

Southside Worship Online

7 June 2020 1st Sunday of Pentecost – Rev. Esteban Liévano

Please go to <https://livestream.com/ggservices/ssuc> to access our worship service. **Families with children are encouraged to use family faith materials Ps Richard Moors has made available.**

Preparing for worship

Find a comfortable space, e.g. around a table or living room, if participating with our Live Worship, gather the bread and juice in preparation for Holy Communion

Gathering with God

We gather the exiled people of Southside Uniting Church,
Not face-to-face, not pew-to-pew,
But gathered in our dispersion in our homes.
We have transformed our places of rest and comfort,
Into sacred spaces where may meet with You, Lord God.
Find us in our homes this day we pray,
Be welcomed into our families,
Into our intimate spaces, Lord,
And may we never forget that we are members of the family of Christ,
That this is Your home also, and You are welcome here!
Amen

Song

Guide me, O Thou Great Jehovah
(TIS 569, William Williams & Peter Williams 1999)

Prayer of Approach & Confession

You are invited to join in this prayer which will be on the video.

Jesus Christ,
We remember that you gathered Your disciples as a family in the Upper Room,
That You shared with them the meal as brothers,
That You dipped your bread in the same bowls with them,
That You shared a cup... (Selah)

That You took the cup of suffering on our behalf,
The same cup you asked the Father, 'if this cup can be taken from me...'
The cup that our sins brought about... (Selah)

That You lifted the bread,
That You broke that bread,
So You would be lifted up in our stead.
So You would become the perfect sacrifice for a sinful world... (Selah)

Lord God, we thank You for Jesus Christ,
For His life and work and for His Sacrifice for us,
And we praise You, God; that we may break bread and take up the cup,
With full knowledge that you forgive our sins
That You redeem Your people, Sovereign God

Hence we say, through Christ our sins are forgiven...
Thanks be to God!
Amen

*Southside Uniting Church acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands on which we gather, the Turrbal and Jaggera peoples and clans, and we pay our respects to the elders past, present and future.
We continue to pray for God's reconciliation of all his children.*

We hear God's Word *Daniel 1:6-20*

Sermon *God is Present in Exile*

Song *Arms Open Wide*
(Sam Knock © 2008 Hillsong Music Publishing Australia)

Offering

Take a moment to set aside your offering to God's mission and pray a prayer of blessing over it.

Prayers of the People

Lord God,
In these times of great change and uncertainty, we call upon Your name.
We pray for our Southside Community, the people who live between the Gateway and the River,
The ones who once worshipped on four sites bound by tradition, denomination, legacy and hope.
The ones who now call on your name in their exile from their spiritual homes,
We pray Your blessings on our dispersed community and look with joy for the day when we gather again.
We pray for all those who suffer in their isolation at this time,
For those who go without the services and connection they once enjoyed,
For those who relied on community support and are now homebound,
Father God, pour out your peace and hope upon these, Your children,
And may they know that this season will also pass.
We pray for our frontline soldiers,
The ones who wear hospital scrubs and surgical masks,
The ones who drive their vehicles with meals and care packages for those who need them,
The ones who now have the added concern of this virus on top of their already hazardous service to our society.
Christ may they know your peace.
We pray for our leaders, both foreign and domestic,
This virus does not discriminate between race, language, wealth or creed,
So should we set aside our barriers to open the doors for conversation and collaboration.
Grant our leaders wisdom in these trying times, Lord God,
And equip us all to be people who will work together to overcome this season.
In all things, may we not lose sight of you Father God,
The hope we have in You, the joy we have in worship, the consolation we have in Your Holy Presence,
Here in the sanctuary of our homes.
And until we can again gather in Your name,
May we be ever grateful for the opportunities You bring for us to love and care for one another in this time.
All this we pray, in the name of Christ
Amen.

Song *Desert Song*
(Brooke Ligertwood © 2008 Sony/ATV Music Publishing Australia
[Admin. by Sony/ATV Music Publishing])

Affirmation / Blessing – Adapted from the Prayer of St. Francis

Lord, make us instruments of Your peace;	O Master, Grant that we may not so much seek
Where there is fear, may we sow love;	To be consoled as to console;
Where there is illness, may we show pardon;	To be understood, as to understand;
Where there is doubt, may we live in faith;	To be loved, as to love;
Where there is despair, may we bring hope;	For it is in giving that we receive,
Where there is darkness, may we shine Your light;	It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
And where there is sadness, may we share joy.	And it is in dying
	That we are born to Eternal Life, Amen.

