




KAURIHOHORE / KAMO CO-OPERATING PARISH

kaurichurch.methodist.org.nz 

kaurichurch@gmail.com 

946 0813 

Sunday 18 May 2025 – Easter 5

Today's service has been prepared by Jane Garrick,
one of our Lay Preachers

Welcome to our service this morning.

In working together on our shared mission, we commit to seven core values:

Togetherness, Humility, Curiosity, Love, Inclusiveness, Justice, Sustainability.

Love: we are committed to selfless love to all, including those marginalised by society and the wider church.

Welcome

A very warm welcome to you all this morning and a very special welcome to George and his family. We acknowledge the contributions you and your dear late wife Barbara have made over the last 7 decades to the work of God and your faithful involvement in this church. Thank you.

This morning our theme is Love. The Lectionary readings for today lead us into the Gospel of John but also to the last chapter in the Bible – Revelation chapter 21. Ultimately, God will dwell with us. In the meantime we have received His new commandment given through Jesus, which is to love one another as He has loved us. Indeed, the world will know we are Christians by our love.

Greeting and Sharing of the Peace

Let us now greet one another and share the Love and Peace of God.

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 148)

(please join in saying aloud the words in bold print)

From the highest heavens to the deepest seas,
Mountains and all hills, fruitful trees and all cedars,
Sun and moon and all stars of light:

Let all creation praise the Lord.

Mission Statement: Sharing God's love, creating hope, working for justice.

Great sea creatures, beasts and all cattle,
creeping things and flying fowl.

Let all creatures praise the Lord.

Kings of the earth and all peoples,
Young men and women,
Old men and children.

Let everything that has breath praise the Lord.

Opening Prayer

Let us be still for a moment as we draw near to worship God...

Take a moment to remind yourself why you have come, and why we are gathered here today...

Let us pray:

We are here, Lord, to honour and worship You, the One who has not only reached down to us in love, but the One whose mercies and love enable us to live fulfilling lives and the One who draws us in love to live with You forever.

Thank You, ever living and amazing God, that Your plans for us are only, ever good.

In this short time together, open our ears and our eyes to know Your love and see Your vision for our lives. Teach us, hear our prayers and enable us for service wherever You might take us. We ask in the precious name of Jesus, that it may be to Your praise and glory. **Amen.**

Hymn HFTC 14: [All People that on Earth do Dwell](#)

(George's favourite)

by William Kethe (1561)

1. All people that on Earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with fear, his praise forthtell;
Come ye before him and rejoice.

2. The Lord, ye know, is God indeed;
Without our aid he did us make;
We are his folk, he doth us feed,
And for his sheep he doth us take.

3. O enter then his gates with praise,
Approach with joy his courts unto;
Praise, laud, and bless his name always,
For it is seemly so to do.

4. For why? The Lord our God is good;
His mercy is forever sure;
His truth at all times firmly stood,
And shall from age to age endure.

Prayer for Centring and Renewal

The Lord says in [Ezekiel 36:26](#) : “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” (ESV)

Let us pray:

Lord, thank You for Your promise to renew and transform us. We cannot do this in ourselves – thank You that this is Your work! Replace our hardened, stoney hearts with hearts that are open to Your Spirit and Your ways. May Your love soften us and change us, enabling us to love others and follow You wholeheartedly.

Renew our spirits, O God, and teach us to surrender to Your perfect will. Let our hearts of flesh reflect Your compassion and mercy in all we do. May we honour You with lives renewed by Your grace. **Amen**

The Lord’s Prayer

Let us join together in saying The Lord’s Prayer. Feel free to pray your own version.

**Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come,
Thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever.
Amen.**

Hymn CMP 288: [I Need Thee Ev'ry Hour](#)

(another of George's favourites) by Annie Hawks & Robert Lowry

1. I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Most gracious Lord;
No tender voice like Thine
Can peace afford.

Refrain:

*I need Thee, oh, I need Thee;
Ev'ry hour I need Thee;
Oh, bless me now, my Saviour,
I come to Thee.*

2. I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Stay Thou nearby;
Temptations lose their pow'r
When Thou art nigh. [Refrain]

3. I need Thee ev'ry hour,
In joy or pain;
Come quickly and abide,
Or life is vain. [Refrain]

4. I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Teach me Thy will;
And Thy rich promises
In me fulfill. [Refrain]

5. I need Thee ev'ry hour,
Most Holy One;
O make me Thine indeed
Thou blessed Son. [Refrain]

Scripture Readings:

John 13:31-35 (page 1674)

Revelation 21: 1-6 (page 1937)

Reflection

Our reading from Revelation this morning shows us where it is all going to end, or, as some would say, where our real lives will begin. What will the new heavens and the new earth be like?

