

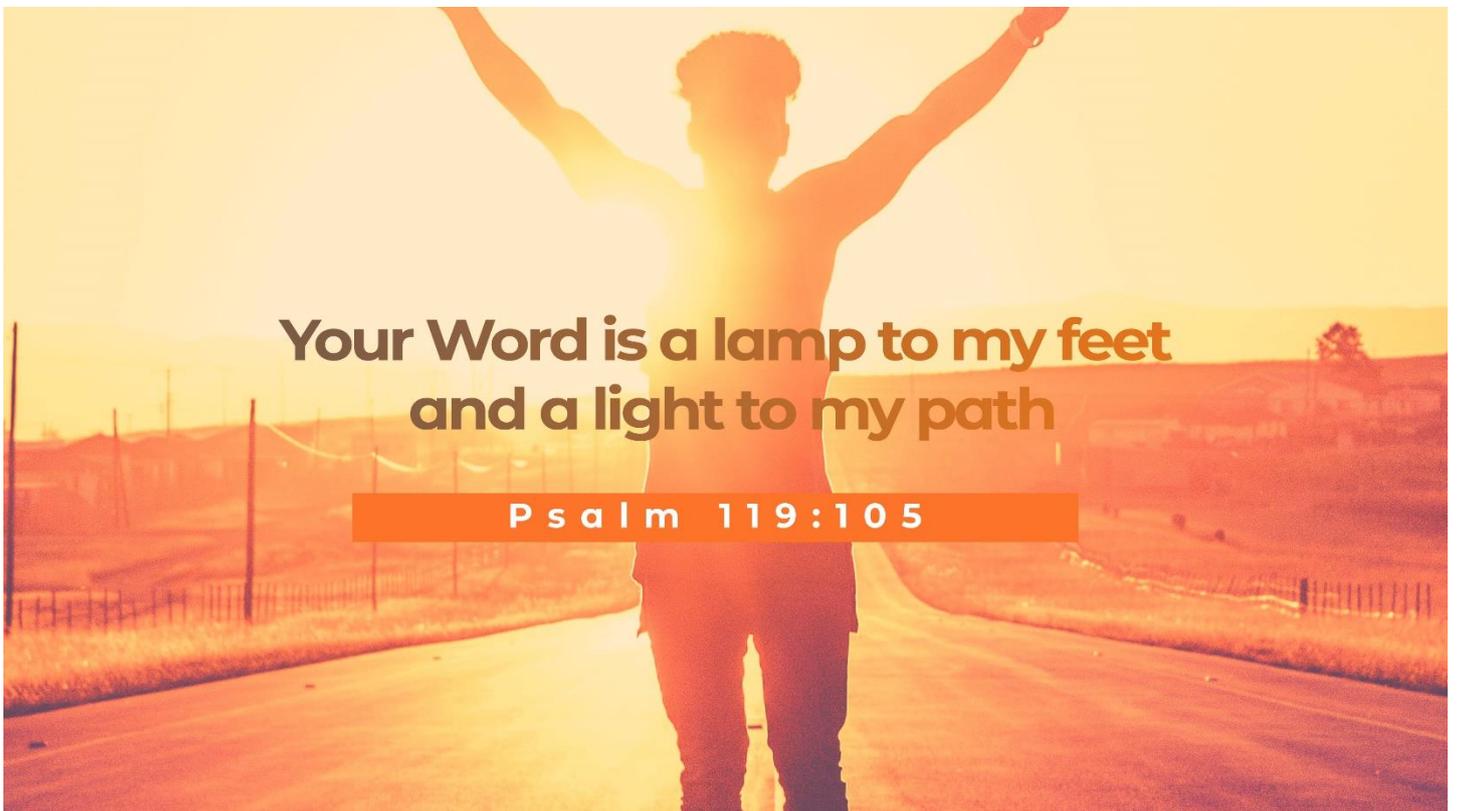


HOPPERSCROSSING UNITING CHURCH

*Loving God, neighbour and self
with heart, mind, soul and strength.*

**Worship at Home
12th July 2020**

6th Sunday after Pentecost



A candle, symbolising Christ's presence, is lit.

We Gather

Open the Eyes of My Heart <https://youtu.be/idQ1n3cdgfo>

CALL TO WORSHIP

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ
the love of God and the fellowship
of the Holy Spirit be with you.

And also with you.

God has abundantly cast God's seeds of love and hope upon us.

