



## Bible Readings for September 20, 2020

Exodus 16:2-15  
Philippians 1:21-30  
Matthew 20:1-16

### Reflection From Ray

I have mentioned before that in my years of preaching I have noticed there are certain passages that come around every three years that get people riled. Passages that we do not particularly like, that get under our skin, that scandalize us. That wrench from us the cry, "But that is not fair!" Some people experience time and time again indeed life is not fair and tragically each time they again become incensed and personally offended.

The unforgiving servant and the exhortation to forgive "not seven times but seventy-seven times" is one. A couple of others also that do this - the parable of the Prodigal Son and the Mary and Martha story. These are the grumbling, murmuring, passages in the bible, as well as the passage from the Hebrew scriptures set in our lectionary. These stories mirror back to us some shadowy, murky side of both the church and us as individuals.

(cont pag 4)



Thanks to those people who have been in touch to pass on their best wishes, and in some cases, disappointment to the news that I will be moving on from the Sunshine congregation at the end of this year to take up the placement at Carlton (Church of All Nations). Much appreciated. But we still have 3 months together and I am really hoping that we can get at least one more opportunity to worship together in person and say some farewells and blessings upon each other.

And we all join together in wishing Gwenda Bond a happy 90th Birthday for Sat Sept 19. Gwenda has hit this major milestone in marvellous condition, even despite a rather nasty fall earlier this year. But she has bounced back well and her and Ron's children and grandchildren, while they can't be with her in person, surround her with their love.

Gwenda, you are a wonderful example of discipleship of Christ and been a faithful participant in Christ's church over many decades.



### Lockdown does not mean you cannot "go to church"

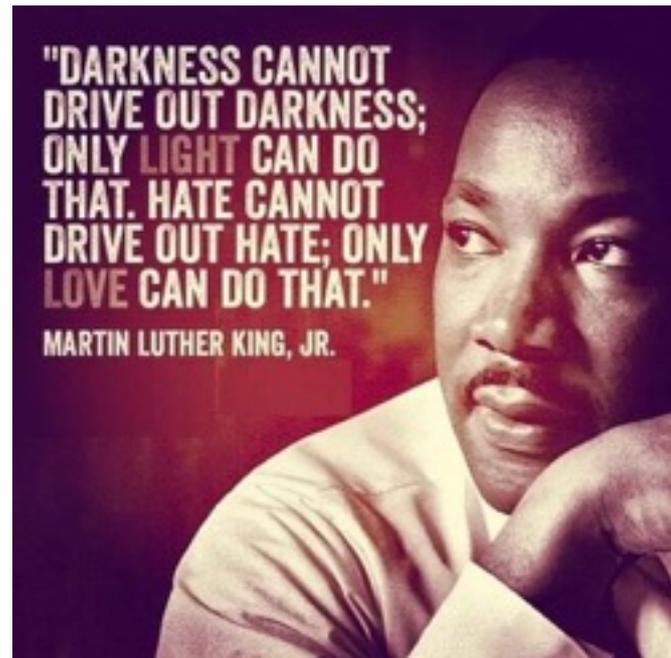
Here again is the link to the VicTas Synod website where you can find the live streamed and recorded worship services.

<https://victas.uca.org.au/resources/covid-19-worship-resources/>



## Do Yourself A Favour

Today we present Aretha Franklin, described by Rolling Stone magazine as the greatest ever vocalist. Aretha Franklin was born in Memphis, Tennessee, in 1942. She was the third of four children born to Clarence Franklin and his wife Barbara, but also had two older half siblings. Barbara was a pianist and gospel singer, while Clarence became one of America's most famous Baptist preachers, as well as a civil rights activist and talented singer himself. Aretha was a gifted musician from an early age, teaching herself to play the piano by listening to jazz music. She also began to sing gospel at her father's church. By ten, she was singing solos and at 12, she dropped out of school to tour with the church's gospel group, under the management of her father. By 14, Aretha had recorded her first album at her father's church 'Songs of Faith' (1956). Then at 18, with her father's blessing, Aretha moved to New York where she eventually signed with Columbia Records. She released the album 'Aretha' (1961) and that same year married her manager, Ted White. In 1966, Aretha left Columbia Records and signed with R&B label Atlantic. She had huge success with the single 'I Never Loved a Man (The Way I Love You)', followed by a string of hits including 'Think', 'Chain of Fools', 'Say a Little Prayer' and '(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman'. Another track 'Respect' reached number 1 on both the R&B and pop charts internationally and won Aretha her first two Grammy Awards.  
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Thanks again to John Gibbins, a wonderful supporter of the congregation and active member of the Men's Shed who contributed this quote from The Rev Martin Luther King Jr.



**This week the Assembly has asked us to be in prayer about**  
God's creatures who are dying in unprecedented numbers amid growing pressures on our environment. current economic climate. May God sustain them and give them hope for better days ahead.

- Revs. David Baker and Steve Francis and their families as they conclude their roles as Moderators in the Qld and WA Synods, as well as all those who exercise leadership across all councils of the Uniting Church.

## Do Yourself a Favour (cont)

Although Aretha and Ted divorced in 1969, her hits continued. Her 1972 gospel album 'Amazing Grace' sold more than 2 million copies. During the 1970s, Aretha also won eight consecutive Grammy Awards for best R&B female vocalist.

