



ST. JOHN'S ANGLICAN CHURCH
TOORAK
EST. 1859



The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

19 November, 2023
8am Service

Welcome

On behalf of everyone at St. John's, Toorak, a very warm welcome to this church and faith community. St. John's welcomes everyone to all services and events, regardless of age, gender, sexual orientation, race or background. This is a wonderful and historic church, founded in 1859. We are part of the Anglican Church of Australia and a member of the global Anglican Communion, comprised of 80 million people.

Worship

Regular services of worship are held each Sunday at 8am and 10am, and Wednesday at 7pm. All are welcome. Services are followed by times of fellowship over food and drinks to which everyone is also welcome.

Mission

This church actively follows Jesus' command to love God, love one's neighbour and to care for all people. Our clergy and parishioners regularly visit the sick, home-bound, and the dying. We care for the poor and needy through service and charitable giving, through our Opportunity Shop run in partnership with the local Catholic and Uniting churches, and by supporting the work of Anglicare, The Brotherhood of St. Laurence and The Anglican Board of Mission. Our clergy regularly baptise new members of the church, preside at weddings and care for the grieving through our funeral ministry.

Visitors

If you're visiting for the first time please introduce yourself to a welcomer or member of the clergy, and fill out the blue 'Welcome' card found at the end of every pew so we can stay in touch with you.

The Church

The church is decorated in green, the liturgical colour of the season of Pentecost.

Cover Image

Andrei Nikolaevich Mironov, *The Parable of the Talents*.

2013, Oil on canvas.

Ryazan, Russia, Creative Commons.

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge we meet on the Traditional Lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the East Kulin Nations and pay our respect to their Elders past and present.



@stjohnstoorak



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Facebook

THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' Jesus said: 'This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: you shall love your neighbour as yourself.'

KYRIE ELEISON

Lord, have mercy, **Lord have mercy.**
Christ, have mercy, **Christ, have mercy.**
Lord, have mercy, **Lord have mercy.**

CONFESSION

Let us confess our sins in penitence and faith, confident in God's forgiveness.

Silence is kept

Merciful God, our maker and our judge, we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, and in what we have failed to do: we have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves; we repent, and are sorry for all our sins. Father, forgive us. Strengthen us to love and obey you in newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

ABSOLUTION

GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth. Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory. Lord Jesus Christ, only son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world: have mercy on us; you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer. For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, in the Glory of God the Father. Amen.

COLLECT FOR THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

Everliving God, before the earth was formed, and even after it shall cease to be, you are God. Break into our short span of life and show us those things that are eternal, that we may serve your purpose in all we do; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in unity with the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

THE FIRST READING Judges 4.1–10 *read by Angus McLeay*

The Israelites again did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, after Ehud died. So the Lord sold them into the hand of King Jabin of Canaan, who reigned in Hazor; the commander of his army was Sisera, who lived in Harosheth-ha-goiim. Then the Israelites cried out to the Lord for help; for he had nine hundred chariots of iron, and had oppressed the Israelites cruelly for twenty years. At that time Deborah, a prophetess, wife of Lappidoth, was judging Israel. She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgement. She sent and summoned Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali, and said to him, 'The Lord, the God of Israel, commands you, "Go, take position at Mount Tabor, bringing ten thousand from the tribe of Naphtali and the tribe of Zebulun. I will draw out Sisera, the general of Jabin's army, to meet you by the Wadi Kishon with his chariots and his troops; and I will give him into your hand." ' Barak said to her, 'If you will go with me, I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go.' And she said, 'I will surely go with you; nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman.' Then Deborah got up and went with Barak to Kedesh. Barak summoned Zebulun and Naphtali to Kedesh; and ten thousand warriors went up behind him; and Deborah went up with him.

Hear the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

THE PSALM Psalm 123 *said*

To you I lift up my eyes:
you who are enthroned in the heavens.

As the eyes of servants look to the hand of their master:
or as the eyes of a maid toward the hand of her mistress,

So our eyes look to the Lord our God:
until he shows us his mercy.

Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us:
for we have had our fill of derision.

Our souls overflow with the mockery of those at ease:
and with the contempt of the proud.

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it
was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen.

THE SECOND READING 1 Thessalonians 2.1–13 *read by Anthony Rose*

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When they say, 'There is peace and security', then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labour pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then, let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

Hear the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

We stand or remain standing and face the Gospel as it is read

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to St. Matthew.
Glory to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

‘For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master’s money. After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, “Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, “Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.” Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, “Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.” But his master replied, “You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

For the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.**

THE SERMON The Assistant Curate, The Revd Lydia Thangadurai

THE NICENE CREED *said together, standing*

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven: was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified, who has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE *led by Clergy*

The Prayers end with the following

Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers. Grant that what we have asked in faith, we may by your grace receive, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE PARISH NOTICES

THE GREETING OF PEACE *standing*

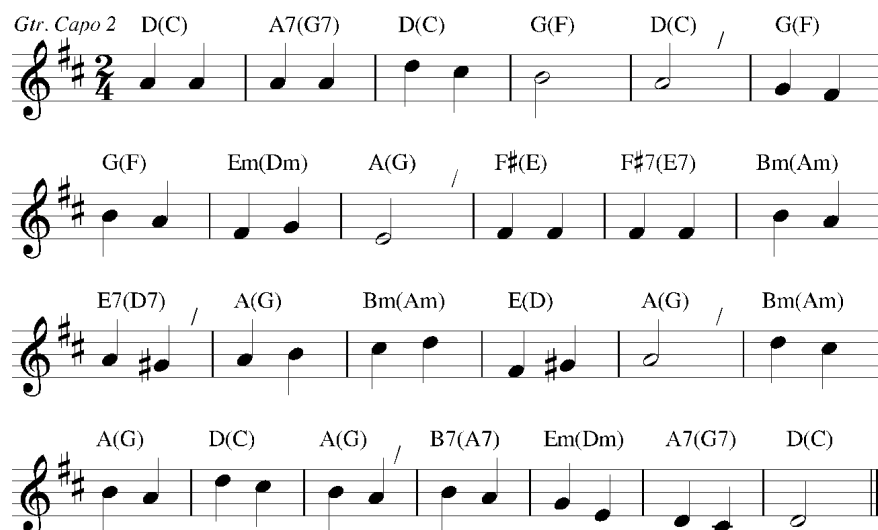
We are the body of Christ. His Spirit is with us.

The peace of the Lord be always with you. And also with you.

All share with each other a 'COVIDsafe' sign of peace

OFFERTORY *As the gifts of bread and wine are brought forward, a monetary collection for the life of St. John's is taken. Please give by contributing to the collection plate, or at the paypoint at the rear of the church*

OFFERTORY HYMN 'Praise, my soul, the king of heaven'



1. Praise, my soul, the king of
heaven;
to his feet your tribute bring;
ransomed, healed, restored,
forgiven,
who like me his praise should
sing?
Praise him, praise him,
hallelujah,
praise the everlasting king!
2. Praise him for his grace and
favour
to his people in distress;
praise him still the same for ever,
slow to chide, and swift to bless:
praise him, praise him,
hallelujah,
glorious in his faithfulness!
3. Father-like he tends and spares
us;
well our feeble frame he knows;
in his hands he gently bears us,
rescues us from all our foes:
praise him, praise him,
hallelujah,
widely as his mercy flows!
4. Frail as summer's flower we
flourish,
blows the wind and it is gone;
but while mortals rise and perish
God endures unchanging on.
Praise him, praise him,
hallelujah,
praise the high eternal one!
5. Angels, help us to adore him,
you behold him face to face;
sun and moon, bow down before
him,
dwellers all in time and space:
praise him, praise him,
hallelujah,
praise with us the God of grace!