The Scripture says that God will dwell with us [WOW!] and we shall be His people. God Himself will be with us and be our God. And there will be no more pain, death, sorrow or crying. Imagine that!

Not only does He take away all those unhappy things, but He promises to “make all things new.” “Behold” He says. In other words, stand still and see – really see - what He is going to do. He is going to make all things new!

So how are we to live out our lives in the meantime, in this world of pain, sorrow and tears? This is where our Scripture from John comes in, and this is the focus of my message today.... Living out our lives in the here and now while we look forward to eternity.

In John, Jesus says “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another.”

We know that Love is the main thing. Victor Hugo said, “Life is the flower for which love is the honey.” Yes, love is the great theme of all the ages. Poets, writers, film makers and the Bible itself all explore this wonderful theme.

So what is love? Our English word “love” is inadequate to really describe it. Some languages have more than one word for love. The Greeks actually had 4 words: Eros – romantic love; Phileo – brotherly love; Storgè – familial love; and Agape – sacrificial love. Agape is the love of God the Father to humankind through the giving of His one and only Son.

We begin to glimpse what love is, but how do we love in this modern world full of self-seeking, greed, hurt and pain? After all, it’s easy to love the loveable, but what about the unlovable – the people we disagree with, those who hurt us and cause us pain? ... the drug addicts, the homeless, the angry, the mentally disturbed?

Scarlett Lewis' son, Jesse, was killed in the 2012 Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting, the biggest school shooting in U.S. history. At first, she said, she felt like her anger sapped all her strength and energy. She was angry at the shooter and at his mother for unwittingly arming him. But Scarlett made a choice to forgive.

She said "Forgiveness felt like I was given a big pair of scissors to cut the tie and regain my personal power. It started with a choice and then became a process." She urged mourners at Jesse's funeral to change their angry thoughts into loving ones, that thereby they might change the world.

I don't think we can actually do this kind of love on our own; certainly not in a sustained way. Yes, we can choose to honour and love others at times, but as a lifestyle, all the time? That's hard, especially when we feel justified to not love, when others hurt us.

This is where people like Scarlett Lewis and people like us need the love of God to fill our hearts with His selfless loving and compassion. Jesus is our example. In the gospel of Mark, a leper comes to Jesus, imploring Him, kneeling down to Him and saying “If You are willing, You can make me clean.” Now lepers in those days were seen as unclean and were deliberately isolated from healthy people. If a leper came towards you, you would scarper pretty quickly.

They even had to shout out “Unclean! Unclean!” if they were moving through a public place. Needless to say, everybody soon backed away.

But Jesus doesn’t rebuke or back away from this leper. Instead, He is moved with compassion.

When was your heart, my heart last moved with compassion towards someone less fortunate than ourselves?

Not only is He moved – note that “moved” is a much stronger word than “noticed” or “made aware of” but Jesus stretches out His hand and touches the leper. Compassion doesn’t just rest in our hearts, but it becomes action. We move with it. Jesus touches the leper – shock, horror – is He now going to become leprous too? You can picture the scene. But the result? Healing came!

In our gospel passage today the context of Jesus giving us His new commandment to love others is important. Jesus and the disciples have just finished the Last Supper and Judas has gone out to betray Jesus. Betrayal a context for love?

That’s hard. Can you think of a situation in your own life where you were betrayed? What were your thoughts and feelings? I remember going to pick up my stolen car from a carpark building in Auckland many years ago. I was really pleased that the police had found it and was feeling thankful to get it back, even feeling forgiving towards the person who had stolen it, but when I saw how trashed the car was, I became extremely angry and vengeful. Love the person who did this to me? I don’t think so.

That is a very human response. But we are talking about Jesus here. And Jesus is in the business of transforming us. Not only does He speak the words, but He also shows it by His actions. Knowing what Judas is about to do, Jesus gets up after supper, lays aside His garments and girds Himself with a towel. He pours water into a basin and begins to wash all the disciples’ feet. So he washes the feet of His betrayer fully knowing what is about to happen. What would Jesus have been thinking? Yes, sorrow for what was about to take place, and Judas’ part in it, but love for this man who was an agent of evil.

Herein lies our challenge. Can we love like Jesus? Can we take off our positions, the masks we wear, our importance in other people's eyes; even our "christianese" and humble ourselves to serve others? Can we do this even knowing that those we serve might reject us, or misunderstand our intentions? Loving like Jesus will hurt.

C.S. Lewis says "to love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness."

