24 January 2021

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:

For God alone my soul waits in silence,
for my hope is from him (Ps 62:5).

Call to Worshiping

My salvation and my honour depend on God
He is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in him at all times,
pour out your hearts to him
for God is our refuge
(Ps 62:7–8).

Prayer of Adoration

Eternal God and Father, you are the source of all life, the fount of all wisdom, the well-spring of all grace.
Your days are without end,
your loving mercies without number.
We depend on you: and we remember your goodness to us and to those who have gone before us. We tell your story in every generation:

God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,
God of Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel,
God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

God of a pilgrim people, your Church. You are our God, ahead of us, leading us, guiding us and calling us;
you are the Lord God, the all-wise,
the all-compassionate.

To you we lift up our hearts and we worship you,
one God for ever and ever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Let us in the silence
recall those things in our own lives
for which we need forgiveness.
Silence
Lord, hear our prayers and forgive
our sins. **Amen**

The Peace is shared

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Scripture

Mark 1: 14-20

Collect

Loving God,
through your Son you have called us to repent,
to believe the good news,
and to celebrate the coming of your kingdom.
Grant that we may hear the call to discipleship
and gladly proclaim the gospel to a waiting world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**.

Sermon

- *A written reflection is appended to these notes. The Sunday Sermon is also online[1].*

THE RESPONSE

- Thank God for those moments in your life where God's Good News story has been made known.
- Is the spirit leading you deeper into the life of repentance? What do you need to let go of? What do you need to take hold of?
- Is there an organisation, advocacy group or cause that you are passionate about - how can you share

[1] https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/

in their work through prayer or giving?

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.

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, Monique, Magda[2]; 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 and patients.

Lord in your mercy

Hear our prayer.

For Leaders[3]

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.

Dedication

We will share in an online Covenant Service in February. There will also be a Synod Covenant Service broadcast on the "CapeMethodist" Facebook page on 31 January, at 10h00. If appropriate pray the Covenant Prayer as a prayer of dedication:

Covenant Prayer

I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will,
rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low for you;
let me be full, let me be empty;
let me have all things,
let me have nothing;
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal. And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, you are mine and I am yours. So be it. And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. 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.

[2] Please let us know of medical workers who we may we have left out.
[3] Prayer by Pete Greig of 24-7 Prayer

Repent and Believe in the Good News

"*I woke up one morning, I couldn't remember how I got home, I could have killed myself in a car wreck, or worse, killed someone else. I said, 'this will not be the story of my life', I've been sober since*…I've heard that testimony, almost those exact words, and similar testimonies over the years. Recovering addicts show us the honesty, humility and bravery of repentance. A life headed to destruction, an awakening, a "U turn" toward abundant life.

Friends, that's repentance! Not "*sorry, I won't do it again*", but courageously letting go of one story and embracing another.

In the very *first verse* of today's Gospel we see two stories, two ways of seeing the world.

Story of Despair

Here is the first story: "*John the Baptist had been imprisoned*". John, the prophet calling in the wilderness, a holy man who drew great crowds, imprisoned. We learn why in Ch. 6. Herod had married Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. John proclaimed that this contravened God's law (Mk. 6:18). By condemning Herod's marriage, he subverted Herod's claims to be God's King.

It's the sad story of power abused, justice denied, greed honoured, people oppressed, truth covered up. For some that's the inevitable story of human history…

People of faith know that's *not* the script God authors. They cry out, as we can imagine the followers of John the Baptist lamenting, with prayers like this one in Habakkuk: Oh God, "*Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why, then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves*"? (Hab. 1:13)

Story of Hope – The Kingdom of God

God answers! In the same verse another story fills the page with light! Jesus says, "*The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news*!"

It's the moment of opportunity. Time to act. Good News is upon us! I'd have been inclined to say, "*Um, didn't you see what happened to John? Those in power are dangerous, it's time to lay low, stay safe…"*

Jesus says, Repent! You think the plot is suffering, oppression, injustice. No, I tell you, the Kingdom is on the march. Follow me.

