

Call to Worship

Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love, that we may sing for joy and be glad all our days. (Ps 90:14)

Worship in song

Sing hymns and/or worship songs of your choice.

Reading from the Psalms

- Psalm 57

Prayer of confession

God of eternity,
forgive the busyness we choose to make us feel important.
Forgive us the busyness we choose that keeps us from ourselves.
Forgive the busyness we choose that keeps us from deep places
where truth is found and we can hear your voice.

God of new beginnings,
forgive our lack of vision, for allowing ourselves to be chained to the past.
Forgive our cynicism and inertia when you call us to move on.
Forgive our helplessness in the face of why things are
when you have called us to build what might be.

God of love,
forgive us our lusts that dishonour those who are precious to you.
Forgive us our control of others whom you have called to be free.
Forgive us our conditional love
when you call us to love with your safe love. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. (1 Pet 3:18)

Prayer of thanksgiving

Heavenly Father,
we declare our love for you, for you have declared your love for us.
Your love gives us the safety to approach you without fear.
Your love gives us the safety that allows us to hide nothing from you.
Your love gives us the safety to confess our sins and know your forgiveness.

Know Your Mission

Your love gives us the safety of Christ's holiness in which we can put our trust.
Your love gives us the safety to love others in return.
Your love gives us the safety to hope.
You have loved us from the beginning, before we even knew you.
Your love is our safety and our salvation.
We delight in it ...and honour you for it.

Holy Communion

On an evening, two thousand years ago, we hear the tale of two cups. The first was a cup of wine. In ancient Greek, Roman and even Chinese cultures, it was the practice to pour out a libation of wine as an offering to their pagan gods. But on this night, a man who was God, took wine and gave it to his friends. Jesus took the cup, identified the wine in it with the blood that he would shortly shed to pay for the price of your sins and mine, and said, "This is the cup of my blood, drink this all of you." Jesus wanted everyone to share in his sacrifice on their behalf and have their sins blotted out. This was the first cup

The second cup Jesus drank that evening was the cup of suffering (mentioned in every gospel). In Matthew, Mark and Luke's gospel, Jesus prays to his Heavenly Father in the Garden of Gethsemane to take the cup of suffering from him, but then says he is prepared to drink it if it is the Father's will (Mt 26:39; Mk 14:36; Lk 22:42). In John's gospel he simply says, "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" (Jn 18:11). So let's pray:

Lord Jesus, we cannot imagine the anguish of your soul caused by you taking our sins upon you.

You who knew no sin, willingly took the vile abuse meted out by predators of our children. Its evil was distilled, put into a cup ...and you drank that cup".

You who knew no sin, willingly took the degradation and self-obsessed escapism of the addict. Its evil was distilled, put into a cup ...and you drank that cup".

You who knew no sin, willingly took the pleasure addicted selfishness of the careless. Its evil was distilled, put into a cup ...and you drank that cup".

You who knew no sin, took the avarice of the greedy and their destruction of the poor. Its evil was distilled, put into a cup ...and you drank that cup".

You who knew no sin, willingly took the evil of those who delight in cruelty. Its evil was distilled, put into a cup ...and you drank that cup".

You who knew no sin, willingly took the malicious arrogance of those who curse God. Its evil was distilled, put into a cup ...and you drank that cup".

Lord Jesus, we are so grateful that you drank the cup of God's wrath on our behalf.

We are humbled and amazed at the extent of your love for us.

Thank you, Lord Jesus.

The Bible Reading

- Acts 3:1-13

The Message: KNOW YOUR MISSION

I don't know if you have ever had a conversation with someone about whether it is good or bad to live to a great age. Sometimes you hear people say, with some degree of truth, that our priority should be to live fully in the 'now', in the moment.

But it all rather depends on what living in the moment means, doesn't it? What if living for the moment simply means chasing facile entertainment and pleasure, of having fun, fun, fun and entertaining your life away without ever discovering who you are or what purpose is? It would be living in the moment, but it would be dishonouring of your true identity, purpose and sacredness.

Christianity has a 'to' and a 'from'. We are called to be free *from* meaninglessness to meaning. We are called from ungodly behaviour *to* godly behaviour. We are called *from* being accidents of history, *to* being people of destiny. We are called *from* the tyranny of self, *to* the grace of God. We are called *from* simply trying to make life as comfortable and entertaining before we die, *to* being participants in God's purposes. It's a freedom from self, to God.

God has not just designed you for mission on earth. He has designed you for engagement in his purposes in eternity... which our mission on earth prepares us for.

We're on the King's business.

So, the trick is: to find out where Jesus is tracking... and join him there. It is pertinent that in any situation, Jesus knew what God the Father was doing (Jn 4:34; 5:19; 6:38).

We may not have the whole story, but we are responsible for going with what we've got. The writer of Hebrews describes Abram as a man who was looking for an invisible city not made with hands (Heb 11:8-10). We too are often called to follow the pattern of Abram who didn't know where he was going – but went anyway in obedience to God's call.¹

The Spirit of God gives us enough guidance for the moment – and some times only for the moment. We can never pin the Spirit of God down into a tidy ten-year plan. As Jesus says; the Spirit blows wherever it wills (John 3:8).

