

# ORDER OF SERVICE - Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2020 – Pentecost 23

Lectionary: Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25; Psalm 78:1-7; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Matthew 25:1-13

But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." Matthew 25:8

## WELCOME & CALL TO WORSHIP

Saide

Good morning I'm Saide and I'm glad to be welcoming you to worship this morning. We welcome Peter Blair, our Olive Way Pastor, as our preacher while Ian enjoys a week of leave. Today we will listen to a very familiar story from Matthew' gospel. Matthew is asking Jesus' disciples to look at time from God's eternal point of view. With the children we will continue to follow Ark of the Covenant. And I invite you to join me on a walk around my local streets in Brunswick.

So let us breathe together for a moment as we prepare to worship God.

God speaks to us through the vastness of time

Calling to us, seeking us out, setting us free.

Come let us worship our eternal God

Creator, Renewer, Life giving breath.

Come let us sing and rejoice.

## SONG: Heaven and earth, AoV 2.53

Heaven and earth, join to worship your Creator!

Sing to the Lord, praise the One from whom you came.

Sing a new song to the God who goes before us.

Making it all new, leaving nobody the same.

Sing a new song to the God who goes before us.

Making it all new, leaving nobody the same.

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SONG: Heaven and earth, John L Bell © 1995 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow. Used with permission; from As One Voice 2, Willow Connection Pty. Ltd. Reproduced with permission under ONE LICENCE # 604502

## CANDLE LIGHTING

Kimberly Fraser

When I light a candle in prayer I am often reminded

of a Taize prayer that repeats the phrase

In our darkness kindle the fire that never dies away

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Charlotte Pitt

We acknowledge and respect

the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation,

the traditional custodians of this land

since time immemorial.

We are learning that the land

is not ours to own, but to look after;

and that if we listen,

we may hear in it the calling of the eternal Spirit.

**Responding to this call, we commit ourselves  
to work for justice, reconciliation,  
and care of the earth.**

## PRAYER OF ADORATION & CONFESSION

Saide

With SONG: Lord let me see, TiS 681

*As we pray this morning we will sing the first three verses of 'Lord let me see' and then later the fourth and fifth verse.*

*This song is a beautiful prayer through which we ask God to let us see, hear, care, learn and love. Let us pray.*

1. Lord let me see, see more and more,  
See the beauty of a person, not the colour of his skin.  
See the faces of the homeless with no-one to take them in,  
See discouragement because she'll never win.  
See the face of our Lord in the pain. Lord let me see.

God of many faces you open our eyes to wonder  
You reveal your glory in unexpected ways.  
As we emerge from lockdown to freedom  
Help us to see more clearly, to notice that which is hidden  
To see beauty, to see need, to see you in all things.

2. Lord let me hear, hear more and more,  
Hear the sounds of great rejoicing, hear a person barely sigh.  
Hear the ring of truth, and hollowness of those who live a lie,  
Hear the wail of starving people who will die.  
Hear the voice of our Lord in the cry. Lord let me hear.

God of many voices you call us out into the world  
Freeing us to follow you, to work with you.  
As we go about our everyday lives help us to listen.  
Help us to hear people's stories, their joys and sorrows  
To lift up our voices and share their truth in ways that matter.

3. Lord let me care, care more and more,  
Care for those who feel the loneliness, for those who have no say,  
Care for friends who have no job and find it hard to face the day,  
Care for those with whom we sing and work and pray,  
And in care Jesus Christ will be found. Lord let me care.

God of all love you gave your only Son to the world  
To show us what love looks like, how love acts and responds.  
As we skip, stumble, dance along the path of discipleship  
Help us to care with our whole hearts and in all that we do  
Respond in your name with compassion and love. Amen

#### WORD OF GRACE

Saide

In his gospel Matthew writes '*The kingdom of heaven will be like this ...*' and goes on to tell a story.  
We are caught up in God's story, called out into the world to be the voice of love.  
As we look, listen, care, learn and love we are held in God's boundless grace.  
Hear then Christ's words to us 'Your sins are forgiven'.

