

Themes of Justice & Compassion



**A Resource For Those
Who Lead Worship**

EPIPHANY

A Lectionary Resource for

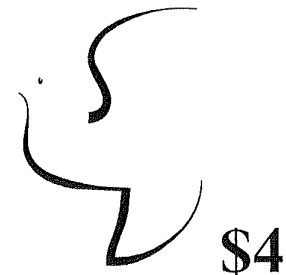
6 January 2005-6 February 2005

**Epiphany-Epiphany 5
Preaching Kit 2
Lectionary Year A 2004-5**

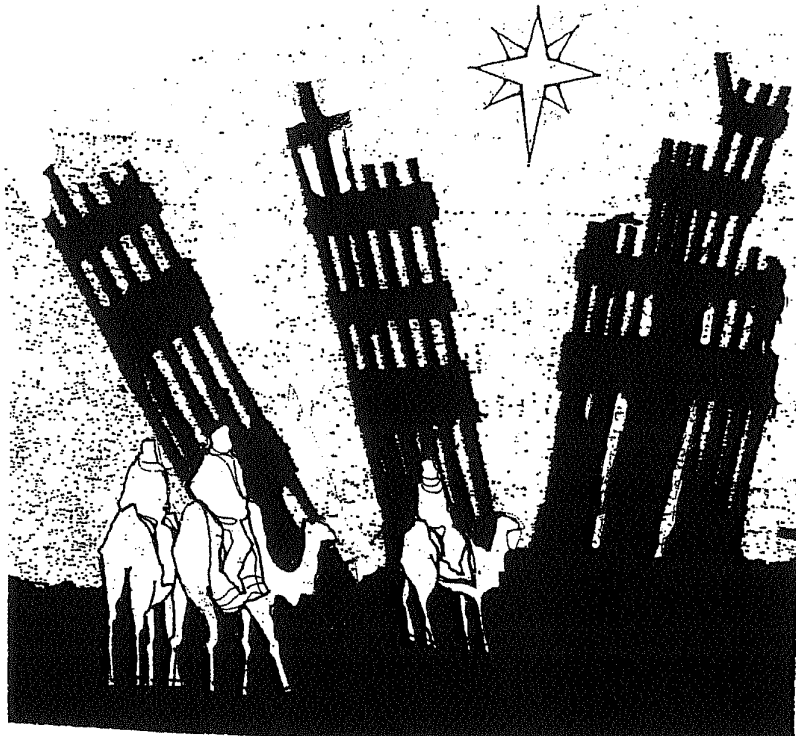
Please note: These preaching notes were prepared 3 years ago by Rev Pauline Stewart and Mrs Raewyn Luxton. The Rev John Curry was preparing notes for this year at the time of his sudden death. The writer who was to complete John's work has been unable to do so within the tight time frame. We apologize for this unavoidable situation.



**Presbyterian Church
of Aotearoa New Zealand**



EPIPHANY 2002



Lord, we keep believing what we build around us will keep us secure – great buildings, eloquent liturgies, beautiful rituals. When everything is collapsing under us, can we find that God is the greatest gift of all? We ask for a faith that stands when all else has crumbled.

What are the gifts we would want the wise men to bring – to the world, to the Church, to our family and friends, to you?

* * * * *

Epiphany is generally celebrated on January 6th or the closest Sunday.

The Season of Epiphany is six weeks. It is a time to celebrate that Christ came for everyone.

This is told with the story of wise men who came from the east (maybe Afghanistan) to find and worship a new King. They studied the stars and had seen God's sign in the sky that told them a new ruler had been born.

They were strangers in race, culture, language and religion, yet they recognised God at work in this sign of a bright star and were prepared to journey far to find what it meant.

The story is only found in Matthew's gospel. Fact or fiction it is recorded there for it's truth that God is not exclusive to any one people. The gift of Jesus is for everyone.

* * * * *

The following pages have been written by Rev Pauline Stewart and Raewyn Luxton from the Te Aroha Co-operating Parish. We have endeavoured to give ideas and thoughts that may help you in your preparation for worship.

Epiphany 2002

In the following 'Notes' The Call to Worship has come from the Hebrew scriptures.
The Responsive Thought for the Day from the Psalm. It is written so it can be led by a child

Sunday 6th January 2002 Is.60:1-6, Ps.72:1-7 10-14, Eph.3: 1-12 Matt.2: 1-12

'We come into the presence of God'

Call to Worship:

We have come to seek your presence, O Lord.
Lead our minds and hearts to follow your light
that the whole world will see your glory.

