

SERVICE TRANSCRIPT

JUNE 6TH 2021

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Communion & Speaker: Mark Reid

Opening prayer

SLIDE

Heavenly Father-

You have invited us to meet with you;

You have created space for time together

that will affect all the other moments of the week.

You have called us to take time

To recall Your love and mercy.

We wonder at the scope of Your love.

You care for each of us

As if you care for each one alone.

As we met with you today

My we receive what you want to give

And wonder at Your love.

AMEN

SONG This love, this hope

Prayer – of thanksgiving –

Father, we thank you that Your love surrounds us at all times,

that we are never far from you,

that you have promised that you will never leave us.

We thank you for the gift of life, with all its joys and responsibilities, its experiences and opportunities.

We thank you for all you have given us in this last week –

for family and friends,

for sun and rain,

*for the wonders of Your creation,
for food and drink,
for the shelter and care of our homes,
for help that has been there when we turned to others,
for truths we have learned and good that has been achieved.*

*We thank you for the example and teaching of Jesus ,
for forgiveness and salvation,
for His presence with us always –
and for the service into which He has called us.*

*Help us to thank you
Not only with our lips, in praise and prayer,
But in our lives of hope and love,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord
AMEN*

We give thanks to God as we sing:

SONG Give thanks to the Lord our God and King - forever

WORD –

I am not a morning person – I find it very hard to get moving in the morning.

I am not one of those who can get up at 6 to pray and read the scriptures – I do not have that self discipline.

It has always been as much as I can do to get up, get ready and get going – and not always in the best of moods.

I was once given this little prayer by a friend – who obviously knew me rather better than she should have!

Dear God,

So far today I've done all right.

I haven't gossiped, and I haven't lost my temper.

I haven't been grumpy or selfish, and I'm really glad of that!

*But in a few minutes God, I'm going to get out of bed, and from then on
I'm probably going to need a lot of help!*

Thank You!

Amen

Over the years, I have learned that the most important thing for me in a morning is to take time, however short, to sit quietly and ask God to equip me for the day – to face any challenge and deal with anything that comes my way.

I find it calms my mind and reassures me that I'm not alone in what the day brings.

And none of us know what today, tomorrow or the future will bring – for us or for our church. We need to listen, to equip ourselves with God's word and then to respond, and to act.

Paul said this: in EPHESIANS 6 – and I'm using the Message version:

Be prepared.

You're up against far more than you can handle on Your own.

Take all the help You can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet.

Truth, righteousness, peace, faith and salvation are more than words.

Learn how to apply them.

You'll need them throughout your life.

God's word is an indispensable weapon.

IN the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare.

I'm sure some of you will remember a video we watched a few years ago which started like this:

Every morning when I wake, I get ready, I put my God suit on.

This much older hymn says it like this:

Soldiers of Christ arise, and put your armour on.

Strong in the strength which God supplies through His eternal son.

SONG Soldiers of Christ arise

HERE IS A PRAYER OF ASSURANCE: and we say it together:

May Jesus assure us as we follow Him

We will never meet a fear He cannot conquer,

We will never face an enemy He cannot defeat,

We will never enter a battle He cannot win,

We will never face a temptation He cannot overcome,

We will never have a burden He cannot lift,

*We will never have a problem He cannot solve,
We will never have a bondage He cannot break.
We will never have a moment when He does not care,
We will never have a time when He is not there.
This is what we pray – AMEN*

COMMUNION

Amen. Why can we pray this prayer with confidence? Because the Jesus we trust, has loved us and by His grace died on the cross for us. Through our faith in Him as Saviour, we have become part of all His promises. He loves us, so as we come communion this morning, we are going to sing of that love in this song that's a prayer:

Song: Saviour I come.

Let's take a few moments in silence as we give Him thanks that He has brought us forgiveness even though we haven't deserved it.

Let's hear Jesus' word's of invitation again.

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said,

"This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying,

"This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So as we break this bread, we remember the body of Christ broken for us.

As we drink this wine, we remember the blood of Christ shed for our sins.