May we be fruitful soil for the planting and growing of hope and peace.

Come, let us praise God who is so generous with us.

Let us sing songs of joy to God.

Hallelujah!

Hallelujah!

Let us worship God.

Refiner's Fire <https://youtu.be/9Y8zP34AhuU>

PSALM 65:9-13

⁹ You take care of the earth and water it, making it rich and fertile.
The river of God has plenty of water; it provides a bountiful harvest of grain,
for you have ordered it so.

¹⁰ You drench the ploughed ground with rain,
melting the clods and levelling the ridges.
You soften the earth with showers and bless its abundant crops.

¹¹ You crown the year with a bountiful harvest;
even the hard pathways overflow with abundance.

¹² The grasslands of the wilderness become a lush pasture,
and the hillsides blossom with joy.

¹³ The meadows are clothed with flocks of sheep,
and the valleys are carpeted with grain.

They all shout and sing for joy!

OPENING PRAYER

Loving God, we give thanks for the reassuring words of the Psalmist. They capture a sense of joy and appreciation of your goodness. The abundant rain has fallen on the ploughed fields nourishing the sown seeds. They have grown and the harvest is abundant and there is plenty for all. Even the animals are sufficiently provided for. Your caring and sustaining presence is celebrated. In this present time of the COVID 19 pandemic, the shutdown, the panic buying, the potential loss of jobs, economic uncertainty, military threats and

political upheaval it is difficult not to feel despair nor have any sense of the joy like that of the Psalmist.

The parable of the sower reminds us your word is sown and hidden in the most unlikely places and the most unlikely people, and so, may your peace and presence sustain us in your joy, the joy of the Lord which is our strength even in these challenging times. In response to your faithfulness and goodness we offer our praise and worship to you. Meet and minister to each one of us wherever we are and then send us out in the power of the Spirit to proclaim your love to all. Amen.

GENESIS 25:19-34

Jacob and Esau

¹⁹These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham's son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, ²⁰and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram, sister of Laban the Aramean. ²¹Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. ²²The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. ²³And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger." ²⁴When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. ²⁵The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. ²⁶Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. ²⁷When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. ²⁸Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. ²⁹Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. ³⁰Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) ³¹Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." ³²Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" ³³Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. ³⁴Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

Pause for quiet reflection.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We used to think that the people in the bible were giants of the faith but then we discover how much they are like us, and we them.

Like Isaac and Rebekah, we choose favourites, causing pain to those who most need our love and attention.

Forgive us, Loving God.

Like Esau, we quickly let go of the promises given to us, so we can gratify our desires instantly.

Forgive us, Loving God.

Like Jacob, we struggle with your claim on our lives, always in conflict with your hopes for us.

Forgive us, Loving God.

Because we are so much like the people in the bible, we are heirs of your promises, recipients of your grace, and sharers of your mercy.

Your Son, our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, sows the seeds of discipleship in our hearts. May we not choke them off but let them grow each and every day of our lives.

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

ROMANS 8:1

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

JOHN 3:17

The good news is this: in Jesus Christ:

We are loved,

We are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

Holy Spirit Rain Down https://youtu.be/d-SI_HRWooA

PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you **and also with you.**

We Listen

Your word, O Lord, is a lamp to my feet **a light to our path.**

PSALM 119:105-112

Your Word is a Lamp to My Feet and a Light to My Path.

105Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

106I have sworn an oath and confirmed it, to observe your righteous ordinances.

107I am severely afflicted; give me life, O Lord, according to your word.

108Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord, and teach me your ordinances.

109I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.

110The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not stray from your precepts.

111Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

112I incline my heart to perform your statutes forever, to the end.

ROMANS 8:1-11

No Condemnation to those who are in Christ.

¹There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ²For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. ⁵For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. ⁶To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law—indeed it cannot, ⁸and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. ¹⁰But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. ¹¹If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

MATTHEW 13:1-9,18-23

The Parable of the Sower.

¹That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. ²Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. ³And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. ⁴And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up.

⁵Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. ⁶But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. ⁷Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. ⁸Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. ⁹Let anyone with ears listen!"

¹⁸"Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. ²⁰As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. ²²As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. ²³But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Lord, may your word live in us **and bear much fruit to your glory.**

HOMILY

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

PSALM 119:105

Title: *Flourishing in All Circumstances*

There is an old saying: *'Sticks and stones will break my bones, but words will never hurt me'*. What it is saying is that words are powerful. Words can wound, but they can also build up.