Responsive thought for the Day from psalm 72

Leader: Lord God, give us the gifts of goodness and justice.

People: that we may have the grace and courage to help those in need.

Leader: Even the mountains will bring peace and plenty,

People: For the earth belongs to you.

Leader: May all the nations praise you.

People: Praise the Lord.

Leader: We will worship you as long as we have breath

All: Gracious God, You are our guiding star. Give us the desire to follow where you lead and to expect great things. We offer you our praise and thanks. We see you in all the things around us. Help us to hear your voice and show your love to everyone we meet Amen.

Isaiah 60: 1 - 6

This is a promise to Jerusalem.

It could be seen as a vision for the Christian church today.

The main thought throughout is 'The glory of the Lord.'

Light and darkness are spiritual symbols

Light - Fellowship with God. God's presence. Darkness - Life apart from God.

For God's nature is light. "In him is no darkness at all"

God's presence brings transformation to our life.

This allows God's radiance to fill us with hope and joy and a vision beyond ourselves.

Do we look around and expect to see God at work among us.

"The glory of the Lord is shining on you
the brightness of his presence will be with you.

Then you will see and with joy you will shine
and his favour and mercy will be yours and mine."

What a great start for the year. The promise of the presence of God.

Psalms 72: 1 - 7, 10-14

A royal poem to a new ruler. Giving his job description you could say.

This could be the picture of what Jesus will bring

Maybe we could make this a prayer for ourselves in our service for God's Kingdom.

God gives us grace to be his effective sons and daughters.

Ephesians. 3: 1 - 12

Epiphany is a time of remembering God's gift of Jesus was God's gift to the World.

Paul tells us that God's secret is revealed by the Spirit, that through Jesus Christ everyone now has a part in God's grace and in his promises. To bring light into the darkness. Grace and love to all. With this knowledge, in faith we can now all come into the Presence of God.

To Paul the greatest privilege was to serve God and to take the Good News to the Gentiles.

A thought for us today. How much is it a privilege to us to give, our time, our energy, our money, our skills, our experience, in service to God? or is it just a duty, an expectation of others, something we do to earn God's favour? which can never be earned.

Matthew 2: 1 - 12

6th Jan. 2002

When you know and see your goal, no matter what, you go for it.

Do we know when it is God in action? Do we hear his voice to us? Have we learned enough to recognise it. The wise men did because they had studied well and had looked out for the signs.

The church leaders of the time knew where the Messiah would be born but they had no interest in what the wise men had to say. They had not been looking out for the signs. God would have told the Jewish churchmen if the Messiah was coming surely, they would have thought. Certainly not someone of the wrong culture and wrong religion.

But God has the habit of using people who are open to his voice and ready to receive new revelations who ever they may be.

'Religious people' often have closed minds and rigid beliefs and God cannot get through.

But if we have seen the Christ this Christmas, then we will come from there and go on a new path.

For the children: You may like to enlarge the picture on the front and ask the children:

What do they see there? What do they think the wise men see? What gifts would the wise men bring to us today? What would they like them to bring? Where is the baby the wise men have come to see?

Thoughts on Matt 2: 1 - 12

Meditation and prayer

Gracious Lord

The year stands before us, a clean slate of days.

It gives us a chance to change our ways.

To be like the wise men, as they rode along following your star and singing your song.

The wise men rode after a bright wondrous star.

What great faith they had to journey that far.

But they knew what this long journey would bring they would be able to worship a new born King

Lord of each day have we that much faith?

With eyes fixed firmly on your face

will we follow, have no fear where you lead?

because to dwell in your love is all that we'll need.

The magi from that eastern land long ago thought that the learned ones in Jerusalem would know.

And the religious leaders they all knew

Bethlehem's the place he'll be born that's true

But surely if the Messiah was there to behold

they would have been the ones God would have told!

And Herod really seemed to care

till his throne it transpired he may have to share.

There are many like Herod Lord, who plot in their need

for their own power and glory with hearts filled with greed.

And still there are those who pretend to care

but when the crunch comes they're not willing to share

The wise men brought with them gifts for a King. Strange gifts when you think of what they could bring.

Gifts for a baby that spoke of a grief,

Many children today would share that belief.

And we have gifts that we can offer too.

