



St John the Divine

Eucharist service

15th Sunday after Pentecost

5th September 2021

WELCOME!

Welcome to our worship and community life at St John the Divine, and to our live-streamed service, linked from our parish website: www.stjohndivine.org.au

Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God's kingdom, now and for ever.

Sentence

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

James 1.17

Hymn: For the beauty of the earth

Folliott Sandford Pierpont (1835-1917) alt.

tune: England's Lane - © The Australian Hymn Book Company Pty Ltd, 1999, CCL No 632290

1. **For the beauty of the earth,
for the beauty of the skies,
for the love which from our birth
over and around us lies,
Lord of all, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.**
2. **For the joy of ear and eye,
for the heart and mind's delight,
for the mystic harmony
linking sense to sound and sight,
Lord of all, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.**
4. **For the joy of human love,
sister, brother, parent, child,
friends on earth and friends above,
pleasures pure and undefiled,
Lord of all, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.**
5. **For each perfect gift divine
to each one so freely given,
graces all of your design,
flowers of earth and buds of heaven,
Lord of all, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.**
6. **For your Church that evermore,
lifting holy hands above,
offers up on every shore
the pure sacrifice of love,
Lord of all, to you we raise
this our sacrifice of praise.**

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

My sisters and brothers,
as we prepare to celebrate the presence of Christ
in word and sacrament,
let us call to mind and confess our sins.

Silence is kept.

God be gracious to us and bless us,
and make your face shine upon us:
Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

May your ways be known on the earth,
your saving power among the nations:
Christ, have mercy

Christ, have mercy

You, Lord, have made known your salvation,
and reveal your justice in the sight of the nations:
Lord, have mercy

Lord, have mercy

May the God of love and power
forgive you and free you from your sins,
heal and strengthen you by his Spirit,
and raise you to new life in Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

GLORIA AND COLLECT

**Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.**

**Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,**

**we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.**

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,

you take away the sin of the world:

have mercy on us;

**you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.**

For you alone are the Holy One,

you alone are the Lord,

you alone are the Most High

Jesus Christ,

with the Holy Spirit,

in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Let us pray.

Cleanse our consciences, O Lord,

and enlighten our hearts

through the daily presence of your Son Jesus Christ,

that when he comes in glory to be our judge

we may be found undefiled and acceptable in his sight;

who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

A reading from the letter of James 1.17-27

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfilment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing. If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

May your word live in us,
and bear much fruit to your glory.

Hymn: Help us, O Lord, to learn

William Watkins Reid Jr (b.1923) - tune: Day Of Praise
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- 1. Help us, O Lord, to learn
the truths your word imparts:
to study that your laws may be
inscribed upon our hearts.**
- 2. Help us, O Lord, to live
the faith which we proclaim,
that all our thoughts and words and deeds
may glorify your name.**
- 3. Help us, O Lord, to teach
the beauty of your ways,
that all who seek may find the Christ,
and live a life of praise.**

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to
St Mark 7.1-8, 14-23

Glory to you Lord Jesus Christ

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around him, they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, 'Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?' He said to them, 'Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written,

"This people honours me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me;
in vain do they worship me,
teaching human precepts as doctrines."

You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.'

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing

outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.'

When he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about the parable. He said to them, 'Then do you also fail to understand? Do you not see that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters, not the heart but the stomach, and goes out into the sewer?' (Thus he declared all foods clean.) And he said, 'It is what comes out of a person that defiles. For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.'

This is the Gospel of the Lord,
praise to you Lord Jesus Christ.

Sermon

Let us together affirm the faith of the Church:

**We believe in one God,
who made and loves all that is.
We believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was born, lived, died and rose again,
and is coming to call all to account.
We believe in the Holy Spirit,
who calls, equips and sends out God's people,
and brings all things to their true end.**

This is our faith, the faith of the Church:

**We believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray for the world and for the Church.

Response:

Lord our God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Almighty God, you have promised to hear our prayers.

**Grant that what we have asked in faith
we may by your grace receive,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

THE GREETING OF PEACE

We are all one in Christ Jesus.
We belong to him through faith,
heirs of the promise of the Spirit of peace.

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

Hymn: As a chalice cast of gold

Thomas Henry Troeger (b.1945) - tune: Lucerna Laudoniae
© The Australian Hymn Book Company Pty Ltd, 1999,
CCL No 632290

- 1. As a chalice cast of gold,
burnished bright and brimmed with wine,
make me, Lord, as fit to hold
grace and truth and love divine.
Let my praise and worship start
with the cleansing of my heart.**

2. **Save me from the soothing sin
of the empty cultic deed
and the pious, babbling din
of the claimed but un-lived creed.
Let my actions, Lord, express
what my tongue and lips profess.**
3. **When I bend upon my knees,
clasp my hands or bow my head,
let my spoken, public pleas
be directly, simply said,
free of tangled words that mask
what my soul would plainly ask.**
4. **When I dance or chant your praise,
when I sing a psalm or hymn,
when I preach your loving ways,
let my heart add its amen.
Let each cherished, outward rite
thus reflect your inward light.**

The altar is prepared.

