



22 October 2017

## Welcoming the Stranger – Welcoming the Christ

*“Thinking allowed; thinking aloud allowed”*

**Musicians:** Marie Cannon KK      Clyde Foster Kaeo

**Readers:** Michelle Tupou KK      tba Kaeo

When they have contemplated the world, human beings have always experienced a transcendence and mystery at the heart of existence.

Karen Armstrong, *Jerusalem: One City, Three Faiths* 21<sup>st</sup> century

## Plugging in

### Gathering with all the Saints

Each morning, God's grace awakens us,  
     each evening, God's peace cradles us.  
 Compassion is our constant companion,  
     as we go through work, school, the day.  
 In every moment, God is present with us;  
     God whispers words which can change our lives.  
 Justice is our faithful teacher,  
     pointing to where we can carry out fairness.  
 When we find ourselves groping in the shadows,  
     God's light will provide a way home.  
 We turn the corner, and hope is waiting for us;  
     we return home, and find a feast prepared.

*Spirit of the living God*

### Prayer

Steadfast Hope:  
 when we want  
 to make all the rules  
 so we can win every game,  
     you call us to your side,  
     put your arm around us  
     and whisper, 'play fair!'  
 When we tremble in fear,  
 worried that our lives  
 are about to crash to the bottom,  
     you place us in  
     the hollow of your heart,  
     and give us safety.

Word of Joy:  
 when we would follow  
 those who pretend  
 to be our saviors  
 to achieve their own ends,  
     you remind us that we have been chosen  
     to be examples of faith to others.

When we would  
 fill our pockets with  
 the treasures of temptation,  
     you ask us to empty them,  
     so we can become  
     servants of hope.

Crafter of Faith:  
 when others judge us on  
 our backgrounds, education, looks,  
     you teach us how  
     to treat all people as equal,  
     to welcome each person  
     as our sister or brother.

When we wonder how  
 our needs, our hopes, our lives  
 will be made known to God,  
     you mention us, by name,  
     in all your prayers.

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### Symbol of God's Presence

**Hymn** *One day at a time* [Michelle's choice]

## Clarifying our Purpose

### Conversation with the Word

An awake heart is like a sky that pours light.

Hafiz, 14th century mystic

Matthew 22:15-22

#### Giving

The situation was yet another occasion when the religious insiders tried to catch Jesus out. They thought whatever he answered would get him into trouble: with the Romans if he said no to paying tax, with the Jewish freedom movement if he said yes. We love Jesus' sharp mind and ready repartee.

Now the message is not all that straightforward. It can seem so, but that's when we misread it and make the very mistake the questioners are making.

It can look like Jesus is talking about two compartments to life – Caesar's and God's.

What's wrong with that?

Think about this matter of the image. Jesus asks, whose image is on the coin? It's Caesar's image so good reason to give back to him: it belongs to him.

Is there a coin with God's image on it? In that day and age definitely not. There was to be "no graven image", remember? No physical representation. So it's not like there were coins for giving to Caesar and coins for giving to God – one for you, Caesar, one for you, God.

Where is God's image? What is God's image? Does God have an image?

Yes. The face of each one of us. The face of every human being and, I'd venture, it also shows in some way in every living being and element of the formed universe. Everything that has the touch of the creator's hand.

All that has the image of God therefore belongs God. Give to Caesar the piddly coins. Give to God our whole selves.

This is a lesson in perspective and that the God perspective is not a mere alternative to the Caesar perspective. It is the overarching and underpinning of every other view, the super-perspective.

When we give to God, it's no mere coin: it is ourselves.

However, this is still so vague that it can be picked up in a variety of ways. For example:

"You should give the whole of yourself and everything you have, no holding back."

"It is between God and me so no-one can tell me what I should give."

"You should never think of yourself and your own needs."

"I'll give my time but not my money."

"I tithe so I've covered my obligations."

Because it is so vague speaking of giving one's self, the temptation is to think we can clarify it, put some terms and conditions on it, for guidance and to know if we're measuring up. That is, like Caesar's tax, set out what counts as complying with one's duty.

Do this and God will be satisfied.

But that's back with the two domain approach, God's domain and Caesar's domain and, in terms of managing our lives, one compartment for God, another for regular commitments as part of society. This in fact is the predominant view in our society, that faith is an entirely personal thing in an entirely separate personal space in the lives of those who choose it.

But no. What Jesus sets out is holistic not compartmentalised. So holistic we cannot get our human brains around it and we therefore need simply to immerse ourselves in the feel of it. What is "of God" is the overarching and underpinning of everything. the perspective and values that supersede all others. It is the measure for working out what is true and honest and good (the other song Michelle might have chosen today).