As we give them to others, we give them to you.

They may not be gifts that are quite so grand but they're what we have, and they're right at hand.

Oh yes Lord, I nearly forgot

the wise men were an obedient lot.

You spoke to them in the night while they dreamt.

They heard your voice, and knew what it meant.

Perhaps Lord that's something we need to do,

to open our ears and our minds more to you,

Then we will recognise and know your voice

and in your love, we will praise and rejoice.

Lord of the years, maker of each new day

On this brand new page, show us the way.

And as I fill in each page, and between,

the gospel according to me will be seen

Yes Lord this year is brand new.

May each day that passes bring glory to you.

And Dear God we pray that you will take

this prayer of ours, for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

Raewyn Luxton.

13 January 2002 - Epiphany 1

Note: After Epiphany

A period in which the Church reflects on the manifestation of Christ to all people from David Brown's book "Introducing the Three Year Lectionary". Epiphany was the original Christmas celebration of the Church. This day reminds us that Christ was the revelation of God to all peoples. During the season of Epiphany which commences on the 6th of January we travel with Christ through Palestine during his ministry. This commences with his baptism and concludes where the synoptic Gospels have Jesus turn his face towards Jerusalem at his transfiguration.

A Tool Box of Ideas for Worship Leaders

Here are some ideas to rummage through. Hopefully there will be something you can use/adapt for your worship service. These ideas relate to the readings in the Lectionary and Calendar followed by the Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand.

In the toolbox are five components, which we usually include in the content of worship services for the congregations which we serve. All three congregations have a single Sunday morning worship service which are attended by a core of older people with a growing number of babies, children and young adults.

Stan and Pauline Stewart

13 January 2002 - Epiphany 1

The readings: Isaiah 42: 1-9, Psalms 29, Acts 10: 34-43, Matthew 3: 13-17

A visual image:

As is common these days we have a photocopied order of service. We always include some small illustration(s), which have relevance to the service, and which often though not always, is talked about in the flow of the service. For young and old, these pictures become a visual clue to one of the truths to be reflected on in the service.

We obtain these images from many different sources, although in the last year most are obtained from the vast storehouse of images available on the Internet.

We suggest using two pictures, side by side.

A classic picture of Jesus being baptised by John.

A picture of someone being capped at the end of a higher education course or something similar. This may be an actual picture of someone in your congregation.

Rationale: The baptism marks the beginning of the active ministry of Jesus in much the same way as a graduation allows a person to begin practising their profession.

A contemporary reference:

We will use the Is 42 passage as a responsive reading. A key task of the Lord's servant is to bring justice to every nation, (in this reading it is repeated 4 times, five if you include setting prisoners free). We will highlight this by printing the justice statements in caps and in bold. At the conclusion of this reading, a prayer will be said for the cause of justice in our world. Reference will be made in this to some situation of injustice that is in the news at that time.

With the Children:

On this occasion talking with the children can be the opportunity when someone shares. Have someone talk about his or her graduation, accreditation or ordination. Ask them to show a photo or a gown or mortarboard or a document that relates to this occasion. They should talk about what difference this made to them - what they were then able to do because of their graduation and of how they felt as they faced new challenges. If the person is not confident, interview them.

At this time of the year, some children and young people are graduating - moving from primary to secondary schooling etc. It would be most appropriate, if children/teens in this situation are present, that their new step be acknowledged and the youngsters supported. Talkative youngsters will tell of their feelings - positive and negative - about this new stage of their life journey.

This should be followed by a meaningful telling or reading of the Baptism as set out in today's gospel. Although not encompassing all the meaning of the event, for Jesus there was in this occasion elements of both graduation and ordination.

Thought for this day:

This is a responsive reading, which we prepare, and is led by a child. As it is printed in the Order of Service, the reader does not have to be a perfect reader to be successful at his or her task.

L: Preparing to do an important job can take a long time.

P: When at last we are ready we can feel nervous.

L: For over thirty years Jesus prepared for his work.

P: The Holy Spirit and the voice of God were signs that he was ready.

L: God wants all of us to be ready to serve him. Let us pray

All: Dear God, thank you for sending Jesus to share our life. Thank you for his silent years of growing up. Thank you for the day when the dove and voice announced he was ready for his ministry.

Sometimes we want to do great things without taking time to prepare. Sometimes you call us and we don't want to listen. Because of this, we have wasted time and left jobs undone. Please forgive us.