Henry Francis Lyte 1793–1847 *alt.* based on
Psalm 103

PRAYER FOR RECEIVING THE OFFERTORY

Blessed are you, Lord, God of all creation. Through your goodness we have these gifts to share. Accept and use our offerings for your glory and for the service of your kingdom. **Blessed be God forever.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

All remain standing

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

The Great Thanksgiving Prayer continues to the following

Therefore, with angels and archangels, and with all the company of heaven, we proclaim your great and glorious name, for ever praising you and saying:

SANCTUS

**Holy, Holy, Holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory, Hosanna in the highest.**

BENEDICTUS

**Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

The Great Thanksgiving Prayer continues to the following

...Let us proclaim the mystery of faith
Christ has died, Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

The Great Thanksgiving Prayer ends with the following

... now and for ever.
**Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever.
Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

As our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are confident to pray
**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us
from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the
power, and the glory are yours now and for ever. Amen.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

We break this bread to share in the body of Christ. We who are many are
one body, **for we all share in the one bread.**

AGNUS DEI

**Jesus Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION *kneeling or standing*

This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Blessed are
those who are called to his supper. **Lord, I am not worthy to receive you,
but only say the word, and I shall be healed.**

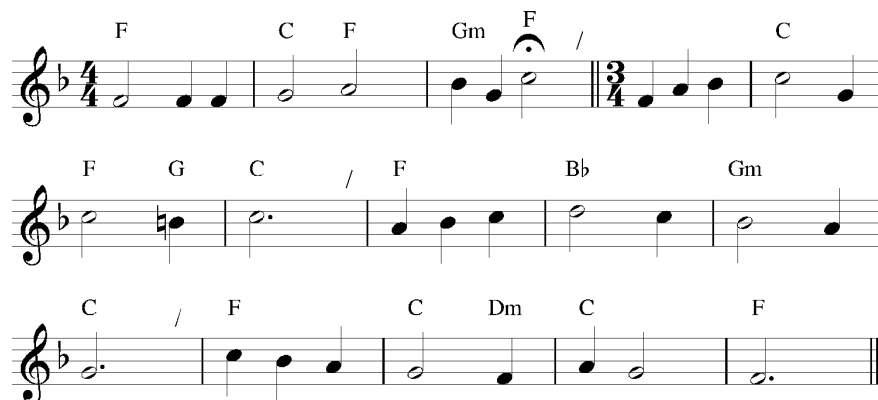
ADMINISTRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*All baptised Christians are welcome to receive Holy Communion. Communion is available as consecrated
bread, which is given to each person, and wine which may be drunk from the chalice. A separate chalice for
intinction (dipped) is also provided. If you would prefer a blessing, please come forward and indicate this by
keeping your arms behind your back. Gluten free wafers are available on request.*

POST COMMUNION PRAYER *Please stand. The prayer ends with the following*

**Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus
Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and
work to your praise and glory.**

FINAL HYMN 'Forth in your name, O Lord, I go'



1. Forth in your name, O Lord, I go,
my daily labour to pursue,
you, Lord, alone resolved to
know,
in all I think, or speak, or do.

2. For you delightfully employ
all that your bounteous grace has
given,
and run my course with even joy,
and closely walk with you to
heaven.

Charles Wesley 1707–88 *alt.*
(TiS 571)

BLESSING

DISMISSAL

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **In the name of Christ. Amen.**

POSTLUDE *Trumpet Tune*

Gilbert Martin (b 1941)

As the postlude is played please remain seated or leave quietly



Order of Service from *A Prayer Book for Australia* 1995. Broughton Books by E.J.Dwyer (Australia) Pty Ltd, Unit 13, Perry Park, 33 Maddox Street, Alexandria, NSW 2015. © 1995, The Anglican Church of Australia Trust Corporation. With the Liturgical Psalter, Inclusive Language Version English text © 1995 by David L Frost, John A. Emerton, Andrew A Macintosh. Hymns from *Together in Song Australian Hymn Book II*. © The Australian Hymn Book Pty Ltd 2006. Registered Office 14 Martin Place (Level 17) Sydney 2000. Used with permission. C.C.L.I Licence number 669476. All readings from scripture are taken from The Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

CURRENT NOTICES

TODAY November 19, 11.30am Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Parish, following the 10am Service.

