



Sunday January 24th, 2021
Third Sunday after the Epiphany
The Fig Tree Worship Resource



Gathering & Lighting the Candle

We are a pilgrim people,
 following the pilgrim Jesus,
 as he walks along the beach
 and calls us to follow.

“Leave your nets, leave your boats,
 leave whatever occupies you most and come,
 come into this time of walking together,
 come,” he says, “and follow me.”

Light the candle, Christ is calling us

Call to worship

Here we are, responding to the call to follow
 some of us are curious, wondering
 some of us are uncertain, stumbling
 some of us are sure and steady, for now,
 and here we are.

**Gather us in, draw us into yourself,
 you who are wisdom,
 birthing life out of darkness,
 brooding over the waters.
 You who have been here since forever.
 Gather us in.**

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
 Christian Congress*

As we approach January 26th, the date of the commemoration of the British occupation of New South Wales we are mindful of the First Peoples who were here for more than 60,000 years before that date. We acknowledge that this occupation of their land, that was never ceded, has caused devastating and irreversible harm to their lives, land and culture. We commit ourselves to truth-telling and to seeking healing and justice, walking together as First and Second peoples.

Singing - Jesus calls us TIS 589

Jesus calls us o'er the tumult
 of our life's wild restless sea,
 day by day his voice is sounding,
 saying 'Christian, follow me. '

as of old St Andrew heard it
 by the Galilean lake,
 turned from home and toil and kindred,
 leaving all for his dear sake.

Jesus calls us from the worship
 of the vain world's golden store,
 from each idol that would keep us, saying,
 'Christian, love me more.'

In our joys and in our sorrows,
 days of toil and lives of ease,
 still he calls, in cares and pleasures,
 'Christians, love me more than these.'

Jesus calls us! By your mercies,
 Saviour, may we hear your call,
 give our hearts to your obedience,
 serve and love you best of all.

Words: Cecil Frances Alexander 1818-95 alt. Music: Samuel Flood Jones 1826-95 Used with permission CCLI 241 739

Prayer

Psalm 62:5-12

62:5 For God alone my soul waits in silence, for my hope is from him.

(keep a time of silence)

62:6 He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken.

**I can stand strong, even when things get tough,
 because I can lean on you, God.**

62:7 On God rests my deliverance and my honor; my mighty rock, my refuge is in God.

I trust you if I fall, I can be safe in you.

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62:8 Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

You can too, everyone! God can be a place of sanctuary, go there and open your heart of everything you carry.

62:9 Those of low estate are but a breath, those of high estate are a delusion; in the balances they go up; they are together lighter than a breath.

God is the great equaliser, no one is better or worse. Everyone is lifted up high in the air, light and free, together.

62:10 Put no confidence in extortion, and set no vain hopes on robbery; if riches increase, do not set your heart on them.

Don't trust anything that you can buy, trade or steal. Don't be fooled by that.

62:11 Once God has spoken; twice have I heard this: that power belongs to God,

You've been told, more than once, so have I; God holds sway, in everything.

62:12 and steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord. For you repay to all according to their work.

So we'll keep loving you unwaveringly, as best we can, because you deserve it God, and we can't resist your call.

Listening

Read: **Mark 1: 14-20.**

For these words of faith

& for Jesus the Word: **Thanks be to God.**

Reflecting

Rev. Nathaniel Akoi Atem

What does it mean to be followers of Jesus Christ? What does Jesus want from us as his followers? What type of a church does God want us to be?

I often ask these questions for myself, since I have been called to God's mission and his

ministry. So today I would like to reflect and share together with you on these questions.

The statement from Mark 1: 14-20 is similar to the Great Commission in Matthew 28: 19. Where Jesus said to his disciples, "Go then, and make disciples of all nations." This is the great commission, and not the great suggestion.

Therefore, Jesus said this to disciples before He ascended to heaven. It was just after his baptism when he had spent 40 days in the wilderness, in his temptation.

To take an honest look at this text, and relate it to our context, then you would have realised that the kingdom of God is near. We do believe in some sense that the kingdom of God is already here within us in our time. Jesus approaches individuals and asks people to live out that call in their own lives.

What we learned in this passage is that fishermen have been taken away from their personal, and professional lives in response to the call of Jesus. As Jesus said, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." I don't even understand the meaning of this phrase, "I will make you fishers of men."

Nonetheless we find references in the Old Testament: Jeremiah 16:16, says, "I am now sending for many fishermen, declares the Lord, and they shall catch them."

