

## Sunday Worship Service

27 March 2022 (Lent 4)



Have you ever waited for for someone in your life? If you are in a position of welcoming the one who you have waited, how would you do differently? We, a people of God in Wallumettagal Country Boronia Park Uniting Church want to learn from the parable of the waiting Father (instead of the

prodigal son) about how much God loves his people as his creation, not as sinners. His grace and mercy may be found from words and works of Jesus Christ and its ultimate form was revealed on that old cross when he died. This moment we worship God who waits for us and Jesus Christ who wants to redeem and pardon our weaknesses in life. Come and find who Jesus Christ is for us today. This is a Lenten calling for us and for many.

### Acknowledgement for the First Peoples

We acknowledge the Wallumettagal people of the Eora Nation, and their elders past, present and emerging, on which we celebrate Jesus Christ our Lord. We recognize their special custodianship and relationship with the land and all creation. And thank them.

### Opening Prayer

God of wonder and glory, this world around us is awesome.

You created it!

You continue to hold it together,  
even as we threaten to tear it apart.

God of justice and righteousness,  
to you we look for the truth.

You are the ultimate judge.  
Your wisdom cuts through the lies.

God of grace and mercy,  
the love you have shown us in Jesus is more than we deserve.  
Your arms are open wide,  
like a waiting father for his prodigal children,  
ready to welcome and restore.

We come to you just now thirsting for your living water.  
Guide us to the streams of your wonder and glory,  
your justice and righteousness, your grace and mercy,  
that we may drink and be satisfied,  
renewed for our continuing journey with Jesus.

This we pray in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.  
**Amen.**

*Retrieved from the Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren website (22 March 2022)*

**Song:     In Christ Alone**

In Christ alone my hope is found,  
He is my light, my strength, my song;  
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,  
firm through the fiercest drought and storm.  
What heights of love, what depths of peace,  
when fears are stilled, when strivings cease.  
My Comforter, my All in All,  
here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone, who took on flesh,  
fullness of God in helpless babe!  
This gift of love and righteousness,  
scorned by the ones He came to save.  
Till on that cross as Jesus died,  
the wrath of God was satisfied.

For ev'ry sin on Him was laid;  
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground His body lay,  
Light of the world by darkness slain;  
Then, bursting forth in glorious Day,  
up from the grave He rose again!  
And as He stands in victory,  
sin's curse has lost its grip on me;  
For I am His and He is mine,  
bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,  
this is the pow'r of Christ in *us*;  
From life's first cry to final breath,  
Jesus commands *our* destiny.  
No pow'r of hell, no scheme of man,  
can ever pluck *us* from His hand;  
'Till He returns or calls *us* home,  
here in the pow'r of Christ *we*'ll stand!

Keith Getty | Stuart Townend  
CCLI #260394

## Scripture Reading      2 Corinthians 5:16-21 and Luke 15:11-32

### New Creation, New Ministry

<sup>16</sup> From this moment on, therefore, we don't regard anybody from a merely human point of view. Even if we once regarded the Messiah that way, we don't do so any longer. <sup>17</sup> Thus, if anyone is in the Messiah, there is a new creation! Old things have gone, and look – everything has become new!

<sup>18</sup> It all comes from God. He reconciled us to himself through the Messiah, and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. <sup>19</sup> This is how it came about: God was reconciling the world to himself in the Messiah, not counting their transgressions against them, and entrusting us with the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors, speaking on behalf of the Messiah,

as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore people on the Messiah's behalf to be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> The Messiah did not know sin, but God made him to be sin on our behalf, so that in him we might embody God's faithfulness to the covenant.

Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **The Parable of the Prodigal: The Father and the Younger Son**

<sup>11</sup> Jesus went on: 'Once there was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger son said to the father, "Father, give me my share in the property." So he divided up his livelihood between them. <sup>13</sup> Not many days later the younger son turned his share into cash, and set off for a country far away, where he spent his share in having a riotous good time.