Supporting the suffering in the Holy Land through our Anglican Agencies

Donations can be made here

<https://www.abmission.org/appeals/emergency-appeals/al-ahli-hospital-emergency-appeal/> And here:

<https://anglicanoverseasaid.org.au/our-work/occupied-palestinian-territories/>

Stewardship at St. John's for 2023/2024

Thank you to all parishioners who have made their pledges in support of the life and ministry of our church. If you have not done so as yet, please pick up the forms in the narthex or email Alicia at enquiries@saintjohnstoorak.org or call on 9826 1765.

The Vicar

Director of Music and Organist, Mr. Christopher Cook to Resign, January 2024

Sunday January 28, 2024, will be Chris Cook's last Sunday at St. John's as Director of Music and Organist. Chris continues to make an outstanding contribution to the life of our church through his superb musical talent, liturgical sensitivity, leadership of our choir and pastoral sensitivity and insight. St. John's will miss Chris very much when he leaves us at the end of January next year, after nine terrific years as our Director of Music and organist.

November 8 - 21, 10am - 3pm Kinross Christmas Craft Market at Toorak Uniting

Start your holiday shopping early while showing your support for local makers.

Mon - Fri & Sun, 10am - 3pm. 603 Toorak Rd, Toorak. Flyers in the Narthex.

November 26, Service of Baptism and Confirmation, 10am

Celebrate with Nathan Chin, Thomas Mackenzie, Hsinhui Huang, Sofia Magree, Mory Poodineh, being confirmed, and Evaan Filippov and Evanka Filippova being baptised, at this service with our Bishop, The Rt. Revd Genieve Blackwell. Please remember them in your prayers as they embark on this next step in their faith journey.

December 2, 9am-2pm, Country Women's Association Christmas Fare

It's on again! CWA are selling their very popular *Christmas Cakes, Mince Pies, Puddings, and Shortbread*. If you love a good scone and a cuppa, join them for a Devonshire Tea being served in the beautiful Edna Walling garden (weather permitting). There will be a variety of Christmas themed stalls, making this the perfect opportunity to do some Christmas gift shopping. 3 Lansell Rd, Toorak.

December 2, 10am-1pm, Advent Quiet Morning

Some of you attended the Advent Quiet morning in our church last year and we are again offering an opportunity to reflect on how we prepare ourselves during Advent for Christmas, the festival of the nativity of Christ. Revd Dr Wendy Crouch will lead the morning in which there will be a mix of short guided reflections interspersed with individual reflection times in the church or garden. Morning tea will be provided. Please notify the office on 9826 1434 or enquiries@saintjohnstoorak.org if you would like to attend. A sign-up sheet is available in the narthex today and Wendy is available to answer any questions about it. All are welcome, and especially those for whom this might be a new and interesting experience.

December 2, 1.30pm - 3.30pm, Advent Preparation of the Church

Come and join in as we prepare the church for Advent, with a spruce up of the church and the setting up of the unadorned trees and wreaths. All help willingly received! Sign up [here](#) or in the narthex.

December 2 & 3, Trinity College Annual Carols Services

The Choir of Trinity College will sing two services of carols on December 2 and 3, at Trinity College. Both services commence at 5pm. Bookings essential here: www.trybooking.com/CLVCE Enquiries: events@trinity.unimelb.edu.au

The Ecumenical Candle

In front of the lectern our ecumenical candle is lit. This is the candle which moves from each member church of the Toorak Ecumenical Movement, the Catholic, Swedish, Anglican and Uniting Churches, to symbolise our unity in Christ. The word 'ecumenical' comes from the ancient Greek word 'oikumene,' meaning 'the whole (inhabited) earth,' and simply means churches who come together to better understand each other and to live into Christ's call for all his followers 'to be one.' St. John's has been a proud member of the Toorak Ecumenical Movement for all its 43 years of existence.