**Thanks be to God. Amen**

#### WITH THE CHILDREN

Dave, Steph Gesling and Joshua

Dave, Steph and Josh talk about the story of Joshua: the parting of the Jordan River with the Ark of the Covenant, and crossing over in to the Promised Land. Then circling Jericho with the Ark. Interspersed with the Joshua reading and SMP artwork.

#### HEBREW SCRIPTURES: Joshua 1-6, selected verses

Kirsty & Martin

After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, God spoke to Joshua, son of Nun, Moses' assistant, saying, "My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan, you and all this people, into the land that I am giving to them, to the Israelites. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given to you, as I promised to Moses. From the wilderness and the Lebanon as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, to the Great Sea in the west shall be your territory."

Early in the morning Joshua rose and set out from Shittim with all the Israelites, and they came to the Jordan River. They camped there before crossing over. At the end of three days the officers went through the camp and commanded the people, "When you see the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God being carried by the priests of

Levi, then you shall set out from your place. Follow it, so that you may know the way you should go, for you have not passed this way before.

When the people set out from their tents to cross over the Jordan, the priests bearing the ark of the covenant were in front of the people. Now the Jordan River overflows all its banks throughout the time of harvest. So when those who bore the ark had come to the Jordan, and the feet of the priests bearing the ark were dipped in the edge of the water, the waters flowing from above stood still, rising up in a single heap far off at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan, while those flowing toward the sea of the Arabah, the Dead Sea, were wholly cut off. Then the people crossed over opposite Jericho. While all Israel were crossing over on dry ground, the priests who bore the ark of the covenant of the Lord stood on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, until the entire nation finished crossing over the Jordan.

Now the city of Jericho was shut up inside and out because of the Israelites; no one came out and no one went in. The Lord said to Joshua, "See, I have handed Jericho over to you, along with its king and soldiers. You shall march around the city, all the warriors circling the city once. You shall do this for six days, with seven priests bearing seven trumpets of rams' horns before the ark.

On the seventh day you shall march around the city seven times, the priests blowing the trumpets. When they make a long blast with the ram's horn, as soon as you hear the sound of the trumpet, then all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city will fall down flat, and all the people shall charge straight ahead." So Joshua, son of Nun, summoned the priests and said to them, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and have seven priests carry seven trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark of the Lord."

So the people shouted, and the trumpets were blown. As soon as the people heard the sound of the trumpets, they raised a great shout, and the wall fell down flat. So the people charged straight ahead into the city and captured it.

SONG: [Lord let me see](#), v4

4. Lord let me learn, learn more and more,  
Learn that what I know is just a speck of what there is to know,  
Learn from listening to my neighbour when I'd rather speak and go,  
Learn that as we live in faith and trust we grow,  
Learn to see, hear and care, with our Lord. Lord let me learn.

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:1-13

Glenice Cook

'Then the kingdom of heaven will be like this. Ten bridesmaids\* took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom.\*  
<sup>2</sup>Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup>When the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; <sup>4</sup>but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. <sup>5</sup>As the bridegroom was delayed, all of them became drowsy and slept. <sup>6</sup>But at midnight there was a shout, "Look! Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him." <sup>7</sup>Then all those bridesmaids\* got up and trimmed their lamps. <sup>8</sup>The foolish said to the wise, "Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out." <sup>9</sup>But the wise replied, "No! there will not be enough for you and for us; you had better go to the dealers and buy some for yourselves." <sup>10</sup>And while they went to buy it, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went with him into the wedding banquet; and the door was shut. <sup>11</sup>Later the other bridesmaids\* came also, saying, "Lord, lord, open to us." <sup>12</sup>But he replied, "Truly I tell you, I do not know you."<sup>13</sup>Keep awake therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour.\*

For these words of witness and for Christ the Word

**Thanks be to God**

SONG: [Lord let me see](#), v5

5. Lord let me love, love more and more,  
Love the loveless and the fragile help them be what they can be,  
Love the way that I would like them to be looking after me,  
For to know you is to love them and be free,  
And in love Jesus Christ will be found. Lord let me love.

SONG: [Lord let me see](#), © Ross Langmead, from [Together in Song](#), Harper Collins Religious;  
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Greetings to you all. Alas I am recording this message prior to the outcome of the US presidential election. So wise words of comfort for the chaotic aftermath of that event will have to wait until Ian's return next week. In the meantime our Gospel readings today take us to the realm of the apocalyptic, somewhat fitting perhaps.