<sup>14</sup> 'When he had spent it all, a severe famine came on that country, and he found himself destitute. <sup>15</sup> So he went and attached himself to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into the fields to feed his pigs. <sup>16</sup> He longed to satisfy his hunger with the pods that the pigs were eating, and nobody gave him anything.

<sup>17</sup> 'He came to his senses. "Just think!" he said to himself. "There are all my father's hired hands with plenty to eat – and here am I, starving to death! <sup>18</sup> I shall get up and go to my father, and I'll say to him: 'Father; I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I don't deserve to be called your son any longer. Make me like one of your hired hands.'" <sup>20</sup> And he got up and went to his father.

'While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and his heart was stirred with love and pity. He ran to him, hugged him tight, and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> "Father," the son began, "I have sinned against heaven and before you; I don't deserve to be called your son any longer." <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his servants, "Hurry! Bring the best clothes and put them on him! Put a ring

on his hand, and shoes on his feet! <sup>23</sup> And bring the calf that we've fattened up, kill it, and let's eat and have a party! <sup>24</sup> This son of mine was dead, and is alive again! He was lost, and now he's found!" And they began to celebrate.'

### **The Parable of the Prodigal: The Father and the Older Son**

<sup>25</sup> 'The older son was out in the fields. When he came home, and got near to the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the servants and asked what was going on.

<sup>27</sup> "Your brother's come home!" he said. "And your father has thrown a great party – he's killed the fattened calf! – because he's got him back safe and well!"

<sup>28</sup> 'He flew into a rage, and wouldn't go in.

'Then his father came out and pleaded with him. <sup>29</sup> "Look here!" he said to his father, "I've been slaving for you all these years! I've never disobeyed a single commandment of yours. And you never even gave me a young goat so I could have a party with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours comes home, once he's finished gobbling up your livelihood with his whores, you kill the fattened calf for him!"

<sup>31</sup> "My son," he replied, "you're always with me. Everything I have belongs to you. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and be happy! This brother of yours was dead and is alive again! He was lost, and now he's found!"

Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

### **Habits of Prayer: Praying with images and the Word**

*You may take a moment to look at the images and then take another moment to meditate on what you are struck or find.*

## Featured art: Frank Wesley, *The Forgiving Father*, 1950



Frank Wesley, the artist who painted this painting, was born in India into a fifth-generation Methodist family (thus the surname Wesley since John Wesley and his brother, Charles, founded the Methodist movement in the Church of England). Wesley painted this while studying in Japan in the 1950s and donated it to the Hiroshima girl's school. He also designed the urn in which Gandhi's ashes were placed and his painting *Blue Madonna* was the artwork UNICEF chose to be on their first Christmas Card. "My main work," Wesley said, "is to paint the Bible in our own Indian way. It is to do something for the church in the field of art."

This painting is considered his great masterpiece. It is his interpretation of the parable told by Jesus in Luke often called "The Prodigal Son." It depicts the moment the son, who had squandered his father's inheritance, is welcomed home by his loving, forgiving father.

The father is clad in a clean garment and sturdy sandals, whereas the son is barefoot and draped in a ragged and dirty lungi (an Indian skirt-like garment). The son is dressed as if he were Dalit, the name for people belonging to the lowest caste in India, also called the "untouchables." But we know he is the son of an important and wealthy man. Dressing in a way unbecoming one's caste would be offensive in Hindu culture, and perhaps that is the point—that God would become human is unthinkable and maybe even offensive to our modern sensibilities.

Being Human connection: Jesuit Priest Geoff Wheaton also meditated on this image and describes a shift in his perspective after some time of observance. Instead of the prodigal son, Wheaton saw the boy as Jesus returning to his Father after the crucifixion, totally spent and exhausted. Jesus has given everything he had in order to bring about our salvation. God, the emotional Father, welcomes his Son back into his arms.