Father, we thank you that we have been able to break bread and drink wine and remember again that we are who we are because of the sufferings and shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thank you that He is risen and gone before us into heaven – He is our eternal hope. Thank you that Your Spirit

is in each of us. May we have the vision, strength and power that comes through Your Spirit to speak and act like Jesus day by day.

We ask this in His name. Amen.

Let's take some time to remember those who we know need prayer at this present time. Over the last few weeks, the Lord has placed the need of individuals on our hearts – let's lift them before Him now as we have this short musical interlude.

THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

Reading: Hebrews 11:8-11

8 By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. 9 By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. 10 For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. 11 And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise.

Many of you will know that I am a bit of a Trekkie and at the moment there is plenty of Star Trek available for us Trekkies to watch if we want to, including new TV series. There are also quite a few films too. I'm going to show you a clip from the film Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country to introduce our theme for this morning. Here the crew of the starship Enterprise are entertaining a diplomatic team of Klingons, the Federation's mortal enemy who are seeking a peace treaty with the Federation because of a huge disaster on their home world. Here's Klingon Chancellor Gorkon speaking at the evening banquet:

CLIP

Chancellor Gorkon toasts the undiscovered country: a future in which hopefully the Federation and Klingons will face together as friends. As Mr Spock correctly says, the words undiscovered country come from Hamlet, and I'll come back to that in a few moments. Seeing the future as an undiscovered country is a hopeful sort of phrase. None of us know the future, but if we see it as something to be explored, to be discovered and to use it to benefit ourselves and others, then surely that's a positive sentiment rather than approaching it with fear.

In the past year we have gone through a period of pandemic: of uncertainty, anxiety for many; and now we are slowly to face a future where so many things seems to have changed. We are travelling through a world that has changed. Work, travel, socialising, daily life have all been altered and we still don't know where that is leading, even beyond 21st June! But do we face it with fear and trepidation after all that has happened but do we trust God and look forward to positive change and new beginnings.

For the next few Sundays, I am going to bring you the story of one of the great heroes of the OT as he left relative safety of where he was and travelled into a new land expectantly following God's command. That's of course Abraham, or Abram as he was known in his younger days. He was originally from Ur one of the largest cities of the earliest civilisation of Mesopotamia, the Sumerian Empire.

Here's how we are introduced to him in the book of Genesis.

Genesis 11:27 to 12:4

27 This is the account of Terah's family line.

Terah became the father of Abram, Nahor and Haran. And Haran became the father of Lot.
28 While his father Terah was still alive, Haran died in Ur of the Chaldeans, in the land of his birth.
29 Abram and Nahor both married. The name of Abram's wife was Sarai, and the name of Nahor's wife was Milkah; she was the daughter of Haran, the father of both Milkah and Iskah.
30 Now Sarai was childless because she was not able to conceive.

31 Terah took his son Abram, his grandson Lot son of Haran, and his daughter-in-law Sarai, the wife of his son Abram, and together they set out from Ur of the Chaldeans to go to Canaan. But when they came to Harran, they settled there.

32 Terah lived 205 years, and he died in Harran.

12 The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;
I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."

So Abram wentHere's a map of Mesopotamia to give you some geography of Terah's journey from Ur with Abram, Lot and Sarai. They went from the safety and culture of Ur into the nations fringing the empire which were less stable. Why they went, we don't know, other than the intention was to end up in Canaan which was populated with Semitic people, like them. Semites had a tradition of being nomadic, unlike either the groups who dominated Ur or Harran. But city life must have appealed both in Ur and then Harran and plans for Canaan went on hold as long as Terah lived.

Then God intervened and made the promise we read:

"Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.
2 "I will make you into a great nation,
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,
and you will be a blessing.
3 I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you.”

As we'll see in a later week, this was a bigger leap of faith than merely taking up the vision of Canaan a land which they were all unfamiliar with. It was a step into the unknown – into an undiscovered country, one they know to be fertile, but lawless – run as it was by clans and warlords.

