



44A LITURGY PENTECOST 3A

When the going gets tough

Abstract

“The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters.
Matthew 10:24-25 NIV

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44A Liturgy Pentecost 3A

When the going gets tough

SUNDAY, JUNE 21, 2020 | AFTER PENTECOST | YEAR A

PROPER 7

Old Testament & Psalm, Option I

Old Testament Genesis 21:8–21

Psalm Psalm 86:1–10, 16–17

or

Old Testament & Psalm, Option II

Old Testament Jeremiah 20:7–13

Psalm Psalm 69:7–10 (11–15) 16–18

New Testament Romans 6:1b–11

Gospel Matthew 10:24–39

Pre-Service

Jesus, lover of my soul

Greeting

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
The Love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us all

We Gather

The steadfast love of the Lord is good.
God's mercy is abundant.
Let us draw near to God's presence.

Our land is alive with the evidence of the glory of God;
deserts hum and gum trees dance.

Our paddocks and plains sing
our mountains breathe their majestic beauty.

All created things add their rhythms of delight
and even stones rap out their praise.

As God's people,
come to worship.
come to listen to God's word,
come to be changed by God's Spirit.

Let our voices mingle with those of the earth;
let our hearts join the beat of her joy,
for our triune God is with us:
and our creator surrounds and upholds us.

Christ Jesus is with us.

The Spirit moves amongst us.

Blessed be our God, our wonder and our delight.

Today, as we recognise the 43rd birthday of the Uniting Church in Australia

This service is not bound by man-made geo-political borders

So, as we acknowledge the Wathawurrung people,

the first inhabitants of the land on which I stand

We also acknowledge the indigenous communities around the world.

We honour them for their custodianship of the land,

on which we gather today

and the care of their communities from time beyond remembering,

As we do for all people of this world that do likewise.

This worship service is a safe place,

Regardless to your race, your age, your ability

Your gender or your sexual orientation

As God Grace is with us all.

Let us pray

Lord, we can't sit at your feet as the first disciples did.

We can't follow you through the roads of Galilee.

We can't ask questions and talk with you deep into the night.

We can't watch in wonder as you heal.

But, Lord, we are definitely your disciples today.

We serve you and speak for you.

We show your compassion and take your risks.

So we pray for your blessing on each of our ministries

Conducted in your name.

Amen.

Hymn/song

Fear Not for I am with you

Welcome

This week we celebrate 43 years of the Uniting Church in Australia

But recognise the ministry of churches around the world

and maybe there is no better time to Celebrate it than during Pentecost.

In 1977, three Australian churches came together as one.

The Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches

have been the Uniting Church in Australia ever since.

We have much to be proud of

much to celebrate

much to be thankful for

much to remember

and we have much left to do.

Let us pray

O Lord, we enter your steadfast love,
 asking that you will respond to our prayers;
 we trust in your abundant mercy and ask that you will come to us.

O Lord, make your presence known to us;
 draw near to us; redeem us, set us free;
 for we seek to be your faithful disciples.

God of yesterday,
 we praise you for your goodness to our forebears;
 you led them out of slavery to a land of promise,
 and from exile you showed them the way home.
 You raised prophets and teachers,
 and came to us in Jesus Christ,
 who lived, died, and rose again for our sake.

God of today,
 we see you at work in our time.
 As people are led into freedom from sin and suffering,
 as your Spirit forms the life of Christ among us,
 as we are drawn into greater and deeper unity,
 we give you thanks and praise.

God of tomorrow,
 we look for signs of the coming of Christ;
 sounds of joy and gladness,
 people sharing what they have with others,
 the knowledge of Christ covering the earth
 as the waters cover the sea.

God of yesterday, today, and tomorrow,
 we lift our hearts, our minds and our lives
 to worship you, now and for ever,
 in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Readings

Matthew 10:24–39

²⁴ “The student is not above the teacher, nor a servant above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for students to be like their teachers, and servants like their masters. If the head of the house has been called Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household!

²⁶ “So do not be afraid of them, for there is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the dark, speak in the daylight; what is whispered in your ear, proclaim from the roofs. ²⁸ Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a penny?

Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

³² "Whoever acknowledges me before others, I will also acknowledge before my Father in heaven. ³³ But whoever disowns me before others, I will disown before my Father in heaven.

³⁴ "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I have come to turn

" 'a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law—

³⁶ a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'

³⁷ "Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.

³⁸ Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.

³⁹ Whoever finds their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life for my sake will find it. ¹

respond

For the word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Hymn/song/video

TIS #738 – "My Jesus my saviour"

We say Sorry

We are sorry for the times we get our priorities wrong –
when we do not put you first;
when we fail to see the needs of our neighbours;
when we lack the courage and faithfulness of true disciples.

Grant us forgiveness;
grant us perseverance;
grant us vision;

that we may serve you as you desire,
and play our part in establishing your kingdom.

Amen.

Hymn/Song

O Master, let me walk with thee

Response

Cross Choices
Matthew 10:24-39

¹ [Revised Common Lectionary](#). (2009). Bellingham, WA: Faithlife.

The last few weeks I have been following the Matthew readings.

It has been a time when we have been examining our own discipleship both individually, and hopefully as a church coming out of isolation, in its various forms.

Let's start with a story.

A man once told his mates, he had invented a method of preserving domestic peace.

"The day we married ten years ago," he said,

"we decided that all important decisions should be made by me.

Small decisions could be left to my wife."

When his friends asked him how it had worked out, he replied,

"Perfectly, there hasn't been a single hitch in the entire ten years.

Of course," he added, "no important decisions have come up yet."

The challenge of human existence is that life is made up of decisions, insignificant or crucial, mundane, or complex.

As we know from history and our own experiences,

even the most trivial decision can have a huge impact on our lives.

Therefore, it isn't always easy for us to make decisions.

When I was a kid, our family was made up of a mother born in Holland,

a father who identified as Indonesian and three kids all born in Tasmania.

With such diverse cultural backgrounds in one household

even deciding what you were going to have for dinner could be difficult.

These days we tend to minimize the importance of decisions and choices,

we tend to believe there are no absolute black and white situations out there.

We want it a little of both ways,

We hope that evil will somehow turn into good

hoping we don't have to totally reject whatever it is we want to keep hold of.

But C.S. Lewis pointed out that this belief leads only to disaster.

Life is not like the radii of a circle, all leading eventually to a common centre,

or even like tributary creeks and streams,

all flowing together into the main river.

Lewis suggested life was more like a road that continuously forks into new roads,

or a tree whose branches keep spreading further and further apart.

"Good, as it ripens," Lewis wrote,

"becomes continuously more different not only from evil but from other good."ⁱ

So to rescue those who choose wrong roads in this life

consists first, in stopping, and then in getting off the wrong road

and getting back onto the right one.

Imagine you've stuffed up a Maths problem.

You can't simply work your way back to the right answer;

you have to go back to the beginning and start all over.

Error and evil can be undone, but time doesn't heal them,

and they don't just "evolve" or develop into good.

Life very rarely if ever presents us with “both or and” situations.
Significant choices are almost always “either/or” situations.
And that is never truer than when it comes to matters of significant concern.

Jesus makes that clear in the gospel reading for today
in the comparison of love for parents or children and love for God.
In this extreme example,
using the case of something that is good — love for our relatives
We get some idea of
the radical nature of choosing discipleship and the way of God.
And how our choices reveal who we really are.

We see this truth revealed in the bible from the very beginning.
The first three chapters of the Bible lay out
who we are and that for which we were created:
We were created in the image of God as moral agents of decision,
and our choices have consequences
because we are important in God’s plan for the world.
Decisions must be made. We have to choose.

And when there is so much at stake,
those choices aren’t always easy for us.
Whatever else the story of whether or not to eat the fruit in Genesis 3 teaches us,
it clearly demonstrates that decisions and choices
either move us away from or toward God.