Show us how we can prepare ourselves to serve you. Teach us about commitment. May our lives be a blessing to many in the work of your kingdom. In Jesus name. Amen

A word of sharing:

As much as possible we encourage various people to talk about some aspect of their life and faith. On this occasion this will be included in the time with the children. See above.

Personally: Where the rubber hits the road -

Somewhere in every worship service there should be a challenge to every listener and some support and inspiration for the personal needs and agendas of every worshipper. This is not a sermon outline, but some points which we will attempt to weave into our message.

Jesus is Lord. Connecting, the baptism with the divine affirmation, on to some of the words from Peter's sermon, "judge of the living and the dead", and the Isaiah servant image. Preaching point - we don't admire Jesus - we worship him.

The meaning of Jesus' lordship - justice, freedom for the oppressed and healing. The baptism was preparation for this ministry and those who follow him must be committed to these same ends - and not just hymn singing and pious acts, but involved in the hard yards to work for these ends.

Pastorally - the theme of giving justice and healing can be applied to individual lives. People facing a life crisis can take comfort here. God cares and it is his will that wrongs will be righted and sickness will be healed. In the universe of our individual lives, the divinely ordained son of God comes right wrongs, and gently to bind the wounds and set the prisoner free. Here is a promise that can be claimed in every heart.

Sunday January 20th 2002 Is. 49: 1-7, Ps.40: 1-11, 1 Cor.1: 1-9 Jn.1: 29-42

'Our trust is in God.'

Call to Worship:

We have come into your presence Lord God, for you are our rock and shield.
Our hearts rejoice, and we sing your praise with all the earth.

Thought for the day: From Psalm 40:

Leader: The Lord listens to us and hears our cry;

People: He reaches out and gives purpose to our life

Leader: Let us sing a new song of praise to the Lord

People: for our trust is in God, He gives meaning to our life.

Leader: All he wants from us is our love, our faith and our obedience. Let us pray

All: Accept our love O God. Forgive us when we have not heard your voice or kept your word in our hearts and in our actions. We will sing your praises as we remember your mercy and love towards us never ends. Amen.

Is 49: 1 - 7

This is conversation between God and the people. As the Prophet sees it, God is the source of their strength and they, and we, can trust the Lord.

Right from the beginning Israel were the people chosen to make God known to the world. God needed a people for his glory to be seen.

But the people have spent their strength, or rather see no result for all their work.

They were to bring back the people to God, a light to the nations. A people for the Messiah who would reveal God to all.

We are to continue to trust in the Lord. We must keep telling the Good news and leave the consequences in God's hands no matter what the circumstances.

Ps 40: 1 - 11

God will respond to those who cry out for him, and give renewed life and energy. This gives them a new song of praise to the Lord.

Happy are those who trust in the Lord.

They do God's will. They keep his teaching in their hearts and they tell the good news. His mercy and love never end.

1 Cor: 1: 1 - 9

I will always give thanks Our God is to be trusted. We receive grace, riches, blessings because our sins are forgiven, we have much to give thanks for

So we start anew, boldly confident that God's grace will enable us to face all things. In dark days and in joyous ones Jesus came to tell us that God is there.

John 1: 29 - 42

(There are too many thoughts here for one sermon. Maybe there are one or two you could pick up)

'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.'

What does the phrase 'Lamb of God' mean to us today? Many do not know the Hebrew Scriptures and what the sacrificial lamb meant in the Jewish faith. Every morning and every evening a lamb was sacrificed for the sins of the people.

'The Lamb of God', one of the most wonderful yet mysterious names for Jesus, gives us a picture of the Love, Sacrifice, Suffering and the Triumph of Jesus. In the book of Revelation this name is given many times (29). Worthy is the lamb to receive blessing, honour, glory and might for ever and ever.

John also tells us what he sees. "The spirit descending and remaining on him."

On Jesus, John tells us, the Spirit remained. The Mind and Power of God were there in Jesus. John does not say he heard the voice "This is my beloved son", as the other Gospels do but he does emphasize that the Spirit remained on him.

20th Jan 2002

The humanity of Jesus seen coming for Baptism. The Divine Jesus seen in the action of the Holy Spirit coming and remaining on him.

We also see the humility of John. John was prepared to step back and encourage his own disciples to follow Jesus who he saw and proclaimed as greater than he.
It's hard to take second place especially when you have been in the first place.

