



Sunday May 9th, 2021 - Easter 6

The Fig Tree Worship Resource



Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

As we gather to renew our faith and celebrate
God's goodness,
the open Bible is before us:
Your Word, O Lord, is a lamp to our feet.

As we gather to hear God's Word
and to seek direction,
we light a candle
Your Word is a light for our path.

Gathering Prayer

Gracious God of us all;
we begin to get an inkling that:
it may be just when we
no longer know what to do,
we have come to our real work,
and that when we
no longer know which way to go
we have come to our real journey.

So help us to be confident,
that to be baffled is not to be lost,
but to be engaged in finding the way.

Remind us that the rocky stream
is the one that sings,
and the crucified Lord
is the one that gives abundant life. Amen.

- 'after a poem' by Wendell Berry

Acknowledging

As we gather we acknowledge the First Peoples of
this land, the traditional custodians, and pay
respect to elders past, present and emerging,
committing ourselves again to walking alongside
each other in friendship, justice and peace.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

Singing - Joyful joyful TiS 152

Joyful, joyful, we adore you,
God of glory, Lord of love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
drive the dark of doubt away.
Giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.

All thy works with joy surround you,
earth and heaven reflect your rays.
Stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
singing bird and flowing fountain
call to praise you joyfully.

You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
well-spring of the joy of living,
ocean-depth of happy rest.
You our Father, Christ our brother,
all are yours who live in love;
teach us how to love each other;
lift us to your joy above.

Words: Henry Van Dyke; Music: Adapted from Ludwig van
Beethoven by Lawrence Francis Bartlett
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Prayer



Eternal God, in you is the source of all life and
wisdom, the well-spring of all grace.
Your loving mercies without number.

We depend on you;
and we remember your goodness to us
and to those who have gone before us.
We tell your story in every generation:
God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,

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God of Sarah, Rebekah and Rachel,
God of a pilgrim people, your church.

But you are not our tame God,
not controlled by us.
You are ahead of us, leading,
guiding and calling us.
To you we lift up our hearts
and we worship you.

God, you touch our lives with
mystery and hope.
In this place today, may we be ready
to see your love working.
Help us to be open to your Word,
and to answer your call.

God, we are sorry;
for the times when we have used your gifts
carelessly, and acted ungratefully,
Hear our prayer, and in your mercy,
forgive us and help us.

We belong to a people
who are full and satisfied,
but too often ignore the cry of the hungry.
Too often we are thoughtless,
and do not care enough
for the world you have made.

Hear our prayer, and in your mercy,
forgive us and help us.

We store up goods for ourselves,
as if there were no God and no heaven.
Teach us instead to share, provoke us to be
generous and trusting in your mercy: **forgive
us and help us.**

For we pray in the name of Christ.

Assurance:

Friends; hear the Good News of grace:
in Christ, we are forgiven,
made whole, made one.
Amen. Thanks be to God!

Listening

1 John 5:1-6 & John 15:9-17

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:
Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

When I was a child I lived in fear of the wrath of God. Scriptures were used to highlight sinfulness, like Romans 3:23: "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God". The next verse was never quoted: "they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus".

It meant I grew up with an exaggerated need to seek God's forgiveness and even practised asking forgiveness quickly in case I was about to die and had unconfessed sin!

That's no life for a child of God, and it's not what the Scriptures proclaim of God revealed to us through the risen Christ. Now late in the season of Easter, we have been shaped in faith by those changed through the death and resurrection of Jesus. We see that Peter is beginning to see life and hope rather than fear and death. He has had to face his own demons and seek forgiveness, but like the passage from Romans 3, it is no longer sin and falling short that matters, it is gift and redemption through Christ Jesus.

Today's readings explain why. From the gospel of John, Jesus says to us (as disciples) that we are not to think of ourselves as servants who are issued commands and expected to obey, but as friends of Jesus. Friends know and care for one another. Friends share the highs and lows of life together. Friends work together with a mutuality that blesses each other.

Jesus has spoken before of abiding in him, but this goes deeper. The invitation is to abide in his love. As people who follow Jesus, we understand that he reveals the presence, love and intention of God to us. God is not distant; God is not trying



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to catch us out; God is not saying we are welcome only under certain conditions ...