As you finish reading this today, place yourself in a posture of prayer. In silence, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you those in need of your forgiveness, waiting, presence, or just as who you are, remembering the forgiveness you've been given. When images or names come to mind, forgive them before the Lord. Perhaps praying through the prayer below will help you.

Lord, hear my prayer.

Just as you have forgiven me,  
I am compelled to forgive others.

There are those in my life whom,  
purposely, I have not forgiven.

Lord, give me the strength to forgive them.

There are those in my life whom,  
unknowingly, I have not forgiven.

Lord, reveal them to me that I may forgive them.

Lord, help me to always be quick to forgive.

Lord, thank you for your forgiveness to me.

**Amen.**

By Rich Obrecht

**Hymn: Great is your faithfulness (TIS 154)**

Great is your faithfulness, O God my Father,  
in you no shadow of turning we see;  
you never fail and your love is unchanging:  
as you have been you for ever will be.

*Great is your faithfulness.  
Great is your faithfulness,  
morning by morning new mercies we see;  
all we have needed your hand has provided:  
great is your faithfulness, Lord God, to me.*

Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
sun, moon and stars in their courses above,  
join with all nature in unspoken witness  
to your great faithfulness, mercy and love.  
*Great is your faithfulness ...*

Pardon for sin and a peace that's enduring,  
your living presence to cheer and to guide,  
strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow –  
these are the blessings your love will provide.  
*Great is your faithfulness ...*

Thomas O. Chisholm  
CCLI #260394

## Sermon

I would say that there is no such thing as the prodigal son. In this real world, at least to their father or mother, or both, or those parenting, there is no such thing as the prodigal son that this parable has. Parable is parable that may bring lessons to the hearers for their understanding. I, as a parent of three children, and you, who may have children either in Australia or all around the world, are always wait with a craned neck until our sons and daughters come home.



Again, there is no such thing as the prodigal son, only bad structures, or circumstances. And as a grown-up, I struggle to find and to decide what is best for my children. I am hoping that you agree with the rules and parenting philosophies of me who is a Korean-born father and raises his children in Australia. During the past week, I had my second son Daniel Yeon, who were away from home, joining a volleyball competition in Nowra, NSW. He is such a wonderful young man that Grace and I raise with thanks and pride. When he left home on Monday afternoon with his teammates, I had full confidence of him, trusting that he would do his best for his team and give me text messages and phone calls after each day. Yes, he did once on his first night at Nowra. Then I expected to have one or two every night. He didn't. But I didn't call him 'prodigal son' although I have him 50 dollars as a travelling allowance.

While he was away, my first son Joshua Yeon stayed with me whole week unless he went out for his things to do. He is my first love that gives me God's abundant grace to me. We had some time to talk and ate one dinner together. How can it be possible for me to have such a full of grace with my 19 years old son? I wanted to give him all that I have. He was so sweet to me when I paid my attention to him. So, I gave thanks to God for the quality of time being with him and the father and the son relationship that I have dreamed of. I ended up thinking of my father who has missed his son and his family who live in Sydney. I mean that I am away from him the last 21 years. But I don't think that I am not such thing as the prodigal son. I only live my life in another country on earth, raising the family that I have and increasing my ministry here at Boronia Park Uniting Church. I assume that my father has missed his son so much. He always waits with his craned neck to see me either in Korean or here in Australia. As I waited my Daniel who was away from home and enjoyed in spending time with my Joshua who stayed with me as unusual, I believe that he keeps valuing his relationship with me as well as waiting his son's coming home.

