

July 26 2020
A Liturgy for use at Home

Notes:

*A liturgy for use at home. Please adapt it as you see fit. Words in italics are instructions. Words in **bold** are said by all.*

PREPARATION

Light a candle as you read these words

Keep your eyes open for God, watch for his works; be alert for signs of his presence.
(Ps. 105:4, The Message)

Call to Worship

Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name;
make known among the nations what he has done.

Sing to him, sing praise to him;
tell of all his wonderful acts.

Glory in his holy name;

**let the hearts of those who seek the
Lord rejoice.**

Prayer of Approach¹

Lord our God,
**eternal and wonderful,
wholly to be trusted:
you give life to all;
you help those who come to you.
Set our hearts and minds at peace,
that we may bring our prayers to you
with confidence and joy;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.**

a song may be sung

Prayer of Adoration

Mighty God,
we do not yet see the glory you plan for all
humankind,
but in faith we do see Jesus.
We thank you for the humility and holiness
in which he lived and died.
We praise you that he freed us from our
sin,

that he comforts and strengthens us
through our struggles,
and that he gives us courage to follow him.

Prayer of Confession

Loving God,
we have indeed sinned against you
in what we have thought, said and done.
We have not loved you with our whole
heart;
we have not loved our neighbours as
ourselves.
We are truly sorry
and turn away from what is wrong.
Forgive us for the sake of your Son.
Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Silence

Christ Jesus came into the world to save
sinners. This is his gracious word:

‘Your sins are forgiven.’

Amen. Thanks be to God.

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Scripture

Romans. 8:26-39
Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52

Collect

God, you have poured the Spirit of your
Son into our hearts so that we call you
Father.

Give us grace to devote our freedom to
your service,
that we and all creation may be brought
into the glorious liberty of the children of
God.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory
are yours, now and forever. **Amen**

Sermon

- *A written reflection is appended to these notes.*
- *The Sunday Sermon is online²*

THE RESPONSE

- Who can you share hope with this

¹ The Methodist Worship Book

² <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

week? What acts of service can you offer?

- Set aside time to become quiet & to allow the Spirit to intercede through you with “wordless groans” (Ro. 8:26).
- If you need help in prayer and meditation, and have a smartphone try the “Lectio365” app. I find it very helpful.
- If you are interested in a “small group” meeting “online” for prayer and reflection on scripture please email: mcguigan@durbmeth.org.za.

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

These prayers may help as you hold before God the needs of our nation and church. Pray them as written or allow them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.

Universities, colleges and schools

Lord God, bless all colleges, universities and schools; that teachers and students may be governed by a true love of learning. In this time when schools are closed may learners may be kept safe, teachers healthy, parents patient and communities vigilant.

May you raise up teachers, union leaders and principals who never, for lack of courage, or refuse to face the truth; or for personal advantage, conceal it; or, in the pursuit of power, betray it; and lead them to those depths of thought and obedience where you yourself can be made known to them; for Jesus Christ's sake.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

All who minister to the sick

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ went about doing good and healing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people: continue his gracious work among us in hospitals and nursing homes; and send

your blessing on all who labour to Prevent suffering and to forward your purposes of love. We pray for doctors and healthcare workers of the DMC family, Bianca, Debbie, Kayla, Karla, Stephen, Philip, Glynnis, Gideon, Liza, Magda³; may you keep them safe and renew them each day by the power of your Holy Spirit, may you bless and protect their families and enable them to be salt light to their colleagues.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

For Leaders⁴

God of all Wisdom, we pray for our leaders: the World Health Organisation, national governments, and local leaders too - heads of schools, hospitals and other institutions. Since you have positioned these people in public service for this hour, we ask you to grant them wisdom beyond their own wisdom to contain this virus, faith beyond their own faith to fight this fear, and strength beyond their own strength to sustain vital institutions through this time of turmoil. God of all Wisdom and Counsel, you are powerful and merciful; may this be our prayer.

Lord in your mercy
Hear our prayer.

Our Father...

Dedication⁵

**Father, help me to live this day to the full, being true to You, in every way.
Jesus, help me to give myself away to others, being kind to everyone I meet.
Spirit, help me to love the lost, proclaiming Christ in all I do and say.
Amen**

Benediction

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen

³ Please let us know of medical workers who we may we have left out.

