

Church Service by Distance 13 September 2020 St Andrews Presbyterian Church Manurewa

I will host a zoom meeting from 9.45am to 10am just to say “Hi” in the same way as we see each other before church. So if you want to have a quick talk before the service you can join the zoom meeting. Then at 10am, for those who have joined zoom, I’ll give a welcome and call to worship and prayer (the same as below). Then you can carry on with the service on your own or with others in your household.

To join the zoom meeting before or after the service, there are 4 options:

1. Download the zoom app on your smartphone or computer from zoom.us, open the zoom app, tap/click “join meeting” and enter the meeting ID number 6914250355 and password 123.
2. Use your smartphone or computer and open a web browser and go to: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/6914250355> and enter password 123.
3. Use a landline phone: Dial 8846780 then when prompted press the meeting ID number which is 6914250355, then press # then when prompted press 123#.
4. Use a mobile phone: Dial 098846780 then when prompted press the meeting ID number which is 6914250355, then press # then when prompted press 123 #.

If you don’t want to join in with zoom, just read through the below...

Sunday Service

Welcome and call to worship

Welcome to St Andrews church service by distance. Although we are scattered around the community, each individual or family in their home, we are still one in Christ, and we are gathered in a sense as we worship God together. Let’s commit this time to the Lord.

Prayer

Let’s pray.

Lord we pray for everyone who joins in with this distance service in their homes today. We pray that you would enable us to concentrate on the words we sing and hear and that our worship would honour and magnify your name. In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Song

Please check your volume level and click on the link for our opening song (and skip ads if they come up.) Whether you are by yourself or with others, sing along, or just think about the words as they are sung.

This I Believe <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuDI-sk2nJU>

Notices

NZ Election Information

Very soon, we will have the general election and the two referendum questions. Family First has put together a publication that has an article on how MPs voted in the past on the key family issues, an article called '20 Reasons to Vote no to Cannabis in 2020', and an article called '20 Reasons to Vote no to Euthanasia in 2020'. Click the link to see the pdf:

<https://valueyourvote.org.nz/2020-general-election/docs/VALUE%20YOUR%20VOTE%202020%20PAMPHLET%20low%20res.pdf>

St Andrews International Dinner

Due to Covid-19, it has been decided to cancel the International Dinner. Even when the restrictions change to allow gatherings again, there is still the issue of having shared food.

Future Church Services

At the moment, Auckland churches are not allowed to meet in person, so please keep an eye out on the news. I will also send an email to say if we are having church by distance or in person at the church building.

AGM Reports

If you are someone who writes a report for the Annual General Meeting, then now is the time to start. This is a report for the period 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

The Blessing Song

Check out this powerful blessing song based on the blessing from Numbers 6 in the bible. It was put together by a huge range of churches across Aotearoa New Zealand. It has had a massive response on Radio Rhema and YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eZQPifs2kjo>

Offering

Giving to the Lord and to the Lord's work at St Andrews is part of our worship. You can give to St Andrews through internet banking as a one-off payment or by AP as a regular payment. The church bank account number is 06-0359-0201482-00. If you want a tax receipt for your donation, please include your name or envelope number in the reference field. Alternatively, you can hold on to your offering until we are back meeting in person.

Songs

Again, whether you are by yourself or with others, sing along, or just think about the words as they are sung so that you are thankful for what the Lord has done for you.

For the next 3 songs, click the below playlist link and it will play 3 songs one after another. (Click "play all" if it doesn't autoplay):

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLGGAxmqq4yrDoEaDZ5BauHb8mMUuXdze>

Kids' talk

If you have children in your house, I encourage parents to read a bible story from your children's bible or download the app called "Bible App for Kids" (See image to the right for what the icon looks like.) Have fun clicking/tapping on stories as well as animals/objects as a story is being told.



For Older Children

There is another free app called "The Big Little Bible" that is put out by the Bible Society. (See image to the right for what the icon looks like.) This app has bible stories with less images and more bible text.



Prayers for Others (Thank you Katrine for providing this prayer)

Gracious and loving Heavenly Father, we thank you for all your goodness and love. In these difficult times help us to look to you and your word. As the Bible says 'We know that all things work together for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purposes.....Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any power, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

While we trust in you, please show us also how to keep ourselves, our families, and communities safe; and follow guide-lines set by our health leaders and government. May you continue to give them wisdom also. May those who have been disappointed and often devastated, by weddings, sports and other events being ruined, turn to you and know your guidance, help and support.

We pray for our congregation, unable to meet in person at present. Help us to keep in contact with one another and support each other. May many families connect with our on-line church services. Please be with Muriel and Alan, and others who are struggling with age and health issues. We pray for continued healing for Eric and your help as they seek residency in N.Z.

Please bless and guide Craig and Tina and family as they seek to lead and help us through these challenging times.

Lord we ask for help for our children, and teenagers who are facing exams after a fractured year. Please guide, motivate and inspire them to do their very best and cope with all their challenges.

