

**For All The Saints**  
**Worship Service, 13 November 2022**  
**Kippax Uniting Church**  
**Robbie Tulip**

**Prayers of Praise**

Holy eternal God of all grace and wisdom, made known in Jesus Christ, we bring to you our prayers of praise. As we contemplate your divine energy in our world, we see that you are the source of all that is good and just and true. You are the profound hope of a world flourishing in peace and diversity. You inspire us to build relationships of love and care and faith. You work in us to strengthen our community networks and do good. You guide and inform our values, helping us to practice mercy and justice and care. You give us the vision of your transforming presence, reminding us to support each other. You came into our world in the person of Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, modelling the connection between our fallen and degraded world and your divine order of heaven. You promise to save us from the broad and easy road to destruction, and show us the straight and narrow path to salvation. Lord God, you have inspired all the saints and martyrs of the church throughout history, from those famed throughout the world to those whose holy lives and deeds are known only to you. We give you thanks for how your saints have borne witness to the truth.

All Saints Day on the First of November revolves around giving God solemn thanks for the lives and deaths of his saints, including those who are famous or obscure. We honour individual saints who are known and revered throughout the Church Universal, such as Saint Paul the Apostle, Saint Augustine of Hippo and John Wesley. We honour and celebrate those people who have personally led each of us to faith in you, among our families, friends and colleagues.

We give sincere thanks in faith, knowing that you are our hope, that unity with and through you is our goal. We can think of you as our heavenly father, and equally as our mother earth, source of lasting stability, security, prosperity and care.

We praise your saints, those people who from ancient times unto today have brought your presence fully into their lives and into the lives of those around them, creating an atmosphere of love and energy and charisma and grace, with faith upon faith making the world a better place.

As we contemplate the meaning and purpose of prayer, we can see that expressing our intentions and concerns and hopes and dreams in words out loud every day can have an amazing real effect. Even though we do not understand the mystery of prayer, we do know that prayer helps us to direct our minds toward what is good. Prayer reminds us of what is important, building habits of thought and action that constantly make our lives better and more connected and help to protect us from harm.

If we can pray for small things in our lives, perhaps as small as remembering to brush our teeth, then we can build the capacity to pray for bigger things, like changes in our society and improvements in the values of our community. As we pray, we can be inspired to see how we can help our prayers come true. Our prayers can help us to respect continuity with tradition, while also helping us to see the need for innovation and change.

When we feel sad, isolated or worried, may our prayers be a consolation and support, giving us strength and helping us to overcome our psychological barriers and weaknesses and separations.

When we feel anxious, depressed or lost, fearing the unknown, may our prayers calm our agitation and help us to articulate our sense of direction, our intentions, our hopes and dreams, giving us confidence in your divine presence and support and care.

When we feel defensive and guarded, may our prayers help us to engage constructively with other people, with perseverance and stamina.

If we feel that prayer is useless, may we see how prayer gives us energy and vision and cohesion. May we turn to the inspiring guidance of Jesus Christ, whose sublime words in the Lord's Prayer capture our vision for a world transformed in the likeness of God, bringing the eternal values of heaven into our damaged and deluded society. Gracious God, we give profound thanks that you explain your promise of salvation. When we repent and confess our failings and express our sorrow about the evils of the world, when we express our determination to make things better, you are faithful and just and will forgive our sins and support us. Lord God, we have faith that you work for good through those who love you, dissolving the trauma and blockages that separate us from each other and from you. We join now to pray together in the traditional translation of the words that Jesus taught us:

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory For ever and ever, Amen.

**Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18** In the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions passed through his mind as he lay in bed. Then he wrote down the dream: I, Daniel, saw in my vision by night the four winds of heaven stirring up the great sea, and four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. As for me, Daniel, my spirit was troubled within me, and the visions of my head terrified me. I approached one of the attendants to ask him the truth concerning all this. So he said that he would disclose to me the interpretation of the matter: "As for these four great beasts, four kings shall arise out of the earth. But the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever--forever and ever."

#### Comments on Daniel

This vivid passage from Daniel 7 is recognized as among the clearest prophetic visions of the Old Testament. The four oppressive kingdoms are thought to be Babylon, the Medes, Persia and Greece. Although set at the time of the exile in Babylon in the sixth century BC, Daniel was not written down until much later. Some readers have thought that rather than an actual divinely inspired prophecy, these details of the four kings were added to give the impression of miraculous ability to see the future.

