



KAURIHOHORE / KAMO CO-OPERATING PARISH

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Sunday 22 June 2025 – Pentecost 3

Today's service has been prepared by Eleanor Ashby and Rosalie Gwilliam, two 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.

Humility: we recognise we do not have all the answers but are prayerfully journeying together as we try to seek them.

Community time during the service is a good opportunity to ask for prayers for yourself or others.

**After the service you are invited to share in morning tea,
either in the kitchen or on the deck.**

If you, or someone you know, would appreciate a visit from one of our **Pastoral Network Team**, please speak to the service leader.

Welcome

Introduction

This week we have been celebrating Matariki. We remember those who have gone before us, family, friends and our church people. Their spirits are now among the stars, and we give thanks for their lives and the legacy they have left behind. To honour this time we light a candle, to signify the light of the Matariki stars that shine so brightly.

Call to worship

As the deep calls to the deep in thundering waves of faith and steadfast love, so we stand on the mountain with Elijah, feeling billowing waves of God's power flowing over and through us.

Set aside your enemies – the people, thoughts, time and challenges – that separate you from knowing God's love. Clothe yourselves in Christ. Shout praise in his name, and declare how much God has done for you.

Prayer

Let us pray

God of mystery, open our eyes, to look for you in unfamiliar places; open our ears, to hear you speak in the sound of sheer silence; open our hearts, to feel the depth of your love.

When we wander in the wilderness of fear and death, revive us with your care, that we may find strength for our journey back to the land of hope and life. Amen

Hymn Be still for the presence of the Lord

Please remain seated.

Be still for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

Come, bow before him now, with reverence and fear.

In him no sin is found; we stand on holy ground.

Be still, for the presence of the Lord, the Holy One is here.

Be still for the glory of the Lord, is shining all around.

He burns with holy fire; with splendour he is crowned.

How awe-some is the sight, our radiant King of light!

Be still, for the glory of the Lord, is shining all around

Be still for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

He comes to cleanse and heal, to minister his grace.

No work too hard for him; in faith receive from him.

Be still, for the power of the Lord is moving in this place.

Psalm 42 & 43 (selection)

As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.

I thirst for God, the living God.

When can I go and stand before him?

**Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again –
my saviour and my God!**

Each day the Lord pours his unfailing love upon me, and through each night I sing his songs, praying to God who gives me life.
'O God my rock' I cry, 'Why have you forgotten me?'

**Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again –
my saviour and my God!**

You are God, my only safe haven. Why have you tossed me aside?
Send out your light and your truth; let them guide me.
Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the place where you live.
There I will go to the alter of God, to God – the source of all my joy.
I will praise you with my harp, O God, my God!

**Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?
I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again –
my saviour and my God!**

Holy Bible. New Living translation. Copyright 1996, 2004, 2007 by Tyndale House foundation.

[Song 703 TIS As the deer pants for the water](#)

As the deer pants for the water,
so my soul longs after you.
You alone are my heart's desire,
and I long to worship you.
*You alone are my strength my shield,
To you alone may my spirit yield.
You alone are my hearts desire,
And I long to worship you.*

I want you more than gold or silver,
only you can satisfy.
You alone are the real joy-giver
and the apple of my eye.
You alone are my strength and shield

You're my friend and you are my brother,
even though you are a king.
I love you more than any other,
so much more than anything
You alone are my strength and shield

Readings: Galatians 1: 1-12
Luke 7: 1-10

Reflection

From what I've learned in school growing up, and recently read about again, the continents are shifting—moving—ever so slightly. What was called continental drift 75 to 100 years ago, when I was in school, has been replaced by more technical terms today.

But regardless of the terminology, the continent of Australia, for instance, drifts nearly three inches to the northeast every year. Australians don't feel it or see it; the drift is too slow to notice. But it's enough of a shift that it's caused problems with the pinpoint accuracy of GPS. Three inches might not sound like a lot of movement, but over the past 16 years or so, since that country's GPS was last updated, that country literally moved more than five feet.

This began impacting driverless tractors and farmers who depended on exact coordinates, programming military drones, or the mail delivery system; imagine driving your car and GPS tells you to "turn now" but you end up being five feet off the mark.

When I read this, it served as just one more illustration that everything on earth changes—even continents. But some things never change. God doesn't change, and His Word doesn't change; it's settled forever in the heavens ([Psalm 119:89](#)).

This was also a reminder to me that because we're living in a constantly drifting culture, we need to constantly update our internal GPS: where we are and where we're going and what we're doing and how we're living and what we're believing. Update it all to match the unchanging, never shifting, always accurate, Word of God.

Our reading from Luke is about a man who was guided in a crisis moment in his life by nothing more than the word of Christ. The Gospel of Luke was actually a letter Luke wrote to Theophilus—a converted Gentile aristocrat; Luke's second letter to Theophilus is called the Book of Acts. ***And Luke tells him—and us—here in chapter 7 and verse 1: That After [Jesus] had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, He entered Capernaum. Luke 7:1***

Capernaum was this busy city built near a major trade route and it became the Lord's home-base of his ministry. And this summary statement in verse 1 signals a new stage in Jesus' mission and ministry. For the first 6 chapters of Luke's Gospel,

Jesus has primarily dealt with the Jewish people. But now after finishing His sermon on the Plateau, He begins to interact with Gentiles.

