

Ilam in Groups: 06 November 2022

Hi, Welcome to Ilam in Groups today. One good thing COVID-19 has given us as a church community is these smaller groups to gather in and to support each other. From time to time, we will continue to have services as Ilam in Groups, (we will have a group that meets at 51 Ilam Road that any new people can go to) so we can build these connections with each other. I know some groups have met informally at other times and maybe that is something you would like to do over the summer months. As usual, here are some ideas for you to dip into as a group. Please feel free to do what suits your group and make sure you have plenty of time to share barstool together and hang out. Take care Helen

CALL TO WORSHIP/PRAYER FOR TODAY

Last week I visited with a woman in hospital. Each time we prayed together, she would begin her prayer with: **“This is the day that the Lord has made. We will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24)**. It was inspiring for me to hear her thanking God for the day even though she was unwell in hospital. I thought that for our call to worship today we could say this verse from Psalm 118: 24 and thank God for something in our lives to remind ourselves that God is with us each and every day. You could also belt out the chorus that was written in 1967 together.



READING FOR TODAY

Lectio Divina – today we’re going to participate in the practice of sacred reading scripture together. Here is Deborah’s introduction to Lectio Divina that she has used in church recently. We’re going to read the passage that Luuk reflected on in our AGM service last week, 1 John 4: 7-21.

Lectio Divina - What is it?

- A contemplative way of reading the bible, dating back to the 6th century, established as a monastic practice by Benedict.
- We slow down. We read a short passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully. We savour it.
- “the text is seen as a gift to be received, not a problem to be dissected.... Let the text come to you.”
- *A way of praying* that leads us deeper into God’s word. We see scripture as a meeting place for a personal encounter with God.
- We come to the practice with a desire to be changed.
- Operates on the emotional rather than purely cerebral level.

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- Allow ourselves to be formed in the likeness of Christ. About ‘formation’ rather than ‘instruction’.

Steps for Lectio Divina

1. Read slowly. We will read 3 times, by different people, with a pause between each.
2. Meditation. When a word or phrase strikes you, stop and rest with it. Allow it to speak to you in a personal way by pondering the word in your heart, reflecting on what it means to you.
3. Prayer. Have a conversation with God, responding to the word or phrase that drew your attention.
4. Contemplation. Rest silently in God’s presence, letting God’s Spirit work within you. It is about allowing God to act in you.
5. We will finish by reading the passage one more time.

1 John 4:7-21 - The Message Version

⁷⁻¹⁰ My beloved friends, let us continue to love each other since love comes from God. Everyone who loves is born of God and experiences a relationship with God. The person who refuses to love doesn’t know the first thing about God, because God *is* love—so you can’t know him if you don’t love. This is how God showed his love for us: God sent his only Son into the world so we might live through him. This is the kind of love we are talking about—not that we once upon a time loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to clear away our sins and the damage they’ve done to our relationship with God.

¹¹⁻¹² My dear, dear friends, if God loved us like this, we certainly ought to love each other. No one has seen God, ever. But if we love one another, God dwells deeply within us, and his love becomes complete in us—perfect love!

¹³⁻¹⁶ This is how we know we’re living steadily and deeply in him, and he in us: He’s given us life from his life, from his very own Spirit. Also, we’ve seen for ourselves and continue to state openly that the Father sent his Son as Savior of the world. Everyone who confesses that Jesus is God’s Son participates continuously in an intimate relationship with God. We know it so well, we’ve embraced it heart and soul, this love that comes from God.

¹⁷⁻¹⁸ God is love. When we take up permanent residence in a life of love, we live in God and God lives in us. This way, love has the run of the house, becomes at home and mature in us, so that we’re free of worry on Judgment Day—our standing in the world is identical with Christ’s. There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love.

¹⁹ We, though, are going to love—love and be loved. First we were loved, now we love. He loved us first.

²⁰⁻²¹ If anyone boasts, “I love God,” and goes right on hating his brother or sister, thinking nothing of it, he is a liar. If he won’t love the person he can see, how can he love the God he can’t see? The command we have from Christ is blunt: Loving God includes loving people. You’ve got to love both.

DISCUSSION FOR TODAY

Share with the group what God took your mind to while you participated in the Lectio Divina.