REGULAR NOTICES

Safeguarding and Wellbeing

St. John's is committed to safeguarding all people and protecting their wellbeing, including young and vulnerable people, especially Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, and children with diverse needs. All relevant staff and volunteers are trained in child safety and have appropriate clearance for service or clearance for ministry. If you have any concerns about the wellbeing of children in this parish, contact Kooyoora on 1800 135 246 or www.kooyoora.org.au. If you have concerns about your wellbeing or that of another churchgoer please contact the clergy.

Pastoral Care

Clergy and members of the St John's Pastoral Care Team offer pastoral care on a regular basis to parishioners as well as to those who specifically request it. This may include Home Communion. They also visit local hospitals at the request of patients, family, friends or staff with the consent of the recipient. Clergy and Lay Pastoral Carers visit a number of local Aged Care facilities on a regular, usually monthly, basis. Parishioners and others are welcome to phone the church office to arrange a home visit by the clergy or a lay pastoral carer. Those who are no longer able to attend usual services at the church are visited on a regular basis at time intervals that suit them.

The Melbourne Anglican (TMA) and Prayer Diary

The latest edition of TMA is [here](#). The link to the November Prayer Diary is [here](#).

Contribute to Worship Services

All our ministries at St John's are supported by our wonderful volunteers. The roster for November is available [here](#). And you will note that volunteering for morning tea has now been added to the list of duties. If you can help fill any of the gaps please contact the parish office. Thanks in advance.

Communion Instructions

All are welcome at the altar and those baptised are welcome to receive Communion. Holy Communion is distributed via a chalice from which to sip or, a separate chalice into which the bread may be intincted (dipped). If you wish to simply receive the bread only that is perfectly appropriate. A blessing only is also available.

Zoom Link

Our 10am Sunday service is streamed here:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87520014330?pwd=VFNaRGFaSzAzSmcrSEZuK1lkVzFDQT09>

Meeting ID: 875 2001 4330 Passcode: 670339

Prayer Requests

Prayer requests can be sent to prayers@saintjohnstoorak.org. The clergy check emails for prayer requests daily, and pray in solidarity with anyone who would like prayers said for them.

Clergy Days Off

Our clergy have one regular day off per week. Our Assistant Curate Lydia has Monday and Vicar Peter has Friday. Wendy usually works Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday only. Please respect their time away from work and unless in an emergency, please refrain from telephoning, texting, visiting the Vicarage, or emailing them on these days. Thank you.

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

A Prayer for the Holy Land

O God of all justice and peace, we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land. Be with those who need you in these days of suffering; we pray for people of all faiths – Jews, Muslims and Christians and for all people of the land. While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end to violence and the establishment of peace, we also call for you to bring justice and equity to the peoples. Guide us into your kingdom where all people are treated with dignity and honour as your children – for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

From the Anglican Cycle of Prayer: All Souls' Anglican Church Sandringham (Jeremy Watson, Samantha White); The Church of the Province of Myanmar (Burma); The Diocese of Bunbury (Bp Ian Coutts, Clergy & People); Defence Force Chaplains; St Thomas, Winchelsea – pastoral visit (Bp Brad Billings); St John's Frankston North and St Luke's Carrum Downs – pastoral visit (Bp Paul Barker); St Michael's and St Luke's North Dandenong – pastoral visit (Bp Paul Barker); St Augustine's Church and St Hilary's Network Church Mont Albert North – pastoral visit (Bp Kate Prowd); All Saints' Rosebud – pastoral visit (Abp Philip Freier);

For those who lead us in Government: His Majesty King Charles III; Governor General David Hurley AC; Prime Minister Anthony Albanese; Federal Member of Parliament for Division of Higgins, Dr. Michelle Ananda-Rajah; and Premier of Victoria, Jacinta Allan.

For Reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians: For Aboriginal Anglican clergy and lay-leaders around Australia, their spiritual health and physical well-being, and the people they care for. For Aboriginal and Government leaders and their work together.

For The Toorak Ecumenical Movement: Our partner churches, St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church, Toorak Uniting Church, and The Swedish Church.