1 Abram is an interesting model for leadership.:

“Where are you going?”

“I don't know.”

“How are you going to get there?”

“I don't know.”

Stuck in the gate

Because the man was a beggar, he couldn't go in through the beautiful bronze-sheathed Nicanor Gate to worship with the Jewish men and be with God.² He was considered to be too 'unclean' for God because he was too crippled for the world.

Gates define who is in and who is out.

Where are you?

Kind people brought him to the gate. They supplied him with care, but it wasn't enough to transform his life. He needed to encounter Jesus through the ministry of Peter and John. Peter and John came in the power of the new order. They came with Jesus and transformed the beggar, changing the man's history.

There is a sense in which Christian ministry involves two things:

1. Care, i.e. bringing people to the gate
2. Transformation. Introducing people to the transforming power of Jesus.

Note: The responsibility for the beggar's change in circumstances did not rest with the beggar but with Peter and John. In other words, it rests with us who are his disciples.

Christian ministry includes care, but it is more than care.

With a rash of self-improvement sermons in some of our churches masquerading as the gospel, it is pertinent to note that Christian ministry is not 'self improvement' plus a Bible verse. Christian mission is helping people encounter Jesus in a transforming way. It is saying, "I am without resources, but Jesus is not." It is transforming people with Jesus, in his name, at his invitation, in his authority, to his glory.

Our churches should be rescue stations for the broken and lonely. Everybody – particularly broken people, must have access to Jesus through the mission of the church. The front door of the church should be a hospital door. The back door, however, should be that of a troop barracks.

Love and relationships the key

God's ambition is that people might know him. Jesus said:

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent (Jn 17:3).

However, if they are to know God, merely giving truthful information is not enough. We must incarnate the person of Christ. We must show Christ's love and character. This is a key element of making disciples.

² The great eastern gate on top of the semi-circular steps that gave access to the court of Israel (men's court) from the women's court. Nicanor was a rich Alexandrian Jew who paid for the gate.

Know Your Mission

And making disciples is our mission on earth. By all means pray for revival, as long as you don't rely on it to make disciples. Revival is not a tool for discipleship. Discipleship is the tool of discipleship.

Relational ministry

In the Semitic culture of the New Testament, there was a “threshold covenant” which applied when someone came to your door.³ The threshold covenant meant that you were duty bound to offer then your hospitality and protection to a visitor. An even higher level of relationship occurred when a Jewish person invited you to a meal. The giving of bread in the Semitic culture was the giving of life at a very basic level. So, may I ask: Who eats with you at your table? Whoever it is: they are the ones you definitely know God has given you to share Jesus’ grace and truth to.

Family relationships are the context for all discipleship.

Who can explain love? As the writer of Proverbs says, “*The way of a man with a woman – who can explain it?*” (Prov 30:19) It is the great mystery that reflects Christ's relationship with the church (Eph 5:31-32). Whilst it can be ordered and governed, it is something that is unmanageable and unable to be scripted. It is, however, by its very essence, relational.

Each of us therefore needs to ask: “Who is it that has been assigned to me relationally?”

All Christians, particularly Christian leaders, must be sure they have a family mentality, not a factory mentality when it comes to outreach. Genuine love is not optional. The essence of evangelism is not that you are more correct than those you speak with; it is that you care for them.

Your job is not just to sow the seed, but to be the seed. It's show and tell. Show friends that you care... and tell them about Jesus.

Let them see your life as well as hear your truth, so that Christ becomes their lifestyle choice. Open your heart; open your front door and open your fridge.

Prayers for others

Pray with passion for those things God has placed on your heart, remembering the persecuted church, world events, the sick and our leaders.

Benediction

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge - that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. (Eph 3:17b-19)

This service was prepared by Dr Nick Hawkes for HopeNet SA

³ This has relevance to blood being placed on the threshold in the Passover. It was linked to covenant.

KID'S CHURCH or KID'S TALK or SUNDAY SCHOOL

The "Be Happy" attitudes

Matthew 5:1-12

8 "upside down" attitudes that make you truly happy.

Some things you think will make you happy don't make you happy. Jesus teaches that 8 things that you think won't make you happy, will make you happy. They are:

- 1) Being **humble** before God – because God will reserve a special place in heaven for you.
- 2) Having a **sad** heart – because God will comfort you.
- 3) Those who are **meek** enough to serve other – for they will be given great things by God
- 4) Those who really want things to be **right** and fair – for they will eventually get all they wish for.
- 5) Those who are **merciful** – for God will show them mercy.
- 6) For those who are **pure** of bad things in their heart and minds – for they will see God clearly.
- 7) For those who are brave and wise enough to bring **peace** between people, for God will call them his very own children.
- 8) For those who get **persecuted** (teased and attacked for believing in Jesus and living life as Jesus would want you to live it) – for God has reserved a special kingdom for you.

Put the labels on the tips of eight legs of Oscar the octopus. Then turn his sad face into a happy face.