For example, parts of 'Motor City' Detroit in the USA, once built on its car industry, are now rendered ghost towns with the demise of the automotive industry. Once grand buildings, homes and bustling suburbs have become derelict as the people who once lived in those homes and patronised the grand buildings and shops have abandoned the neighbourhoods as a result of unemployment and affecting their ability to pay the rent and mortgage payments.

But over the last several years, there is a renewal taking place in the once depressed neighbourhoods. They are once again coming alive as people return to them; even community initiatives such as gardens are popping up as a new sense of community fever takes hold. Not surprisingly, the catalysts for rejuvenation and renewal have been led by the literary and arts world. So confident are those who are heading the community building initiatives in the power of words in bringing about renewal that a new program called 'Write-A-House' will give away houses to daring wordsmiths, that are good at writing. In an attempt to lure new literary blood-people- into the once-abandoned neighbourhoods¹.

There are correlations between this story of communal renewal and rejuvenation and Psalm 119 set down as one of the bible readings for today. At the heart of each is the power of the Word for renewal and to rejuvenate and sustain. There are two things to note here:

The first is that in today's Psalm the Psalmist exudes confidence in God's Word to guide his path. In verse 105 we read: *'Your **word** is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path'*

PSALM 119:105

The second thing to note is, a word that is gaining popularity is *'wellbeing'*. Normally, 'wellbeing' is connected to a person's health. This Word is the subject of many books as more and more Australians consider their health and mortality. In the current COVID 19 pandemic situation, shutdowns, economic and employment uncertainties, political and social upheaval in Australia and around the world attending to one's own mental health is becoming the norm. So friends, today I want to get behind the mind of the Psalmist to discover what

gives him the confidence in God's Word to keep him on the right path and the implications of this for his wellbeing and maybe in there is a message for us two as we attend to our wellbeing. To aid our exploration are the following three headings:

- The Good Way.
- The Good Spirit.
- The Good Life.

The Good Way.

Psalm 119 pays homage to the Jewish 'Torah' or 'teaching/law' and its significance on the life of those who fear God. At the beginning of verse 105, the Psalmist uses 'word' which in this context is the synonym of 'law'. An alternate reading would go: '*Your law is a lamp to my feet, a light to my path*'. This keeps it in line with verse 1 of the same Psalm which goes: 'Happy are they whose way is blameless, who walk in the law of the Lord'.

As meaning the same, we will use 'law' and 'word' interchangeably.

Can people really be happy in giving total devotion to the law? One has only to think of the young man who came to Jesus saying: "Lord, I have kept all these, that is, the law, what do I still lack?"

MATTHEW 19:20

Jesus responds by telling the young man to sell all his possessions and give to the poor. But the man could not divulge himself of his possessions because he loved his riches more. This story is a good example of devotion devoid of any actions. It also illustrates that total devotion to the law does not equate with happiness.

In this day and age, the word 'law' doesn't gel well with most people with its connotations of seemingly absurd regulations rigidly imposed and enforced. An appropriate term would be 'the way' which flows well with the idea of 'law' as shining a light so one does not lose the way. The word 'way' is also another synonym for law (105:3).

In the gospel of John, Jesus says that he is 'the Way, the Truth and the Life. The early Christians were known as followers of 'the Way'.

Permit me to digress here briefly and to say something about 'Anomie'.

The Britannica Encyclopedia online states the following '*Anomie, in societies or individuals, is a condition of instability resulting from a breakdown of standards and values or from a lack of purpose or ideals.*

The term was introduced by the twentieth-century French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858-1917) in his study of suicide. He believed that one type of suicide (anomic) resulted from the breakdown of the social standards necessary for regulating behaviour. When a social system is in a state of Anomie, or breaking down, common values and common meanings are no longer understood or accepted, and new values and meanings have not

developed. According to Durkheim, such a society produces, in many of its members, psychological states characterised by a sense of futility, lack of purpose, and emotional emptiness and despair'.²

Do we not see in our current crisis, of which the COVID 19 pandemic is one of many other crisis' we are facing, the evidence of these *psychological states characterised by a sense of futility, lack of purpose, and emotional emptiness and despair'*?

Friends, there is reason to hope:

The implications of God's Word and of being guided by it are that 'Anomie's, or upheavals and breakdowns, need not disable us. Seen in this context, adhering to 'the way' or to the Word of the Lord is important for the Psalmist and important for ourselves.

