



Order of Service



11 June 2023

10 am



Worship led by:
Rev Dr André Groenewald
Organist Martin Petty and choir

Gathering of God's People

Time when we greet one another and prepare for worship.

Those who are able please stand for the entry of the Bible.

Words of welcome and announcements.

With sadness that I announce the death of Ken Bissett. AT this time our thoughts are with Helen, Scott and Jennifer. No formal arrangements has been made so far.

Session meeting on Wed 14th of June 2023.

Ecumenical Bible study will take place via ZOOM on the 29th of June 2023. The theme is "Wait".

Joint service with Currie Kirk **25 June 2023** at 10:30 followed by a BBQ picnic! All are welcome!

Guild 'Summer Treats ' fundraising event for one of the Guild projects on Wednesday the **28th of June at 7 pm in the ST Joseph's Centre.***Tickets with a suggested donation of £5 is available.*

Worshipping God Together

Call to worship

Minister: Let us walk with love.

Let us walk with mercy.

**All: Let us walk with kindness and
compassion,**

**as we walk together and worship God
today.**

Beloved I greet you in the Name of God the
Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

CH4 210

Awake my soul and with the sun.

Opening prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Let us pray:

Merciful God who welcomes us all,
no matter who we are,
no matter where we are from,
no matter what we have done,
no matter what our successes

or failures in life so far have been,
we gather together before you, as your children,
knowing we are welcome.

At this time Lord, we want to thank you for Ken
Bisset's life and we ask you to look after Helen,
Scott and Jennifer, be with them and help them to
see you standing at their doors.

Lord God, forgive us when we do not show love to
others;

forgive us when we do not show compassion to
people in times of need;

forgive us when we do not show your forgiveness
to others,

forgive us when we do not show kindness to those
we meet;

forgive us when we are harsh and uncaring to

those around us;
forgive us when we do not act as you want us to
do towards family, friend, neighbour or stranger;
forgive us when we ignore the needs of those who
come to us;
forgive us when we neglect the world around us;
forgive us when we deliberately do wrong for our
own benefit;
forgive us when we are dishonest and untruthful.
Lord God, forgive all who truly repent, for your
name's sake.

We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

ALL: Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in
heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; And forgive us our
debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into
temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the
kingdom, the power, and the glory for ever. Amen.

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Matthew 9:1-17
Reader: George Burt

CH4 506

All I once held dear.

Sermon

Today's Bible reading is very interesting in the sense that a lot of things are unknown to us.

Let me explain: Matthew wrote his Gospel to Jews who converted to Christianity. We know this because of his constant references to the Old Testament, his emphasis on the difference between Moses and Jesus, and how he applied the Third commandment of not using the Name of God in vain. Instead of talking about the Kingdom of God he talks of the Kingdom of heaven. As he was writing to a mostly Jewish audience, he assumed their knowledge of the OLD Testament.

When they heard the passages that we read today, they would have immediately understood the

context, content and purpose of Jesus' words and actions in the light of what they knew God said in the Old Testament.

Jesus was fulfilling the prophecies in the Old Testament in a real and practical way.

Two of the passages immediately comes to mind namely:

Hosea 6:6

“For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.”

And **Micah 6:8**

“He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

This is exactly what Jesus was doing.

He was showing mercy or forgiveness to the paralyzed man, the toll collector, and others. He was acting justly, treating the people with love, fairness, dignity and compassion.

Why did these people need his forgiveness?

The paralyzed man was regarded by the Pharisees and others as someone who has been punished by God for his sins. Jesus knew this and formally redeemed his sins. The teachers of the LAW immediately reacted by thinking that Jesus is blaspheming against God because to them only God can forgive the sins of humanity. Jesus knew their thoughts and responded by making the point that He has been sent by God and that He has the authority not only to forgive sins but also to heal people which He did.

The Greek word for sin “amartia” [ἁμαρτία] can mean a lot of things like:

- *error, failure, in a moral sense wrongdoing against others; i*

- in the NT as offense against God *sin*; (1) as the state of being in revolt against God and failing to honor him
- *sin, being rebellious, sinfulness* personified as a power like a slavedriver or dictator that rules human beings and leads them to guilt and destruction
- of a thought or action, an assertion of one's own will in opposition to God's will, a failure to do what pleases God, equivalent to ἁμάρτημα *sin, wrongdoing*

Sinners on the other hand, denoted by the Greek word [ἁμαρτωλός] hamartōlós meant to deviate, and or miss the mark. It was usually used as:

- As an adjective, stumbling from the divine law, sinful, wicked, impious.
- In a general sense to refer to a sinful generation (Mark 8:38); a sinful man, a sinner (Luke 5:8; 19:7; 24:7; John 9:16, 24); a sinful woman (Luke 7:37, 39; Sept.: Num. 32:14; Is. 1:4); “more wicked than all others” (a.t.; Luke 13:2); a sinner (Luke 18:13; Rom. 3:7); sinful, sinners (Rom. 5:8; Gal. 2:17).
- The Jews called the Gentiles sinners or despisers of God and considered them heathen or pagan.
- Sinners were often linked with tax collectors (Matt. 9:10, 11; 11:19; Mark 2:15, 16; Luke 7:34; 15:1) who were in bad repute among Jews and Greeks.

And then Jesus met the toll collector Matthew who was as I just explained considered to be “sinner”.

Tax and toll collectors charged tolls and taxes on behalf of the Roman government. These private government subcontractors would tax travelers who were carrying merchandise between properties or delivering goods along certain well-defined roads. Rome preferred to hire locals who were familiar with a region’s inhabitants, land, and roads.