⁴ Prayer by Pete Greig of 24-7 Prayer.

⁵ From the “Lectio365” app.

Treasured!

Finding Treasure

I intended to preach on Romans this week. And, indeed, I will. But something unexpected happened. I read Jesus' parables (Matthew 13:31–33, 44–52) and they worked just the way Jesus described: Like yeast a woman mixed in the flour (Mt. 13:33) they shaped my thinking...I couldn't get them out of my head!

Take the merchant who found a pearl of great price. Doesn't it get you thinking: *"What did the pearl look like? Who would give up everything for one pearl? What do I treasure?"* Dallas Willard, speaking on treasures, notes that intimacy between two persons includes mutual knowledge of what they treasure. Children, who all know about treasuring, love to ask questions about what we treasure...it's a way of drawing close to who we truly are.

Here is a take on the "pearl" parable that I've always treasured: *God is like the merchant. You are the pearl of great price. God gives up all he has to purchase you!*

Treasured by God

Scholars caution us against reducing parables to analogies, but that analogy is appealing. Jesus said that God so loved the world he gave everything – even his one and only son (Jn. 3:16). Paul teaches that we have been bought at a price (1 Cor 6:20). In Exodus we read God saved that people so that they would be God's *"treasured possession"* (Ex. 19:5; Dt. 26:18).

The parable of the fine pearl, and the one before it of treasure in a field, get us thinking about treasure. I remember Jesus' words: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"* (Mt 6:21). The Kingdom of Heaven reorders our treasures: We receive revelation that God treasures us. We discover that there is no greater treasure than living as a child of God in the Kingdom of Heaven. We start to treasure what God treasures. We are consumed by the only healthy obsession – to serve God with every breath.

Rightly ordered treasuring

We treasure memories of people who live that way. I think of a maths teacher I knew – "Mr Thomas". Amongst his treasure trove: the beauty of mathematics and the love of teaching it. He treasured justice – fiercely so. Rumour had it that as a fiery young man he had to flee India because he crossed the wrong people in his fight for justice. Whenever I visited him a learner was either on the way in or the way out for extra lessons. These lessons were offered without charge to learners who had no means to pay. This led to other treasures – a letter of thanks, or a picture on the shelf – learners who, thanks to his efforts, gained access to tertiary education. Most of all, Mr Thomas treasured the God made known in Jesus. That's who he served. I'm sure that, like all of us, he had his faults and vulnerabilities. But they are not worth comparing to the shining treasure of God's glory shining through him.

Paul was a person who had discovered treasure. He said, *"If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* He understood, really understood, how much God treasured him. So much so that no matter how bad things got, even if he was to *"face death all day long"* like a *"sheep to be slaughtered"* he was convinced

that nothing could separate him from God's love. We know that verse well. But few know it in the way Paul did – imagine how free from fear and worry his life was!

Paul's bright treasures didn't blind him to the pain, sorrow and evil in our world...he'd been on the receiving end often enough. He says "*the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans*" (8:26).

I have groaned lately because it seems corrupt leaders and weak leaders amplify the suffering in our world. Sometimes, perhaps, we groan with frustration and despair. Praise be to God that the Spirit can transform those groans into prayers. Even when, in our weakness, we don't know how to pray or what to pray, we can groan in the Spirit. God uses those prayers to bring about healing and transformation. We start to treasure what God treasures.

Our groans lead us to trust that "*in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose*". That's likely a verse you treasure; the idea that God can bring about good even through the worst of things. Scholars alert us to a gem we have missed, though. They tell us a better translation is "***God himself co-operates for good with those who love God***".

We don't sit idly by as God works in the midst of horrible situations. God works with us, through us, to bring about good. By God's grace we become, even in all our weaknesses, treasure for this world. People of hope and love and prayer and justice and mercy. When people see that in us, they give all they have to share the treasure that we enjoy. That's how the church has been growing from Paul's day to ours. May our prayers; every lament and wordless groan, lead us to treasure what God treasures. May the Spirit reveal in us the treasure of the Kingdom of Heaven. May we be God's treasured possession both now and always. Amen.