Wise and gracious God,
you spread a table before us;
nourish your people with the word of life
and the bread of heaven.

Amen.

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

All thanks and praise, glory and honour,
be yours at all times, in every place,
holy and loving Father, true and living God.

We praise you that through your eternal Word
you brought the universe into being
and made us in your own image.

You have given us this earth to care for and delight in,
and with its bounty you preserve our life.

We thank you that you bound yourself to the human race
with the promises of a gracious covenant
and called us to serve you in love and peace.

Above all, we give you thanks for your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ:
born as one of us, he lived our common life
and offered his life to you
in perfect obedience and trust.

By his death he delivered us from sin,
brought us new life,
and reconciled us to you and to one another.

Therefore with angels and archangels,
with apostles, and prophets,
with holy women and men of every age,
we proclaim your great and glorious name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.**

Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna in the highest.

Holy God, we thank you
for these gifts of your creation, this bread and wine,
and we pray that we who eat and drink them
in obedience to our Saviour Christ,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
may be partakers of his body and blood,
and be made one with him and with each other
in peace and love.

On the night he was betrayed Jesus took bread;
and when he had given you thanks
he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying,
'Take, eat. This is my body given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.'

After supper, he took the cup,
and again giving you thanks
he gave it to his disciples, saying,
'Drink from this, all of you.
This is my blood of the new covenant
shed for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.'

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Therefore we do as our Saviour has commanded:
proclaiming his offering of himself
made once for all upon the cross,
his mighty resurrection and glorious ascension,
and looking for his coming again,
we celebrate, with this bread and this cup,
his one perfect and sufficient sacrifice
for the sins of the whole world.

As we eat and drink this holy sacrament,
renew us by your Spirit
that we may be united in the body of your Son
and serve you as a royal priesthood
in the joy of your eternal kingdom.

Receive our praises, Father,
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
with whom and in whom,
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
we worship you in songs of never-ending praise:

**Blessing and honour and glory and power
are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

As our Saviour Christ has taught us,
we are confident to pray,

**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 from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.**

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD AND THE COMMUNION

As this broken bread was once many grains which have been gathered together and made one bread:

so may your Church be gathered from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

**Jesus, Lamb of God, have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us your peace.**

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was given for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life. Take and eat this in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your heart by faith with thanksgiving. **Amen.**

The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for you, preserve your body and soul to everlasting life. Drink this in remembrance that Christ's blood was shed for you, and be thankful. **Amen.**

SENDING OUT GOD'S PEOPLE

Let us pray.
Gracious God,
we thank you that in this sacrament you assure us of your goodness and love. Accept our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving and help us to grow in love and obedience that we may serve you in the world and finally be brought to that table where all your saints feast with you for ever.

Father,
we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.

Hymn: There's a spirit in the air

Brian Arthur Wren (b.1936) - tune: Lauds

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- 1. There's a spirit in the air, telling Christians everywhere: 'Praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working in our world.'**
- 2. Lose your shyness, find your tongue, tell the world what God has done: God in Christ has come to stay. Live tomorrow's life today.**
- 3. When believers break the bread, when a hungry child is fed, praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working in our world.**
- 4. Still the Spirit gives us light, seeing wrong and setting right: God in Christ has come to stay. Live tomorrow's life today.**

- 5. When a stranger's not alone, where the homeless find a home, praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working in our world.**
- 6. May the Spirit fill our praise, guide our thoughts and change our ways: God in Christ has come to stay. Live tomorrow's life today.**
- 7. There's a Spirit in the air, calling people everywhere: 'Praise the love that Christ revealed, living, working in our world.'**

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God, and of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord; and the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord:
In the name of Christ. Amen.

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Note: the readings etc. used today are those set for last Sunday - an adjustment arising from the recently completed sermon series.

From next Sunday - 12th September - we will revert to the expected lectionary readings.

THIS WEEK IN THE PARISH

Sun 5 th Sep	<u>15th Sunday after Pentecost</u> 10am Eucharist - <i>live-stream only</i>
Mon 6 th Sep	-
Tue 7 th Sep	5.30pm <i>community meal: TDRM</i> 7.30pm <i>Vestry meeting (Zoom)</i> (postponed from last week)
Wed 8 th Sep	5.30pm <i>community meal: Winter Shelter</i> 7.30pm <i>Mission Action Team (Zoom)</i>
Thu 9 th Sep	-
Fri 10 th Sep	<u>Vicar's day off</u>
Sat 11 th Sep	-
Sun 12 th Sep	<u>16th Sunday after Pentecost</u> 10am Eucharist - <i>live-stream only</i>

The debate: should Christians be vaccinated?

