



Sunday May 16th, 2021 - Easter 7 The Fig Tree Worship Resource



Gathering & Lighting the Candle

As we gather for worship, we light a candle.
The light of Christ shines among us.
We know Jesus as the light of the world,
and hear his loving care for the disciples
in the prayer he offers before leaving.

As the candle dances to life, we remember Jesus
Christ is life still today for all who follow him.

Call to worship - based on Psalm 47

O sing your praises to the Lord! all you peoples,
clap your hands, shout to God in gladness. The
Lord we must fear, King of all the earth.

**God goes up to shouts of joy, sound the trumpet
blast. Sing praise to our God, praise unto our
King! God is King of all the earth, sing with all
your skill. To the king of all nations, God
enthroned on high!**

Gladden us with holy joys, almighty God, and
make us rejoice with devout thanksgiving, for the
ascension of Christ your Son is our exaltation, and
where the Head has gone before in glory, the
Body is called to follow in hope.

**Sing praise to God; sing praise to our King! God
is King over all the world; praise him with songs!**

Acknowledging

In this gathering, we acknowledge the traditional
custodians of these lands and waters. Take a
moment now to name them (and if you don't
know who they are, do some research and find
out).

We name them as an expression of our faith in
response to the call upon us to seek justice, to
love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah
6:8).



Singing - Christ is alive (TiS 387)

Christ is alive! Let Christians sing.
The cross stands empty to the sky.
Let streets and homes with praises ring;
Love, drowned in death, shall never die.

Christ is alive! No longer bound
to distant years in Palestine,
but saving, healing, here and now,
and touching every place and time.

In every insult, rift and war,
where colour, scorn or wealth divide,
Christ suffers still, yet loves the more,
and lives, where even hope has died.

Women and men, in age and youth
can feel the Spirit, hear the call,
and find the way, the life, the truth,
revealed in Jesus, freed for all.

Christ is alive, and comes to bring
good news to this and every age,
till earth and sky and ocean ring
with joy, with justice, love, and praise.

Words: Brian Arthur Wren
Used with permission: CCLI 206 729

Prayer



Almighty God, we thank you for your Son our
Saviour Jesus Christ who ascended far above all
heavens that he might fill all things: Merciful God
give us faith to perceive Holy Spirit, according to
your promise, you abide with your Church on
earth, even to the end of the ages; through Jesus
Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and
the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory. Loving God,
please grant us peace of mind and calm our
world. Give us the strength and clarity of mind to

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find our purpose and walk the path you have laid out for us. We trust your love God, and know that you will heal this stress. Just as the sun rises each day against the dark of night, may hope rise against anxiety and worry. God of all, we pray to you, we would be your true servants, let us be your love to all the world. Let your joy be our joy. You have sought the great and small, so seek the greatest gift of all.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Prayer of confession

God, we thank you for Jesus our prince of peace and our King of love. His love freed by his forgiveness, may we follow his way in forgiveness, and truth, generosity, courage, compassion, hospitality and faithfulness.

Loving God as faith is your gift to us, we thank you for the faith we have and pray you to sustain it, so that by faith our hope in you might be strong.

Spirit of God, comforter, counsellor, guide and friend, we thank you for your presence here with us. You teach us the ways of freedom. You show us how to live justly. You equip us for the journey of life. You strengthen us and encourage us. We thank you Lord that you departed heaven. Amen.

Word of assurance

Jesus Christ made us all to work as one body that works for unity within the community, and the gifts we have, we are given to share. May the Spirit of love make us one indeed; the love that we share our hope. **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

Listening

1 John 5:9-13 & John 17:6-19

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

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

We've been watching the Netflix series, Shtisel. Rabbi Shulem has had a health scare and believes his mortal days are numbered. Moved to write down his last will and testament, (a departing gift to his family), he names his children, one by one, and ensures they are cared for with a share of his estate and a good place to live. He tenderly refers to his youngest son, still living at home, and offers his own apartment on the condition he marries - a loving concern for his son's future.

I was reminded of the Rabbi as I read the prayer of Jesus to the Father in John 17. Jesus is preparing the disciples for life without him. It is a heartfelt and lengthy prayer of encouragement, support, instruction, and a deep desire that disciples are protected by God, looked after, and kept safe. Jesus looks out for disciples as he would his own flesh and blood.