Jesus asked. "What are you looking for?"
Perhaps this is a good time to ask ourselves "What am I looking for? Where am I going? What is my priority, my aim? Who do I worship?"

We also see Andrew the quiet one wanting his brother Peter to know Jesus. We only hear of Andrew three times and each time he is introducing someone to Jesus. Here, and the boy with the fish and loaves (John 6: 8,9) and when he brings the inquiring Greeks to meet Jesus. (John 12:22) Andrew was never in the inner circle yet that never stopped him from bringing others to Jesus.

When Jesus looks at us, he can see what we can become just as he did when he looked at Peter. He sees the best that there is in us. and longs for us to reach that potential.
The Lamb of God cleanses us from our sins and with the Holy Spirit we too can become what Jesus knows we can be.

Prayer.

Gracious and loving God
Our rock in times of trouble, Our deliverer from the quicksand of life
You hear our call. You answer our cry.
We sing a new song of praise in you we trust for the purpose of our lives.
We give you thanks for the many wonderful blessings you shower on us;
for the marvelous plans you have for us, for your promise of salvation to all,
for your love and faithfulness that keeps us secure.

Help us to hear your voice, to keep your love in our hearts, to know your will.
Gracious God, May we become the person you know we can be.

This year is already on its way
Routines and structure now again in place
New visions and old dreams to be put into action.
Loving God, help us that with loving hearts, we will be ready and willing to tell the good news, to visit the sick, to seek out the lonely, to offer love to the unlovely.
Then others around us will come to know your mercy and your love for them.

Help us to say today. "Here I am to do your will in this place.
Creator God, May we become the people you know we can be. Amen.

For the children: Perhaps you could tell them about Baptism and what it means, for Jesus, for them, for the church.

27 January 2002 – Epiphany 3

The readings: Isaiah 9:1-4, Psalms 27:1, 4-9, 1 Corinthians 1:10-18, Matthew 4: 12-23

A visual image:

We suggest four images:

A lighthouse

3 faces – one white, one black, one Arab

This will be more effective if the faces show different ages. Make sure both sexes are represented.

Position the lighthouse down one side and have the three faces beside it – the three pictures taking together the same area as the lighthouse.

Rationale: The readings today tell that God intends to send the light to shine in darkness for people who live in the shadows. The gospels (especially John 1) reveal that Jesus is the light. By his actions, at the beginning of his ministry Jesus makes it clear that his light will not just shine to a certain race, but to all who are seeking for the light of truth.

A contemporary reference:

Developing the theme of bringing light to those who live in darkness and shadows we will draw attention to those whose work provides the only hope to people in horrific circumstances. Using a two-minute segment, we will feature the work of relief agencies helping with emergencies and humanitarian aid. Depending on the news of the week, we may focus on an aid project that is in the current news. This will be followed by a prayer for this work.

With the Children:

The theme of light in dark places will be developed. Candles, lanterns and torches will be displayed. The comforting, welcoming presence of light in dark places the children will know about, (in the bush, in a blackout at home, etc), will be discussed. Probably the children will join this discussion. One of the most comforting lights for many children is a night light, the button light that can stay on all night in a child's room or in the passage outside.

The light of Jesus dispelling darkness in the heart will be introduced by telling a story. There are many of these, but one the children will be interested in is the story of how Christians crusaded to stop the use of child workers in underground coal mines. This story works on several levels – the darkness of the coal mines – the darkness of people's hearts who profited from this exploitation, the darkness of the children's lives.

"This little light of mine" would be an appropriate song to follow this segment.

Thought for this day:

This is a responsive reading, which we prepare, and is led by a child. As it is printed in the Order of Service, the reader does not have to be a perfect reader to be successful at his or her task.

The theme of the Thought for the Day builds on what has been shared with the children. However in the prayer, concepts which will have more meaning to the adults than to the children are used.

L: Darkness can be scary.
P: Darkness can be dangerous.
L: We feel much better when we have a light.
P: Lights can save us from becoming lost.
L: When we are frightened, we feel dark inside.
P: Evil can darken the mind and deaden the heart.
L: Jesus brings us God's love. Let us pray.

All: Dear God, thank for the light of your love. Thank you that it shines on us.
Thank you for Jesus who has come to show us the way.

We do not always want to walk in his way. Sometimes we have chosen darkness rather than light. Sometimes we have made it harder for others to believe in your love. Please forgive us.