Tax collectors earned a profit by demanding a higher tax from the people than they had prepaid to the Roman government. This system led to widespread greed and corruption.

The tax-collecting profession was saturated with unscrupulous people who overtaxed others to maximize their personal gain.

Since the Jews considered themselves victims of Roman oppression, Jewish tax collectors who overtaxed their fellow countrymen were especially despised. Jews viewed such favor for Rome as betrayal and equal to treason against God. Rabbinic sources consistently align Jewish tax collectors with robbers. Jewish religious leaders particularly despised tax collectors (Matt 9:11; 11:19; Luke 5:30; 7:34), regarding them as ceremonially unclean and excluding them from religious activities.

Jesus interacts with tax collectors throughout Scripture, but He also speaks critically about them, at times affiliating them with prostitutes (Matt 21:31–32) and Gentiles (Matt 18:17). Jesus agrees that paying taxes is moral (Mark 12:17), but He disapproves of the corruption common among tax collectors. They are among the lost whom He came to find (Luke 19:10) and the sick whom He came to heal (Matthew 9:10–12).

SO it is no surprise that Jesus tells the toll collector Matthew to follow him which he did. And then the most scandalous thing happens when Jesus eats with him and his other tax collector colleagues. They were the sinners *par excellence*.

The Pharisees' criticism may well have occurred later. They noticed - which could mean that they have heard from others in the close-knit communities of ancient Judaism – that Jesus was eating with sinners.

Interestingly they do not ask Jesus about his action directly, but his disciples. This could have meant that they were trying to shame Jesus in public by ignoring him.

Jesus answered them from the prophecy of the Old Testament which I quoted earlier. He came so that people could be saved from their sin and sinfulness.

Our passage can thus be summarised by Jesus addressing sin and the sinners.... And in both cases He showed forgiveness and mercy.

How do we show mercy, love, and compassion to our brothers and sisters around us?

Do we judge them by their outward appearances without getting to know them a wee bit better? Do we take the time to discover their faith, their hopes, and fears? Or do we just exclude them like the Jewish leaders did a long time ago.

To illustrate this, I brought along a fruit that does not look the part on the outside.

What kind of a fruit is this? Kiwi

Look at it – from the outside, it doesn't look very appealing!

Brown, scratchy, prickly – not very exciting at all!

But... Looks can be deceiving!

If I cut it open, you will see what it looks like on the inside

- It's bright green!
- It tastes nice – tangy sweet taste.
- And did you know? One of the healthiest fruits around!
- Contains vitamins C, E, & K, it supports your immune system, helps you to sleep, and is good for your skin!

But you would never have guessed that by just looking at the brown skin on the outside, would you?

The same is true for us people.

There is more to us than what you can see on the outside. God knows this, and that is why he doesn't care what we look like on the outside – whether we are poor, or rich, famous, or infamous, ill or healthy, popular or unpopular.

He only cares about what is going on in our hearts. And He wants us to be the same when we deal with other people. He wants us to look deeper – to not only see what they look like on the outside - what they are wearing, but He wants us to see who they really are.

And most of the time people will surprise us with all the amazing things they carry inside of them!

So let's never judge people on what we see at first glance, because God doesn't do that with us.

Henry David Thoreau says: It's the beauty within us that make it possible for us to recognise the beauty around us. The question is not **what you look at** but **what you actually see...**"

I think we can add something to this quote: It is not what you **have heard about a person**, but what that **person actually tells you** him/herself!

AS people of faith, as redeemed sinners, We have a very important task on this earth and that is to

show mercy, love and forgiveness to all people – whether we think they deserve it or not.

God showed us mercy, grace and compassion. He forgave us all our sins and transgressions. It is time that we forgive ourselves and others too. It is time that we model Jesus' compassion in the small and big things in our lives on earth,

Let say it once more: God does not require sacrifices but mercy and compassion.

Amen

Responding to God's word

Choir sings "O let the Son of God enfold you by John Wimber".

Prayer of thanksgiving: Lesley Burt.

Benediction Receive the blessing of God and go in peace:

God of mercy and justice,
as we walk alongside those in our communities
who seek mercy, kindness, or forgiveness,
open our eyes to see them
and our minds and hearts to reach out to them,
that we may be moved to share your love and
compassion
in practical ways – and in Jesus' name.
And the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and
Holy Spirit will be with you, now and forever
more.

Sung Amen, Amen, Amen

Please remain standing as The Bible is removed.

You are invited to stay for tea and coffee which are served in the hall.



Intimations

Ecumenical Bible study will take place via ZOOM on the 29th of June 2023. The theme is “Wait”. At the third station, there is a delay in your journey where you need to “wait” on God and take the moment to reflect on what it means to be dependent on God. It is also a time where I focus more on *what I need to become* rather than on what I need to do. It is a time to open myself to the work of God’s Spirit to change/transform me.



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Guild 'Summer Treats ' fundraising event for one of the Guild projects on Wednesday the **28th of June at 7 pm in the ST Joseph's Centre.**

If you are not able to bake something, then please feel free to help on the night or simply encourage friends and family to come along and help us raise much-needed funds for the Guild Project: BEAT; a charity that supports folks with eating disorders. ***Tickets with a suggested donation of £5 will be available from next week.***

THANKS TO YOU... Thank you for all your generous contributions towards the ministry

and mission of the Church. Gift Aid envelopes are available at the end of each row or from the Treasurer after the Service.

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