

Call to Worship

Praise the Lord. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever. (Ps 106:1)

Worship in song

Sing hymns and/or worship songs of your choice.

Reading from the Psalms

- Psalm 86:1-11

Prayer of confession

Merciful God, faithful and true, you have kept your covenant of love and acted faithfully whilst we have not.

You have remembered us in our brokenness but we have failed to remember you.

You have not abandoned us when we sinned but we have abandoned you.

You gave us your commandments but have put them behind us.

We have revelled in your great goodness but have rejected your warnings.

As a result, we have become enslaved by sin and are in great distress.

Forgive us and restore us through your covenant of love that we might rejoice in you and give glory to your name. Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (Heb 10:22-23)

Prayer of thanksgiving

Holy God,

You were not content that we lie helpless in the jaws of suffering.

When we cried out in pain despairing of hope and frightened of meaninglessness, you revealed yourself to us as Father the one who will have the last word, the one who has set a time when this present age will be replaced by a new kingdom uncorrupted by sin and suffering.

When we cried out that you did not understand how it felt to be the victim of suffering, you revealed yourself to us as the Son, who experienced the agonies of our life and understands.

When we cried out that we were still helpless to address suffering; you revealed yourself to us as the Holy Spirit, the empowering presence of God, who compels us to address suffering practically wherever we find it.

Lord God, your answer to our suffering is awesome in its integrity, complete in its provision, and wonderful in its hope. Amidst the pain and suffering of life, we thank you and honour your name.

Holy Communion

Jesus was passionate about his people exhibiting the same unity and fellowship with each other as existed between the Father and the Son (Jn 17). The Bible teaches us that the early church devoted themselves to fellowship (1 Jn 2:42). The Greek word for fellowship is koinonia, meaning “community, partnership or fellowship.” Jesus expected his followers to be distinctive in their love, unity and fellowship (Jn 1:35).

To celebrate this fellowship, Jesus instituted a practice amongst his followers of them “breaking bread” together. They would break open a loaf and pass it to each other, giving thanks to God for two things:

The first was that they were all sharing in Christ's body. Everyone was acknowledging that they were beneficiaries of Jesus giving up his body to die in our place and pay the price for our sins. The bread represented Jesus' body given to us. We need to note that bread was not a luxury but a staple food required by people in order to live. Similarly, everyone needs to accept Christ's death for them in order to live eternally. This is why Jesus called himself the bread of life (Jn 6:48).

The second thing they gave thanks for when breaking bread together was their unity in Christ. Each of us share in the one loaf. Each of us are in Christ. Each of us are pieces of the one loaf. As such, Holy Communion is a powerful reminder of our need to be united together in Christ.

Let's eat the bread together and celebrate the sacrifice of Christ for us and our unity in Christ.

(Say a prayer of thanks for the bread and the wine which represents the body and blood of Jesus sacrificed in order to rescue us back to God. Then share the bread and wine together.)

The Bible Reading

- John 15:5-8

The Message: **SHOW GOD'S GLORY**

In the remake of the film *Alfie* directed by Charles Shyer, Alfie, played by Jude Law, ends the film by saying: “I've got everything I want ... but I haven't got peace of mind. And if you haven't got peace of mind, you haven't got anything. ... What's it all about?”

What's it all about? What is life all about? What is our purpose here on earth?

Are we mere the mere accidental by-product of a quantum fluctuation doomed to live out an all-too-brief and meaningless existence, or is there something more?

This was the question that hung unanswered in the immensity of time that came from the lips of billions of people. We busied ourselves inventing philosophies and religions in order to force a significance on the meaningless life... and things remained very muddled until God stepped in to reveal himself and our purpose. When this happened, everything changed. Suddenly, we were being called from meaninglessness to significance

We are being called beyond the imprisonment of self to fulfil a purpose and a destiny that takes us beyond ourselves. When you say "yes" to this adventure, you will have significance. In calling us to share his love and be about God's purposes, God is calling us to significance.

I wonder what it is that God will do through us? What projects will we partner with God in? Each of us need to feel as if we are people of purpose engaged in things that are true and significant – and this is exactly what I invite you to be part of.

Even if we can't physically do everything we'd like to for Jesus, we can enable others to do so by our giving.

It's probably worth a brief excurses at this point on why we give.

We give for two reasons:

1) To grow God's kingdom.

1. Because Jesus says "*Follow me*" in a life of sacrificial love (Lk 9:23). God asks us to share in his mission.
2. To grow our church and a mission we are proud of (Ex 36:2-5; 2 Kings 12:5-12)

2) To grow ourselves.

1. I am reminded that Jesus didn't so much focus on the deserving causes that needed to be given to so much as the spiritual need of a person to give (remember the story of the rich young man in Mark 10:17-23). Each of us has a spiritual need to give, a need that has to do with love, practical service, and freedom from the tyranny of selfishness.
2. We receive when we give. We can't out-give God. It is a biblical principle that our ability to give determines what we will be given (Lk 6:38; 2 Cor 9:6). I'm not suggesting we give simply because we are selfish enough to want God to give us back more, but there is a truth in the fact that where we are open and obedient enough to give, such openness also allows us to receive from God.