From my reading of the parable, I was struck by verse 20. It says, "While he was still a long way off, his father saw him and his heart was stirred with love and pity. He ran to him, hugged him tight, and kissed him." In another

translation (KJV), it says, “But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.” I was struck by the expression that the father fell on his son’s neck and kissed him. This tells me how desperately the father missed his son who is now with him in his household. The parable called him ‘prodigal son’ but to his father, who waited with his craned neck, he was his precious second son. In its present context it is meant to illustrate the pardoning love of God that cares for the outsiders. Not because of their awful histories, but because of being absent in God’s embracing presence, God waits there for us. The younger son who ran away from his father’s household is welcomed home by the father and his former status is restored. No conditions. No condemnations. No judgements. The younger son is now back to his father who has waited such a long time with his craned neck. The father instinctively acted when he saw his younger son coming back to him. He had his eyes to see him and then his arms unconsciously reaching out to his son and holding him tight. He smelt on his son’s skin no matter how long he didn’t wash. He checked that the younger son is alive and home. That’s it.

What is the place of the older son? Is he a bad guy who claimed his complaints to his father about putting the feast for the return of his younger brother? The question of the elder brother’s relationship to his younger brother is more important: will the elder brother share the father’s joy at the return of his younger brother?—this is the unanswered question. To answer this question is ours as the hearers of the parable. Listen to what the father replied to his older son.

“My son,” he replied, “you’re always with me. Everything I have belongs to you. But we had to celebrate and be happy! This brother of yours was dead and is alive again! He was lost, and now he’s found!” (vv 31, 32)

The father of two sons in the parable may invite us to think like this: your sons and daughters are all precious no matter where they are and what they do today. And he may ask us to remind each other the attitude of God to all his creation and the attitude of Jesus to all his friends and followers. From

this parable, the central figure is the father who patiently wait until his second son comes home and his first son understands how deep his love is for both sons. The waiting Father represents the God who waits for us today near and around us.

My sister Seung Eun was the most celebrating when I ended up giving myself to God in faith of Jesus Christ. She never asked me forcibly to go to church with her every Sunday. She confessed me later that she had prayed to God that I became a Christian like her and it took almost 10 years to get answered her sincere and faithful prayers. But you know what? During that time when she prayed for me, she also prayed for her parents and her grandmother so that God answered her prayers in the most amazing ways like this: my grandmother who used to be a Buddhist began going to a local church. I told you a couple of times her story that she was an illiterate person but scribed many bible passages and words of hymns in the rest of her life. Then my parents were moved by my grandmother's significant conversion to Christianity so that they joined a presbyterian church where one of his friends had his membership. The younger one prayed secretly to God that her family becomes a Christian family and then God answered all her prayers 10 years later. I give thanks to God for her quiet but powerful prayers that moved God and touched many lives in her family. She waited patiently until God worked in her life.

Dear my brothers and sisters in Christ, let us remember that God waits for us till we come and confess that God's amazing grace is there for us all the time. For this redeeming and pardoning grace for us, God sent his one and only Son Jesus Christ for us and for many. And also he affirms that we are always with him in this journey as the followers of his Son. This moment our God waits for his people coming back with his craned neck. And I am sure that he will never give up. Like Jesus who fulfilled God's redeeming and pardoning grace until he died, let us have the attitude of him that we should welcome all who are weary and burdened in life. They may be your friends, colleagues, neighbour or even your sons and daughters. When they come back to you, please not hesitate to welcome. Please run fast and fall on the weakest part of their life stories – failure, frustration, or shame in

their past. You may be the last one for them to lean on or to hide from all worldly enemies and challenges. When you have a chance to welcome them, please don't miss it. Your waiting and welcoming may give others another chance that the world cannot give. 2 Corinthians 5 speaks this encouraging message to us.

It all comes from God. He reconciled us to himself through the Messiah, and he gave us the ministry of reconciliation. This is how it came about: God was reconciling the world to himself in the Messiah, not counting their transgressions against them, and entrusting us with the message of reconciliation. So we are ambassadors, speaking on behalf of the Messiah, as though God were making his appeal through us. (vv. 18-20)

There is no such thing as the prodigal son. If we take part with those who seek find God's presence in life, the waiting God may welcome them, embracing and taking care of all their weariness and burdens in life. Through our waiting and welcoming, I hope that all will be placed as where they should be – in God's purpose and presence.

Amen.

