



*Sunday August 1st, 2021
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost
The Fig Tree Worship Resource*

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

Light the candle.
Take a few moments
to still yourself.
Listen to the sounds around you.
Let them drift in and out
as you breathe.
Be still, God is with you.



There let it freely burn
till earthly passions turn
to dust and ashes in its heat consuming;
and let your glorious light
shine ever on my sight,
and clothe me round, the while my path illuming.

Let holy charity
my outer garment be,
and lowliness become my inner clothing;
true lowliness of heart
which takes the humbler part,
and for its own shortcomings
weeps with loathing.

And so the yearning strong
with which the soul will long
shall far surpass the power of human telling;
for none can guess its grace
till we become the place
in which the Holy Spirit makes their dwelling.

Call to worship

based on Ephesians 4:1-16
We gather and are encouraged
to lead a life worthy of the calling
to which we have been called,
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,
bearing with one another in love,
making every effort
to maintain the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.

**Come, Spirit of God, inspire our faith,
be present in this time of worship.**

Acknowledging



As we gather we acknowledge the traditional
custodians of the land where we are. (*Name
them*) We pay respect to elders past, present and
emerging and commit ourselves to Walking
Together in justice and truth.

Singing - Come down, O love divine TiS 398

W: Bianco de Siena d 1434 alt. M: Ralph Williams 1872-1958
Used with permission CCLI 206 729

Come down, O Love divine!
seek now this soul of mine
and visit it with your own ardour glowing;
O Comforter, draw near,
within my heart appear,
and kindle it, your holy flame bestowing.

Prayer

(based on Psalm 51)



In or out of lockdown, you are present,
God who knows us, inside and out.
You sense our fear, disruption,
disturbances, frustrations and sadness,
and you hold us in the struggles of this time.

In the quiet, we find gratitude
for the way you dwell in us, as we dwell in you.
Through closed doors and borders,
growing up from the ground of our being,
along the tracks and through the cracks of life,
you bring blessings and we claim them for you:
(hold a good time of silence)

Your constant love never ends, God of grace,
so, in your mercy, dwell in us always.
**Remove whatever keeps us
from living in your light,
because it's so easy to stay in the shadows.**

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Break into our closed minds and hardened hearts with the brilliance of your forgiveness.

**Make us new,
drenched in your presence, washed in kinship,
forever in communion with you.**

Keep us on our toes,
joyfully moving to the music of the soul.
Dance us into life, over and over again.
Amen.

Sung prayer response TiS 712

Digby Hannah 1949 - Used with permission CCLI 206 729

Create in us a clean heart, O God.
Renew within us a right spirit.
Cast us not away from your presence, O Lord,
and take not your Holy Spirit from us.
Restore us to fullness of joy,
the joy that comes from your salvation.
Lighten our minds, shelter our hearts,
with your Spirit free.

Listening

Read: John 6:24-35

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

Reflecting - Rev. Ian Brown

'That which lasts'

It's a while ago now, but you might remember that the space program of the 1960s and science fiction had many believing that the future of food was synthetics. The Jetsons had their dinner whipped up at the press of a button; astronauts ate protein bars. But it hasn't caught on. Instead slow food, locavores, and competitive cooking shows are all the rage!

I don't understand competitive cooking at all! But I am interested that science fiction didn't get it's way with our daily bread. It would have made some sense. Natural food is tricky to prepare, it goes off. It doesn't last! – but it does taste better.

In John chapter six a fine line is being explored. The reactions that create the loaf can spoil it. The reactions that draw crowds to have their hungers met can go off too. Hunger, even spiritual hunger, can be met in healthy ways or can become unhealthy.

The gospel reading has the Galilean crowds seeking Jesus, but what they were asking for was inappropriate. The crowds have a selfish idea and Jesus challenges them and us as well, to think more deeply.

After feeding the 5000, Jesus moves from amazing signs to deeper truth. The crowd are looking for miracles and to be fed again, because they hadn't understood what it is that Jesus offers.



The table here is in a church on Lake Galilee, where the feeding of the 5000 is remembered. The Tabgah church dates back to the 4th

century. The rock under the table is exposed ground, in front is an original mosaic of a basket, loaves and fish. The place still draws crowds of visitors.

