



5 March 2017
Lent 1

Welcoming the Stranger – Welcoming the Christ

“Thinking allowed; thinking aloud allowed”

Minister: Rev Dr Robyn McPhail
Musicians: Diane Paterson KK Clyde Foster- Kaeo
Readers: Kay Blunkell KK tba Kaeo

It is good to be without vices, but it is not good to be without temptations.

Walter Bagehot

Activity Space at Cornerstone

Young ones, and those who like to do something while they listen, are invited to go to the Children’s Table as they wish.

Plugging in

Gathering with all the Saints

God, soothing our wasteland,
 you have spirited us
 through life’s desert ways.
 Drive us deeper yet,
 our true way testing.

Bob Eldan, preachingtip.com/

Symbol of God's Presence

Hymn *Be Thou my vision* WOV455 [Kay's choice]

Prayer (note: there will be pauses for silent prayer between sections)

God, how good it is to raise our voices
 and to welcome your presence among us,
 a stream in the desert, a rose in the wilderness!
MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY FOR THE LORD!

From our slumbers we rise to praise you.
 All that demeans and belittles us we shrug off,
 as we stand strong and confident before you.
MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY FOR THE LORD!

From all we do to keep you from us,
 from all the evil that is in us,
 from the gloom that would overwhelm us
 and from all that would harm us,
 set us free!
MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY FOR THE LORD!

We share our hope together,
 that you will come to us as prophets tell,
 bringing peace and justice to a tired and twisted world.
MAKE STRAIGHT THE WAY FOR THE LORD!

God, come to us in Jesus and save us!
 Let the waste places of the world be made new again!
 Let wickedness be routed and justice and goodness shout with joy!

Adapted from *For the love of God*, Prayer Handbook 1996, Michael and Susan Durber

Clarifying our Purpose

Conversation with the Word

Matthew 4:1-11

[Wilderness by Taylor Davis](#)

Think wilderness and we often think beauty. Peacefulness, refreshment, away from all the bother, a place of presence and just being. Our relative affluence means we can afford to take time away from the work of survival. We can escape.

Wilderness makes us think of escape.

Yet here in the Bible, it's a not so desirable place. Sent there: Jesus by the Spirit, the people journeying with Moses who became Israel by their Lord God. 40 years wilderness wandering for them.

Wilderness has become for us a symbol of faith, for it is a faith-building place, a place of encounter with Other with a capital 'O'. Other than ourselves or other ordinary things.

Wilderness is a place of growth through testing.

Wilderness is challenging – tramping, climbing, surviving. The weather changes so quickly. Rivers rise. Slips and avalanches. A variety of dangers.

It is also a challenge in that it is hard to avoid one's self. In the wilderness, up against a challenge, no distractions of everyday life, we encounter the me we'd rather not know. Such wilderness is not being just when we're in the bush, but whenever big things happen – a turn for the worse in health, bereavement, loss of livelihood, etc. etc.

Before connecting ourselves with the challenges Jesus faced in his wilderness, I'd like to take a wander into the garden in Genesis 2 and 3, today's Old Testament text. Such a well known story, there are a lot of assumptions about what it means.

They eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil and what is indisputable and obvious in the actual text is the aftermath: they want to hide themselves from sight.

For what reason?

Disobeying God is the classic answer, but it's strange to think God doesn't actually want humans to know right and wrong. And the serpent's up a gum tree thinking that being like God is a tempting new thing to gain. They are already "in the image of God"! Perhaps it's a crucial step in their "imagehood" development to eat this fruit of moral knowledge and God knew how best to get them to do it. The best way to get pre-maturity creatures to take hold of the responsibilities of maturity? Tell them not to do it!

So they eat, they take the step towards moral maturity, which involves a reflective kind of knowledge with awareness for the first time of self. They could now see themselves as others see them.

Maybe the hiding is because they didn't like what they saw.

It's a big problem, not liking ourselves. It's hard to stand tall in who we are.

Whatever the case here, the key point, the major consequence, is that there is now a barrier between them and their companion presence, God. It's like an eclipse (Martin Buber's term), a separation, which is a really useful way of understanding the word "sin". An eclipse in relationships. Something coming between, a break in the connection, in the friendship, in the intimacy.

