

Sunday, 25 October 2020



Preparing for Worship

Welcome to Boronia Park Uniting Church and our service of worship for Sunday 25 October 2020. My name is Alan Keast and I am a member of the Uniting Church here at Boronia Park. Thank you to all the people who have contributed to this service and the presentation of the service for our congregation.

As I look at my new bookshelves in my new study, I have a row of inspirational books which even without taking them off the shelf encourage me to **FOCUS ON THE BIG PICTURE**, as these characters did. Here is a list of some of these books.

Powell, Mulder and Griffin: **Growing Young**

Fanny J Crosby

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: **The Cost of Discipleship**

Basil Miller: **John Wesley**

Mary Drewery: **Martin Luther King**

John Hercus: **David**

Brian Booth/Paul White: **Booth to Bat**

Elisabeth Elliot: **Through Gates of Splendour**

Billy Graham: **The Reason for My Hope.**

Let us join together in our **CALL TO WORSHIP**

Call to Worship

Loving Heavenly Father,
we gather together from all walks of life,
in all different situations,
some with family members around and others with none.

Yet we are FAMILY under God the Father
and so brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus.

So we come as FAMILY to worship and praise together,
to learn, to hear the Bible stories and to share in the music
which has such a worship message.

**Lord,
through all the generations
you have been our home.**

**Before the mountains were born,
before you gave birth to the earth and the world,
from beginning to end,
you are God.**

Loving Heavenly father,
we confess that at times we only see the small picture,
things that are about us and only us,
yet in the quietness that can come from you,
we acknowledge that you not only see the big pictures
but can deal with all the small issues
in our lives.

**O Lord,
come back to us.**

Take pity on your servants.

**Satisfy us each morning
with your unfailing love
so we may sing for joy
at the end of our lives.**

Renew our hearts and minds with your scripture,
your stories and the music and prayers
from the congregational members
as we bask in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

(with reflections from Psalm 90)

Let us further consider the greatness of God with the stirring hymn How Great Thou Art. (TiS 155)

Hymn: How Great Thou Art

**O Lord, my God, when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the worlds Thy Hands have made
I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder
Thy power throughout the universe displayed**

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art*

**And when I think of God, His Son not sparing
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in
That on the Cross, my burden gladly bearing
He bled and died to take away my sin**

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art*

**When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And lead me home, what joy shall fill my heart
Then I shall bow with humble adoration
And then proclaim, my God, how great Thou art**

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God, to Thee
How great Thou art, how great Thou art.*

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Bible Readings

First Reading: Deuteronomy 34: 1-12 (New Living Translation)

34 Then Moses went up to Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab and climbed Pisgah Peak, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him the whole land, from Gilead as far as Dan; ² all the land of Naphtali; the land of Ephraim and Manasseh; all the land of Judah, extending to the

Mediterranean Sea; ³ the Negev; the Jordan Valley with Jericho—the city of palms—as far as Zoar. ⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have now allowed you to see it with your own eyes, but you will not enter the land.”

⁵ So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, just as the LORD had said. ⁶ The LORD buried him in a valley near Beth-peor in Moab, but to this day no one knows the exact place. ⁷ Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever. ⁸ The people of Israel mourned for Moses on the plains of Moab for thirty days, until the customary period of mourning was over.

⁹ Now Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him, doing just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁰ There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹ The LORD sent him to perform all the miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, and all his servants, and his entire land. ¹² With mighty power, Moses performed terrifying acts in the sight of all Israel.

Gospel: Matthew 34:34-40 (New Living Translation)

³⁴ But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees with his reply, they met together to question him again. ³⁵ One of them, an expert in religious law, tried to trap him with this question: ³⁶ “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?”

³⁷ Jesus replied, “**You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.**” ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

This is the word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Sermon: Focus on the big picture – Mr Alan Keast

I have titled today’s message “**Focus on the Big Picture**” but mainly because I wanted to talk about the Deuteronomy reading where God shows Moses the promised land but tells him he is not to enter **AND** the Matthew reading where the Pharisees try to trick Jesus by asking which is the most important of the commandments Moses was given from God.

Two hugely powerful readings and I wondered how they might link up. Each one is deserving almost of a series of sermons by itself. There is one classic book titled “Your God is too small” which challenges the reader’s perception of God.

