



A little intro and some tips

I think it is worth acknowledging that this is a unique moment in the life of Ringwood Church of Christ, when we are in different places and spaces today and yet still essentially unified in our desire to connect with one another and with our creator God. My hope is that this is a resource that will help us all to engage meaningfully with God's word for us and invite an open and experimental sense of worship today. I encourage you to use this guide in a way that feels comfortable and most helpful and here are a couple of suggestions that might help the process.

1. Get prepared for worship – have your Bible close by, perhaps set up some favourite music to listen to, find some food to have during communion – it doesn't have to be bread and grape-juice, it could be whatever is available (tea and a biscuit) to use in this symbolic time.
2. Get into a 'sacred' space. It's important, when we are not physically in a dedicated worship space (like a church building), to mentally and spiritually shift into a sense of worship. Be intentional. Some examples of how you might prepare: Sit somewhere where you feel receptive and responsive to God (e.g. a cosy chair or outside in the garden); have some visual representation of God (perhaps a small cross, your Bible, a symbol or image); start with a few moments of silence and deep breathing.
3. Consider your environment and what will work for you. If you have others in your house – house-mates / family, consider sharing this time with them, each reading or participating as appropriate. Or you might simply reflect individually, in your own time and space.

Sunday 29 March 2020

“Looking Back to Look Ahead: A Time to Integrate” (Matthew 15:1-20)

A Song of Worship “10,000 Reasons” (Matt Redman 2013)

CHORUS

Bless the Lord oh my soul
Oh my soul
Worship His Holy name
Sing like never before
Oh my soul
I'll worship Your Holy name

VERSE

The sun comes up
It's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again
Whatever may pass
And whatever lies before me
Let me be singing
When the evening comes

VERSE

You're rich in love
And You're slow to anger
Your name is great
And Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness
I will keep on singing
Ten thousand reasons
For my heart to find

VERSE

And on that day
When my strength is failing
The end draws near
And my time has come
Still my soul will
Sing Your praise unending
Ten thousand years
And then forevermore

View and listen online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XtwlT8JjddM#action=share>

Collage of Blessings – Not quite 10,000 reasons to celebrate God’s goodness

(Add your own prayers to spaces below. You can continue to reflect on this at the end of this time of worship.)

	<p>Thankfulness for Kaye: Sunshine & blue skies Kindness of neighbours Technology that helps social connecting and functioning</p>	<p>Thankfulness for Shannon: I am thankful that I have the authority to make decisions that support my team to keep themselves well, physically and mentally, during this time of isolation. For Autumn: sunny days and ugg boot nights, red leaves and the call of winter pudding with custard</p>	<p>Gratitude</p>
<p>Thankfulness for Cam: My family Sunshine</p>	<p>Gratitude</p>	<p>Thankfulness for Penny: I am so thankful for acts of thoughtfulness and kindness. For a loving family and our health and safety</p>	<p>Thankfulness for Linda: For backyard where the kids can play and we can still see trees and space, even when locked down. For scripture that is alive and speaking into our time, even tho it was written 1000’s of years ago</p>
<p>Thankfulness for Noah: My doggie My house My bike & mtb riding My trampoline</p>		<p>Thankfulness for Gayles: For colleagues and teams that pull together to make things happen in a short time. For a safe and warm home. For friends who check in on me to make sure I’m going ok</p>	<p>Love</p>
<p>Thankful</p>			<p>Thankfulness Andrea: I am thankful to go for walks in the time I would usually be commuting I am thankful for the number of birds I am noticing, perhaps because I am slowing down.</p>
<p>Thankfulness Anon: I’m grateful for work at this time, for continued good health and for good internet that keeps me connected to people</p>		<p>Thankful</p>	

Bible Reading: Matthew 15:1-20 (NIV)

(If you are with others perhaps take turns to read different sections.)

15 Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, ² “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!”

³ Jesus replied, “And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ⁴ For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’ ⁵ But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is ‘devoted to God,’ ⁶ they are not to ‘honor their father or mother’ with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. ⁷ You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

*⁸ “These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.*

*⁹ They worship me in vain;
their teachings are merely human rules.”*

¹⁰ Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen and understand. ¹¹ What goes into someone’s mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them.”

¹² Then the disciples came to him and asked, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?”

¹³ He replied, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. ¹⁴ Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

¹⁵ Peter said, “Explain the parable to us.”

¹⁶ “Are you still so dull?” Jesus asked them. ¹⁷ “Don’t you see that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and then out of the body? ¹⁸ But the things that come out of a person’s mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. ¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. ²⁰ These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them.”