The crowd who followed Jesus on that day wanted what Moses had done. If Jesus was to be a great leader and saviour, he ought to feed them like Moses had with manna. They were "realistic", if they were going to follow this Jesus, they wanted proof and some benefit, thank you. But that wasn't what they got. Jesus is different. So, after that first stunning feeding, Jesus starts to engage the people in some theological reflection on things that last.

The text in our English translation has Jesus saying:

“Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you.”

I'll use the term, 'that which lasts' here, to be more faithful to what the text originally said.

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Food that endures for 'αἰώνιον' in the Greek, means 'of the ages' or without ending. It's an ambiguous term we should leave as a window into a mystery.

Imagine yourself back in the first century, in the troubled land of Israel, full of political strife and violence - that might not be too hard. Imagine yourself there to get a feel for the impact Jesus' words might have had. In the midst of need, foreign threat and anxiety, Jesus says, 'I am the bread of life.' Bread lasting 'of the ages'. However it's heard, it is a big claim.

Food is our most basic need. Jesus reminds us that we have deep hungers. But Jesus doesn't mean to feed everyone with physical bread. He says that the bread God gives is about having life, life in abundance, that lasts and this bread is for the whole world. It's a universal vision. It's not hard to see why people could have misunderstood what Jesus was doing and talking about.

'Bread of life' is a way to express a truth. Jesus doesn't mean that he is literally bread, or that people should consume him. Chapter six discusses this in detail. But it seems we like literalism and the church has had trouble getting with what Jesus meant, right through its history.

We don't come to church for a morsel of Jesus to keep us going, but we do look to Jesus for things that give us life on a deeper level. We come for a deep connection with the authentic source of life.

And when we come for this bread of life, perhaps we might think of what we can do, to be sharing the abundance we have with others who need it.

The bread of life is what we celebrate; that God has given us life and that God offers us all this, as we are. This is the amazing reality of God's grace to us.

Song suggestion:

TiS 259 Among us and before us, Lord, you stand

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Responding: Prayers for World and Community

Abiding God, in whom we live
and move and have our being,
There's so much struggle, pain and hardship,
fires, floods, fighting and the pandemic ...
it's hard to find the words to pray.

We bring before you those places and faces
who appear on our screens and in the papers.
We ask your blessing on the forgotten ones
whose images and stories are unknown.

We ask for strength and courage
for health workers, teachers, shopkeepers ...
Bless all who are disrupted and disturbed.
Hold your young ones gently, loving parent,
as they grow up in this emerging world.
Let your Spirit rest beside our elders,
visiting them with memories of blessing,
and bouquets of hope.

Startle those in power with truth
and confront injustice with cries of dissent.
Let wisdom flourish in seemingly barren ground,
and transform selfishness into common good.

Reach out with healing to all living things,
shield them from our greed and denial.
Let your abundance take root and grow.

Where there is hunger, bring your bread of life,
and feed us with the things that last.
Bless us and those we love,
and especially those we are learning to love,
as we pray the prayer you 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.



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Passing the peace

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

Offering

Bless whatever we give, God of abundance,
and let it be more than enough for now,
to bring hope, connection and healing,
to offer the bread of life
in the places where you need us to be.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Notices

How can your church community support people who have been, and maybe still are, affected by the lockdowns? Is it time to plan for a community meal? Fresh fruit and vegetable boxes? Messages of hope and connection?
Where is the hunger for 'things that last' and how will you be Jesus in that space?

Singing Guide me, O ... TiS 569

w: William Williams 1717-91 m: John Hughes 1873-1932
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Guide me, O thou great Redeemer,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand:
bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me now and evermore,
feed me now and evermore.

Open now the crystal fountain,
whence the living waters flow;
let the fire and cloudy pillar
lead me all my journey through:
strong deliverer, strong deliverer,
be thou still my strength and shield;
be thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
bid my anxious fears subside;
death of death, and hell's destruction,
land me safe on Canaan's side:

songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to thee,
I will ever give to thee.

Blessing

Ephesians 4: 15 & 16
But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love.

Go knowing that God is with you
and that you have been filled
with grace upon grace
to be the body of Christ.

Feed the hungry with the food of the ages.
Live joyfully in the abundance of hope.
Follow Jesus, wherever you find yourself,
with all humility and gentleness,
with patience,
bearing with one another in love,
making every effort
to maintain the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.

May the blessing of the Holy,
One in three, Three in One,
be within you always,
and all the people say: **Amen**

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