

**Epiphany 3**  
**23/1/2022**

**Mark the Evangelist**

**Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10**  
**Psalm 19**  
**1 Corinthians 12:12-31a**  
**Luke 4:14-21**

**There is no utterance ... their voice is never heard**

Sermon preached by Matt Julius

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E tō mātou Matua i te rangi  
Kia tapu tōu Ingoa.  
Kia tae mai tōu ranga tiratanga.  
Kia meatia tāu e pai ai ki runga ki te whenua,  
kia rite anō ki tō te rangi.  
Hōmai ki a mātou āianeī  
he taro mā mātou mō tēnei rā.  
Murua ō mātou hara,  
Me mātou hoki e muru nei  
i ō te hunga e hara ana ki a mātou.  
Āua hoki mātou e kawea kia whakawaia;  
Engari whakaorangia mātou i te kino:  
Nōu hoki te ranga tiratanga, te kaha,  
me te korōria,  
Āke ake ake. Āmine.<sup>1</sup>

Hear these words from the law:

“If resident aliens among you prosper, and if any of your kin fall into difficulty with one of them and sell themselves to an alien, or to a branch of the alien’s family, after they have sold themselves they shall have the right of redemption; one of their brothers may redeem them, or their uncle or their uncle’s son may redeem them, or anyone of their family who is of their own flesh may redeem them; of if they prosper they may redeem themselves.” (Lev. 25.47-49)

O lord, my rock and my redeemer. (Ps 19.15b)

“Some of the [religious leaders] in the crowd said to [Jesus,] “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” [Jesus] answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the rocks would shout out.” (Luke 19.39-40)

O lord, my rock and my redeemer.

We live on a land of droughts and flooding rains  
And the droughts are getting longer  
And the floods are getting deeper  
And the fires are burning longer  
And the crisis is getting deeper  
And the wait for justice is getting longer  
And the cries are getting deeper

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<sup>1</sup> The Lord’s Prayer in Te Reo Māori.

“Without a word, without a sound,  
without a voice being heard” (Ps 19.4)

And those who were killed by the colonisers when they came have no voice  
And those whose land was taken have had no voice  
And those who were enslaved have no voice  
And those whose culture has been erased have no voice  
And those in youth detention in spit hoods have no voice  
And those left in remote communities, when the services are switched off have no voice  
And there is no treaty, so there is no voice

“Yet their message fills the world,  
their news reaches its rim.” (Ps 19.5)

Āke ake ake

O lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Hear these words from the law:

“The uniting churches were largely silent as the dominant culture of Australia constructed and propagated a distorted version of history that denied this land was occupied, utilised, cultivated and harvested by First Peoples who also had complex systems of trade and inter-relationships. As a result of this denial, relationships were broken and the very integrity of the Gospel proclaimed by the churches was diminished.”<sup>2</sup>

*The uniting churches were largely silent*

O lord, my rock and my redeemer.

“Some of the [religious leaders] in the crowd said to [Jesus,] “Teacher, order your disciples to stop.” [Jesus] answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the rocks would shout out.” (Luke 19.39-40)

O lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Leaders met at the meeting place  
Coming from all points of the southern sky  
At Uluru -- and spoke about sovereignty from the big rock

*“Sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or ‘mother nature,’ and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with [their] ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.”<sup>3</sup>*

Hear the voice of Mununjali Yugambah poet Ellen van Neerven:

women are still not being heard  
our bodies ignored  
crimes against us approved  
sister spoke up  
it took her life  
in custody, without custodianship  
children taken, and land  
weeping and lonely

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<sup>2</sup> *The Uniting Church in Australia Revised Preamble to the Constitution.*

<sup>3</sup> *Uluru Statement from the Heart.*

no more women unheard behind the wall  
no more women dead over unpaid fines  
no more women dead by men  
it must end.<sup>4</sup>

...

The Psalmist ties together a reflection on creation with praise of the law. The created order of things is not simply an inert object, not simply a bundle of random stuff. Rather, the created world is the wide horizon of our encounter with God.

God is big.

The story of God can only be told on the cosmic scale of the universe. The rhythms of life, the fact that we human beings are products of nature's processes, the changing of night to day and day to night ... All of this must be included in our account of a God who speaks to the world.

The voice of God comes to us through creation itself. It comes to us through the voices of those who have tended to creation, those who have cared for these lands and waters and living things since the time when the sacred stories were first told.

Too often we have not heard these voice. We have let them go silent.

And yet, says the Psalmist, even though no voice is heard, no words are uttered, even without a discernible sound, God's message permeates the world.

God's message speaks of a law that is perfect, demands which are just, decrees which are faultless, of more worth than gold.

What the Psalmist offers us in this rich poem is a vision of a world in which the movement between the world itself and our human community is a seamless whole. We should not seek here a sense of a discussion of creation simply stitched together to a discussion of the law. The law which restores our souls in the law which forms a human community which reaches beyond itself and embraces all people, all things, in a new order of righteousness and love.

For this we must allow the message of God which permeates the world to permeate our souls. We must be open to acknowledging faults ... We must be open to letting go of being the ones in control of measuring our own correctness:

"... faults hide within us  
forgive me mine ..." (Ps 19.13)

says the Psalmist.

We must "keep [our] pride in check, / break its grip; / ... be free of blame / for deadly sin." (Ps 19.14)

We must allow this Psalm to sear into our souls.

There is blood in this land, and not enough justice yet to clean it.

So let us listen to God's voice in those who speak for justice  
Let us hear the call for Voice. for Treaty. for Truth.

Āke ake ake. Āmine.

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<sup>4</sup> Ellen van Neerven, 'Women are still not being heard,' *Throat*, p. 47.