### **Prayers of the People: Joshua Yeon**

Heavenly Father,

Thank you for bringing us here today. Thank you that we are fortunate to gather together to worship. Lord, we pray for all the situations happening in the world.

We pray for Ukraine and Russia's situation and we pray that they can solve this problem together like humans and stop this war. God, innocent lives are being taken away. Please protect the people of the countries and bring this war to an end.

Lord, we pray for all Uniting Church congregations, faith communities, and the chaplains and ministers of the City of Ryde zone. We pray that we push through in this difficult times, stay strong and continue to worship you.

Father God, the weather has not been in our favour these past few weeks. Many areas have been affected, and have lost many things due to the flooding. We pray for those communities, especially the Northern Rivers Community. As they fight each day to stay dry, please protect them and keep them safe.

Thank you to our church and its team, bringing talents and gifts into the church. Pour out your blessings to each member.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,

我們在天上的父，  
願人都尊祢的名為聖，  
하늘에 계신 우리 아버지，  
아버지의 이름을 거룩하게 하시며，

your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.

願祢的國降臨，  
願祢的旨意行在地上，  
如同行在天上。  
아버지의 나라가 오게 하시며，  
아버지의 뜻이 하늘에서와 같이  
땅에서도 이루어지게 하소서.

Give us today our daily bread.

我們日用的飲食 今日賜給我們，  
오늘 우리에게 일용할 양식을 주시고，

Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those who sin against us.

免我們的債

如同我們免了人的債

우리가 우리에게 잘못한 사람을

용서하여 준 것같이 우리 죄를 용서하여 주시고,

Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.

不叫我們遇見試探，

救我們脫離兇惡，

우리를 시험에 빠지지 않게 하시고

악에서 구하소서.

For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours now and for ever.

因為國度，權柄，榮耀，

全是祢的，直到永遠。

나라와 권능과 영광이

영원히 아버지의 것입니다.

Amen.

### **Dedication of the Offering:**

The offering will be used for the congregation's continuing mission and ministry in these changing times. Please make your offering through a Bank Deposit or a personal cheque whichever is convenient to you.

**Account Name: Boronia Park Uniting Church**

**BSB: 634-634**

**Account: 100023784**

**Reference: Offering**

**Mail to: Mrs. Robyn Harvey**

**96a Champion Rd. Gladesville NSW 2111**

Please contact Robyn Harvey, Treasurer on 0418 783 290 or robyn.49@bigpond.net.au for more information about how to make Direct Debit.

## **Hymn: Be thou my vision**

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart,  
naught be all else to me, save that thou art  
thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my thru word;  
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;  
thou my great Father, thy child let me be;  
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Be thou my armour, my sword for the fight,  
be thou my dignity, thou my delight;  
thou my soul's shelter and thou my high tower;  
raise thou me heavenward, O power of my power.

Riches I scorn and the world's empty praise,  
thou my inheritance, now and always:  
thou and thou only the first in my heart;  
high King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, after victory won,  
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
still be my vision, O ruler of all.

*Words from [The Poem Book of the Gael](#)  
by permission Chatto & Windus, London*

## **Benediction**

Lord, give us enough strength and patience to wait for others.

In waiting,  
we believe that you go with us another mile in this journey.

Lord, help us to grow our faith in your son Jesus Christ.  
In growing,  
we believe that you grow your kingdom in and among us this life.

Lord, reveal to us that you are the waiting God  
who always endure all our pains and failures from injustice and violence.  
In revealing,  
we believe that your people are healed and saved as who they should be.

And the blessing of God almighty,  
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,  
be upon us and remain with us always.  
**Amen.**

**Sung Blessing      Go in peace, go in love**

Go in Peace, Go in Love  
Let's find joy with each other.  
Go in Peace, Go in Love,  
We are sister and brother.  
Fed by Spirit with strength each day  
to find our way together  
Go in Peace, Go in Love,  
God be with us forever.

Mary Louise Bringle

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