Friends, it is easy to get discouraged, especially when injustice seems to thrive –
Politicians of dubious reputation overseeing a vaccination roll out – Most holy God, why do you tolerate it?
Half a million people fleeing in terror in Mozambique' – Most holy God, why do you tolerate it?

Jesus says, repent and believe in the Good News. Repent: God is here, God is at work. God has not given up on the world.

Repentance – Embrace Hope

Here is the **first** way I feel called to repent: I turn from despair to hope, cynicism to faith. I remember the story God has written, a story of a future with hope!

God reminds us in many ways: On Monday our American brothers and sisters celebrated Martin Luther King jnr, the Baptist pastor and I civil rights leader. Remember "I have a dream" ... *a dream that... the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood...a dream ...a dream that every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain*

King was assassinated - that old story of pain

and violence trying to rewrite the plot…But his dream cannot die; it is inspired by the story God is writing! In Wednesday's inauguration of a new American president, a young poet Amanda Gordon, recited a poem inspired by God's story (did you hear/see her)? I'll quote a few verses:

Scripture tells us to envision that everyone shall sit under their own vine and fig tree
And no one shall make them afraid
If we're to live up to our own time
Then victory won't lie in the blade
But in all the bridges we've made

To repent is to humbly accept that God is writing a story of justice, joy, peace and reconciliation. This Good News doesn't stay *out there*. It beckons us in. So, the Gospel tells how Jesus finds Andrew and Simon saying "follow me, I will make you fishers of men…"

Fishers of men.

Remember that lament I quoted from Habakkuk? It continues "*You have made people like the fish in the sea, like the sea creatures that have no ruler. The wicked foe pulls all of them up with hooks,he catches them in his net* (Hab. 1:14–15). Throughout history men and women have been like fish caught up in the net of whoever has power – whether Egypt, Babylon, Rome…

God promised Habbakuk that justice would be done, there would be a time "*when earth will be filled with knowledge of the glory of the Lord as waters cover the sea*". Jesus brings that knowledge! He declares that those fish of the sea who have no ruler will be caught up, not by arrogant, self-seeking rulers, but by the Kingdom of God.

Repentance – follow Jesus

Here's the **second** way I'm called to repent:
To stop meandering or gong with the flow and wholeheartedly following Jesus.

Role models or faith heroes are helpful. When it comes to courageously and embracing God's story Beyers Naude stands out. He was brought up in the mould of Afrikaner Nationalism, an NG "dominee", member of the "Broederbond". But by following Jesus, he'd witnessed, first-hand the living conditions of non-white communities. He knew their suffering was not in harmony with God' story. In following Jesus his eyes were open to that opportune time of darkness that, paradoxically, opens our eyes; for him the Sharpville shootings of 1960 were pivotal. He embraced a radically new story of actively opposing Apartheid. It was costly, he was forced to resign from the church, the government banned him for seven years. But, he said, it was a "*choice between obedience in faith and subjection to the authority of the church. And by unconditional obedience to the latter, I would save face but lose my soul*".

Today the NG dominees I know are passionate about justice. They admire a man the church once disowned. One way or another, with or without us, God writes the story.

Most of us won't be leaders like Naude, living our faith in the public eye. But following Jesus is always lived out in the political reality of this world. The Spirit challenges me, "*am I investing in the story of the kingdom in how I spend my money, in the pattern of my prayers, in my volunteering, in what I teach my children, in what I dream?*"

Surely the suffering of the Pandemic, and the injustices it unmasks, are another opportune time. God will raise up leaders who bravely point the way into the story God is writing. Are we facing the right direction? Are we willing to wake up, let go of our addiction and follow Jesus? How tragic it would be if so focus on saving our lives that we lose our souls!

Friends, "***The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news***!"