So how does that work in practice?

Most important: no set rules. It is the spirit of God-values, not the rules.

By the way, a clue to when we using the rules approach is the word “should”.

As in:

“this should be funded by...”

“this should be done for free...”

“this person shouldn’t pay out of their own pocket”

These things can be reasonable when, but only when, we’re working in our equivalent of Caesar’s domain. They belong with good management. We’re not asked to disregard that. Within the specific domain of economic stewardship and legal requirements, it’s right to manage our organisation fairly and equitably.

But we’re talking bigger picture when talk about giving to God. We’re talking about what bubbles up from the faith and compassion within us as people. What comes from within in response to recognising who we are – God’s – and what we are – gift given by the source of life. Gratitude for life is what drives giving to God.

As a community of faith, it is important that we do good management to maintain the practicalities of our life together and to maintain and sustain the community space with a spiritual heart so it remains open and available to all. But it is as important that we put no blocks in the way of whole-hearted giving out of love for the Lord. We mustn’t prevent people from giving according to their heart.

Positively it is between a person and their Lord how and what they give, so let’s give room for them to do so. Let’s listen, let’s try to hear where people are coming from.

And please let’s not decide for others what they can afford.

Now if you’re concerned for someone in that respect in a particular situation, have a chat to me, and I can check it out quietly. We definitely don’t want people giving out of guilt. There must be no pressure. But we have to trust that we each can make our own call on what is right for ourself.

This is one of the delights of diversity: different understandings, different theologies, different ways of expressing faith.

God-inspired giving is like having an awake heart. In Hafiz’ words, like a sky that pours light.

## Conversations around the Table

*Hymn Longing for light*

**Continuing the Conversation**

**The World: Our Prayers**

Ecumenical Prayer Cycle: The Caribbean: Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Cuba, Dominica, Dominican Republic, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Puerto Rico, St Kitts-Nevis, St Lucia, St Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago

**Lord’s Prayer**

**Offering**

**Love the World as God Loves**

**Serving in the Week Ahead**

**Blessing**

Kia tau... The grace...

*Go gently, go lightly*

Robyn McPhail, 22.10.2017

**NOTICES FOR TODAY – 22 OCTOBER 2017**

Parish email: [admin@kkup.org.nz](mailto:admin@kkup.org.nz)

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KK Pastoral: Jessica Scott 09 407 5555 [jomscott2@gmail.com](mailto:jomscott2@gmail.com)

**NEXT SUNDAY 29 OCTOBER 2017 – GIRLS' BRIGADE PARADE**

**10.30am – NB the change from the regular time**

Lead by the Brigade Girls and Leaders

Door and tea: Bev and Ngaire      Flowers: Joan Jurisich

**THE KAEO CONGREGATION** will be joining the Kerikeri congregation next Sunday for the Girls' Brigade Service

**LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE COMING WEEK:**

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Psalms 90:1-6.13-17

1 Thessalonians 2:1-8

Matthew 22:34-46

**KK SINGERS:** no singing practice today

**BIBLE STUDY:** no study tomorrow or the following week. Next study Monday 6 November, 1.15-2.45pm in the Cornerstone Meeting Room.

**COMMUNION SERVICE:** Today at 4.00pm at Ted Robinson Chapel

**IN CORNERSTONE THIS WEEK:** Today: Ensemble pm. Tuesday: Yoga Therapy am; Tai Chi pm; Learning Hub pm; 1<sup>st</sup> Birthday evening; Yoga evening. Wednesday: Learning Hub pm. Thursday: Auction pm; Girls' Brigade pm; A Choired Taste evening. Friday: Cooking Workshop am. Saturday: Car Boot Sale am; Apiculture Training am; Girls' Brigade Sleepover pm to Sunday am.

**AT KAEO CHURCH HALL THIS WEEK:** Monday: Yoga evening. Thursday: Puna Awhina day; WHST pm. Friday: Friday Friends am; Papakainga Workshop day.

**CORNERSTONE GARDEN GROUP:** Keen gardeners may like to contribute plants propagated from their own garden. If you do, please put your name and proposed plant type on the list available from this Sunday. Drought resistant, hardy plants are preferred. The Garden Group requests you pot them and keep through to the autumn when a planting session will be arranged.

**WEEK OF PRAYER FOR WORLD PEACE:** the final in this Inter Faith Experience, service at 5.30pm in Cornerstone – Whare Karakia o Manako. Day 8 Theme: Truth – Leader: Union Church

**CAR BOOT SALES:** Next sale is this Saturday 28 October 7.30am-12noon at Cornerstone.