May your love dispel the shadows from our hearts. May we walk in the light of your will for us. Use us, we pray to help others find the light and freedom Jesus brings. Amen

A word of sharing:

As much as possible we encourage various people to talk about some aspect of their life and faith.

On this occasion a person will share how a life threatening illness effected their life for the better. First there was the darkness of the life threat and then after recovery, (not full but partial), there was as it were a blinding light. What this led to was a re-evaluation of the person's life direction and life priorities. A result of this has been a treasuring of every day and a commitment to Christian service.

We suspect that stories like this are to be found in every congregation.

Personally: Where the rubber hits the road -

Somewhere in every worship service there should be a challenge to every listener and some support and inspiration for the personal needs and agendas of every worshipper. This is not a sermon outline, but some points which we will attempt to weave into our message.

A challenge: The Corinthian passage challenges the darkness of division which can be as dense and as evil as any other kind of darkness. Our prejudices and territorial ambitions can cause great harm in families, churches and societies. This is a sin of good people - that is, people who committed to their church can also be gripped by this divisiveness. Here is a darkness that invades the hearts of people who sit regularly in church.

Pastorally - the theme of light in frightening places can bring courage and comfort. Sometimes the light we need is not obvious or perhaps we are looking the wrong way. Encouraging people to look for that light in unexpected places can be most helpful.

Our hope - the light will endure and overcome. It will bring release and joy for God's creation and for us. Even in the darkest times, we are assured that evil will not prevail and the hope of this light can sustain us.

Sunday 3rd February

Micah 6: 1 - 8, Psalm 15, 1 Cor.1: 18-31 Matt. 5: 1 - 12

'A Christian's life style'

Call to Worship

Even the mountains know the Lord and listen to His voice.

In our worship today, we bring to God our love, our humble hearts and our praise.

Thought for the Day from Psalm 15

Leader: Who can come to worship God?

People: Those who obey his laws and do his will.

Leader: They are open and honest before God

People: and do no wrong to anyone.

Leader: In God's love they build bridges not walls

People: and seek to reach out to people with His love.

Leader: This is what gives them security. Let us pray

All: Lord, we have come into your house today to bring you our worship. Forgive us where we have not done what is right or what is loving, when we have been hurtful and unkind. Help us to reach out in your love to all we meet. It is in you that we find wholeness and security and we thank you that we can never be separated from your love. Accept the worship we offer today. Amen.

Micah 6: 1 - 8

God is questioning Israel as to why he has been neglected.

Even the earth itself bears witness to God's nature.

We are so blind to the wonderful works of God

God does not need rituals and sacrifice He has shown us what is good

Do justice, Love kindly, and walk humbly with God

A practical list. This is a down to earth, an every day possibility.

This is one of the mountain peaks of insight in the Hebrew Scriptures.

Psalm 15

Instruction for one who wants to walk with God

Honesty, truthfulness, dependability, honourable, generous, a fair return for work done, one who is blameless one who acts in love.

An ethical list. Jesus said attitude and inner thoughts were most important in the sight of God. A high standard for those who worship, for those who call themselves Christian.

1 Cor. 1: 18 - 31

The Corinthians were Greek and thought very differently from the Jews. Their Spirituality is more intellectual, their knowledge more logical and to practice straight faith more difficult.

The Cross was offensive. It didn't make any more sense to them than it did to the Jews.

But Paul is proclaiming that to the Christian the cross is the power and wisdom of God.

That this power and wisdom come through love, the kind of love shown on the cross.

Empires have come and gone but the foolishness of the cross endures.

God's wisdom is foolishness to us. God's wisdom is what brings wholeness to our lives.

Matt. 5: 1 - 12 The Beatitudes.

A revolutionary teaching that again shows the wisdom of God is foolishness to us.

I have heard the Beatitudes called 'Windows to Heaven'

The Beatitudes are a collection of Jesus's sayings, the essence of what he had to teach. Many think of them as beautiful thoughts to be carefully put aside and only brought out when one wants to feel pious. But the Beatitudes are life truths to be lived in the present for the present.

To the Christian they tell of the joy and the wholeness a follower of Christ has. They do not bring us salvation, rather they make us aware how much we need God's grace, but they bring a blessedness and a sense of well being to those who live by them.