There is a lovely poem about love, by Luci Shaw, an American Christian poet that begins like this:

*The risk of love
is that of being unreturned.*

*For if I love too deep,
too hard, too long
and you love little
or you love
me not at all
then is my treasure given,
gone,
flown away lonely.*

At the end of the poem, when describing what happens when love is returned, she says

*it is fear
that flies.*

Yes, loving like Jesus involves risk. But the whole point of loving like Jesus is to change the world. Martin Luther King, the Civil Rights activist did this. He said ["I have decided to stick with love. Hate is too great a burden to bear."](#) We can do it too. We change the world through choices, one choice at a time – for example, choosing to change a sharp retort into a kindly encouragement and we change it one person at a time.

Do you remember Eleanor's service recently when she recounted children's views on love? Remember the child who said "When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore. So my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love."

What about "Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they have known each other for so long."

Well, here is a 6-year old's words of wisdom: "If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate."

That's loving the unlovely, the unlovable, the one who hurts you the most. When you really stop to think about it, that is me and that is you. God chose to love us when we were still afar off from Him, full of our own selfish pride and desires. There is not one of us who deserves it. It is His free gift because God is love.

Let's love with the love of Jesus in our hearts.

Here are some practical ideas to help us love:

- Meditate on the love of God – for God so loved that He gave.
- Read the great love chapter in 1 Corinthians 13. Love is kind, does not parade itself, thinks no evil...
- Read the gospels to learn how Jesus loves – think about the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, the tax collectors...
- Pray for the Holy Spirit to help you feel and show love
- Pray for those who hurt you and for those who seem unlovable to you
- Choose to love through affirming words
- Choose to love through affirming actions
- Speak well of all peoples

What happens when we do this? Hearts are changed and healing happens. Both the person who is loved and the person who loves, find joy and wholeness.

And more than that, God is glorified. The Westminster Confession of faith asks the question "What is the chief end of man?" In other words, what is our purpose? The response is that we are to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever." When God is glorified, the darkness flees and there is light and life. This is the life we are learning to live here on Earth as we await eternity. Not that we have 'arrived' but we press on to become more like Jesus every day, learning to love others as He has loved us. And when we love with the love of Jesus, everyone knows that God is real. Amen.

Hymn HFTC s26: [A New Commandment I Give Unto Thee](#)

by Roy Crabtree

A new commandment I give unto you,
that you love one another as I have loved you,
that you love one another as I have loved you.
By this shall all know that you are my disciples,
if you have love one for another;
by this shall all know that you are my disciples:
if you have love one for another. *Sing twice:*

Offering & Prayer of Thanksgiving

Let us pray:

We love because You first loved us. All we have is from You. Even the fruit of our own efforts is through Your enabling gifts. Thank You Lord.

Here are our offerings, Lord, offerings of love, – our money, talents, time, our serving, ourselves. Use them for Your glory we pray and continue Your work in us to make our lives an offering to You.

Amen

Community Thanks, Notices & Concerns

Prayer of Intercession

Loving Heavenly Father, we thank You for Your many blessings to us. Thank You that You are always with us.

We pray for George today, thanking You for 100 wonderful and fruitful years. Thank You for his steadfast faith and dedication to You through the decades. Continue to bless his latter days and guide his family, and the generations coming after him, to love and honour You.

We pray for our families and those who are close to us, asking You to so work in their hearts and lives to keep them close to You and trusting in You.

We pray for those who are sick, in pain, grieving... Gently touch them, Lord, and bring the comfort of Your Holy Spirit.

We pray for our nation, that You would turn hearts back to You, that our country would once again be known as God's Own.

We pray for all peoples in places of conflict, that a way for the Peace that passes all understanding will be found in those who suffer, as well as those who are leaders and decision makers.

**Thank You that Love will triumph in the end and bring us home to You.
Amen.**

Hymn HFTC 217: [Love Divine, All Loves Excelling](#)

by Charles Wesley Tune: Blaenwen

1. Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of Heav'n to Earth come down,
Fix in us Your humble dwelling,
All Your faithful mercies crown.

2. Jesus, You are all compassion,
Boundless love that makes us whole:
Visit us with Your salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

3. Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Your grace receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Your temple leave.

4. You we would be always blessing,
Serve You as Your hosts above,
Pray and praise You without ceasing,
Glory in Your perfect love.

5. Finish then Your new creation:
pure and sinless let us be;
Let us see Your great salvation,
Perfect in eternity:

6. Changed from glory into glory
Till in heaven we take our place,
There to cast our crowns before you,
Lost in wonder, love and praise!

Blessing

Christ has given us a new commandment

We go forth in love.

God guides us to love the stranger and the unlovely.

We go forth to love all.

The Spirit is teaching and leading us to love as Jesus did.

We go forth with His help to truly love those He leads us to.

Go forth in the love of God! Take His love with you wherever you go! May His love beating in your hearts bring healing and fullness of life in Jesus.

Sung Amen