For The Anglican Board of Mission, The Brotherhood of St. Laurence, and Anglicare.

For schools in our parish: Geelong Grammar School Toorak Campus, Head of Campus Nicole Ginnane; St Catherine's School, Principal Michelle Carroll; and Toorak Primary School, Principal Julie Manallack.

For Australian Defence Force personnel their families, their chaplains and Bp. Dibden, their Bishop.

For the sick and all in need: Gwen; Bruce; Sam; Margaret; Nichole; Joanna; Ivan; Anthea; David; John; Tim; Joan; James; Karen and Trisha.

For those in aged care and those who are housebound: Rosie; Beverley; Val; Rosalind; Anne; Elizabeth; Trevor, and Sue.

Give thanks for those whose Anniversary of Death is this week: Tim Swann (2022); Jeanette Viney (2020); Pamela Fraser (2019); Dorothy Hughes (2017).

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY

Judges 4:1-7

Joshua is dead; Israel is now under the influence of 12 successive judges, charismatic leaders raised up at times of national crisis by the spirit of God, to deliver God's people from pagan oppressors. Judges honestly admits that Israel does not control all of the Canaan; because they "did what was evil in the sight of the LORD" (v. 1, 3:12 and elsewhere), they were subjugated by other peoples from time to time. Conquest was a gradual process, with many reverses.

The preceding passage, 3:12-30, tells the story of "Ehud" (4:1), a judge, a national hero who put an end to domination by the Moabites, the people who lived to the southeast of the Dead Sea. He carried the tribute to Eglon, King of Moab. He tricked Eglon into seeing him in private to hear a secret message from God. Ehud took his concealed sword and assassinated Eglon. Without a leader, the Moabites were in confusion; Ehud was then able to lead the Israelites to victory over the Moabites. God sometimes works in strange ways!

Once again the Israelites disobey God, and so are subjugated: this time by "Jabin" (v. 2), a king who rules at "Hazor" (north of the Sea of Galilee); "Sisera" is his chariot commander. The forces of Jabin are awesome, especially because the Israelites, lacking chariots, are no match for his army on level ground. "Deborah" (v. 4), the fourth of the judges, is different from others: she acts as God's spokeswoman in matters of national importance and societal disputes ("judgement", v. 5) but leaves military leadership to "Barak" (v. 6). She orders him, in God's name, to assemble troops drawn from northern tribes ("Naphtali" and "Zebulun") on Mount Tabor. There, God will "draw out" (v. 7) the enemy, and will give Israel victory. The following verses describe the battle. Due to a heavy rainstorm or to the "Kishon" river overflowing its banks (or to both), Sisera's chariots become mired in the mud, and his troops panic. Sisera and all his troops are killed. Israel is once again free.

Psalm 123

This is a prayer for deliverance from enemies. Vv. 1-3 speaks of humble submission to God's will (note "servants" - "masters" and "maid" - "mistress", v. 2). We look with our "eyes" to God, seeking his "mercy" (v. 3). The speakers (Israel or an oppressed group within Israel) seek God's help, his mercy, having had their fill of "contempt" (v. 4), "scorn" of the powerful, and derision.

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Paul has just told the Thessalonian Christians that, at the end of the age, both the faithful who have already died and those still alive will ascend to heaven to be with God for ever. Now, he says, concerning when Christ will come again, you are well aware that he will come suddenly and unexpectedly ("like a thief in the night", v. 2). Others who are lulled by the "peace and security" (v. 3) will be separated from God for ever ("sudden destruction"), as suddenly as a "woman" comes into labour; God's condemnation of them will be inescapable.

Then, in vv. 4-8a, he exhorts his readers to moral vigilance. Being “children of light”, (i.e. united with Christ, the light of the world), they will not be surprised by Christ’s second coming. So let us not become careless and sinful (“fall asleep”, v. 6) as others do, but let us be prepared. Let us have the sobriety of people who have peace of mind through trust in God. Sleep and drunkenness are attributes of children of darkness, those who ignore or oppose God’s ways.