This vision closely relates to the prophecy in chapter 2, interpreting the dream of King Nebuchadnezzar, where Daniel had described four successive worse kingdoms, of gold, silver, bronze and iron. This is a widespread pattern seen in mythology from India to Greece and Rome. The Indian myth of the Yuga imagines time as a perpetual repeating cycle. The descending pattern of worsening ages is followed by ascent from iron through bronze, silver and golden ages. Daniel said his dream told the king what would happen in the future. The interpretation of the four kings in Daniel 7 is that Israel would come under four successive world-empires, each worse than the last, until finally God would end oppression and introduce the eternal kingdom.

Reading this now shows some of the difficulties that come with prophecy. When the Jews rose up against the Greeks in the Maccabean revolt in the second century BC, these words of the prophet Daniel were a significant inspiration. The prophecy we heard that "the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever" was used to support the claim that God

would enable the Jewish people to resist the Roman Empire. This ended badly, with the Romans destroying Jerusalem in 70 AD and dispersing the Jewish people out of Israel. It may be that without the false confidence arising from prophecy the Jews could have negotiated a better deal with Rome.

The genre of Daniel 7 is known as eschatology, the theory of end times. It tells of a divine revelation or apocalypse predicting the moment when God will intervene in history to transform the kingdoms of the world into the kingdom of heaven. Such prophetic literature is today widely viewed with suspicion, yet it has an important function. As we look today at the widespread fears of a climate apocalypse, we face justified widespread anxiety about a collapse of our economic and social and ecological systems under the pressure of a warming planet and chaotic weather extremes. We can study the vision of Daniel to ask how the message of liberation from bondage in the Bible might help inform our situation today.

I mentioned the Indian myth of the Yuga. This old story tells of a 24,000 year cycle of planetary time, like the annual cycle of the seasons. In the story, our planet passed the low point of this long cycle about one thousand years ago, like the cold and dark times at the annual winter solstice. Interestingly, this mythology has an actual match to climate science, based on observation of how Earth's orbit changes over the millennia to create ice ages. And remarkably, this cycle also has a plausible match to the ancient Christian theory of history that would have also been known when Daniel was written down. The early church held to a seven thousand year view known as the day-millennium theory, with six thousand years of fall followed by a thousand years of recovery. This story of transition from fall to redemption matches to the periods of decline and recovery in the Indian Yuga theory of time. The underlying message is that humanity has fallen from an original state of grace into a state of corruption and depravity and delusion. Christianity tells us we need the word of God in Christ to rescue us from destruction, and that Christ will return to rule the world in truth and love. So let us listen to the word of Christ.

#### **Luke 6:20-31**

Then he looked up at his disciples and said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry. Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets. But I say to you that listen, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you."

#### **Comments on Luke**

These core ideas in Christian faith have long been seen as profoundly unrealistic as a practical political program. And yet, if we place them in the context of eschatology, Daniel's vision of the eventual triumph of God over the evil kingdoms of the world has a sort of evolutionary necessity. The prophetic vision in the Bible imagines a future world of sufficient abundance and wisdom and love that we will eventually no longer have to worry about personal possessions or conflict. We are very far from such an ideal heaven on earth. Maybe in ten thousand years that will happen. Christ tells us in the Sermon on the Mount that in our current fallen situation we are dominated by the false view that personal wealth and popularity are our salvation. The problem is that worldly security can distract us from hearing the authentic word of God. If our dominant planetary culture is mired in delusion, then we are on a path to destruction. Wrong beliefs lead to wrong thoughts and decisions, amplifying harm and trauma and suffering. We already see this destructive trajectory for our planet in the increase in conflict and in the growing loss of nature. Insects and birds and fish and other wildlife are going extinct under the heedless pressure of human dominance and indifference.

Meanwhile in countries like Ukraine people cannot imagine a cooperative approach. How then can we find the path of salvation?

Jesus tells us the path of recovery and repair requires that we see the need to transform our values. We need to recognise the eternal truth of the word of God as the message that is required to create and sustain a flourishing spiritual and material abundance for the earth, serving as wise sustainable stewards rather than dominating nature through greed and oppression. The blessings of Christ for the hungry, the poor, the despised and the grieving in Saint Luke's version of the Beatitudes function rather like our modern sustainable development goals. Christ is describing the moral concerns and priorities we need to focus on if our life is to be freed of what Paul called bondage to decay and set instead on a path toward universal freedom and peace.