And here in the Gospel of Luke, this is His first encounter. **Verse 2** introduces us to a Roman centurion.

A centurion was in command of a century of soldiers—100 soldiers. Centurions were responsible for the discipline and morale of the regiment. They were considered the cement that held the army together. Polybius, the Greek Historian, would write 200 years before the birth of Christ that centurions were “reliable men, not over-anxious to rush into the fight, but when hard pressed, ready to hold their ground, even if it meant dying at their post”. These were highly respected military leaders.

Oddly, the centurion and Jesus never meet face-to-face. All their interactions occur through the means of intermediaries. First, it is the local Jewish leaders who ask for Jesus' help. The centurion, they say, "is worthy of having you do this for him" (7:4). Hearing this, Jesus sets out apparently without much hesitation. Now, no one would have blamed him for having some suspicions. After all, entering the house of a Gentile could potentially make Jesus unclean.

Even more, a centurion is not your typically friendly neighbour. From the perspective of many of Jesus' neighbours, this centurion represents everything that is wrong about the world. And yet, Jesus accompanies them. He is willing to see this centurion. We don't learn why Jesus is so eager to help this Roman soldier; we only learn that Jesus does not hesitate in the slightest to head toward his house. But on his way, another set of intermediaries enters the scene.

The centurion sends friends to stop Jesus from coming into his house. He recognizes that he is unworthy to host Jesus. This is a rather extraordinary display of humility and submission for a Roman military leader used to having his orders followed, not questioned.

Humility and power usually don't mix well as we know. A quick glance at some political leaders is proof positive of this. Most people endowed with power are not used to taking on postures of humility.

Jesus is dazzled by this centurion's faith, marvelling that such faith is not even found among God's chosen people. This is shocking. Why would Jesus praise a foreigner, a Gentile, a centurion so highly?

Imagine for a moment if Jesus were to walk into our congregation and declare our enemies more faithful than us. Imagine for a moment if Jesus were to declare your oppressors more faithful than you. Imagine for a moment if Jesus declared a terrorist more faithful than you, a criminal more faithful than you. This is how shocking Jesus' declaration would have been.

But if we think of all we know about God, we shouldn't be so surprised. The foreigner and the stranger and our worst enemy are as welcome at God's table as anyone else is. After all, it was mere shepherds, not the kings of the world, who welcomed Jesus at his birth. When corrupt tax collectors ask John what they should do, how they should repent, John does not tell them to stop being tax collectors. He tells them to stop taking advantage of their neighbours. When Roman soldiers come to John right after and ask him the same question, he tells them not to lay down their swords but to execute their duties with honour. When Jesus preaches his first sermon, he points out that God sent God's prophet beyond the boundaries of Israel when hungry widows at home could use Elijah's help. He also reminds us that it was a foreign soldier named Naaman who is cleansed of leprosy by Elisha.

This has happened before. God will not be restrained by the boundaries we draw around one another. God will surprise us; God will even enrage us when God's grace extends even over those we deem unworthy of such a gift. This has happened before, and it will happen again.

What then was the content of the centurion's faith? What did the centurion believe? What faith did Jesus see in him? The centurion believed and recognized Jesus' power over the forces of death. As a military officer, he likely understood well how powerful raw force could be. He knows how swords and masses of trained men can create massive destruction in their wake. He recognizes such power in Jesus, but there is a difference in Jesus' power, a difference the centurion believes can make all the difference in the world. Military might cannot heal the sick or raise the dead. An army can't heal his faithful servant. Imperial power cannot gain the affections of a people, but only their fear. Jesus' power is unlike that wielded by Rome or any other empire. Jesus' power heals peoples and communities; it brings the powerful down from their thrones and lifts up the lowly. Jesus' power turns the world upside down and inside out. That a centurion would recognize this power is the very essence of faith; faith is seeing the world with God's eyes, to see the possibilities of a world renewed by God's love and God's grace.

But that isn't the end of the story. This story isn't just about a centurion and his slave. This is not just about power alone for Luke; it's also about the might that abides in weakness. This isn't the only case of exemplary faith Luke gives us. In fact, right after this story comes a second. Luke 7:11. And it reads: "Soon afterwards he went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went with him. As he approached the gates of the town, a man who had died was being carried out. He was his mother's only son, and she was a widow; and with her was a large crowd from the town. When the Lord saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, 'Do not weep.' Then he came forward and touched the bier, and the bearers stood still. And he said, 'Young man, I say to you, rise!' The dead man sat up and began to speak, and Jesus gave him to his mother. Now fear seized all of them; and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen among us!' and they said 'God has looked favourably on his people!' The word about him spread throughout Judea and all the surrounding country."