We are, (here he uses a military image) to possess the Christian virtues of “faith” (v. 8), “love” and “hope” – the certain hope of “salvation”; these virtues protect us from evil. For God has preordained (“destined us”, v. 9) that we are saved through Christ rather than being damned eternally (“wrath”). Jesus rescues us from sin, so that, whether we are alive (“awake”, v. 10) or physically dead (“asleep”) when he comes again, we will live with him in heaven. Finally, he advises his readers to “build up” (v. 11) each other, to support each other spiritually: here he sees the church as the temple of God under construction; the builder is God, and Christians can participate in the work.

Matthew 25:14-30

Jesus continues to tell parables about the kingdom of heaven. In the previous parables, he has told us that we need to be prepared for the Second Coming at all times. Today’s parable is set in the realm of finance. A master, before leaving on a journey, entrusts his slaves with his money, “each according to his ability” (v. 15). (A talent was about 15 years’ wages for a labourer, a large sum of money.) Two servants invest the money and earn more (vv. 16, 17); the third simply buries it (v. 18). When the master returns (v. 19), he praises the investors; they, he says, will be made responsible for “many things” (vv. 21, 23), and will “enter into the joy of your master”. But the third slave, admitting that he was afraid of his master’s wrath (v. 24), simply returns the original sum (v. 25). The master chastises him for his wickedness and laziness. This slave loses what he has been given (v. 28) and is condemned to “outer darkness” (v. 30). This would have caused a stir in Jesus’ day, for a rabbinic maxim commends burial of money as a way of protecting it.

But this parable is about the kingdom of heaven, so what is the lesson it teaches? “Weeping and gnashing of teeth” (v. 30) is a stock phrase for condemnation of the wicked at the Last Day. The master stands for God and the servants for various kinds of people. Yes, God both rewards generously and is a stern judge. He expects us to be good stewards of his gifts. We will be commended and rewarded for faithfully carrying out his mission. Failure to use what he gives us will result in punishment – by separation from him, the essence of goodness. We are expected to make his gifts grow. He is free to distribute them as he sees fit (vv. 28-29)

ART COMMENTARY

Andrei Nikolayevich Mironov is a contemporary Russian artist, known mainly for his portrait paintings, and occasional forays into religious painting. Mironov's religious works are often described as unusual or 'weird'; this may be in part due to his being self-educated in painting. He has developed his own, highly classical style of painting religious subjects, such as the artwork we are looking at today *Parable of the talents*. The slave stares intently at the precious 'talents' given to him by his master, the angle of his face and the warm light of the lantern drawing the viewer into the scene. You can almost hear the slave's thoughts, as he ponders how best to care for these talents.

The intimate scene is the result of Mironov's many years painting portraits and reflecting upon the thoughts of his subjects. It could almost be viewed as a self-portrait into his own reflections upon religion and his own preparation for the Second Coming.

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ST. JOHN'S
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This Week

SUNDAY, 19 November, 2023
Twenty-Fifth Sunday after Pentecost
8am Said Eucharist
10am Sung Eucharist
11.30am Annual Meeting

WEDNESDAY, 15 November, 2023
7pm Eucharist, Angel Chapel



Next Sunday, 26 November Christ the King

8am Said Eucharist

First Reading: *Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24*, Molly Bull
Second Reading: *Ephesians 1:15-23*, Vivienne Randall
Gospel Reading: *Matthew 25:31-46*
Intercessor: Angus McLeay
Preacher: The Revd Dr Wendy Crouch
Celebrant: The Revd Lydia Thangadurai

10am Sung Eucharist

First Reading: *Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24*, Andrew Ankers
Second Reading: *Ephesians 1:15-23*, Richard Uglow
Gospel Reading: *Matthew 25:31-46*
Intercessor: Keith Beecher
Preacher: Bishop Genieve Blackwell
Celebrant: The Revd Dr Peter French

Morning tea: Jenny Smith & Helen Ballantyne

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