The cost of discipleship becomes very real to us when we face situations requiring a decision.
When we are confronted with crises, tests, and temptations that demand a choice
that’s when the rubber hits the road.
We suddenly realize the cost of discipleship at the point where we have to decide
to go with Jesus away from where we feel comfortable and nice.
Whether we choose life and choose God’s way, following Jesus,
or we do death and choose another way.

There won’t be a person listening to this that hasn’t been affected
by COVID-19, social isolation
and what it has meant to us to change the way we do things.

Our understanding of church, fellowship, caring for each other
and being Jesus in our community in crisis has changed the way we do things
and how we relate to things that have been important.

As we exit this time, we have an opportunity.
Like the Pentecost disciples we have learnt so many new skills
maybe to speak in the language of those around us
rather than swap one form of isolation
to insulating ourselves in our churches once more.
We are at a crossroad; this is the time for a decision.

Is this the time we decide to do things a bit differently?

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the Lutheran martyr who died at the hands of Nazi Germany, said,
 “When Christ calls a person, he bids that person ‘come and die.’ ”ⁱⁱ

Those words reflect what Jesus teaches us in verses 38-39 in the gospel reading
 as the crux of the matter:
 that taking up the cross and following Jesus means giving up self for Jesus’ sake
 to find real life in him.

Only the person who is willing to sacrifice his or her own selfish will - can follow Christ.
 To choose life through the death of self
 and our love of what is comfortable, nice and familiar is never easy.
 Every day we encounter new temptations,
 and every day we ask God’s Spirit to help us choose again
 to take up the cross or to choose our own way.

And, that we have the strength to make such choices
 has nothing to do with our strength of character or innate abilities.
 That any of us manages to follow Jesus faithfully for even one minute, let alone for a lifetime,
 is truly the miracle of God’s grace!

God’s grace works its miracle on us, in us, and through us
 when, through prayer and praise and Bible study together with other believers,
 we fix our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

God’s Spirit is the one who makes us fit to be Jesus’ disciples in the world,
 willing and able to share with others how to find life
 by, paradoxically, giving it up for Jesus.

To choose the cross of Christ is the best choice of all.
 And I pray to God for the strength to follow that road!
 Do you?

Amen.

Hymn/song
 Jesus lover of my soul

Offering

Notices

Prayers for all people

Take a piece of string in reality or maybe in your thoughts.

It’s a piece of string or wool about 30cm in length.

Tie three knots in their string (any type of knot).

As you tie the first knot,

think about and pray for people who serve God

in a country that is not their own.

As you tie the second knot,

pray for those who are struggling with a sense of calling

(e.g. to a specific ministry or role in the church, or to a career change).

*As you tie the third knot, think about yourselves,
praying that you will be equipped
to face the challenges that your own discipleship brings.*

Lord, we are your disciples:
make us one in you.

We pray for those whom you have called to service far from their homes
doctors, nurses, teachers, engineers, and many more...

We are your disciples:
make us one in you.

We pray for your church
and those who serve you in the church
those who clean, make tea and wash up, arrange flowers,
those that offer a welcome, ministry and care and much more...

We are your disciples:
make us one in you.

We pray for those who serve you by telling your story
those who teach, lead assemblies, speak at meetings, preach the gospel,
and many more...

We are your disciples:
make us one in you.

We pray for those who engage in a ministry of prayer
spiritual leaders, group leaders, prayer chain coordinators,
and many more...

We are your disciples:
make us one in you.

We pray for our own discipleship,
that we may face our challenges with courage.

We are your disciples:
make us one in you.

May our united discipleship
further your work and help to establish your promised kingdom.

In your name, we pray.

Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.

	For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. AMEN
	Hymn/song Come People of The Risen King by Keith and Kristyn Getty
	We are sent out May you have discernment to see whom to serve. May you have wisdom to know how to serve. May you have strength to serve as a faithful disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. May the Lord bless us and keep us May His face shine upon us and be gracious to us May he lift up His countenance upon us and give us peace
	Benediction
	Thank you

ⁱ C.S. Lewis, *The Great Divorce* (New York:Macmillan, 1959), p. 128.

ⁱⁱ Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (London: SCM Press, 1948/2001), p. 44. Additional concepts from pp. 41-78, 86-93.