Lord, though the world is in turmoil, we continue to seek and trust you. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Bible Reading and Message

There are two ways you can receive the bible reading and message:

1. Read the full script below (If you are with others, you might want to take turns reading aloud).
2. Go to the church website and listen to the podcast: click the below link: <http://sapcmanurewa.org/podcasts.php> then choose the message with today's date.

(Don't forget to come back to this page for the song, benediction, and cuppa and chat.)

Written Sermon:

Luke 8: 26-39

²⁶They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. ²⁷When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. ²⁸When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, "What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!" ²⁹For Jesus had commanded the evil spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

³⁰Jesus asked him, "What is your name?"

"Legion", he replied, because many demons had gone into him. ³¹And they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.

³²A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into them, and he gave them permission. ³³When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

³⁴When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, ³⁵and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ³⁶Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. ³⁷Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

³⁸The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, ³⁹“Return home and tell how much God has done for you.” So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

Let's pray.

Lord, we come to look at this bible story as people of the 21st century. We are conscious that in this age we live in, many are unaware of the spiritual realm; and even some Christians are unsure about demons. So we pray that you would give us insight and understanding to your Word today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Some of you will remember when Adolf Eichmann was captured and tried for engineering the Holocaust. One of the most dramatic moments in that trial occurred when Yehiel Dinur, a Holocaust survivor, entered the courtroom to testify against Eichmann, who had condemned Dinur to a concentration camp many years earlier. When he walked into the courtroom, Dinur suddenly stopped. Then he began to sob uncontrollably -- and then he fainted.

Later, in a "60 Minutes" interview with Mike Wallace, Dinur explained what had happened. He had seen Eichmann sitting there in the courtroom, and had been overwhelmed at the sight. It wasn't that he had been suddenly overcome by fear or hatred. Instead, he was startled to see that Eichmann was not the god-like Nazi officer whom he remembered -- the man who, with a wave of his hand, could save you or sentence you to death. Instead, the Eichmann in that courtroom was just an ordinary-looking old man.¹

We may ask the question, “How can such an ordinary looking man have done so much evil.” Eichmann was a human being – a man created in the image of God – yet he committed such horrific and demeaning acts of violence against other human beings. How could anyone do such things?

Doesn't it make you wonder if this depth of evil was influenced by the spiritual realm of evil? Could it be that an evil spirit had drawn that man along or even possessed him to do such terrible things? If this is so then it doesn't excuse his bad decisions. And it doesn't justify his inhumane behavior. But perhaps including the spiritual realm of evil may help us understand the horror he caused. It makes more sense if we consider the combination of a person's rejection of God, countless bad decisions, and the influence of evil spirits. These combined factors can make a monster of a man.

In our bible reading from Luke 8 we see another monster of a man. Luke describes him as being demon-possessed, not wearing clothes, and living alone at the local cemetery. The demons in this man made him stronger than an ordinary human and he was able to break the chains that bound his hands and feet. He was beyond human control. He was beyond help – humanly speaking. So people gave him a wide berth. They didn't want anything to do with him.

¹ Source: Richard Donovan

But he was not beyond help as far as Jesus was concerned. He was not too powerful or too crazy for Jesus. Beneath the wild and dangerous exterior, Jesus saw a human being, created in the image of God, but tormented by demons. The man was in desperate need of a power that was greater than the forces of evil.

So Jesus takes on the powers of darkness head on, commanding the demons to reveal their name.

“Legion”, came the answer. And Luke tells us that “many demons had gone into him.” In the days of Jesus when Rome was ruling the Holy Land, a Roman legion was six thousand soldiers, quite a substantial number, such that no one would dare to challenge them.

But Jesus challenged the legion of demons. He was not threatened or afraid. Jesus knew the authority that God the Father had given him; and so did the legion of demons. Before Jesus had a chance to do anything except ask their name, Luke tells us that “they begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.” V31

From this point, the story takes an unexpected turn. The legion of demons begged Jesus to allow them to go into a large herd of pigs. And the interesting part is that Jesus actually gave them permission, which in turn resulted in a pig stampede and all the pigs drowning. This turn of events does seem a bit strange and I don't claim to understand it. But I think that if we focus too much on the pigs, then we might miss the point of the story. That is, that a crazy, dangerous, cemetery dwelling, uncontrollable, tormented man gets delivered from the powers of darkness. He gets a fresh start. His life is forever changed. He is now sane and calm and whole and healed.

What a picture of the restoration that Jesus brings! What a picture of the power of God over evil. What a picture of transformation.

Some people today doubt if demons are real or not. They argue that at the time when the bible was written, whenever the people of the day didn't understand something, they put it down to demons. In other words if they couldn't explain something evil then they said it was a demon.

As a bible believing Christian I don't agree with this perspective. The bible is clear that there is a spiritual realm. In the spiritual realm, God is the most powerful being in heaven and earth. And there are also evil spiritual beings. Did Jesus believe in demons? Clearly from this story he did. He had a conversation with the legion of demons. I for one am not going to say that Jesus was deluded.