In fact much of the parables found in the latter part of Matthew's Gospel are what might be considered apocalyptic. So before we have a look in depth at our passage today I thought it might be helpful to unpack this term 'apocalyptic'. It's a pretty scary term and there are many negative connotations that come with it. Apocalyptic writing tends to use language that describes ultimate things, such as 'the end of days', the 'coming of the Son of Man', 'in those days', and so on. For this reason apocalyptic writing often gets mistaken as being all about the end of the world. Our popular usage of the term apocalyptic typically references the destruction of all things when we talk about 'apocalyptic scenarios' or 'post-apocalyptic worlds'. But was this what the ancient authors of our biblical texts had in mind? I would argue a definitive NO.

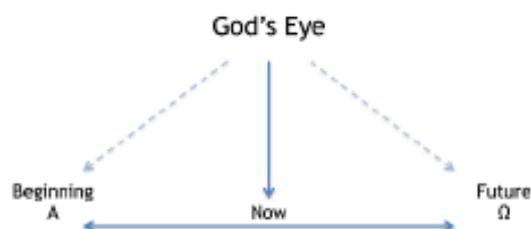
Apocalyptic writing is often stuff we steer clear of in our lectionary, and I would suggest for good reason; not because it is bad, but simply because it is so badly misrepresented and so badly abused. It cannot easily be incorporated without explanation.

So for today I will give you a bit of a working definition of what I mean by 'apocalyptic writing', bearing in mind that scholars will probably disagree with this rather simplistic view and that there are many different expressions of it in our Bibles.

So for our purposes today apocalyptic writing is viewing the present on an eternal time-line. It is the God's-eye-view of the world. Far from being preoccupied with the end of the world, as is commonly assumed, apocalyptic writing is concerned with the here and the now, with the present moment. But it does this from the God's-eye perspective, viewing the present in light of the the beginning, the origins of all things (the alpha), and the end (the omega). This is most clearly illustrated in Revelation in which the author, John of Patmos, is drawn up into heaven, and given a vision. And from this vision John begins his polemic on Roman power and the early church's collusion with it. Jesus himself appears on that timeline as the 'alpha and the omega' (Rev 1:8), 'the beginning and the end' (21:6), 'who is and who was and who is to come' (1:4,8).

Here's one way we can use to think of the apocalyptic worldview.

### The Apocalyptic Worldview - A 'God's Eye' perspective



In our passage today Jesus is responding to the question of when he will return. We can imagine that for the discipleship community that this Gospel addresses, the return of Jesus would have been the most pressing question. For them it would have been the final vindication, the ultimate rescue from their constant marginalisation. Here, the anticipated bridegroom is clearly intended to represent Jesus and the bridesmaids are the discipleship community of the early church.

Those of us living in Victoria can relate somewhat to that sense of expectancy that comes from our waiting for the long winter of a hard lockdown to end. We've all been champing at the bit to be released from this difficult period of self-isolation. But what are we being freed from, and what are we being freed to? Does our freedom from lockdown simple mean we are being freed to 'live it up'? Is this all? Or are we being freed 'in order to...'? I'll come back to this in just a moment.

In our parable today the bridesmaids are chastened (by the gospel author) for their failure to properly supply their lamps with the key ingredient that makes them work; oil. Similarly they have failed to take care of the thing that makes them shine properly; the trimming of their wicks. Consequently they are caught off-guard and unprepared when the bridegroom suddenly appears, trying to keep their lamps alight. We have heard reference to 'light' and 'lamps' before in Mathew's Gospel. At the start of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus tells his disciples that:

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. (5:14-16)

These good works 'shine[s] before others'. In my reading of this parable, I would suggest that the oil here symbolises the 'stuff of discipleship'. However, the parable warns us, not all will take this seriously. There are some who have given up on waiting, they are not living expectantly as though Jesus' return was imminent. They've run out of oil as it were.