3rd Feb.2002

The Beatitudes are all promises of the Kingdom of God. Promises; to be comforted, to inherit the earth, to be satisfied-made whole, to receive mercy, to see God, to be called God's sons and daughters, to be listed with the prophets of old. All these give us something to rejoice about.

The poor in spirit. Their minds are not closed they are ready and willing to learn and to understand new things of God. Poverty of spirit is the beginning of all virtues.

Those that mourn; for the loss of a loved one, for the hate and violence in the world, for the knowledge of personal sin. To truly mourn summons the aid of God because that is God's nature.

The Meek. The humble-no doormats here. Aggressors destroy the earth, as we have seen over the last few months. The humble know their own needs, but they are content where ever they are and are not dependent on places or rituals to know who they are. 'Pride is the root of sin'.

Those hungry and thirsty for righteousness. The Good News translation reads 'Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires.'

'What does God require? but for you to do justly, love kindly and walk humbly with God.

The Merciful. 'God's nature is always to have mercy' we repeat in the communion Service. To have Mercy for all in creation which needs releasing from cruelty and injustice.

Pure in heart. What is more beyond us, purity of heart or seeing God? Create a pure heart in me O God (Ps.51:10). We echo his prayer. It is only those pure in heart who can see God in things around them, and who can discern the action and the will of God.

Peacemakers. Let us be Master Builders of Peace... not peace lovers but peace makers. Jesus is the Prince of peace and his offer to us is. " My peace I give to you" Jn.14:27

A peace maker practices the presence of God, and most surely is a child of God.

Be persecuted and reviled for Jesus's sake; Our reward is in heaven. Our reward is the promises given in the beatitudes. Through these we can communicate God's healing and power to the unhappy people in our world and our community. This brings blessings and joy to both parties.

Prayer:

God of blessings, God of Wisdom

How can we understand the message of the cross, unless we have experienced your love.

How can we forgive, unless we have received your forgiveness

How can we be peacemakers, unless we have your peace within us.

We pray for your grace, that we can experience and know these things for ourselves.

Lord God, we are not wise. These readings from your word are difficult for us to grasp.

How can we be all these things? We can't, not in our own strength and will.

We pray for understanding and insight, so that in your strength, and in your love, we can reach out towards fulfilling this way of life that Jesus has shown us.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will make this more real and relevant to our lives.

Help us not to grow complacent in our relative comfort, about the plight of others.

May our living in the way Jesus taught, bring others into the Kingdom of God, and restore purpose to their lives, and your love in their hearts.

We give thanks that your wisdom is available to us, though it seems foolishness to many.

We thank you for your unconditional acceptance and friendship to us, and the promise of our place in your Kingdom for ever.

Hear this our prayer which we ask in Jesus' name Amen.

With the Children. Talk about how Jesus came and turned the world upside down. How he gave teachings that at first glance do not make sense, but on reflection will change the world.

10 February 2002 - Epiphany 5

Waitangi Day - Sunday nearest the 6th of February 2002

The readings: Duet 10: 12-21, Psalms 144: 9-15, 1 Corinthians 1: 26-31, Matthew 6: 19-34

The Treaty of Waitangi was signed on 6 February 1840 by Captain William Hobson, several English residents and approximately forty-five Māori chiefs. The Treaty of Waitangi (Te Tiriti O Waitangi) lays the foundation for the way Māori and other New Zealanders share responsibility for this country and is considered the founding document of the nation of New Zealand.

A visual image:

We suggest using two pictures, side by side.

A fern koru

An English rose

Plus: This theme could also be taken up in the flower arrangements in the fern fronds and English flowers and the actual plants can be used by way of illustration.

Rationale: On the day we honour the occasion when two very different cultures pledged to work together. The plant images speak of each culture – the differences in the two images and what they meant to each people can be expanded upon in either the children's time or in the sermon.

With the Children:

- Talk about contracts. Have a number to show the children: wedding certificate, mortgage, hire purchase, and if possible, naturalisation papers.
- Talk about each of these. If a person present has been naturalised, they can talk about this experience and the meaning had for them.
- Talk about what happens when a contract is broken – marriage, mortgage, hire purchase. How do people feel on both sides of the contract? This could be acted out, say focused on hire purchase, on a portable hi fi unit or something the children would value.
- Then talk about the Treaty – the parties – the intent – what went wrong – what went right – ask the children "What needs to be done?" Get suggestions from the congregation.
- This is controversial – people will have different points of view – the best way to handle this is to have a board and write up all suggestions without comment. The most extreme ones will cancel each other out. Noting that people see the outcome of the Treaty in different ways is a statement of fact that must be acknowledged.