When Christ tells us to love our enemies, he presents one of the most profound statements of the Bible about the need for cultural evolution and transformation. Humanity has evolved over millions of years to love our friends and be suspicious of people we do not know. That is simply how our brain is wired by the communal instinct for self-preservation. For millions of years, our ancestors lived in small clans where trust and loyalty within the clan were the basis of survival. This morality of trust produced a genetic evolution in our species, with group selection promoting our instinctive ability to belong to our group. Such tribal instincts flow through into modern culture. Nation states, political movements and companies operate as groups where we love our own tribe and are hostile or indifferent to others. This growing polarisation is a dangerous force of separation that stands in conflict with the Christian teaching to love our enemies. Hating our enemies leads to war, whereas loving our enemies leads to peace. To follow up on what Christ taught, we need to work out how to enter into constructive dialogue and recognition with people who disagree with our views, to find a path of reconciliation and respect. This is the meaning of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament.

The content of the Christian teaching of salvation is expanded by Saint Paul in his Letter to the Ephesians.

#### **Ephesians 1:11-23**

In Him we were also chosen as God's own, having been predestined according to the plan of Him who works out everything by the counsel of His will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, would be for the praise of His glory. And in Him, having heard and believed the word of truth—the gospel of your salvation—you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the pledge of our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of His glory. For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in your knowledge of Him. I ask that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know the hope of His calling, the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power to us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of His mighty strength, which God exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God put everything under His feet and made Him head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

#### **Comments on Ephesians**

May the eyes of our hearts be enlightened. What a wonderful prayer.

From Daniel and Luke, we see that God has an orderly plan for the restoration of our planet, for the inevitable victory of good over evil. The moral content of this plan is explained by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount as a transformative liberation from bondage. Yet this freedom is profoundly challenging to the prevailing values of our world, which are deeply corrupted by individual interests and delusions. Historically, those who have sought to live by the ethics of the Beatitudes have faced criticism and persecution. Paul explains in Ephesians 1 that the church has inherited the teachings of

Christ in order that we may understand the glorious plan of God. He says this divine vision is found in the word of truth that is the gospel of our salvation. The truth that sets us free is a call to see that our world is now on a path to destruction, but God's intention for our planet is that we should flourish with universal abundance and peace. Seeing this purpose as a call to mission invites us to have faith in the real presence of God among us, revealed in the word of Christ and the actions of the Holy Spirit inspired in the church.

Paul says in this text that the saints are predestined by God to fulfil a holy plan. This is a very challenging and controversial idea, that some have felt cuts away human agency and freedom of will. How I think of predestination starts from the observation that simple natural processes such as the paths of galaxies and planets can be accurately predicted by the scientific observation of causal processes. Human social processes are obviously far more complex and unpredictable than the operation of the law of gravity on heavenly bodies, as God gives us freedom of will so we are morally responsible for our decisions. How then can it be possible for the lives of the saints to be predestined by God? Each of us may choose at any time whether to do good or evil, and we often fail to discern the difference. We cannot know if the future will bring planetary recovery, stepping back from the brink of extinction from climate change. Christ therefore calls us to pray for a transformation of the human spirit, working to put our world on a path of universal peace and justice and inclusion, grounded in the strategic vision of faith in God. Our faith tells us that God will save the world, working through love and truth. May the inspiring words of Daniel and Christ and Paul and all the saints enlighten the eyes of our hearts. Amen

#### Prayers for Others

Ruth Williams, Dorothea Wojnar, Anwar, church council, ministers and volunteers, return of COVID, climate change, floods in Victoria Forbes Lismore Pakistan, drought in Europe and USA and Africa, risk of famine, COP 27, Ukraine, Voice to Parliament, economy interest rates inflation poverty, UCA Presbytery, WCC, all saints

Order of Service

Announcements

Call To Worship

Indigenous Acknowledgement

Lighting of Christ Candle

Hymn: TIS 448 [Blest Are The Pure In Heart](#)

Prayers of Adoration

Reading: Daniel 7:1-3, 15-18

Hymn: TIS 445 (verses 1-4) [For All The Saints](#)

Commentary on Daniel

Reading: Luke 6:20-31

Hymn: TIS 445 (verses 5-8) [For All The Saints](#)

Commentary on Luke

Reading: Ephesians 1:11-23

Commentary on Ephesians

Prayers for Others

Hymn: TIS 447 [God Your Almighty Word](#)

Benediction