The disciples have been learning since the resurrection that life wins, that love wins, that the evil and destructive powers of the world can be conquered through our faith in Jesus Christ. The passage from 1 John speaks to this. Building on from the word of the gospel, living as God wants us to is not a chore because it is shaped in the love of God.

If I had been stuck in my childhood faith of distorted judgement and wrath, it would have been exhausting and a great burden. I'm sure I would have given it away long ago if that's all I'd known. But faith has led me to life, and that's a whole other thing!

This is spoken of in 1 John in a more global sense. Who is it that conquers the world? It is this life-affirming, freeing faith that is in Jesus Christ!

It was the disciple Peter who became the rock of the early church, despite three times denying he even knew Jesus. Transformed in love, he found life in Jesus Christ and shared that with a world that needs what Christ offers.

In that same Spirit, walls have come tumbling down, hospitals have been built, justice has come, safe havens have been created. Of course the world could always use more of that - like people who notice things are rough for their neighbours; for people who speak up for Myanmar or any place in crisis; for people who quietly share the love they know in Christ, because sharing it is no burden at all ...

Abiding in the love of Christ - lifts me to be the best version of myself. Let all who follow find their life there that our joy may be complete. And in that, let's bear fruit for the sake of a struggling world.

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

Lord of Dawn and Darkness, we are grateful for your gentle loving care. You saw our fear and doubt, our suspicion, our mistrust, and you showed your care and brought your peace to our lives, moving us towards hope, love and joy. You called us to be your witnesses, to all the world, by keeping your commandment to love each other.

Be with us, as we play our part in bringing healing and hope through your church, in our community and our world. Give us courage and strength to be your disciples, loving one another in all the circumstances of our lives.

Still God, we are a little disbelieving that we should presume to pray for others. Remind us that we are friends of Jesus, who asks us to pray for one another and to love, even as he has loved us.

Today we join our prayers with your concern for a world ruptured by injustices and festering with hostilities; hear and use our prayers, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We join our prayers with your concern for the host of starving, homeless and forsaken people. Hear and use our prayers, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We join our prayers with your concern for those who suffer abuse; the battered, the bullied, the forgotten and those mistreated in the workplace, hear and use our prayers, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We join our prayers with your concern for all; for government, in our land and beyond, give wisdom and compassion, hear and use our prayers, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We join our prayers with your concern for the church, with its varied emphases and institutions, that our works of love may be a joyful service. We pray for those around us; especially any who



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are bearing a hard burden or pain; hear and use our prayers, that your will may be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Loving God, our prayers continue on, enriched and spurred on by your command and our experience. We ask and listen and act through Jesus, who gave us these words to pray together:

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 forever. Amen.

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:
and also with you.

Offering

As we make our offerings to God, may it be free from burden, knowing love and life in God.

Notices

Singing - Love Divine (TIS 217)

Love divine, all loves excelling,
Joy of heaven to earth come down!
Fix in us Thy humble dwelling,
All Thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, Thou art all compassion,
Pure unbounded love Thou art;
Visit us with Thy salvation,
Enter every trembling heart.

Come, Almighty to deliver,
Let us all Thy life receive;
Suddenly return, and never,
Never more Thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
Serve Thee as Thy hosts above,
Pray, and praise Thee
without ceasing,
Glory in Thy perfect love.

Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless let us be;
Let us see Thy great salvation
Perfectly restored in Thee!
Changed from glory into glory,
Till in heaven we take our place;
Till we cast our crowns
before Thee,
Lost in wonder, love and praise.

Words: Charles Wesley Music: Rowland Huw Pritchard
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Blessing

We go knowing that the God
who holds all things will be with us;
that Christ who calls us friend
will walk beside us,
and that the Spirit who
makes bearing abundant fruit possible,
will mark our way with hope.

The blessing of God,
be with you and empower you to;
see light and hope where others see gloom, travel
calmly with the confidence of those who have
caught glimpses of a great glory, abiding in Jesus
our Christ.

Go in peace to love and serve the risen Lord in
the name of Christ. Amen

Liturgy & Prayers: Rev. Ian Brown
Reflection: Rev. Arnie Wierenga

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