In the end, we give in response to God's love and to show God's glory.

You may be wondering about the biblical origin of tithing. The practice of tithing (giving a tenth of your income to the church) began with Abram, later known as Abraham, (Gen 14:17-20). Tithing was God's instruction to his people during much of the Old Testament period (Lev 27:30). The practice of tithing was not discouraged by Jesus (Mat 23:23). However, the New Testament replaces the legal necessity to give with an *invitation* to give because of our love for God and our concern for other people (2 Cor 9:7).

In summary, three things should characterise the giving at our church:

- Our giving should be *faithful* (2 Cor 9:6)
- Our giving should be *cheerful* (2 Cor 9:7)
- Our giving to God's work should be seen to be a *privilege* (2 Cor 8:4)

Seize the day. See what God is doing in our day, catch the vision, and share in it!

God wants us to bear fruit in his name, and (amazingly) to share his glory with us. Jesus said that he had given his disciples, "*the glory that you* (the Heavenly Father) *gave me*" (Jn 17:22). We are therefore tasked with the responsibility of showing God's glory.

However, in order to share in God's mission, power and glory, we must give ourselves to God entirely, completely and as a first priority. We cannot withhold our gifts, our finances or our time from God – yet expect God to give us his mission, power and glory. We need to die to self and live for Christ. The apostle Paul said, "*It is no longer I who live but Christ who lives in me*" (Gal 2:20). Jesus put it bluntly, "*if you want to save your life, you must lose it*" (Mt 16:25) i.e. give it to God completely.

The biblical principle is that we will only be fruitful when we are no longer autonomous but "in" Christ. Jesus speaks about this powerfully when he speaks of us needing to be branches which are "in Christ", i.e. branches of the one who gives us life.

(Read Jn 15:5-8)

Look at verse 5. Do you see what it says? Jesus is the vine, and you are to be the branch of that vine, i.e. an integral part of the vine. This means that you are of the same substance and nature as Christ. You have the character of Christ, you have the mission of Christ, you have the holiness of Christ, you have the authority of Christ, and you have the power of Christ.

Do you see God's plan in this? God's plan is that you "*bear much fruit*". God is a God who seeks abundance. God's purpose is that you multiply yourself in making other disciples of Christ. Matthew 28:19-20 makes it clear that we are to make disciples of "*all nations*". That's the fruit God is looking for. God the Father wants to restore his dominion over creation and reconcile all of creation back to himself through Christ.

In verse 6, we see a graphic warning to beware of trying to be religious without Christ. However religious you are, if we choose not to recognise Jesus who reconciles us back to God – then we are throwing God's love back in his face and are trying to find our way to God on our own terms. This verse says that to do that is to be like a branch that is disconnected from the vine (Jesus), and therefore withers and dies. The warning is also given that those areas of your life that fail to bear fruit will be considered to be worthless. As such, they will be cut off and thrown into the fire.

However, for those who are "in Jesus" are the true disciples – the fruitful ones. They are the ones that show God's glory.

Verse 7 makes it plain that great power and great consequences follow as a result of us choosing to remain "in" Jesus. The consequence is that we will share in God's power. It will mean that the wisdom, truth, authority, and power

of God will flow into you as vitally as life-giving sap flows into a branch enabling it to bear fruit.

Verse 8 teaches us what Christ's motive is for us bearing fruit. Jesus' motive for us bearing fruit is that we bring glory to the Father. Jesus says, “*This is to my Father's glory that you bear much fruit*” – not just a little bit of fruit - “much” fruit. God is glorified when we show ourselves to be his Son's disciples by bearing “much” fruit. God is honoured when we are abundantly fruitful.

So, let's give ourselves, our abilities, our identity, our time, our finances, our imagination, our humour, our creativity – everything we are, to Jesus – so that he might flow his life through us and make us fruitful.

God expects his people to show his glory. He expects you to. So, let's not withhold anything from God but allow him to achieve what he wants through us.

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

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:6-7)

This service was provided to HopeNet SA by Dr Nick Hawkes

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

"No worries"

Matthew 6:25-34

Introduce yourself to the children by saying that today you are pretending to be someone who is called "Mr Worry Wart" (WW).

Go on to say that as Mr Worry Wart, you spend a great deal of time worrying. You may like to ask the children what sorts of things they worry about. Go on to explain all the things that you worry about. Ham it up a bit. Make it fun.

Say that you worry that someone will drop a piano out of a window on you (put on a bike helmet); you worry that you might fall into the river (put on a life-vest or buoyancy aid); you are worried that you might get cold (put on a coat); you are worried that you might get stuck in a lift and so may need a ladder (pick up some step ladders).

Organise for an accomplice leader to dialogue with you, saying something like this:

Leader: "Mr. Worry Wart, are you enjoying yourself?"

Mr. WW "No, my life is full of fear and worry."

Leader: "Why don't you come outside and have a game of football with us?"

Mr. WW "I can't do anything I enjoy because I have to try and protect myself from all my worries."

Go on to teach the children what God teaches about worry. Read Matthew 6:25-34 and discuss what it means practically about how they should live and think.