I was talking with a good pastor friend of mine recently, and he told me of some of the on-line debates he has found himself being asked to respond to. Of course there is much anxiety around vaccinations and the role of government in managing a pandemic, and a natural consequence of anxiety is mistrust. And people try to find reassurance by persuading others of the validity of alternative perspectives - alternative to the sources of authority they had previously trusted.

When I said that I hadn't been asked to make any responses, and also that I hadn't researched enough to engage confidently with some of the alternative perspectives, he shared the following article with me. I include it here as something you can bear in mind if someone engages with you about their concerns!

*If you find the article goes into more detail than you need, **the bottom line is that the government should not be coercing Christians to do the right thing - rather, Christ's love should be convincing us to do the right thing.***

DON'T BE COERCED, BE CONVINCED!
KUYPER ON VACCINES AND PASSPORTS
published in eternitynews.com.au 2/9/2021

An email [the Ezekiel petition] has been doing the rounds of in-boxes recently that uses a quote from Abraham Kuyper – a Theologian and Politician of the 19th and early 20th Century – to urge people to sign a document and oppose (among other things) the introduction of Vaccination Passports.

The quote, drawn from one of two paragraphs that address vaccination in Kuyper's work *Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto*, first published in 1879, is as follows:

*Vaccination certificates will therefore have to go ...
The form of tyranny hidden in these vaccination certificates is just as real a threat to the nation's spiritual resources as a smallpox epidemic itself.*

I say 'among other things', because the email makes no bones about the opposition of its authors to any continuation of other public health measures, especially restrictions such as lockdowns, and makes statements that cast doubt on the efficacy and safety of the COVID vaccines when it speaks of those who choose not to, or refuse to be vaccinated.

As I have often found during these COVID times, people will latch on to a part of something – usually one or two verses from the Bible – and use them to show support for their view. Such use lends 'authority' to the whole, for other believers who read what they trust – words from Scripture – alongside the words of the wider document. But sadly what is quoted is often only part of the story – and reading a little wider one finds things that throw a different light onto the interpretation and use made of the initial quote.

I wondered if the same might be the case with this Ezekiel Declaration email. So I dug out a digital copy of Kuyper.

The first thing I noticed was that the chapter titled Public Hygiene from which the quote is taken, begins by listing a portion of his policy position on the role of government. This says in part

... at the manifestation of contagious diseases (excepting the right of everyone to make decisions about his own body and his own conscience) it is to take all such measures as may be conducive to and are indispensable for preventing anyone without their will or consent from being dangerously exposed to the viruses of these diseases.

So far so good. It appears Kuyper here is clear that he doesn't support imposing vaccination on others. And so it is fair to say he would likely say the same now regarding COVID. But just as clearly, it seems he would argue that the role and responsibility of government is to take "all" measures, even if they only "may be conducive" to keep people from being dangerously exposed to the dangers of COVID. I think Kuyper would be more supportive of the broad public health measures about which the original email is more equivocal.

I then did a bit more reading. In another three volume work of Kuyper's, *Common Grace: God's Gifts For A Fallen World* first published in 1902, I found two chapters in the second volume titled The Vaccination against Cowpox (1) and (2) that dealt specifically with vaccination, in particular the 'cowpox' vaccine to guard against smallpox.

While again in these chapters Kuyper is quite adamant that people should not be forced into taking a vaccine if they do not wish to have it. He comes down pretty strongly in favour of having the vaccine! To the point of saying that someone who could take a step to prevent their child from contracting an illness that led to their death – and did not – was "guilty of breaking the sixth commandment" (Thou shalt not kill.)

He quite plainly states that

... it also is true that if our child does not yet have the pox, but it may strike, we are therefore obligated to take all precautionary measures available to us in order to ensure that our child will not be infected by the pox

– note: in the context of writing about vaccination – he says we are "**obligated** to take **all precautionary** measures ..."

He even throws in some comments pertinent to lockdowns and other public health measures imposed broadly for the protection of others:

...measures intended to protect third parties against dangers that affect them through our omission may and must be taken by the authorities.

As I read Kuyper's arguments for myself it seems clear that Kuyper would indeed say that we shouldn't IMPOSE "vaccination certificates" – but it seems just as clear that he would say we shouldn't NEED them.