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TOPIC FOR TODAY

If you've been having a great discussion from the Lectio Divina exercise, then feel free to skip this. When I have been reading 1 John 4: 7-21 this week I have been struck by verse 18 which says, in The Message translation, "There is no room in love for fear. Well-formed love banishes fear. Since fear is crippling, a fearful life—fear of death, fear of judgment—is one not yet fully formed in love." Or from the NIV translation, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love."

As many of you know, I'm a very fearful person. I can be scared of most things. I have always thought that God should somehow by a miracle take away all my fears or that I need to try harder, to pray more, to have more faith in order to banish fear from my life. But as usual I forget that most miracles happen slowly and quietly. And I've found that maybe in the honesty of admitting my fears and the fears around me and then somehow continuing to live with love, faith, hope and joy (and maybe medication if you need it), the fear may not have quite as much power or hold over me. Brother Lawrence teaches us to practice (living in) the presence of God in every ordinary part of our lives. Henri Nouwen speaks of choosing to live as the beloved over and over and over again, and maybe love casting out fear happens in this incremental but no less miraculous way.

Here is a clip of Kate Bowler reflecting on fear and love: [Relationship to Fear - YouTube](#).

ACTIVITY

Share barstool time together. It's a lovely opportunity to tell each other how you are and how we can pray for each other.

PRAYER FOR THE WORLD

One way of practising love instead of fear is to pray for places and people in our world that are facing fear or cause us to fear. Here is Catherine's prayer for the world from the AGM service last week. You might like to read this prayer together or add your own words to some of these fear-filled situations:

A prayer for the world.

Father God, we pray for our world today. We pray for peace and hope to abound.

We pray for all who are affected by natural disasters that destroy homes and livelihoods, putting lives at risk.

Merciful Lord, we pray that people living through these difficult times would find comfort and hope in you and the practical aid that they need.

We pray for peace and hope to abound.

Lord, we pray for all the countries that are going through war, conflict and political instability.

We ask for peace, and that their citizens be free from fear and know stability once more.

We remember those in Ukraine and Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Yemen, Ethiopia, Israel and Palestine and other places where unrest continues.

We pray for peace and hope to abound.

Father God, we bring before you all who have fled persecution and conflict searching for safety in different countries. May they find loving communities, be able to settle well and find healing for their experiences.

Lord, may those they meet be kind and compassionate to them. May they be welcoming and understanding. We lift them to you, and ask for your protection over them.

We pray for peace and hope to abound.

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We pray for those communities and whanau in in Aotearoa and across the globe who are experiencing the effects of the global pandemic, the economic fallout, inequity and the cost of living crisis. May they have hope, access to resources and practical help as they need it.

We pray for peace and hope to abound.

We pray for our home, Papatuanuku, planet Earth, for the oceans, the forests, the grasslands and all the precious species great and small that are affected by the climate crisis.

We pray for peace and hope to abound.

We praise you, God, for your Church across the globe. In particular, we lift to you our MissionScope partners who are faithfully serving you in their communities. We think of Jo Smith in Spiti, Project Burans in Uttarakhand, JOYYA in Murshidabad, the Village Education and pastor training in Bangladesh, The Pancaran Kasih Church in Indonesia, The Roxas and Lilok Foundation in The Philippines, Carol in the slums of Cambodia. Right now, they are supporting vulnerable people in their communities with education, safe places, meaningful work, healthcare, spiritual care, and practical assistance.

We pray for peace and hope to abound.

Lord, we lift up our world in prayer. May your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

BENEDICTION

Say together the words of the Ilam Benediction – and maybe think of others at Ilam as you do so:

You are God's servants, gifted with dreams and visions; upon you rests the grace of God like flames of fire. Love and serve the Lord in the strength of the Spirit. May the deep peace of Christ be with you, the strong arms of God sustain you, and the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen you in every way.

***He pononga koutou nā te Atua
Mea hoatu ngā moemoeā me ngā wawata kia koutou
I runga i a koe nga atawhai a te Atupērā hoki ite mura o te kapura.
Arohatia, manaakitia te Ariki I roto i te kaha o te Wairua Tapu
Kia tau te rangimārie ki runga i a koutou, I roto hoki i ngā ringaringa o te Atua, ā, mā te
Wairua Tapu e whakakaha koutou i ngā wā katoa.
Āmene.***