

Lockdown Worship



Week beginning Sunday 3 October 2021

This week's reflection is prepared for you by Jill Kayser

I CALL HEAVEN AND EARTH
TO WITNESS AGAINST YOU TODAY,
that I have set before you
LIFE AND DEATH,
THE BLESSING AND THE CURSE.
THEREFORE CHOOSE LIFE,
that you may live,

YOU AND YOUR DESCENDANTS;
TO LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD,
TO OBEY HIS VOICE,
AND TO CLING TO HIM;
FOR HE IS YOUR LIFE,
AND THE LENGTH OF YOUR DAYS;

DEUTERONOMY 30:19-20



**Let's pause
and reflect:**

How have we
chosen to honour
God this week?

Let's pray: Lord, our love for you is great! Today we come to worship remembering Your love for us, a love that we are called to be a part of as we choose to live in Your way. We come offering ourselves as co-creators in Your world. Empower and equip us today and each day to live and love as You love us.

As we reflect on our past week and take stock of our part, what we have done and not done, let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us.

Our Father in Heaven, holy be your name. Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Do not put us to the test, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever, Amen!

Scripture to reflect on: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

¹⁵ See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. ¹⁶ For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

¹⁷ But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, ¹⁸ I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

¹⁹ This day I call the heavens and the earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live ²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

This passage is the conclusion of Moses' farewell address to the Israelites. They are on the plains about to cross over the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. After being rescued from slavery, after learning to trust in God's faithfulness, after the ups and downs of good choices and bad choices, after 40 long years in the wilderness, they are about to step into what has been promised all along - a place of their own to call home.

Moses imparts some very important instructions for them before completing his life's work of freeing his people as a nation committed to reflecting God's image in their new land. He stresses the importance of the Israelites living as God would have them live. He makes a passionate appeal to his people to obey God's laws and commandments referring no doubt to the Ten Commandments set out to preserve relationship with God and with one another' and importantly he refers to the 'summary' of the law - **love God with all your heart, mind, strength.** To choose life, suggests Moses, is to love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.

Choosing a life that is inspired by our love for God and our desire to hear His voice and hold fast to him is a choice presented to each of us every day over and over again.

As I awake each morning to the sound of the Tuis singing, I start my day by thanking God for another night of sleep and protection and commit my day to serving and honouring him. This doesn't mean I don't have moments in my day where I fail to hear Him or hold fast to His way.

However the good news is that God chooses us every day and every moment to be His beloved child. We are God's chosen one from the moment we are conceived (if not before....) *"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart....I appointed you...."*

God's love for us is never ending. It reminds me of the children's story "The Runaway Bunny" by Margaret Wise Brown where the bunny keeps running away from his mummy but his mummy reminds him over and over: *"if you run away, I will run after you, for you are my little bunny and I am your mummy."*

We all have times in our lives where we choose to step away from God, from what we know is right or good. But that doesn't separate us from God. God will never leave or forsake us. And fortunately the choice to move away from the goodness of God is never final, just like the prodigal son, there is always an invitation to return home to Him. As it says in the Jesus Storybook Bible: *"God loves you with a never stopping, never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever Love."*



So today as we face yet another week of lockdown let's choose life? Let's 'step into' things that give 'life' - love, joy, peace, hope, faith, friendship, connection, health, fitness, meaning, contribution, justice. And let's shun the things that take life away - hate, fear, despair, conflict, violence, disconnection, greed, injustice, holding onto a grudge, getting one up over someone else.....

Let's pay attention to our choices. When we are feeling down or grumpy let's choose to get out into the fresh air, or phone a friend. When we become overwhelmed by the bad news all around us let's turn off our screens and spend some time in silence, or read a book or have a nap. Consciously choose to do things that give us life.

The challenge Moses laid out for those Israelites as they stood on the threshold of the Promised Land still speaks to us today.

Choose life! Love God, follow God's teaching, stay connected to the source of all life because it is in this that you will find that which is life for you and for those all around you as well. Pursue Life. Chase it down. Engage in it daily, there are many ways for you to do it. May you know God's spirit is in you, holding you and cheering you on.

Prayers for ourselves and others:



Dear God,

We come to you in our separate bubbles, knowing we are united by Your love.

We come to you thanking you for the safety of our homes, knowing that there are many in this world who do not share a safe country or warm home.

We come to you with anxious hearts for what is happening in our country and the world beyond us. Sometimes we feel so overwhelmed by the bad news we are bombarded with each day via the media. We feel disempowered, not knowing how we can help. Show us a way to be responsive to the needs of the wider world and responsive to the needs all around us. Encourage us to do our best and reassure us

that You, our God, creator, source of life and love will do the rest!

We pray for ourselves and all those living in Auckland struggling with all the realities of being in lockdown - isolation, loneliness, frustration, fear, temptation.

We pray for our leaders who have to make tough and unpopular decisions to protect us.

Open our hearts to the needs around us and inspire us to do small acts of kindness to make a difference.

We come to you in awe and gratitude for the beauty we see around us. For the new bright green shoots on the trees and the blossoms reminding us that spring is here and that all things have their season, and this season of lockdown too will pass.

We come to you in all things. In fear, anxiety, loneliness, desperation, gratitude, thankfulness, joy and love, grateful that we know your spirit is with us now and always. **Amen**

If you would like to offer a reflection during this time where we cannot worship together, please let Jill know. Thank you to those of you who have contributed.



Jill (Transition Ministry Facilitator)

My reflection for today was inspired by a sermon prepared by Rev Dan Spragg from Christchurch.