

2 Corinthians 1:1-11
Feilding Baptist
12.4.26

Call to Worship

Welcome to worship with Feilding Baptist Church!

Some of you will remember Cyclone Bola. Most of us will remember Cyclone Gabrielle. So it is quite normal and acceptable to be apprehensive with Vianu on the way.

The disciples of Jesus were facing a storm. Jesus didn't appear even slightly concerned. He was asleep, on a boat that was being buffeted, no, slammed by the wind. We read about it in Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Matthew 8

Jesus calms the storm

23 Then he got into the boat and his disciples followed him. 24 Suddenly a furious storm came up on the lake, so that the waves swept over the boat. But Jesus was sleeping. 25 The disciples went and woke him, saying, 'Lord, save us! We're going to drown!'

26 He replied, 'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.

And what did the disciples say?

27 The men were amazed and asked, 'What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey him!'

Let's delight as we worship, the God who nature even bows to, the God who death bows to, the God who is King over evil and Satan. And let's remember that while Jesus can calm our storm today, through our suffering and anxiousness, God is with us.

Let's pray.

Father God, thank you for this time to gather, to worship, almost in the midst of a storm. We pray for those who can't gather today due to the weather, and pray that they will sense the comfort of Your presence.

Holy Spirit, we are grateful for Your presence here with us. Please encourage us as we worship, as we spend this brief time together. Please bless this time and this space, in Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

Message - Why?!

We are united around Jesus, both in suffering and comfort, but confident in the hope that we have through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

André McDonald was a 48 year old who was losing her battle with cancer. She chose to end her life through euthanasia. Her parents and husband found out on a Friday, she died the following Monday. Her teenage sons were told after she had died. So begins an article in the latest Christianity Today magazine (Death is not a Right, Kristy Etheridge, p84-91, March/April 2026).

Canada is where André lives. Canada is the world leader in openness to euthanasia. There it is called Medical Assistance in Dying, MAID. Some people call it state sponsored execution, and a crime against human life. One in 20 deaths in Canada is by euthanasia, 5%. But this is expected to be around 100 000 people this year. Originally the law allowed for those who were terminally ill. But now it has been widened to those chronically ill, or disabled. And now there is a group campaigning for 'mature minors', that is children, to be given permission to choose this option. They believe it is compassionate. Lives that are so devoid of quality provides

euthanasia an option. Those whose health is so bad that they have to rely on others for everything. What's the point of living?

These are end of life issues. Let's not forget the similar beginning of life issues either, detecting foetal abnormalities in unborn babies, and aborting. The opportunity to relieve ourselves of the uncomfortable. Where do we draw the line? Should our tax money be used for caring for people, or keeping people alive, when it could be used for, say, roads? Do the disabled make us feel uncomfortable? Is our desire for comfort wrong? Are we to avoid suffering? [When does a life, rather personhood, begin, and end?]

Who is campaigning against euthanasia? When it comes to church denominations, the campaign against seems to be only the Catholic church. The protestant voice is very quiet.

What is wrong with the rest of us? Is there anything wrong with the rest of us? Are we sitting back and shrugging our shoulders? What is our thinking on suffering? Think about Jesus, He didn't experience a suffering free life. We are supposed to not only endure suffering, but stand alongside those who are, to love and to care for them. It is us who are supposed to be compassionate, towards those who are suffering. We are to be the hands and feet of Jesus. We are to care for people in such a way that euthanasia shouldn't look so attractive.

And care for the families of those who suffer alongside. The article says that the grace and mercy shown to family members from the people who prayed with and for them, after a euthanasia was truly healing in the midst of their grief and anger. So we can get it right.

Our passage today from 2 Corinthians is about hopelessness, and looking death in the face. It's a reminder not to turn our backs on those who are suffering, but to care, to show love, to show God's love for them. We do well with caring for the poor, the marginalised, the vulnerable, the disabled, what do we do for those who have lost quality in their lives? May we care for them in such a caring and compassionate way, that they may endure towards a natural finish.

Let's read;

2 Corinthians 1:1-11 (NIV - UK)

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

To the church of God in Corinth, together with all his holy people throughout Achaia:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Praise to the God of all comfort

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. 5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ. 6 If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. 7 And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters,[a] about the troubles we experienced in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired of life itself. 9 Indeed, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. 10 He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us again. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, 11 as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favour granted us in answer to the prayers of many.

Footnotes

2 Corinthians 1:8 The Greek word for brothers and sisters (adelphoi) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family; also in 8:1; 13:11.

May God bless these words to our hearts and minds.