We don't know what made Terah stay in Harran, but safety, security and prosperity would have been big attractions. We know from later in Genesis that Abram wasn't sort of a bob or two, had large flocks and herds and a small army of people to tend and protect them against hostile Canaanite tribes.

What is God calling you to do? What step of faith is he asking of you? Is it even a question you are asking yourself? We've been pulled out of our comfort zones in the last year. In some ways that's been painful, troubling, unpleasant, but also if we have been serious about our faith, we have also been left challenged and thinking by a God who wants us to explore how we may be closer to God and serve Him in new ways. It's about embracing the new as well as appreciating what we lost as it is returned to us.

Can you hear God's voice? Are you listening?

I believe God wants to challenge us in the journey of life and I believe the story of Abram may help us in understanding how we should walk with God and what happens when we don't. In the next few weeks I'll flesh that out.

To wrap up this morning let's come back to the Undiscovered Country. In the Star Trek film, Chancellor Gorkon led a toast over Romulan ale to *"the undiscovered country — the future."* Spock immediately identified Gorkon's reference to *Hamlet*, Act 3, Scene 1, in which was the title character's famous *"To be or not to be"* soliloquy. Hamlet, contemplating suicide, called what's on the other side of death (the afterlife) *"the undiscovered country"* - quite a different meaning to what was quoted in Star Trek. He contemplated whether he should be taking so drastic an action when he didn't know what the afterlife held for him, perhaps it was better to bear the ills that he had.

We live in a world where almost no part of it remains undiscovered. Because of thousands of years of civilisation, it's likely that wherever we want to do or go, someone's already had that experience. Abram wasn't exactly going to an undiscovered country either. He had a pretty good idea of what was there – he had possibly even visited it more than once. If he

hadn't there would have been people he knew who were familiar with Canaan. But he knew there was a risk and was prepared to trust that God would fulfil His promises to him – more on that next week.

But is eternity the undiscovered country too? We have celebrated communion this morning. We remember the One who was dead but now is alive and He's where? In heaven – the place He's promised to us. It's not a place of deep unknowns because He's been there already for us – He's gone ahead of us. Yes, there is so much of God to discover there, wondrous things to see, but it's not a place of fatalistic mystery that perplexed Hamlet.

So what of our immediate future – it isn't an undiscovered either. Abram trusted a God who knew what was in Canaan and who was leading him there. Similarly, we trust a God who is leading us and walks with us through life; He knows the future – let's place our trust in Him for the weeks and months to come as we return to our building, as we restart activities from the premises, as we have to make decisions about the interior damage in the building. I often use these words as a benediction, but they are appropriate words for me to use as we explore the undiscovered country in front of us. They are from Ephesians 3:20-21:

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

We have thought of our ultimate future in the last few moments. Here's a modern rendition of an old hymn:

Song: When we get to heaven.

We are a people of hope. Let's rejoice in what God has in store for us both now and eternally. Let's close with these words of blessing.

As you go from here into the coming week,
may God open your mind to His presence,
so that you may know Him deeper;
may He open the eyes of your heart
so that you can experience the hope he offers
to all who follow Him;
and may you come to understand
the full extent of God's power at work in your life—
the very same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead,
and seated him at the right hand of God. Amen.

That's it for today. Be blessed, stay safe and see you next week!

For Reflection & Discussion

Read Hebrews 11:8-11

1. Abraham didn't just leave the safety of one city, he left the safety of two! What did the writer of the Hebrews suggest was his motive? The following verses may help us understand the answer: Hebrews 11:16, Hebrews 13:14, Revelation 21:2.
2. Why do you think it is important to have eternal perspective as we go through life? How do the call and promises of God help us when we face the many unknowns of life?

Read Genesis 11:27 – 12:4

3. We don't know precisely when Abram received his call to go to Canaan, whether that was in Ur or Harran, but he left his brother Nahor and his wife once Terah had died? What would it take for you to leave everything you know to go to a land full of uncertainties? What would you need for you to be convinced? What may that tell us about Abram's faith?
4. What benefits did God promise Abram? How did that work out in reality for Abram? How long did it take for these promises to come into reality? What does that tell us about the expectations we should have of God?