In this parable Jesus is asking his disciples to hold that same apocalyptic viewpoint, in light of his failure to appear in what the early church was beginning to view as his tardy arrival. Jesus is asking the church to view the now, the present, on that same eternal timeframe. This is still relevant for us now, living many years in the future, as it was for the early church. I once saw a satirical news article on 'The Onion' headlined 'Christ Calls Off Plans For Return After Realizing It's Been So Long It'll Be Weird Now'. Satire. Obviously. The physical return of Jesus, regardless of how you view it, may not necessarily be a literal revisitation in the distant future, it is a way of living in the now, taking on that same God's-eye-point of view. It's about what we put our trust in; and that is the oil of the bridesmaids' lamps. Light is what comes from that trust, it's the good works that will 'shine before others'. And that is what keeps burning even in Christ's physical absence; in this Christ is never absent.

So what are our good works? In our other reading today we hear from Amos, critiquing the temple establishment, invested as they were on spending up on sacrifices, grain offerings, burnt offerings, pious prayers and songs, whilst neglecting the suffering all around them. 'But' says the prophet and in words immortalised by Martin Luther-King, 'let justice (mishpat) roll down like waters, and righteousness (tsedekah) like an ever-flowing stream.' (5:18). And again in the verses proceeding the parable of the bridesmaids, we hear the parable of the sheep and the goats; a similarly apocalyptic passage that gives a spells out what Jesus means by the good works that Jesus expects of his disciples:

[F]or I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.(25:35)

What is it for us today? It may well be the things that Jesus lists here as the kind of acts of justice and mercy that exemplifies a life of discipleship. It may be others. There is plenty at stake in our world, and much that is unbalanced. There is climate justice, refugee and asylum seeker issues, black deaths in custody, and so much more. What are we being freed to respond to? What are we being freed to lend our voice to so that justice may flow like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

SONG: Christ be our light, ATO 312

1. Longing for light, we wait in darkness.  
Longing for truth, we turn to you.  
Make us your own, your holy people,  
Light for the world to see.

*Christ be our light! Shine in our hearts.  
Shine through the darkness.  
Christ be our light!  
Shine in your church gathered today.*

2. Longing for peace, our world is troubled.  
Longing for hope, many despair.  
Your word alone has power to save us.  
Make us your living voice.

3. Longing for food, many are hungry.  
Longing for water, many still thirst.  
Make us your bread, broken for others,  
Shared until all are fed.

4. Longing for shelter, many are homeless.  
Longing for warmth, many are cold.  
Make us your building, sheltering others  
Walls made of living stone.

5. Many the gifts, many the people,  
many the hearts that yearn to belong.  
Let us be servants to one another,  
Making your kingdom come.

SONG: SONG: [Christ be our light](#), by Bernadette Farrell, from [All together okay](#),  
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#### OFFERING

Saide

Christ, light of the world, we are your church  
A body of people with much to give.  
We offer our hearts, our hands, our abundance  
With a deep longing to meet the worlds' need.  
Bless us and all that we offer in your name. Amen.

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Ray

Eternal God we pray for the world  
This earth our home is a place of turmoil, violence and despair  
We pray for a peaceful resolution in the United States  
For victims of terrorist attacks in Ethiopia, Kabul and Vienna  
For nations in lockdown with rising infections and death tolls.  
This earth our home is a place of love, acceptance and peace  
We pray that love will encompass all the pain and suffering  
and bring healing and wholeness to all creation.

Risen Saviour we pray for the church.  
Your name is claimed by many voices in ways that cause harm  
We pray for people who have drifted far from their faith  
For people hurt by barriers, rejection, fear and confusion  
For people missing their communities through months of restrictions  
Your light shines in the darkness, reminding us of your love  
We pray that we your people will be the voice of love  
Offering healing and wholeness in your Holy name.

Holy Spirit we pray for our communities  
We have been physically apart for so long now  
We pray for all who have struggled to maintain connection  
For all who have lost jobs, loved ones, health and wellbeing  
For all who have worked hard to sustain their communities.  
Breath of life, flame of love, renew us today and always  
Set us once more and always on the path of discipleship  
Free to be a community of healing and wholeness, welcoming all  
Amen

NOTICES

**Good morning.**

I'm Matthew Cameron

And I'm Michael Cameron

**And this is the BUC News**

**So what will we talk about today?**

Good question - possible topics include

- Coming out of lockdown
- Climate Action
- The Christmas Bowl Catalogue
- Singing
- Pastoral Care

**Good list - let's start with singing**

Okay so if you have offered to record Christmas Carols please do so soon

**We want to hear as many voices as possible during our Christmas services**

Sing: Joy to the World

*The Lord is come ...*

And it's not too late to join the Pageant choir - yet!!