In the 1980s, Aretha reinvented her career with a role in the film 'The Blues Brothers'. Having left Atlantic Records she signed with Arista, with new pop albums such as 'Jump To It' (1982), 'Who's Zoomin' Who?' (1985) and 'Aretha' (1986). These included chart-topping duets with stars such as George Michael and Annie Lennox. However, the 1980s were a sad time for Aretha, with the end of her six-year marriage to actor Glynn Turman, and the death of her father who had been critically injured in a burglary five years earlier.

Aretha received many awards during her lifetime, including 18 Grammy Awards, three special Grammys (and 44 nominations). The 1998 Grammy Awards were also particularly memorable when opera singer Luciano Pavarotti pulled out due to sickness and Aretha famously stepped in to perform a powerful rendition of 'Nessun Dorma' to a standing ovation. In 1979, she received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and in 1987 became the first female artist in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. She was also awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President George W Bush in 2005.



Much of Aretha's life story was told in her 1999 autobiography 'Aretha: From These Roots' and it was revealed in 2018 that actress Jennifer Hudson plays Aretha in an upcoming film about her life. Aretha had four sons, two of whom were looked after by her sister and grandmother during her early career.

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In 2017, just before her 75th birthday, Aretha announced it would be her last year of touring. She died the following year aged 76 from pancreatic cancer, surrounded by family and friends at her home in Detroit. As guests arrived for her televised funeral, more than 100 pink cadillacs lined the streets of Detroit reflecting the lyrics of her 1985 hit 'Freeway of Love'. Speakers and performers included former US president Bill Clinton and singer Stevie Wonder – all paying their respects to a remarkable woman.

Respect Aretha's version written by Otis Redding

O Happy Day An extraordinary version of this gospel classic, sees Aretha returning to her roots. Performed with her good friend, Mavis Staples



## New (ish) Minister at St Michael's, Melbourne

When we say new(ish) the RevDr Margaret Mayman was inducted into this significant ministry in Feb this year. It had just slipped past your editor. Francis McNab had retired in 2016 and it was a three year process to find a replacement. Margaret has come from ministry in Sydney and prior to that was a Presbyterian minister in New Zealand.

Read the full story [here](#)

**Something that has lost the innocence or the naivety of unbridled joy and celebration.**

**All stories have in common the aspect that someone in the story is undeservedly getting something they have no right to. And for that to happen then (in our impoverished way of thinking) it means that I must be missing out. To live out of love is to be confident in the abundance and richness of life. To receive gratefully and to share what you have received. To live out of fear is to live with the suspicion that scarcity lies at the heart of life and so life becomes a matter of ensuring I will be protected from those who will threaten me and my security. And these two remain: love and fear and if I am not mistakes our scriptures insist that perfect love casts out fear.**

**Today's parable by Jesus is an absolute classic of this genre. The labourers in the vineyard and the ones who have worked but a few hours and paid the same as the ones who have sweated it out all day long. How can that be right we protest?**

**Isn't this still the same mentality that complains (mistakenly) about the houses and cars and handouts that other groups are always getting. Indigenous people, asylum seekers, something in us can't stand to see others get something we think is ours.**

**But it is not just getting material goods. It is also recognition, applause, status.**

**Why do I get all puffed up so I want recognition and thunderous applause for every act of love or service? If my reward will still be a generous one then the only thing I'm begrudging is the fact that someone was made equal to me. I feel that somehow my status is reduced because theirs is raised. And I liked the gap. I'm happy for others to be rewarded so long as our relative standing in the eyes of the community is maintained. I'll celebrate the blessings lavished on the other person so long as I feel that mine are still superior.**

**But the excessive generosity of God is different than getting what you earned. And so**

**for the third time Jesus says, "the last will be first, and the first will be last."**

**Jesus concludes with a sharp question to those who grumbled about God's excess: "Are you envious because I am generous?"**

**Well actually, this is incredibly good news. Unbelievably good news. So long as we can get out of our life-time habit of needing to be recognised as more worthy than others, then this is mind-bogglingly good news. You see, in the story Jesus told, the workers who put in the full eight hour shift that did not have their pay cut in making them equal with those who only worked an hour. They were still getting what they had agreed on. It is just that those who only worked an hour were paid as though they had done the whole day.**

**Mostly we identify with those who worked the whole day and so we grumble and complain. And I don't know about you, but I know that on any scale of worthiness, I'm not at the top. I may not be a one hour bludger, but I'm not the greatest saint since mother Mary either. And so what this story is actually promising me, is that I am going to be treated far far better than I deserve. It is telling me that God is so gracious that I will be received into heaven with all the applause and reward due to a Mother Teresa or Desmond Tutu or John Wesley. You and I will be welcomed as though our lives were worth as much as those of Mary of Magdala or Francis of Assisi. We will be rewarded as richly as if our godly achievements had been the equal of those of Martin Luther King or Oscar Romero or John Bunyan. In fact, having been baptised into union with Christ Jesus, we will find that we are joint heirs with Christ, and receive the reward due to one who laid down his life for the world.**

**If the way that God works was fair, we would be in a heap of trouble. If the way God works was fair, we would find ourselves lost and alone with no clear direction of where to go. If the way God works was fair, we wouldn't have a Christ who was executed though innocent. It ain't fair. And, I, for one, am so very thankful that it isn't.**

## Cartoon of the Week

### JOIN US

**IN PRAYER FOR:** • **God's creatures who are dying in unprecedented numbers amid growing pressures on our environment.**

- Women who are struggling in the current economic climate. May God sustain them and give them hope for better days ahead.
- Revs. David Baker and Steve Francis and their families as they conclude their roles as Moderators in the Qld and WA Synods, as well as all those who exercise leadership across all councils of the Uniting Church.

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