Contrary to what I expected to find, based on how the Ezekiel Declaration email used their quote to oppose vaccination passports, I didn't find Kuyper spending pages on why government ought not coerce people to

be vaccinated. I did find that he convincingly argues why we should feel compelled to be!

And that ought not be foreign to us as Christians – after all – we don't sing a hymn with the line 'Love so coercing ... demands my soul my life my all ...' But for me, it is not anything coming from government that compels me to comply with public health measures or to be vaccinated. It is Love. Amazing. So divine. Its demand on me is not an unwelcome imposition from without, but a rising within of the same grace and compassion shown to me. As the hymn reveals, it is when looking upon the wondrous cross, where we see what personal sacrifice for the good of others looks like, in the One that the very name Christian means we pledge to imitate. If I can take steps to benefit others, to care for them, to bring them life, then I will.

But back to Kuyper. At the time, he is writing about a vaccination that was made with a live virus – and some objected on the basis that they would be introducing a 'poison' into their bodies.

The COVID vaccines available to us do not contain COVID virus particles. They use techniques to cause our own immune system to prepare to encounter the COVID-19 virus, by creating antibodies 'armed' to recognise the distinctive spike protein that COVID-19 has – and send the immune system into battle against it.

However, even though the vaccines we have for COVID are different, Kuyper even argues that people should not use the argument that it introduces a poison into the human body to refuse vaccination.

That would be true if the poisonous substances worked destructively always and under all conditions. But since this is not the case, and the destructive working often comes about only if we introduce the poison in large quantities and under certain conditions... an entirely different rule follows from this: poisons must not be administered to a human being in such a quantity and in such a way that they harm a person, but only in such a measure and in such a way that they benefit him. When it comes to vaccination, this raises the question of whether the inoculation administers the pox vaccine in such a way that it destroys or in such a way that it saves. If the former is the case, then it is not allowed, if the latter then it is allowed.

In fact – he even addresses the issue that the vaccine may cause some deaths, by saying

...such testing may indeed cost human lives, but this is not a fact that as such invalidates the rule. No one will dispute that it is God's will that we sail the seas, and yet how many human lives did it cost before we learned how to sail the seas? Building houses is a duty, yet how many human lives did it cost... It therefore would seem clear that God's order for humankind in learning... does not preclude loss of human life.

Kuyper again (and unlike the Ezekiel Declaration document) speaks forcefully of the obligation upon us to take what steps we can – and remember, he is writing in these two chapters specifically about vaccination –

if the results of the research are favourable^[1], then not only does nothing stand in the way of its application from the standpoint of faith, but it would be foolhardy – even immoral – not to apply a means that God has shown us for protection of the life of our child.

Yes, he then restates his view that he is not advocating coercion. But he then goes on to make an appeal – that to me seems either lacking entirely or at best is obscured in much that is being circulated to Christians today – motivated by care and duty that one should choose to be vaccinated:

we wish to lay it before the conscience... We ask what the sixth commandment imposes on them as a duty for protecting the life of their child. And we would very much like to spare parents who still hesitate from the bitter regret that, sadly, we have seen in so many instances when they finally decide at their child's grave that they will let their remaining children be inoculated.

That last statement is extremely poignant, even difficult to read – with the many video clips and accounts of people regretting having earlier been hesitant about being vaccinated or who had refused to do so, pleading from their own hospital beds, even from their own death beds or by the beds of loved ones who have passed.

You may want it to be your choice, you may like Kuyper, argue that no one should be coerced – but it is – as Kuyper himself stated – “foolhardy – even immoral” not to take advantage of the means before us to protect those around us.

A Church of Christ Pastor that wants to stay out of the social media war - 1 September 2021

Kuyper quotes sourced from:

Our Program: A Christian Political Manifesto Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology Copyright 2015 Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty Lexham Press, 1313 Commercial St., Bellingham, WA 98225 LexhamPress.com Originally published as Ons Program. Tweede druk (2nd ed.) © Amsterdam: J. H. Kruyt, 1880. First published unabridged in 1879.

and

Common Grace: God's Gifts for a Fallen World Volume 2: The Doctrinal Section Abraham Kuyper Collected Works in Public Theology Copyright 2019 Acton Institute for the Study of Religion & Liberty Lexham Press, 1313 Commercial St., Bellingham, WA 98225 LexhamPress.com Originally published as De Gemeene Gratie . Tweede Deel. Het Leerstellig Gedeelte. © Boekhandel voorheen Höveker & Wormser, 1902.

^[1] *I know there are some who want to question whether the COVID vaccines are effective. But questioning without taking notice of the quality and quantity of answers available is to be disingenuous. The verdict is in. The results of the research is favourable. Kuyper's injunction applies with its full force.*