The Good Spirit

The concept of 'word' implies we are not alone in the 'good way'.

The Uniting Church's Basis of Union, which sets out our church's core beliefs, makes two observations about God in the life of the church.

First, it affirms that the Uniting Church *belongs to the people of God on the way.*

Paragraph 18 p16 1992 edition

The second observation: *'on the way, Christ feeds the church with word and sacraments, and it has the gift of the spirit in order that it may not lose the way'.*

Paragraph 3 p7

Time does not permit an in-depth analysis of those statements from the Basis of Union except being reminded that the church is sustained by and accompanied by the good Spirit of God. The idea of a god who would put all things aside in order to accompany and sustain the people on a journey is an important observation not to be overlooked.

I rather like the contemporary interpretation of Psalm 119:105-112 from The Message version of the bible. It captures the deep sense of the Psalmists trust in God and the redemptive power of the Word of God, which is particularly helpful in times such as we currently are in:

*By your words I can see where I'm going;
they throw a beam of light on my dark path.
I've committed myself and I'll never turn back
from living by your righteous order.
Everything's falling apart on me, GOD;
put me together again with your Word.
Festoon me with your finest sayings, GOD;
teach me your holy rules.
My life is as close as my own hands,
but I don't forget what you have revealed.*

*The wicked do their best to throw me off track,
but I don't swerve an inch from your course.
I inherited your book on living; it's mine forever-
what a gift! And how happy it makes me!
I concentrate on doing exactly what you say-
I always have and always will.*

The Message Bible

The Good Life

So what does all this mean for us, friends?

In essence, what the Psalmist alludes is that when you put these two affirmations-the good Way and the good Spirit together, its natural flow-on effect would be a good life-one that flourishes in all circumstances. The ability for lives to flourish in diverse conditions lays in deep contrast to seeds which could not grow in abnormal conditions. And aren't we currently experiencing 'abnormal' conditions-or the 'new norm' as some would say?

The Psalmist knows his wellbeing comes by having his entire life enveloped by God's Word. He has experienced renewal rejuvenation and sustenance, for his life is guided by the Word of God.

His response can only be described as like that of a child who has tasted something good and returns for more.

May we do likewise.

Lord, your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Amen.

Prayer

Loving God, through your Word you have given us a light to guide us on our way in life; a light that sheds its golden glow, so that our steps will not falter when the way ahead becomes difficult to navigate; and when the forks in life's pathways tempt us into the wrong directions. With joy, we celebrate your Light shining on life's pathways. We thank you O'lord that you are ever present with us on this journey and in Jesus name we pray. Amen.³

Attribution:

Resources and ideas for this address came from the following sources-
Rev Dr. John Bodycomb.

¹'Motor city makeover' in 'Traveller' pp16-17, The Age, Saturday 5th July 2014).

²Encyclopaedia-Britannica Online. (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/26587/anomie>).

³Prayer-Joan Stott www.thetimelesspsalms.net- Edited in part.

We Respond

My Redeemer Lives https://youtu.be/bj_BvlYFyEg

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Take a moment to pray for one or more of the following:

- countries and nations of the world
- those who are sick and in need
- the Church and our congregation

After each prayer, a response may be said such as:

Lord, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

And in the languages of the nations, we pray as Jesus taught...

THE LORD'S PRAYER

**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 in the time of trial**

and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and forever. Amen.

OFFERING

You are invited to contribute financially to support the ministry and mission of the Hoppers Crossing congregation using the following details:

<u>Bank Transfer</u>	<u>Credit Card</u>
BSB: 013-915	www.HoppersUniting.church/offering
Account Number: 354 439 707	
Account Name: Hoppers Crossing Uniting Church	
Reference: 'Your SURNAME'	

I Will Trust My Saviour Jesus <https://youtu.be/SDi-4Gp7By0>

We are Sent

BENEDICTION

As you have received the seeds of faith and hope;
Go into God's world with joy,
telling of the good news of God's abundant,
lavish love for all creation,
scattering the seeds of reconciliation and peace,

And the blessing of God,
the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit
be with you now and always.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Shine Jesus Shine <https://youtu.be/J3iB30gCqAc>

The service is ended.

Acknowledgments

This liturgy was constructed with material from the following sources:

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Confession, Benediction – Thom M. Shuman. Edited in parts.

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Music – YouTube as linked

Background Music – used with permission: CCLI License: 726611