**And now for an update on the Christmas Bowl Catalogue**

Those biscuits were delicious (pats belly)

**Download the catalogue and place your order soon**

Some items are selling out

**And if you can donate a bag of biscuits for a Stewart Lodge resident that would be lovely**

**The Pastoral Care Review is continuing**

The committee is keen for to receive your stories of pastoral care

**The Climate Action Group is now meeting monthly**

Remember to make your voluntary Climate Crisis commitment

**And check out the revamped Earth Button page**

It's looking good

**Actually, so are the BUC Arts and Olive Arts pages**

Visit them for stories about the amazing Olive Arts online presentations

**There are so many beautiful ways of being creative**

And everyone is welcome to join in on Wednesdays at 10am.

**Now back to the top of the list - Coming out of lockdown**

Regular updates are provided through the Welcome page on our website

**The most important thing to be aware of is *drum roll (banging on the table)***

If you visit the church for any reason please follow the basic COVID Safe guidelines

**And provide your details in case contact tracing is needed.**

Join Peter Blair for the post worship Zoom chat

**Check out the Olive Press on our website for full details of all the news.**

**Goodbye and thanks for listening.**

SONG: God gives us a future, TiS 687

1. God gives us a future, daring us to go  
into dreams and dangers on a path unknown.  
We will face tomorrow in the Spirit's power,  
we will let God change us, for new life starts now.

2. We must leave behind us sins of yesterday,  
for God's new beginning is a better way.  
Fear and doubt and habit must not hold us back:  
God gives hope, and insight, and the strength we lack.

3. Holy Spirit, teach us how to read the signs,  
how to meet the challenge of our troubled times.  
Love us into action, stir us into prayer,  
till we choose God's life, and find our future there.

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SONG: [God gives us a future](#), by Elizabeth J. Smith, from [God gives a future](#), © 1990 by St. Stephen's Publishing.  
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## BENEDICTION

Saide

We have emerged, freed from restrictions, where to now?  
Held in love we continue, we follow along the path of discipleship  
Acting for climate change, caring for people in need,  
Adding our voices to the call for justice for asylum seekers,  
For First Nations people, for the homeless and unemployed.

We are part of God's future, God's new beginning.  
Let us go from this time of worship  
held in God's all-consuming life-giving love  
guided by Jesus' inspiring life-changing teachings  
and nurtured by the life-sustaining breath of the Holy Spirit. Amen

## THANK YOU

Liturgist:  
Saide Cameron

Reflection:  
Peter Blair  
(Olive Way Pastor)

Notices:  
Matthew Cameron  
Michael Cameron

Lighting of Christ Candle:  
Kimberly Fraser

Prayers of the people:  
Ray Cameron

Images:  
Walking around Brunswick –  
Ray & Saide Cameron  
Also - Peter Blair, Glenice Cook,  
Kimberly Fraser, Charlotte Pitt  
Joshua / Jericho:  
[www.freebibleimages.org](http://www.freebibleimages.org)  
[www.bible-history.com](http://www.bible-history.com) order  
#1170  
J. James Tissot Jericho painting:  
[www.ancient-origins.net](http://www.ancient-origins.net)

Acknowledgement of Country:  
Charlotte Pitt

Musicians:  
Elaine Potter (Co-ordinator)

Children's time:  
Steph Gesling and Joshua  
Dave Hall  
(Pastor: Children, Youth and  
Young Adults)

James Balsillie  
Daniel Broadstock  
Glenice Cook  
Alistair Hunter  
Bronte Potter  
Natalie Sims  
Courtney Rohde  
Catherine Simone  
Shawn Whelan

Bible readings:  
Kirsty & Martin Brown  
Glenice Cook

Production:  
Ray A Cameron  
Saide Cameron  
Dave Hall  
Lydia Jacka  
Shawn Whelan

CLOSING SLIDE: Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Job 38:4a