

FAITH TO CHANGE & PET BLESSING SUNDAY

Psalm 13, 2 Timothy 1:1–14, Luke 17:5–10

We've come to the last of our series of services called the 'Season of Creation' which covers the first four Sundays of Spring. We are stretching it out to five weeks with this Pet-blessing service.

It's the first time I've done the series, and I hope you've found it as interesting and refreshing as I have.

The series reinforces the importance of connecting our Christian faith with 'the care of Creation'. 'The care of creation' being one of the Five Faces of Mission.

The Season of Creation is about meeting God in the unwritten gospel we call 'creation'.

Each week we've been receiving photos of 'serenity' taken by members of our congregation. Thank you again to those who've contributed those photos of peace and God in creation.

For your information the Karearea /NZ Falcon won the Bird of the Year competition for the second time since 2012. The Karearea appears on our \$20 notes if you can't remember what it looks like. Thank you to all the different people who have spoken about various birds during the Season of Creation.

Over the last four Sundays we've focused on the Ocean; Flora and Fauna; Storms and the Cosmos.

On this final Sunday in the Season of Creation we focus on 'faith' and 'trust' in the Goodness of Life – the Goodness of Life that we know as the 'logos' or 'Wairua'. The Goodness of Life that we believe, was revealed in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

Today's three readings offer us a striking blend of emotional honesty, spiritual resilience, and humble discipleship.

Psalm 137

In Psalm 137 we hear the emotional honesty and the raw emotional cry of people in exile: "By the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept when we remembered Zion." (We all know the Boney M version.)

The Psalm speaks of the pain of displacement, the longing for home, and the struggle to remain faithful to treasured values, customs and culture - especially in the face of defeat and colonisation.

Between 597 & 586 BC Babylon, defeated and colonized Judah and Israel, destroying the first Temple and taking the nobles to Babylon as prisoners.

If you are an immigrant, or spent some time living in a foreign land, you will understand a little bit about the raw emotions described in the Psalm. Although all of us are here voluntarily.

Whether you have emigrated from England, Holland, Indonesia, or South Africa, you will always look back to the place you came from. It is your spiritual home if not your actual home.

Samoans describe themselves as being like the white heron who flies with his head turned backwards towards Samoa.

In creation terms, the Psalm echoes the grief of ecosystems that have been disrupted, animals displaced, and communities mourning environmental loss. We know that so many species of animals, birds, fish and plants have become extinct - parts of the Garden of Eden has been lost forever.

I always find the saddest part of Psalm 137 are verses 8 & 9, which express a deep hatred towards Israel's colonizer, Babylon.

⁸O daughter Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us! ⁹Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock!

Many nations including South Africa, the USA, Samoa, China and India and Aotearoa NZ are former British, or German colonies (Samoa).

The temptation (as illustrated in the Psalm) is to despise former and current colonizers.

In Gaza and Israel at the moment. In the Ukraine and in other battle fields around the world, the temptation is to go down the road of hatred and trying to annihilate your enemy.

In sharp contrast, the way of Christ, offers us a better way forward and a better future for the colonized and the former colonizers.

When the way of love and reconciliation is rejected, conflict and hatred will continue unabated, as we are seeing in those places of conflict.

On this Pet-Blessing Sunday we are reminded that animals only kill for food, otherwise they live in peace with other animals. They do not seek the annihilation of others of the same species – that is sadly, human behaviour.

2 Timothy 1:1–14

Our second reading is much more positive. It is about spiritual resilience, courage and faithfulness.

Paul urges Timothy to “rekindle the gift” that was given to him at his conversion - and not be ashamed of suffering for the gospel.

It’s a call to spiritual resilience, grounded in grace and passed down through Timothy’s whakapapa. His mother and grandmother.

⁵I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.

Paul also talks about his own pride in worshipping God as his ancestors did before him.

‘Religion’ as the saying goes, ‘is caught, not taught’. We catch faith from people’s who have a contagious faith. Grandparents, parents, friends, teachers, people who made the faith come alive for us by the way they lived.

I often think of one of my former Professors at Knox Theological Hall , the late Prof Donald Glenny. Don taught Pastoral Theology and Communication of the Gospel. I owe so much to him in the way that I have carried out my ministry, since my ordination. I can say categorically that I am one of his disciples.

Don taught me and all my fellow students about the importance of good pastoral care, good Biblical scholarship, good liturgy and worship, and humble service (among other things). Don had a contagious passion for ministry and passed that on to me and to many others.

I have often wondered if I’d get a pass mark from Professor Glenny - in the way I have performed in ministry.

Maybe you’ve got a mentor, a someone who gave you the gifts of spiritual resilience, courage and faithfulness. Be thankful for that person.

They were St Paul to you. And you were their Timothy. They were your Lois and your Eunice – gifting you with their living faith. You are their disciple.

Luke 17:5–10

In our gospel reading, the disciples ask for more faith, and Jesus responds with a parable about servants doing their duty.

“⁹Do you thank the slave for doing what was commanded? ¹⁰So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, ‘We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!’”

The parable is a reminder that faith is lived out in quiet, consistent acts—not in grand gestures. It’s the unspectacular acts of kindness that make all the difference to the quality of life for us and for others.

On Pet Blessing Sunday, this humility mirrors the lives of animals: faithful companions, silent teachers of how to be present for others, and how to trust in their master(s).

Our pets teach us to be the kind of people who can be relied on. They trust us with their lives. They teach us to be people who can care for creation. They teach us about the God in creation who appears in them.

PRAYER

God of mercy and steadfast love,
You meet us in exile and sorrow,
and plant hope where all seems lost.
Kindle in us the gift of faith—
not grand or boastful,
but humble, grounded, and ready to serve.
Teach us to trust your power in small beginnings,
to remember your compassion in times of grief,
and to live as your faithful servants,
bearing witness to grace beyond measure.
Through Jesus Christ,
who walks with us in suffering and strength,
Amen.