

ONLINE SERVICE

during COVID-19

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19 July 2020

Welcome and Notices

Amanda Fairs
viola

Call to Worship

Prayer of Invocation

Young at Heart
Christine Bradbeer

Bible Reading: Matthew 26:1-19
Ian Rutherford

A good and beautiful thing

Prayers of Intercession
and
The Lord's Prayer

Amanda Fairs
viola

Benediction



NOTICES

19 July 2020

Wednesday 22 July

1.30 pm Covenanted Prayer Time

Sunday 26 July

11 am A Guarded Tomb?.

For your prayers this week:

Congregational member: **Tibor KOSA**
with Jessica, Audrey and Tristan.



and



Hannah DAVIES who
concludes her service in France in September and
seeks further service.

MEMBERS who wish to continue their freewill offerings may use the banking details at the bottom of this page or post to our Treasurer. Vic Ansell, 59 Queen St Kangaroo Flat Vic 3555.

GARDENIA ST
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
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GARDENIA ST. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH BLACKBURN

19 July 2020



WELCOME



A coalition of international, national, and refugee-led organisations in the Horn, East and Central Africa (HECA) have today called on governments in the region to reopen borders for asylum seekers. The organisations are calling on governments to put in place measures that manage the current health emergency while ensuring asylum seekers can seek protection. The HECA region host approximately 4.6 million refugees and asylum seekers and have a long history of receiving asylum seekers and providing them with protection.

Amnesty International, 22 June 2020

Even though Kenya is a majority-Christian country, reports have indicated that a growing al-Shabab presence in the northeast and coastal regions monitors the activities of Christians. Believers in these parts of Kenya who converted from Islam live under constant threat of attack—even from their closest relatives. Organised corruption and crime are also serious problems. Corrupt officials do not take measures against those who persecute Christians; this encourages additional acts of persecution. Radical Muslims living in Kenya, together with militants crossing the border from Somalia, severely persecute Christians and in recent years have been responsible for the killing of hundreds of Christians. Any Christian who lives or works in countries bordering Somalia is at risk of intimidation and attacks by al-Shabab.

Open Doors Australia

A good and beautiful thing

Sermon Notes

Beginning with the Sermon on the Mount, we have journeyed through the five teaching segments of Matthew's gospel.

Now, noting "When Jesus had finished **all** these words" (26:1) Matthew brings us to the greatest story ever told, the Passion of the Christ. Here are some of the characters in this tumultuous narrative:

1 Caiaphas - temple custodian. As high priest Caiaphas was responsible for temple administration. Jesus had spoken against the temple; it had become a place of thieves (21:12,13). His actions there had momentarily halted the sacrificial ritual. This was problematic for the religious establishment. Jesus was an unqualified troublemaker who had foretold the destruction of the temple.

Caiaphas decreed (John 11:50) that it was "better for one man to die for the people". What charge might suffice? Put on oath Jesus let it be clear that he was the Messiah. For this 'blasphemy' Caiaphas said he ought to die! Calm would prevail once the troublemaker was gone.

2 Judas - the betrayer. I hesitate to speak of Judas whose name has become synonymous with betrayal. The gospels repeat with astonishment he was "one of the twelve". He was their 'treasurer', although apparently he pilfered money. But is that sufficient to explain his betrayal of Jesus? It seems the mismatch between his aspirations for power and Jesus' kingdom teaching, was too great, and he sought other material benefit.

When Judas came back to the temple he discovered it no longer offered forgiveness. It had already ceased to be the place where God's loving purposes were enacted. Like the house on the sand it was crumbling, and as Jesus had foretold, it would be destroyed.

3 Peter - fearful disciple. It is remarkable that all four gospels mention this embarrassing, even shameful action of Peter, in his triple denial of Jesus. If he, one of Jesus' inner circle, de facto leader and speaker of the group could be so fearful as to deny that he ever knew Jesus, of what might we be capable? Yet Peter found forgiveness and restoration to leadership.

Christianity is not always comfortable. Might Peter's story have brought courage to Christians in the early persecutions; and even to fearful believers today.

4 Pilate - empire spokesman. In this story Pilate represents the Roman system of justice. His opening question, "Are you the king of the Jews?" makes clear that this was how the Jewish Council had framed the blasphemy charge. As a "king" he was a challenger to Caesar.

Pilate is aware that the Jewish leadership wants rid of Jesus, but suspects their motive and is troubled by their insistence. It appears he discussed it with his wife. He offers a choice. But it is Jesus they want crucified.

5 Barabbas - set free. *Jesus Barabbas* is a 'brigand leader' justly condemned for murder. He was a dangerous prisoner, yet the crowd were persuaded to prefer him (27:20) to "Jesus called the Messiah".

Barabbas himself has no active part in Matthew's narrative. He is set free because another died. This is what the Passover, Israel's great freedom celebration, was about. A lamb was killed, Egypt's firstborn died, and the people were set free.

6 Mary - costly devotion. Before all this drama Jesus had a meal at which an unnamed woman anointed him with a vial of precious oil. The disciples rebuke the "waste", but Jesus said it was "a good and beautiful thing" in preparation for his burial. She anticipated his great sacrificial love.

Mary, says RVG Tasker, "sees the shadow of a cross lying heavily upon him and she penetrates its meaning. She knows he is ready and willing to die as a supreme act of love for his friends, and she rightly reckons herself and her family among those friends. And so she pours the fragrant perfume, her most costly possession, over His head, as though she were anointing a king".

Preaching the Gospel should remind us all her loving and devoted response.

Where are you in this story? With whom do you identify?