The farewell discourse might be summed up as this: Jesus lives to intercede to the Father on our behalf. Jesus' very life and ministry is for you and me as it was for the twelve. It is that we may know God, know how much we are loved by God, and then live fully in the ways of God. As Jesus says earlier in the gospel (John 10), 'I came that you might have life and live it in abundance.'

How does it move you to hear Jesus pray for you in this way?

Father, keep them safe, look after them, protect them.

The second reading, from 1 John 5, offers a similar view of Jesus and his impact on those who follow him. It too speaks of the closeness of knowing God through knowing his Son. A sign or the fruit of knowing Christ is that we have the testimony of God in our hearts. The author sets this up by way of stark contrast. Having the testimony shows you know the Son. Not having God in our hearts shows the opposite. And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life.



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Whoever has the Son (or Jesus) has life. It is a reminder that though Jesus is no longer with us in a flesh and blood sense, yet he remains or abides in us. If we believe in Jesus, we have life – NOW! It isn't a hoped-for eternal life in the beyond, something we might imagine happens when we die. It is the current reality. Jesus equals life. Jesus is life. We might say that life everlasting begins the moment we believe in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

I am deeply moved by the prayer of Jesus for the sake of those he will leave. While I am touched by the tenderness of Rabbi Shtisel to his family, there is something else in what Jesus offers. Jesus has given his final farewell to the disciples with the intent that it is everlasting. I can hear him praying for me as I seek to be his disciple. It is not an act of imagination, rather an ongoing prayer in the here and now. This is what we hear from 1 John. Jesus is life - for disciples like you and me, today and tomorrow.

So, if we have the Son, and therefore we have life, what does it mean to believe in life before death? How might we live into this abundant life offered us through Jesus Christ? Jesus has offered us many ideas on how to live – how to be salt and light to the world; how to bring good news to the poor; how to be sight to the blind, liberty to the captives; how to be peacemakers ...

If we believe in life before death, I wonder how that reflects Jesus, the testimony of God in our hearts, and who we are called to be?

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

Almighty God, open our ears to hear your word and know your voice. Speak to our hearts and strengthen our wills, that we may have soft hearts to hear your word. May our words be your words not our own. Loving God, we thank you for bringing us into the new season even though it is cold, with your protection we beg your strength to keep us warm.

Hear our prayers Lord, and the prayers of our sisters and brothers in every church, those who think about the future of the Church, and especially the presbyteries members and all our congregations.

Pour your Holy Spirit upon us as your children, and keep us in your strength. Almighty God, we thank you for the light you have given us in Christ, the humility and wisdom you provide to your people and again through your grace. We continue to pray for our regions here in Gippsland, and for all places to protect people.

God of mercy, God of healing, we pray for sickness especially we pray for the aging community here in Gippsland, those who are in hospitals. We pray for their hope of life, and we pray for those who care for them, and especially we pray for the strength our great God provides. God of comfort, we pray for those who are dying and for those who grieve for loved ones. God of grace, turn your eyes upon them as they belong to you. God we thank you for our congregations, and for the gift of everyone in ministry. Give us health and sustain us in order to exercise our gifts for the glory of your Son Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

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.



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Offering

Those who abide in Christ have life in abundance in his name. What might we offer in response to the everlasting life we find in Christ Jesus?

Notices

Next Sunday the church celebrates the day of Pentecost. Come along wearing something *red* to join the celebration.

For up to date information on COVID safety, go to: <https://victas.uca.org.au/all-you-need-to-know-answers-to-your-frequently-asked-questions/>

Singing - Holy Spirit (TiS 420)

May be sung to AUSTRIA (see TiS 93)

Holy Spirit, go before us,
every mind and heart prepare
for good news of life in Jesus,
for the joyful hope we share.
Gently lead the lost to safety,
gently teach them Wisdom's way,
till they come to seek you gladly,
till we find the words to say.

Holy Spirit, come and help us,
give us words to speak of Christ.
Teach us how to tell all people:
deepest darkness can be light!
Help us tell how faithful God is,
and how Jesus sets us free;
take our words, and make them gospel,
so that many may believe.

Holy Spirit, stay to show us
how to serve as Christ served us.
May our words of love be grounded
in love's actions, first and last.
Your good news is news of justice,
and the strong befriend the weak
in your service, till compassion
builds the peace the nations seek.

Words: Elizabeth J. Smith
Used with permission: CCLI 206 729

Blessing

May the power of the Holy Spirit strengthen us to live out the gospel, and teach all nations through word and witnesses.

May God bless our days and our deeds with peace, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Contributors this week:

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