

8th Sunday of Aotearoa Response to Covid 19
John 14:15-21; Acts 17

Keep grounded, keep honest, keep talking, keep praying.
These are some of the things we have said to each other over these weeks.
Each of us will tell the story differently
because our experiences have been different
within the common experience of NZ response to the global pandemic.

During these weeks we have also walked through the central events of our faith story, God with us, suffering, dying, being raised to new life.

Jesus has invited us to begin the freedom journey – away from things that keep repeating and into new life and hope.

Jesus doesn't make following him difficult, he is not divine trickster that teases, or gives us puzzles to stump us, or makes us wait until we get disheartened.
Not at all, Jesus says to his disciples – you already know the one who is coming, because he abides with you, i.e. that's me, but it's going to get better, the inexhaustible love of God will pour through you. The Holy Spirit, the one who will come, confirms God's presence, the reality of forgiveness, and keeps on revealing more of Jesus.

Just as last week we recognized that we grow **into** aligning ourselves with the character of Jesus so that when we pray we pray according to his will, so today we are invited into adventure of sharing the life of God Disciples, then and now, become part of Jesus transformative work in the world, here Jesus talks of 'keeping my commandments' not as the combination to unlock a relationship with God, but as the expression of a relationship that is secure enough to allow us to take the risk of joining in, knowing that there will be mistakes but that these are part of growth.

I have heard that some people are struggling with confidence after weeks of being at home in lockdown. Door is open, bit scary to walk through it.
Sometimes we get stuck in our faith and, if we are honest, we don't want much to change. Life fits together quite nicely, thank you. Then something happens and we are confronted with ourselves. It's uncomfortable. The door is open – we aren't sure that we want to step through. So it's helpful to be reminded of Jesus' gentle presence with us. Because we are all being asked to step into something different on multiple levels.

On Tuesday Katie invited Stuart and me to an on line event with Helen Clark. It was breathtaking to hear someone of her caliber and experience talk about the global effects of this pandemic. No one is sure what the effects will be and how long they will last. We cannot go back to what was before, we are in an uncharted landscape and we need to listen; to do our bit as God's people for a just and sustainable future.
Small or large, each of us is being asked to look at the world in a different way.
There are people around us keenly queuing to get an old fix, but no one's quite sure if whatever it was is going to do it anymore. The ground isn't very stable.

So, right now, we are in a between space / a liminal space.

When Paul got to Athens, he was in a between space. He goes into the market place; he takes a good look at what matters to the Athenians. He quotes their own gurus and uses their 'unknown god' as the space in which to present the Good News.

It's like we are in a similar unexpected landscape. We have an opportunity to listen to our context, to the people who live close to us, so that we can discern the space and language the Spirit is opening up.

As it happens, at this time of year, there is a prayer initiative 'thy kingdom come'. Can you hear the connection with aligning our prayers with God's kingdom initiative that we thought about before?

Well, last year I picked up the literature when we were in England; I wondered if we would use it at St Stephen's. But, of course, the year has not worked quite as expected!!

I forgot about it and then, unexpectedly, I noticed it this week on the website;

I think a small part of it could support us in our discernment and growth with God.

Basically, it's a prayer journey of 10 days, the trick is that it starts this Thursday until Sunday 31 May, the day of Pentecost.

Thy kingdom come, grew from a desire that people of all ages would experience God in a deeper way and those we love or live close to would discover God's love themselves.

If you are finding life a bit of slog or a bit dull
with too much activity or too little,
or if you are a little close to your limit
and unwanted stuff has come back to your scene.

Please join me on this prayer journey,

Drop me an email,

Jesus has said he is coming too.

I'm sure the rest will become clear.