The question that remains is: can we force people into church, and force them into a relationship with God? Well when we look at this statement, it really doesn't seem to speak of kindness and compassion. But let us look at it in fresh eyes, and bring it into our context. As we proclaim Christ's Good News to the world.

However we need not to force others, but to tell them Christ's goodness as our saviour. When fishermen decided to leave all behind



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and follow Christ, they were powerless, fairly poor men, but they believed in Jesus Christ as Saviour of the world. But they fundamentally misunderstood the call, and believed it to be the way out of their poverty and powerlessness. They didn't really know who Jesus was, and they didn't understand the implications of his ministry, but they followed him to achieve power, authority, and respect. That was a fundamental misunderstanding that stayed with disciples throughout the rest of their life-time with Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

I think we need to pay more attention to understand this passage better, the call of Jesus on our lives is counter-cultural. Following Jesus Christ is the theme to which we are called, we are not called to an easy life, but to a challenging life.

We are called to always assess why we are followers of Christ, and what it means for us to serve God and the people. The mission we are called on is always based on the Holy Spirit, in order to move us forwards in Christ's ministry.

We believe we are moving in the power of God, and the Holy Spirit is our confidence in whatever we do, we sing this in the hymn, 'We are marching in the light of God.'

Perhaps this year we can give some thoughts, discernments and prayers to how we might recommit ourselves as followers of Christ. To recommit ourselves to the mission and the ministry to which we are called. **Amen.**

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

God of beginnings and endings,
 we pray for your hurting world:

Be with those who are lost
 in loneliness, in isolation,

in grief, in disappointment, in pain.
 Walk with gentle steps beside them.

Be with those who are angry
 with themselves and others
 with the world, with you.
 Speak softly, words of hope.

Be with those who are weary
 from falling, failing, fighting for life
 and holding others while they weep.
 Comfort them with your tender embrace.

Be with those who need you,
 when everything else they trusted has gone.
 Call to them, right where they are,
 and assure them of your steadfast love.

And when you need us, we are here,
 pilgrim people, on the way,
 ready to follow, ready to risk
 ready to live as if we mean it,
 as we pray the prayer that Jesus taught us;

The Lord's Prayer

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.

Offering

As the disciples left their nets and followed you, so we offer you our lives, God of life.
 Bless what we bring; time, energy,
 faithfulness, money, creativity, music, tech skills, and so much more ...

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Bless these gifts, that they might multiply in love, grace and peace for all of your creation.

Singing: Inspired by love and anger - TIS 674

Inspired by love and anger,
 disturbed by need and pain,
 informed of God's own bias,
 we ask him once again:
 'How long must some folk suffer?
 How long can few folk mind?
 How long dare vain self-interest
 turn prayer and pity blind'

From those forever victims
 of heartless human greed,
 their cruel plight composes a litany of need:
 'Where are the fruits of justice?
 Where are the signs of peace?
 When is the day when prisoners
 and dreams find their release?'

From those forever shackled
 to what their wealth can buy,
 the fear of lost advantage
 provokes the bitter cry,
 'Don't query our position!
 Don't criticize our wealth!
 Don't mention those exploited
 by politics and stealth!'

(song resumes after blessing)

Blessing

Send us out, out into our daily lives,
 you who are wisdom,
 birthing life out of darkness,
 brooding over the waters.
 You who have been here since forever.
**Send us out and come with us,
 so we can walk with you;
 lead us on, take us with you. Amen.**

Singing: Inspired by love and anger - cont.

To God, who through the prophets
 proclaimed a different age,
 we offer earth's indifference,
 its agony and rage:

'When will the wronged be righted?
 When will the kingdom come?
 When will the world be generous
 to all instead of some?'

God asks, 'Who will go for me?
 Who will extend my reach?
 And who, when few will listen,
 will prophesy and preach?
 And who, when few bid welcome,
 will offer all they know?
 And who, when few dare follow,
 will walk the road I show?'

Amused in someone's kitchen,
 asleep in someone's boat,
 attuned to what the ancients
 exposed, proclaimed and wrote,
 a saviour without safety,
 a tradesman without tools
 has come to tip the balance
 with fishermen and fools.

Bell & Maule Tune: 'Salley Gardens. Irish Trad
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Presbytery of Gippsland
 Editor: Rev. Jennie Gordon
pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com

Contributors this week include:
 Rev. Nathaniel Akoi Atem - Orbest Uniting Church
 Rev. Jennie Gordon - Presbytery Minister.