

**Sunday Morning Worship**  
**Readings, Reflection and Prayers 7<sup>th</sup> July**



**Ezekiel 2.1-5**

He said to me: O mortal, stand up on your feet, and I will speak with you. And when he spoke to me, a spirit entered into me and set me on my feet; and I heard him speaking to me. He said to me, Mortal, I am sending you to the people of Israel, to a nation of rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have transgressed against me to this very day. The descendants are impudent and stubborn. I am sending you to them, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God.' Whether they hear or refuse to hear (for they are a rebellious house), they shall know that there has been a prophet among them.

This is the word of the Lord.

## **2 Corinthians 12.2-10**

I know a person in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows. And I know that such a person—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know; God knows— was caught up into Paradise and heard things that are not to be told, that no mortal is permitted to repeat. On behalf of such a one I will boast, but on my own behalf I will not boast, except of my weaknesses. But if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth. But I refrain from it, so that no one may think better of me than what is seen in me or heard from me, even considering the exceptional character of the revelations.

Therefore, to keep me from being too elated, a thorn was given to me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me, but he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.' So, I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities for the sake of Christ; for whenever I am weak, then I am strong.

This is the word of the Lord.

### **Mark 6.1-13**

He left that place and came to his home town, and his disciples followed him. On the sabbath he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astounded. They said, 'Where did this man get all this? What is this wisdom that has been given to him? What deeds of power are being done by his hands! Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?' And they took offence at him. Then Jesus said to them, 'Prophets are not without honour, except in their home town, and among their own kin, and in their own house.' And he could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them. And he was amazed at their unbelief.

Then he went about among the villages teaching. He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits. He ordered them to take nothing for their journey except a staff; no bread, no bag, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not to put on two tunics. He said to them, 'Wherever you enter a house, stay there until you leave the place. If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them.' So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them.

## **Reflection by Margaret Mandrell**

Last week I was on duty in the Cathedral when the Ordinands came in for a rehearsal. I was thrilled to meet three of them who I had taught in the last few years as part of their faith journey. This is what they said about reaching this point in their discipleship:

Dean, "I learned something new about myself, about callings and formation. We are not called to do; we are called to be. I am excited by my calling and look forward to discovering what I am called to be."

Jen, "Being called to be a minister is not something I ever considered or even suspected might happen, but I do know that placing my trust in the Lord and believing in Him was the right thing to do."

Norman, "Being ordained to the place I've been a member of for nearly 50 years means I know the congregation well and feel able to minister to them in a deeper way than if I had come to them as a stranger."

Today we are looking at spiritual gifts, and from our first reading we meet Ezekiel, called by God at a young age to a difficult job. He was to proclaim God's message to the exiles, hundreds of miles from the Promised Land and the Temple. He was a captive in Babylon and was instructed by God to reach out to the weary people, to warn, exhort and comfort them. His message was that they were to repent and receive God's blessing. This was at a time of political corruption and rebellion against God. Ezekiel spoke of the need for discipline to correct beliefs, a redirection of behaviour and restoration of fellowship. He looked to the coming of Christ, God's anointed, the true shepherd who would deliver and feed his flock.

Paul criticises the Corinthians for following dumb idols and for listening to false teachings. He says that there are spiritual gifts, or capabilities, which can be used to strengthen individuals and build up the Church. There are a variety of gifts but through this diversity the whole community of believers can benefit and work together in unity. These gifts include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, the working of miracles, special teaching gifts and faith. Through their use of these God given

gifts, Christians can live wisely, walk by faith, teach others the truths of God and serve one another in love.

Jesus returned to Nazareth and taught in the synagogue. He spoke with authority and wisdom and performed works of healing. However, the local people questioned how he had these gifts, as they knew him to be one of them, from a family headed by a carpenter, and whose brothers and sisters they had grown up with. Many rejected his message; some were jealous of his popularity and ability to attract crowds and hold their attention. The saying "A prophet is not without honour except in his own country, among his own relatives, and in his own house" is one which has persisted to this day. Unable to achieve very much in his hometown, Jesus then sent out his disciples and gave them power to heal and restore those they met who accepted them. They had the gift of restoring to wholeness those who suffered in both body and spirit. They went out in pairs, taking just a staff, and having to trust fully in God for food and shelter.

What do these accounts tell us and how can they inspire us to use our own gifts? Ezekiel, a priest and prophet who ministered between 593 and 571 BC, the apostle Paul, who changed dramatically from a persecuter of Christians to an inspired leader, and the disciples who left all they knew to follow Jesus. Each one of these was called by God to a life of service, all faced hardship and trials, all were tested, but each one used their gifts to further the kingdom of God and preach salvation to all who would listen to them. We may feel far removed from the situations faced by those we read about in the Bible and who lived so long ago, but there are resonances with our current issues and concerns. We are encouraged to use our gifts in God's service and each one of us has something to offer. We may not be called like Dean, Jen or Norman to be ordained, but we can offer a ministry of listening, prayer and praise. We can care for one another and show by our care the love which God has for each one of us.

## **Prayers**

O Lord of light and vision, hear us now as we pray to you.

Open our eyes to behold your presence, to perceive your love and to see your purpose for us.

To the bidding: Lord, in your mercy

Please respond: Hear our prayer

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Lord, come into our weakness with your power,

touch our eyes that they may behold your glory.

Grant, O Lord, that your church may lead many to you;

we pray for the outreach and mission of the faithful,

for all who teach the faith and pass it on by example,

for all who are quiet witnesses to what they believe,

for each in their vocation and ministry.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

God of love, guide communities which are growing  
in fellowship and in understanding.

Direct all who are seeking to build up community life.

we pray the recent election; that all those in new positions of power

would work for the good of all they seek to serve.

We pray for our Home Groups

asking that they be places of fellowship, growth and support.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Father, strengthen our bonds of love.

We pray that children may be brought up with respect and freedom,

that each may have proper spiritual nourishment.  
We give thanks for all who work in childcare or early years education,  
and for all the families with which we're connected  
through Little Stars and Sunday Stars.

We pray for all who are undervalued or taken for granted,  
for the unnoticed workers in our community,  
for refuse collectors and street cleaners.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who have suffered hardship, persecution  
or calamity this week;

for those injured in accidents or suddenly taken ill;

for those suffering with long term conditions,

and those coming to terms with a new diagnosis.

From our own community we pray especially for:

Leon and Valda Bailey, Joyce Pringle, Ann Hunt, Anuwat Wanggane,  
Joan Tyson, Alan Coe, Jack Tubby, Rob & Lucy, Roger Jones, Patricia Ash,  
Jason Thomson, Ryan Day, Brenda Hulland, David New, and Adrina and  
Alan Price.

And in the silence of our own hearts, we lift before you now, those we  
know to be in need at this time.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

We remember those who have recently died:

Bryan Plester and Jenny Tuff.

And we pray for all who mourn.

We remember with love and gratitude those whose anniversary of death  
falls at this time: Richard Wickham, Linda Hampton, Simon Bowen,  
William Layton, Betty Wake, Evelyn King, Edwin Hulme, Freda Keightly,  
Reg Pritchard and Stanley & Elvina Kennett.

Grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

*Silence*

Lord in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, we thank you  
for making your ways known to us  
and guiding us into your truth.

Merciful Father,

**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Saviour Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**