In this second story, Jesus sees a widow accompanying her son's body to the grave. His death is her death in an economic system where men generally carried all financial power. Jesus sees her from a distance and has compassion for her. She never speaks to Jesus. She never

asks for his help. She never confesses like the centurion great belief in the power Jesus wields. Instead, Luke notes that Jesus had compassion on her and gives her son back to her. And that's it. At first glance, there's not much there, but if we look more carefully and read these two stories together, something marvellous becomes clear.

In these two stories, two very different people seek Jesus' healing touch in two very different ways. What binds these two stories together is that God's promise of life is fulfilled and salvation arrives wherever Jesus walks.

Simply, we can't understand the powerful centurion if we don't have in mind a weeping widow. On one side, you have a powerful centurion, beloved by the local Jewish community, but still a leader of the invading Roman force. He exhibits great faith when he comes to Jesus. Then, we learn of a grieving widow. Nowhere is her faith highlighted by Luke or by Jesus, only her grief. But perhaps in her grief, there is as much faith as the centurion had. In both cases, Jesus restores life where death and illness prevail. In both cases, unexpected individuals receive these free gifts.

What then does faith look like? How do we know faith when we see it? When we are struggling under the cloud of doubt, can we still say we dwell in faith? I think we can.

Both the centurion and the widow have faith. The centurion's faith is bold, willing to reach out to Jesus through a number of trusted friends. Due to the bitter hostilities between Israel and Rome, Jesus should have no part in healing a centurion's servant. But the centurion asks nonetheless. He has faith. In contrast, the widow's faith is rocked by grief and sorrow. Her hope is muted, dampened by the loss of both husband and son. Jesus has compassion on her and her plight. She too had faith, even if not like that of the centurion.

Where do you see yourself in these two portraits of faith? Is your faith like the centurion's? Bold. Daring. Willing to make a fool of yourself in public. Is your faith like that of the widow? Full of doubt and tears and grief. Is your faith so bold, so daring, that you are willing to cry before your neighbours, inviting them to share your loss? That's a powerful faith, my friends. No less powerful than that of a bold centurion.

Let's pray. God, we turn to you in faith and in doubt, in joy and in anxiety, in hope and in fear, with boldness and with trepidation. No matter how we turn to you, we trust that your grace and love will hold us in your care, O God. Draw us together. Inspire us to preach your good news that faith can be found where we least expect it. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

Offering Prayer

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. Loving Lord, we give you thanks for life and all the love we have received that has enabled us to know you and to care for others.

Receive and bless our giving of all that we are, our treasures, our time, our talents, and our mistakes and learning, that they may enable your love to be known and your transforming compassionate forgiveness experienced among your whole creation. Amen.

Community time

Prayer for others

Loving God, you speak in many ways, at different times and in different places. Help us to listen and discern the wisdom in your message.

You care for all people,

Help us to care for others

For the poor and downtrodden –

for the prisoner and the homeless

foster children, and other children living in unsuitable and unsafe homes,

you require justice.

May we hold our leadership accountable.

May we be ready to speak up about unjust practices.

May we demand justice for all rather than just for ourselves.

Gracious God, we pray for these things in your name. Amen

[Hymn 477 HFTC Light of the minds that know him. Tune Aurelia](#)

Holy Communion

The Lord be with you

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Almighty God, from the dawning of creation, you have brought forth light to guide our ways.

And so, with all your people on earth, and all the company in heaven, we praise your name saying:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord. hosanna ain the highest.

We greet the One who comes in your name, your true light, your true love, the Bread of Compassion, the Wine of Renewal.

As he broke bread before the brokenness of his death,
as he poured out wine before his blood was poured out on the cross,
as he gave his life as acts of goodness,
as he invited all to the feast of new hope,
so come to us, God of Jesus, in your love.

Come to us, Spirit of our Lord of love, and let the bread and wine before us bear your life to our life, nourish us with his vision of hope, and unite us in one body of peace.

**You are our life;
You are our hope;
You are our peace;
And we praise you.**

In communion we join ourselves to all your people and we pray;
Lord's prayer

The Breaking of the Bread

The bread which we break is an offering of life to us all.
The cup which we take is a celebration of love for us all.
The gifts of God for the people of God.

See, the broken life.
See, the life poured out.
Come, feed on him in your hearts, by faith with thanksgiving.

Distribution

Prayer after communion

We thank you, God of compassion, that you have nourished us with the bread of life and the wine of hope.
As in Christ your love flowed out to those around him, so let your love flow through us to others.
As in Christ your life was broken, so let your life meet us in our brokenness and release hope in us and others, through Jesus, the risen Christ, our hope and our life.
Amen

[Hymn 528 HFTC Guide me, O my great Redeemer tune Cwm Rhondda](#)

Benediction

In the spirit of God's unchanging love, live the stories of faith we have heard today.
In the melody of God's song within us, sing the faith we have received this day.
In the hope of God's unfailing help, share the grace we have touched this day.
Go and tell the world how much God has done for us!

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the companionship of the Holy Spirit be with us all

Sung Amen