven deadly sins. Sloth means not caring, not loving, not rejoicing, not living up to the full potential of our humanity,

playing it safe, investing nothing, being cautious and prudent, digging a hole and burying the money in the ground. “

*Michelangelo*

“The greater danger for most of us lies not in setting our aim too high and falling short; but in setting our aim too low, and achieving our mark.”

**WE SING HYMN TIS 572 O THOU WHO CAMEST FROM ABOVE** *by Charles Wesley*

O thou who camest from above

the pure celestial fire to impart,

kindle a flame of sacred love

on the mean altar of my heart.

There let it for thy glory burn

with inextinguishable blaze,

and trembling to its source return,

in humble prayer and fervent praise.

Jesus, confirm my heart’s desire

to work, and speak, and think for thee;

still let me guard the holy fire,

and still stir up thy gift in me.

ready for all thy perfect will,

my acts of faith and love repeat,

till death thy endless mercies seal,

and make the sacrifice complete.

**PRAYERS FOR OTHERS** *B D Prewer, adapted for “Australian Prayers” p 119, © Open Book Publishers, used by permission*

In our prayers today we will especially remember those people whose lives have been warped and stunted by evil. Let us pray.

Wherever people grow up without the example and encouragement of loving people who have respect for themselves and others; may your saving love abound.

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

Wherever people live with a bitterness of spirit which poisons and distresses all those who live around them; may your saving love abound.

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

Wherever some live greedily, without gratitude or generosity, always keeping a ruthless eye on the happiness and possessions of others; may your saving love abound.

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

Wherever men resort to violence, rape, abuse, terrorism and warfare, spreading immense misery and accelerating hatreds; may your saving love abound.

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

Wherever women suffer disease, abuse, injustice, exploitation, slavery, or forced prostitution, and have no faith or hope to succour them; may your saving love abound.

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.***

Wherever communities of mixed races are torn by rumours, old resentments and new patterns of discrimination; may your saving love abound.

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven***

Wherever people sit with the dying, make funeral arrangements, or spend sleepless nights grieving and fearing; may your saving love abound.

***Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven***

Holy Friend, you cherish every being on this planet. Please teach us, slow learners that we are, how to better live together, organise communities, end injustice, and eradicate all those evils that defile the sacred, divine image that resides in us all. Through Jesus our elder Brother and our Saviour.

***Amen!***

**BLESSING**

When we see God, we cannot stay the same.

When we see God working, we are called to participate in God’s ministry.

When we see God transforming, we are invited to join with God in God’s mission.

Open your eyes and see.

See God and be changed.

Join with God in ministry and mission to bring life and hope.

Amen.

**OFFERING**

You may like to consider giving an offering to your congregation via direct deposit. Details for each are:

* Gisborne: Gisborne branch, Bendigo bank, B.S.B. 633 108, A/C: 1512 83736
* Romsey: Bendigo Bank, B.S.B. 633 000, A/C: 161501200, Account name: UCA Romsey Uniting Church
* Lancefield: Account Name: Lancefield Uniting Church, BSB: 633 108, A/C No: 112926639
* Mia Mia – Kyneton: Commonwealth bank, B.S.B. 063 517, Account no.: 1002 1775

 *I will publish other congregation’s details as they come to hand. Contact you congregation’s treasurer for details if they are not here.*