



HOON HAY Presbyterian CHURCH

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Today's Preacher: Rev. Dr. Michael Reid **Worship Leader:** Allison Cooper



'God can heal what's broken. But we need to give Him all the pieces'
Anonymous

Mission Statement

To love and serve the Lord Jesus in the Hoon Hay Community
Worshiping God as a family
Offering opportunities to grow in faith
Sharing God's love with people in our community and beyond

ORDER OF SERVICE

Welcome

Lighting of the Third Advent Candle

The third candle symbolizes joy.

It is called the 'Shepherd's Candle'. "Jesus Christ the Light of the World" came among us.

Notices, Celebrations and Opening Prayer

Christian Blind Mission videos

Singing: 'Joy to the World'

RESPONSIVE READING:
Zephaniah 3: 14-20 (NIV)

¹⁴ Sing, Daughter Zion;
shout aloud, Israel!

Be glad and rejoice with all your heart,
Daughter Jerusalem!

¹⁵ *The LORD has taken away your punishment,
he has turned back your enemy.*

*The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you;
never again will you fear any harm.*

¹⁶ On that day
they will say to Jerusalem,
"Do not fear, Zion;
do not let your hands hang limp.

¹⁷ *The LORD your God is with you,
the Mighty Warrior who saves.
He will take great delight in you;
in his love he will no longer rebuke you,
but will rejoice over you with singing."*

¹⁸ *"I will remove from you
all who mourn over the loss of your appointed festivals,
which is a burden and reproach for you.*

¹⁹ At that time I will deal
with all who oppressed you.

I will rescue the lame;
I will gather the exiles.

I will give them praise and honour
in every land where they have suffered shame.

²⁰ *At that time I will gather you;
at that time I will bring you home.*

*I will give you honour and praise
among all the peoples of the earth
when I restore your fortunes
before your very eyes,"
says the LORD.*

Song: 'How Deep the Father's Love'

Dedication of Offering

Intercessory Prayer

SCRIPTURE READINGS (NIV)

Old Testament

Isaiah 60: 1-7




New Testament

1 John 1: 1-4



Message: 'Boundless Love that makes us whole'

Listening: 'Love Divine, All Loves Exceeding' 

Singing: 'Let us sing to the God of Salvation'

BENEDICTION

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU IN TODAY'S MESSAGE?

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Christmas Eve Service: We are hosting a special Christmas Eve service starting at 9 p.m. on Friday, 24 December, here at Hoon Hay. This is a combined service with members of Halswell Community Church. Please plan to come (NB. Vaccine Passes required).

Christmas Day Service: Please join us at 9.30 am for a short traditional Christmas Day Service.

Boxing Day Service: Please note there will be no service on Sunday 26th December.



TEACHING NOTES

In his 1989 song 'Everything's Broken' Bob Dylan sums-up reality. Everywhere we look including at our hearts, minds, and relationships, there is brokenness'; things are ill-at-ease, there's *dis*-ease. Joy is fleeting and woes seem to increase and compound. Recently I wrote in praise of roadworkers who faithfully repair our roads and the pipes underneath them. The orange road cones showing they are at work symbolise *brokenness*. They stand for a road or some other infrastructure being 'under repair'. Here in Christchurch since the earthquakes we have become very familiar with road cones and it's still almost impossible to drive across the city and not encounter hundreds of these ubiquitous symbols of 'broken'.

Our first reading (Isaiah 60) speaks of the future kingdom. It looks forward to a time for God's people when light will penetrate the darkness. But the people of Isaiah's time had to be patient for God's timing (as must we). This lengthy poem which extends to Chapter 62 (and from which we read only seven verses) portrays Jerusalem (Zion) as a bereaved woman, but also heralds the dawn of a new age of restoration. The overall message of Isaiah whose name means 'The LORD is salvation' is strongly focused on the future destiny of Israel and the Gentiles. Then as now, God's people are to be expectant, obedient, and faithful. Isaiah had a vision of glory (6:1-8) and his metaphors were light and darkness. He ministered among people who preferred darkness to light and life. They were proud, unbelieving, and hard-hearted (6:9-10). They would also experience physical brokenness and desolation (6:11-13) but in God's greater plan they would not be forsaken.