What's the setting here? Well, historically, the people of Corinth were very naughty boys and girls around 150 BC (146BC). They sided with a group who were opposing Rome. Guess what happened? Rome took a dim view of this, and paid them a visit. All the men were slaughtered, and women and children taken away. Corinth was no more (Belleville, 14). A hundred years later (44BC) the Romans saw strategic value in Rome, and resettled it, with a whole heap of poor people. A bit like New Zealand? And a bit like Russell was reputed to be, it became a very grubby and non scholarly city. But a city that was of great value to the Romans.

So the people of the church came out of this background. They were forming a culture based on Jesus that was so different to what they had been used to. And it's hard to leave some of that behind.

So we'll see over the next three weeks, what the purpose for writing this letter was. Paul has already written, 1 Corinthians. But these were not the only two letters that Paul wrote to the people in Corinth. There were at least four. Only two remain.

Back to our verse, it might seem strange to us that Paul and Timothy sign the letter at the start, rather than the end. But never mind, it is who the letter is to, that we should note. This is not to society, but to the church. And not just one church, as in 1 Corinthians, but the churches of the region. This letter was going to be available widely. So what it was addressing, was not something for just one congregation, but more.

Not only was the letter going widely, it was going to a cross cultural audience. This letter wasn't just to the Jews in the region of Achaia, or to the Greek speakers. This was to both. And we know that with Paul's greeting in verse two, grace and peace to you. Peace to you was a standard Jewish greeting. Greeks would have expected to hear grace, charis. By writing grace and peace, Paul is uniting both Jew and Greek. This is a letter for all.

A letter from Paul? Ok, yes, it is a letter from God, through Paul and Timothy, from the God of all compassion and comfort, verse 3. Wow! We get the God of compassion, but comfort?! Who preaches this? We're more often told to endure, not seek comfort. What's this about?! A cuddly blanket? A Tahitian holiday?

The best we can do in English is translate what Paul meant with the word comfort. It is about being near or with someone. And we don't just sit, the comfort we're to speak are words that change someone's mood and situation, giving them courage, new hope, new direction, new insights that will alter the way they face the next moment, the next day, the rest of their life. Comfort has the aspect of encouragement. Comforting someone meets them where they are at and brings them right on to the point where they are strong enough to see new hope, new possibilities, new ways forward (NT Wright - For Everyone).

When should we expect this comfort, v4? God comforts us in our sufferings or troubles, or afflictions (depending on your translation)! That's good! But look at why we are comforted, SO THAT we will be able to comfort others. Oh! This is not a sit on the couch message. Actually, I'm not sure I want to hear any more. This sounds distinctly uncomfortable! Oh, it gets worse, comfort those who are facing ANY trouble. This is more than just those facing end of life issues. Here are those facing issues of justice, or employment, or housing, or relationship issues. No wonder this book is preached from so rarely! I jest!

With the comfort we have received from God, so we are to comfort others. An exact copy, not something watered down.

So there is the first Why - v4 our comfort isn't for ourselves, but for others. God blesses us so that we might be a blessing to others. This is how we continue the work of Jesus in the world. This is the purpose of the church, not to be inward looking, but outward looking, contributing to the world in a positive and powerful way.

Here in v5 is God's call to us is to do something that Jesus has already done.

[5 For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ.](#)

Which leads to Why 2 - v6 if we are afflicted it is for your comfort AND salvation. Again, it isn't about us, but others, that others might know about Jesus, others might know of the comfort of Jesus. And if that is costly for us, then it is completely worth it. This shared comfort might be costly in time, costly in finance, possibly costly in health?

Which we see in v8, that the cost was extreme, their suffering was to such an extent that Paul and his friends despaired of life! They v9 had the sentence of death, thinking they were going to die.- But remarkably, they didn't give up, but patiently endured, for God was their hope. How? In the resurrection of Jesus, we have hope. God's comfort should give us hope, not just hope, strength and hope.

So that, here are those words again, v9, so that, the third Why, so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God. A God who raises the dead. This isn't to be foolish, this isn't about not taking medication, this is about the times when we are tempted to trust in ourselves, to ignore what we know to be God's path. No, trust in God.

Which is exactly where these verses end, with God, in prayer, prayer not for ourselves, but again, for others.

How often do we pray for others? I have to have a list, to remind me, with different people on different days of the week, to make sure my prayers aren't all about me! Our comfort is to extend into our prayer life too, praying for others, as well as helping others in practical ways.

So, the message in a sentence is this;

We are united around Jesus, both in suffering and comfort, but live confident in the hope that we have because of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

It seems that the verse we had a few weeks ago applies again here, Romans 12:12;

[Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.](#)

[Benediction](#)

Romans 8:38ff

For I am convinced that neither death nor life,
neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,
neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation,
will be able to separate us from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,
In the name of Jesus. Amen.