Today I would like not to challenge but encourage you to focus on the big picture if at all possible. You might have issues such as loneliness, stress, HSC exams, health issues or financial concerns – I believe that unlike us sometimes, our God is big enough to focus on the big picture but has the ability to deal with the small issues in your life too.

I was reminded by God this week that He was around in 1964 to support me when I was doing the Leaving Certificate at Hurlstone Agricultural

High School at Glenfield so He probably has plenty of experience in supporting His people as they commence their Higher School Certificate. Also He reminded me that a student cannot take study notes, parents or friends into an exam room. When a student goes in, there is no option of phoning a friend, taking a 50/50 or swapping the question. But a student can take God's presence with him or her into the exam room, to bring them a sense of peace and purposefulness as they complete their paper. You see, God can focus on the big picture but also care for the small details at the same time. I believe our role is to keep a correct perspective on matters and not let ourselves get gate crashed by the small details.

Let's commence with the story of Moses and God on Mt Nebo, where God shows Moses the Promised Land but reminds him he will not enter into it. A hugely powerful passage reflecting on God's relationship with Moses and I am so glad that Seungjae and I have had so much "fun" with our stories of Moses and God over the last few years.

I believe we cannot look at this passage without putting it into the full context of Moses' life, or even into the life of God's people. God certainly had a focus on the big picture. If we work our way back to Joseph and his coloured coat we can trace God's people as they moved into Egypt to escape the famine, however as Pharaohs changed the people moved from guests in the country to slaves. So the story of Moses goes way back.

The final chapter in Deuteronomy is so much more than just the passage we have had read to us today. We can start with the story of Moses in the bulrushes. God was with him then and was saved in a miraculous way from death as a young child. Moses had a troubled upbringing as he was torn between two races – his birth rights and his adopted family. However at no point did God take his attention from Moses, despite some poor decisions by Moses.

Moving through his life, Moses encountered the “burning bush” and heard the voice of God. Moses decided he couldn’t do what God asked of him and gave numerous excuses to God why he would not go to Pharaoh. But God continued to hold to His bigger vision for Moses and His people.

The Passover where people put blood of the lamb on their doors heralded the opportunity for Moses to lead God’s people out of Egypt. And so began the forty year journey towards the Promised Land. There were highlights and low lights on the way.

The section referred to by the Pharisees in the Matthew Reading is a feature of the journey and became the basis for God’s laws for His people. The Pharisee in Matthew’s reading is identified as an “expert in religious law” however sadly his expertise is limited to an academic knowledge looking, as it were, down a tunnel. He was not able to focus on the big picture that maybe this Jesus was the “real deal” – they were all so engrossed on tricking Jesus and “scoring points”.

The final verses in this Deuteronomy reading are so powerful. That might not be the word I want but I cannot think of an alternative at the moment. What a description, to be called the “servant of God”. At age of 120 years we can identify that God certainly had a big vision and focus for this man and we should be encouraged that He who had called Moses also has a plan for us, for you and me.

So we come to the final section – as Jesus is again confronted by the church leaders as they seek to challenge His life, His message and His way.

They focus on small issues in an attempt to discredit Jesus and to restore authority and power for themselves. I enjoyed mulling over their

conversation – they clearly set themselves up in opposition to Jesus, as the authority, the power and the church. It is a good reminder to me to remember not to try and take over when I should be trusting Jesus for the future. I should not be afraid, as they were, that if I released power and authority in my life it would all go astray. Jesus calls us to trust in Him and God reminds us He does have a bigger plan for our lives.

Just as He watched over Moses for 120 years so we can expect Him to do that for us.

The Pharisees were only interested in one area where they thought they might be able to trap Jesus. The timeline I have on the sheet lists only half a dozen key figures from both old and New Testaments. Each has a huge story to tell and share to give us knowledge and understanding of our God. Yet these men sought only to trap Jesus and picked one little bit to “bait” the trap. They were NOT interested in what Jesus had to say or in any of the relationships people in the OT had with God.

We can learn a lot from looking at OT characters and their involvement with God but only if we are open minded and willing to look beyond our immediate issues.

The response Jesus made to this “expert in religious law” is of course the basis for a series of sermons in itself. We can read and sing about it and see it as the basis for the new commandment.