Message for today

integrate: to bring things together, to make something whole...
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I had a really good laugh when I read Matthew 15, our text for this weekend and Jesus’ dispute with the Pharisees and scribes here. My first reaction was to shake my head and feel like I had to set the Son of God straight about how massively important washing hands is – especially TODAY. Watching the TV during the week, The Project on channel 10 have taken on the morally encouraging and reminding voice for the nation. I was given a quick and hearty lesson on singing “Happy Birthday” while washing my hands by Lisa Wilkinson – and strongly urged to get up off of my comfy couch and perhaps just wash them right now to be on top of it all.

It is such an interesting story from Matthew 15 – and ironically not really about hand-washing as we understand it today. This story is essentially giving readers an insight into a conflict about ‘ritual cleansing’ and purity – which was one of the ways people in ancient times demonstrated a commitment to holiness. The community in Matthew’s time is concerned about being ritually contaminated, concerned about the things that would spiritually defile a person and Jesus makes a very clear point about the hypocrisy of simply focussing on one visible demonstration of purity – handwashing. Jesus says it’s not just about one physical act – it’s about bringing together, or integrating, a much broader set of

values and practices that speak to true holiness. We know all too well right now that washing our hands is not the only thing we need to do in order to be 'clean' and living into our responsibility to be safe and responsible members of the community.

What feels like a lifetime ago, but was only about 10 days ago, our family was walking to the oval up the road from our house and we found a nest that had fallen out of a tree. Nests are the most wonderful little creations. They are made up of all kinds of bits and pieces. The one we found is made up of string, twigs, fishing line, fur – a little messy collection of stuff that has been carefully pulled together to make a secure holding place. I feel like this speaks powerfully to us right now – and serves as a profound illustration of what we, as followers of the way of Jesus, are called to be in these times.

To truly inhabit a life-giving approach to being the people of God is to consider much more than just one small twig... One little twig does not make a trustworthy holding place! Jesus says in some pretty confronting terms that it is not ok to practice personal 'rituals' of religious holiness today, things like prayerfulness, tithing, reading the Bible, attending church (even online or paper church) and yet neglect the way we treat others; the way we sacrifice; the way we respect; the way we speak; the way we use our resources; the way we adapt; the way we stand; the way we forgive; the way we love.

You know I feel like the world is just beginning to see what faithful people can really do when we are reminded of our responsibility to be reliable, safe, sure holders of love, hope and compassion, when so much of the world feels uncertain, unsteady and unsafe.

So we bring all the messiness and diversity of who we are, what we believe, how we feel – our fears and possibilities, and our deep assurances of God's love and power and ask God to gently but firmly confront us today, as did his Son Jesus with the religious folk in his day, with what it means to continue to be the faithful, hope-holders for a generation who will not quickly forget the impact of 2020.

Communion – (have some food and drink prepared for this time)

Communion is usually a time of being *in* community, breaking bread together as a symbolic remembering of Jesus' last supper with his disciples and followers. If we are not in our normal community it might feel strange to do this alone, as a couple or with a small group of people.

If you are alone – intentionally consider who you are communing with:

- Think of the people in close proximity to you e.g. neighbours. Give thanks for them.
- Consider and visually bring to mind friends in our church community who would normally be sitting close by at this time. Give thanks for them.
- Consider the community of the Trinity – God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit – a divine community into which you are embraced today as a beloved child of God.

If you are with others consider each taking part in the following readings as well as intentionally bringing to mind the broader community of faith.

Reading Isaiah 55:1-3

“Come, all you who are thirsty,
come to the waters;
and you who have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without cost.

²Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good,
and you will delight in the richest of fare.

³Give ear and come to me;
listen, that you may live.

²⁶While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

²⁷Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Reading 2: Matthew 26:26-29

The Bread (take / share your food in this moment)

This is the body of Christ, the bread of life—given for you. Amen.

The Cup (take / share your drink in this moment)

This is the blood of Christ, the cup of salvation—shed for you. Amen.

Prayer

Lord, as we have taken some symbolic nourishment,
We remember that You are the bread of life.
You feed our souls, you nourish our hearts and You give us sustenance to run the race before us.

Lord, as we have taken some symbolic refreshment,
We remember that you are the giver of life.
You are forgiveness, You bring deep peace to our souls and Your love flows within us.
Send us now in the power and strength of the Holy Spirit.
May we live to be all that You have destined us to be.
In the name of Jesus we pray.
Amen.