In Jesus Christ this plan became tangible as a human being. The ultimate response 'which was from the beginning' (1 John 1:1), is God Himself in human form. John declares we have *heard, seen, looked at* and *touched* him. All along God's plan was to rescue creation and deliver it from corruption into liberty (Romans 8:19-23). God's love which is the very essence of His trinitarian being (hierarchy and submission, obedience, service, unity and wholeness) was Christ coming to earth, the supreme identification of holiness with fallen humanity. He came to do what we cannot do for ourselves; i.e. obtain salvation.

Many people don't know what to make of Jesus. They may see him as a teacher or sage but nothing more. They believe they are good which really means 'I don't need a saviour'. But we do. Advent reminds us that God, the source of all life and redemption has *come to us* as *one of us*. Other faiths require working towards enlightenment/salvation/nirvana, but in Christ, God has come to us. We're saved by grace, not works.

Christmas means fellowship with God and each other (v.3). Christ's coming makes a way for us to enjoy fellowship with the whole community of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and with saints past, present, and future. Loneliness is crippling but in the body of Christ, His Church, we get a taste of glory through acceptance, love, and the service of each other. Love existed before creation; it created and sustains the world, and in Christ, is redeeming the world. When we begin to grasp this – and it's more than an intellectual 'grasping' – our joy is complete (v.4). Christmas means joy. Advent will eventually change everything – not all at once, but at the appointed time, totally and definitively. Meanwhile, the love of God in Christ is our ever-sufficient joy. Happiness is momentary but joy is abiding. It's hard at times to keep going but the truth about Christmas brings deep joy in spite of, not because of, our circumstances.

PASTOR'S REFLECTION

For the past eight years on the first Monday of each month I have run a study called 'Logos Hour'. We spend an hour together in a close study of Scripture, usually a chapter of a nominated book. Recently we have been exploring the book of Judges. The conversation ranges from discussing the text, the culture and background to the events; certain words or phrases, to application and how to apply what's read to our own life and times. It's incredible what comes out as we examine and share with each other.

As we know, Scripture can be hard to just read, let alone understand and apply. The names and places are often difficult to pronounce and some of the events are truly miraculous and sometimes even bizarre and bloodthirsty. Modern sensibilities and values, human rights, freedom and individual autonomy – all things we identify with – are often lacking and it's easy to either not bother and conveniently put Bible study in the 'too hard' basket, or cherry pick favourite passages and verses – the bits we like to read and feel comfortable with. Logos Hour came from a conviction that as believers, we are obligated to engage Scripture seriously and diligently. This is not to suggest teaching is lacking in Sunday services, but as we know, a service is structured to include many elements and ministry of the Word is only one aspect (although a very important one). Logos allows greater focus on Scripture and a freer engagement and participation.

The Bible is not self-interpreting. We need 'tools in the toolbox' to comprehend what is read. A mechanic or plumber is trained to know both theory and practice and what tools and knowledge are needed in any given situation. Similarly, there are both scholarly and practical guidelines for approaching Scripture which help. The complexities are vast and while study is not necessarily an academic task (it is for theologians), it is an important one for all believers; and for everybody it takes discipline and commitment. Considering the nature of inspiration (how the writers heard from God and recorded their thoughts), the role of revelation (the process, not the book), and the question of inerrancy (can the Bible ever be wrong?) are key tools which we work with at Logos Hour. We also learn about genres of text: some books are historical, others legal or prophetic, and still others address specific problems and issues. Some can be taken literally (with direct application) while others are metaphorical, pointing towards future events, and written more as poetry than prose.

We also have fun together and Logos is a great time of fellowship and connection. In recent months meetings have been via Zoom (video conference) and while this lacks physical presence, it also means we can participate from the comfort of home and not have to travel. Next year we have a mix of both actual meetings (here at Hoon Hay) + using Zoom. I'm also keen to resume fortnightly meetings which are more feasible with Zoom. Another possibility I'm exploring is starting a Growth Group to discuss the Sunday message.

However we engage with Scripture, one thing is certain: the study of God's Word is critical for our growth and discipleship.

Blessings for a good week,

Michael