To conclude, I do believe God calls us to focus on the big picture, as He does, with the assurance that He can and will look after the small details. Don't get hung out to dry on little issues but trust in Him for their resolution. He didn't let the people at the top of this page down, nor those mentioned at the start of the service when I listed some books above

me in my study – **why would you think God is going to change his character now and not care for you?**

For homework you could look up five or even ten (or more) verses from the Bible or from your other readings that emphasise God's faithfulness and God's love for His people.

(I would be happy for you to send me copies of your completed homework.)

Amen.

Hymn: Great is Thy Faithfulness

**“Great is Thy faithfulness,” O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.**

“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”

Morning by morning new mercies I see;

All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—

“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!

**Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above,
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.**

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*“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!*

**Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!**

*“Great is Thy faithfulness!” “Great is Thy faithfulness!”
Morning by morning new mercies I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided—
“Great is Thy faithfulness,” Lord, unto me!*

Words: Thomas O. Chisholm
Music: William M. Runyan
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Prayers of the People – Rev Barnabas Joo

Merciful father,

We gather in spirit and heart as we continue our worship during the pandemic season. Whilst we cannot be together physically, we remember we are always in fellowship with one another as the family of Christ.

Whilst we are now in Spring, though we get to enjoy the weather, we are reminded of environmental issues we have. We remember the dry Winter and pray for farmers. We think of the harm we have done to our world which has caused issues like climate change. Help us to put the health of all peoples and our world over money and greed.

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We remember Father, how lucky we are.

We think of those who are persecuted for their beliefs. We think of those who do not enjoy freedom. We ask for your justice in a world where many things are wrong.

We ask for your compassion in our world where inequality plagues so many people.

We ask for your peace as we see wars continue to traumatise lives.

We ask for your love to fill our hearts as we live our daily lives and interact with family, friends, neighbours and strangers.

May you continue to live in us each day so we follow Jesus' footsteps.

Especially this morning Father, we pray for Canada and United States in the world ecumenical cycle of prayers.

We pray for their government leaders that they would advance justice, human rights, and peace for all within these countries and in the rest of the world.

We also think of the United States and their presidential elections. May you help the people choose a wise leader who can guide the country and the world in your way.

This week, we think of our brothers and sisters in the Hunters Hill Congregational Church. As we walk alongside them in the same journey in our community, may you guide them in your way and keep them under your wings.

We take this time to pray for our own congregation here at Boronia Park. We ask for your blessings upon all of our members. That we keep safe

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and healthy during these difficult periods. We think of the young ones, who are growing up in these uncertain times and ask for more guidance. We ask for your comfort and healing hands on all those who are unwell. May they be always reminded of your love and have strength.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name,
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your name,
your Kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in Heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

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

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

For the kingdom,
the power and the glory are yours
now and forever.

Amen.

Closing Hymn: Shout to the Lord (TiS 738)

My Jesus, my saviour,
Lord there is none like you
All of my days, I want to praise
The wonders of your mighty love

My comfort, my shelter
Tower of refuge and strength
Let every breath, all that I am
Never cease to worship you.

Shout to the lord, all the earth, let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of your name.

I sing for joy at the work of your hands
Forever I'll love you, forever I'll stand
Nothing compares to the promise I have in you.

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Offering

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

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Account Name: Boronia Park Uniting Church

BSB: 634-634

Account: 100023784

Reference: Offering

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

Benediction

**King of glory,
thank you for revealing your love to us today
in a powerful way.**

**As we leave our time of worship
and go out there
may we go in the power of the Holy Spirit.**

**May your grace and love
be with us each day.**

**Bless us O Lord with your unfailing love
and cause the work of our hands to prosper.**

And now may the Lord bless you and keep you.

**May the Lord make His face to shine upon you
and be gracious unto you.**

**And may God give you His peace
in your going out and in your coming in,
in your lying down and in your rising up,
in your labour and in your leisure,
in your laughter and in your tears.**

Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT

1. This Tuesday 27 October: Church Morning Tea

Come and join the monthly morning at church where you may have meet other members of the congregation, have chat with them over coffee/tea and draw near to God together who always cares for us. 9:45am for 10am gathering and bring your own coffee on your way to church. This meeting finishes at 12 noon.



2. Next Sunday 1 November: All Saint's Day Communion Service



You may prepare a cup of wine/grape juice and a piece of bread to join communion wherever you are. And think about who your favourite (Christian) saint is and why he or she is so important for your faith in Jesus Christ today.