Talk about the New Testament – explain this means the new covenant – God's new agreement that is based on his love to us in Jesus.

This children's time will take longer than a normal children's address but the content is such that in fact much of the sermon material will be introduced in a dramatic and easily accessible way and so shorten the sermon time.

Thought for this day:

This is a responsive reading, which we prepare, and is led by a child.

L: Making promises is easy.

P: Keeping promises is hard work.

L: Sometimes we forget what we promised.

P: When things change, we sometimes want to break promises.

L: When we break promises, people are hurt.

P: When we forget promises people can become angry.

L: Jesus wants us to be promise keepers. Let us pray.

All: Dear God, thank you for always keeping your word. Thank you for the promises you make to us through Jesus. Thank you for welcoming us into your family.

We are not very good at promise keeping. We have forgotten promises. When it has suited us, we have broken promises. Dear God, please forgive us.

Make us people who keep promises. Help us forgive others who have let us down, as you forgive us. Help us to share your love and promises with those we meet. Amen

A Word of Sharing:

Have a Maori person speak briefly about the Treaty from 2 points of view.

1. What the Treaty means to me.
2. What I would like the Treaty to mean for the future of this country.

A contemporary reference:

We will use a contemporary version of Ps 114: 9-15 as a responsive reading.

This will be followed by a reading of headlines taken from the newspapers of that week of Maori/Pakeha issues. These will include land and other claims, stories of conflict and good news re co-operation in sport and culture. Members of our worship team will do this. This will be followed by a prayer for Aotearoa New Zealand and all its peoples, including the recently arrived refugees. New Zealand prayer books all contain prayers on this theme or a prayer could be composed by a member of the worship team.

Conclude this segment with the Lord's Prayer - spoken, (if you use a contemporary version you will have to print it), or sung.

On the occasion of this service, this segment will follow the Word of Sharing.

Personally: Where the rubber hits the road -

Somewhere in every worship service there should be a challenge to every listener and some support and inspiration for the personal needs and agendas of every worshipper. What follows is not a sermon outline, but some points which we will attempt to weave into our message.

Pastorally: Many people feel guilty and unworthy. Somewhere during a service that has a focus on contracts it is important to affirm that our relationship with God relies solely on grace. It is not dependant on what we do, but on what God has done.

Pastorally: This service will challenge people and annoy some people because of prejudice or pre-judgement. Here is a time to gently encourage people to open their lives more fully to the forgiveness of God so that they might in turn be more open and accepting.

Action: This is a day to re-commit ourselves to seeking justice for all and to honouring promises and commitments. This means that issues of resources and prosperity must be viewed in relation to the wider issue of God's justice. For Christians of all races, this can never be an issue that is dominated by dollars and cents. In the end, the essential things for all people and races are not to be found in material things, but in God's provision.

PREACHING IDEAS AND PRAYERS

(2004-2005 Lectionary - Year A)
("The Year of Matthew")

These preaching ideas or sermon starters are based on the 2004/2005 Revised Common Lectionary which is being used in many churches in Australia and New Zealand.

This set of notes is the **2nd** in a series being written again this year by a variety of writers who will cover the full year. Writers of considerable experience and variety have agreed to write notes including: the Revs Mark Chapman, Roger Wiig, Frank Glen, Pamela Tankersley, Judy Bedford, Martin Stewart and Mua Strickson Pua, and Graham Millar..

This Kit has been written by the **Rev Pauline Stewart and Mrs Raewyn Luxton**

Over the last few years these notes have been of particular value for:

- preachers - both ordained and lay preachers
- parishes without a stipendiary minister
- as study material for groups
- as material for a team preparing for worship to spark ideas

The periods covered are:

Kit 1 Nov 28 2004-Jan 2 2005

Kit 2 Jan 6-9-Feb 6

Kit 3 Feb 9-March 26

Kit 4 March 27-May 8

Kit 5 May 15- June 26

Kit 6 Jul 3-Aug 14

Kit 7 Aug 21-Oct 2

Kit 8 Oct 9-Nov 20

These ideas are beginnings, suggestions for the preparation of worship and should be adapted for your own parish's needs. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily the PCANZ. Please respect our copyright. The kits are produced by, and may be purchased from:

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