But don't think of demons as you see them pictured. They are not little red creatures with horns and forked tails. These evil beings were around in the days of Jesus, and they continue to work evil in the world today.

An evangelist working with the German mission agency AVC in Nepal reports “I work in the Gorkha district. I was recently called to a house where a man called Mithe Pandey had been possessed by evil spirits for nine years. His family had done everything they

could to help him; all their savings had been spent on Hindu priests and witch doctors, to no avail. When I entered the house, I told Mithe about Jesus and his transforming power. Touched by God's love, he fell to his knees and gave his life to Jesus. To his family's astonishment, his symptoms - shaking, frothing at the mouth and cursing - vanished instantly. He was completely set free. The result was that his entire family, which had previously strongly opposed Christianity, came to believe in Jesus. There is now a lively church in the village.”²

This is not an unusual situation. All over the world this type of thing is happening including New Zealand. I've seen people set free from evil spirits first hand myself.

Jesus gave his disciples authority over evil. In Mark 16:15-19 ¹⁵He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. ¹⁶Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. ¹⁷And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; ¹⁸they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well."

The disciples did in fact go out and preaching the good news and driving out demons. We see in Acts 5 that ¹²The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. ¹³No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. Acts 5:12-16

Jesus has the power today to save and heal and to cast out demons. These demons or evil spirits are still as real as they were when Jesus encountered them. If you ever see a person who has a demon and is set free by the power of Jesus, then you know it isn't psychological. It is spiritual.

There are very real spiritual forces of evil that battle against us. But the good news is that Jesus Christ has defeated every one of them. Col 2: 15 tells us that at the cross, Jesus triumphed over these powers of evil.

Many people today are afflicted by demons and don't know it. For some it is extreme like the bible story we had. For others it is far less extreme, but it holds these people back from experiencing the fullness of life. The same Jesus who set the demoniac at Geresá free, can work in this world today. Jesus has the power to save and heal and cast out demons.

Jesus works differently in different people. For me, the Lord began working in my heart as a child in Sunday school, when God moved in my heart. Later as an 11-year-old the Lord

² Source: Daniel Hofer, AVC.

spoke to my heart and called me to stop living for myself and to live for him. By God's grace I responded to his call and gave my life over to him. And since then God has brought daily transformation to my heart.

Not everyone has the same conversion experience. Some have more dramatic conversions like this demoniac at Gerasa we read about in the bible. Their lives were going off the rails terribly, but God reached out to them and called them to himself. Some have had habits and addictions healed by God instantly, others have had to work through them slowly. Some have had prayer against the evil forces that have brought them into bondage and have been instantly delivered. Others have had ongoing prayer for the same thing with slower results. But the main thing is that God is working in our hearts, helping us to become more like Jesus, increasing in us the fruit of the Spirit!

In our bible story we saw that when it came time for Jesus to leave the region of the Gerasenes, the man that Jesus had helped was so thrilled by what Jesus had done for him that he wanted to join the team and go along with Jesus. But Jesus had a different plan. Jesus wants him instead to tell his story in his hometown. Everyone would have known about this guy who once was crazy and demon-possessed. And everyone would know very soon about his deliverance and the saga of the pigs. So having the man go and tell his story in person, would be a very compelling witness of the power of God. His life had been radically changed and no one could argue with that.

If you are a true follower of Jesus, then God has changed your life. Probably not as dramatically as the man from our story, but God has done a great work in you. Think about just one or two things that God has changed in you. Has he brought you peace or an increase in joy? Has he taken a weight of guilt and made you feel lighter? Has he given you purpose in life where you once had hopelessness? What was the most significant change for you? What is your story? It's good to have your story clear in your minds and ready to speak at a moment's notice.

Jesus called the man from Gerasa to tell his story. And in the same way, Jesus calls us to tell our story. We don't have to be preach from the pulpit or on the streets, but in our circle of friends and family, pray that God will give you an opportunity to tell your personal story of what God has done for you. Every Christian has a story, and every Christian has the Holy Spirit who gives us the strength to do God's will.

Let's pray.

Heavenly Father you call us to tell our story. Help us to have it clear in our minds. Give us strength by your Holy Spirit and give us opportunities to tell our story. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Song

Below is a link to our final song: Cornerstone

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvLxZEU02uI&list=PLGGAxymm4ypWHOJgJxp-4P8RrQA2ixdd&index=3&t=0s>

Benediction

May God bless you and strengthen you and may God help you to be a blessing to others.

Cuppa and Chat

Before you are tempted to skip this bit, let me encourage you to think about it a minute: We are a church family and part of being family is talking to one another. I encourage you have fellowship with others via zoom right now. We can form small groups in zoom depending on how many join the zoom group. We are geographically away from each other, but we can still connect with one another via the technology available to us. So grab a coffee, and join the social time in one of the four ways:

1. Download the zoom app on your smartphone or computer from zoom.us, open the zoom app, tap/click “join meeting” and enter the meeting ID number 6914250355 and password 123.
2. Use your smartphone or computer and open a web browser and go to: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/6914250355> and enter password 123.
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