Sermon notes

Emerge Preaching Series -

God is Present in Exile

Daniel 1:6-20

Have you ever been at a red light, maybe late one night – and looked and saw that there was no traffic, and had the thought, “I could just go... no one would know.” This temptation is one that many of us who drive regularly can relate to, and one thing I have noticed when our COVID19 restrictions first came into place was just how few cars were on our normally busy roads. In my home country of Argentina, road rules are much more relaxed than they are here, for instance road lanes are really more of a suggestion than firmly enforced marks of where you should drive, and every now and then you have to give way to oncoming drivers using your lane to overtake others. A red light in Argentina doesn't mean that you have to wait for it to change, it's largely treated like a stop sign where people stop momentarily and when it's clear that there is no oncoming traffic, they go.

Coming to Australia for many people from overseas can be scary and one of the scariest things is how people drive here – no... I'm not saying we're bad drivers. But we follow the rules strictly and we have rules that largely make each individual on the road held accountable for their actions. *i.e.* If a person is in an accident it is likely that they broke the rules. However, consider why people overseas can go into the oncoming lane to overtake, or go through a red light at an intersection... They are accustomed to a system by which drivers interact with each other through gestures and eye system and place them in one where they have to remember rules rather than a very scary experience.



accustomed to a system by which drivers interact with each other through gestures and eye system and place them in one where they have to remember rules rather than a very scary experience.

Now we consider our present situation in the world and new rules are now in place. When you see a person in the market aisle, you have to make that eye contact and negotiate if you will both walk let the other one pass. And with our worship place that challenge the very fabric of who we are as worshipping communities. Is it any wonder why some Christians are very upset about the lifting of restrictions on pubs and clubs and not on churches – it's like society is saying that it's more important to have a drink and a meal out in public than it is to demonstrate your faith!

This ties in with what we read about with Daniel and his friends in Babylon – it was much more important for them to follow the rules and eat the king's food than it was for them to adhere to their faith. Daniel and his friends wanted to stop at the red light, when everyone else around them was egging them to drive on. They asked the official permission to forego the king's food, but this is how the official responded:

“I am afraid of my lord the king, who has assigned your food and drink. Why should he see you looking worse than the other young men your age? The king would then have my head because of you.”

Daniel 1:10

Daniel had to consider not only his desire to adhere to God's laws, but the impact that might have on the life of another person. This is something I reflect on daily as I consider how we may be able to return to regular worship, questions arise about keeping people safe and limiting the spread of the virus and the fact that many of our membership are in the vulnerable category.

Daniel asked for ten days in which to demonstrate that if they kept God's law, they would still be as healthy and fit as the other young men. This is where our story diverges from that of Daniel's, because although we know that we would do all we can to keep people safe in our Services, even if we went beyond what the governments are asking the pubs and clubs to do, we would still be at great risk and potentially doing a disservice to our members by doing something like this. However, like with Daniel, we have to hold on to the assurance of what we know to be true – that even if we are in exile in a new land, a COVID 19 land where we cannot meet, we can still hold on to our faith in God that He will prevail!



With the official, Daniel asks him to compare him and his friends with the other young men, the testing is not in the doing what they always did previously, before they were in exile, but in leaning in to God and seeing results of God's provision among Daniel and his friends.

***“Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food,
and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.”***

Daniel 1:12

In this relying on God, God then blessed Daniel and his friends – not by lifting them from their exile so that they would return to their previous country, but by elevating them so they would influence the king and the highest offices of the land. Likewise, in our communities we seek to be influencers, and this time of COVID 19 is presenting us an opportunity to demonstrate our care and reliance on God in new and unique ways. Where once some churches had live streaming services, now we all have streaming and recordings so that people who once could not engage with our ministries are able to see and participate. Where once all our meetings were face-to-face, now we meet online and discuss things from the comfort of our homes. Where once the community at large had no time for faith and spirituality, in this time where people need hope, more and more people are turning to the Christian church to find meaning in the midst of the chaos in the world.

While many very competent people in the world once asserted their views and opinions on a world driven by its own greed and wants, now the worlds' needs have become a space where the love and consolation we have in Christ is a much more important commodity – where hope has a greater value and our hope is not in fickle things, but in the reality that our God is here with us.

With us in our isolation, with us in our dispersion, with us in our fear and worry, with us in our hope and dreaming for a time when all this is but a memory.

God is with us in our exile, let's not forget that and like Daniel let us be bold to assert our faith in Him in everything we do – not longing for a time when we go back to how things were, but hoping for a new future where we can apply all our learning from this time, becoming influencers like Daniel and his friends, and hopefully help the world get to a better place.

May God's Grace and Peace be with all of you!

Rev. Esteban Liévano