The way back is a kind of journey. God sets it going with an act of kindness: a little thing – fashioning clothes for them. In the ongoing narrative of the Old Testament God continues to care, and to call them back; turn back to widow and the orphan, to the poor. Being always invited back, the people do keep trying to return each time things happen that eclipse their relationship.

This turning back, and the temptation to turn away, is especially focussed in the wilderness, the place of aloneness, of freedom from distractions. There the real challenge of being human can be faced and relationships put back in the centre.

We keep being pulled in directions that damage relationships. But if we let ourselves be tested we can learn to resist such pulls. We can learn the choices that build and restore relationships.

As Jesus does. In the biblical narrative Jesus is God's pièce de résistance for ending the eclipse. A pattern to follow, a journey to join, a person to relate to. Here is my summary of the three tests he faces, which we can learn from.

1. Solve the hunger problem, which would include all the hungry of the world as well as oneself. It's the temptation of being a fix it person, getting results, being capable and efficient, the end justifying whatever the means.

But we don't live only on quick fixes of immediate problems.

2. Prove yourself by doing spectacular things. The temptation to be a stand out person, drawing the crowds (and again being more effective), better than the rest, and therefore invincible.

But humanity is not the limit of all the is. Pride comes before a fall.

3. Make your attitude to life totally focussed, self-directed, and heartless, merciless when you have to be. Taking control of everything. Think of what you could achieve!

But, there is only one place to put you heart – with the all-loving source of life.

Three tests to help keep one's essential humanness, to put relationships before all else, with Other (God) and all kinds of others.

Hymn *Tama ngākau mārie* WOV633

Conversations around the Table

Continuing the Conversation

Prayers

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: Ireland; UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales

God of passion and power,
insistent, immediate,
challenging, compelling us with your story's breathless beginning.
Walk us into the wilderness
to hear your voice where silence reigns.
Give us insight, the vision beyond all seeing,
so we may look upon heavens torn open
and know that the time of good news for all creation
is always now. Amen.

© Claire Amos

Beauty for brokenness

Sent to Carry Healing and Hope

Serving in the Week Ahead

In the community

... being Christ shaped

Offering Song *Song of the Wilderness*

Blessing

Kia tau/The grace

...[singing] *May the road rise to meet you...*

Robyn McPhail

05.03.2017

NOTICES FOR TODAY – 5 MARCH 2017

Parish email: admin@kkup.org.nz

Church Office at Cornerstone: 09 407 8250

Minister: Robyn McPhail (DD) 09 283 4802, 021 0247 6280
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Notices: Jenny Phillips 09 407 8883 jenny.jane@xtra.co.nz

KK Pastoral: Jessica Scott 09 407 5555 jomscott2@gmail.com

ROSTERED FOR NEXT SUNDAY 12 MARCH 2017

Musicians: Marie Cannon KK Clyde Foster- Kaeo

Readers: Annette Black KK tba Kaeo

KK Door and Tea: Michelle and Akisi

KK Communion Prep: Ngaire Allwood and Stella Leather

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE COMING WEEK:

Genesis 12:1-4a,

Psalm 121,

Romans 4:1-5,13-17

John 3:1-17 or Matthew 17:1-9

AN EVENING WITH COLIN GIBSON: TONIGHT at Cornerstone. NZ Hymns and Songs, and their stories. Pot Luck Meal at 5.30pm, workshop 7.00pm - 8.30pm. Suggested donation \$20.

BIBLE STUDY: Monday 6 March 1.15-3pm in the Cornerstone Meeting Room, focussing on some or all of the readings above. A chance to share responses, hear some of the background, and dig out, and be fed a little for the journey of life.

KERIKERI RETIREMENT VILLAGE CHAPEL SERVICES: Every Sunday at 4.00pm at the Ted Robinson Chapel. Our parish next leads the service (with Communion) on 26 March.

CAR BOOT SALES: Next sale is on 11 March 7am - 12noon at Cornerstone. Contact Mary 407 1117.

CORNERSTONE Kerikeri is open each week day from at least 10am to 2pm. Pass the word around. Invite people to call by to visit.

VOLUNTEER HOSTS: *Can you help increase the team?* Get in touch with Robyn if you could spare a couple of hours, late morning or early afternoon, through the week. Whatever will work for you.