



*Sunday August 15th, 2021  
13th Sunday in Pentecost  
The Fig Tree Worship Resource*

***Gathering & Lighting the Candle***

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In the quiet, what comes to you?  
the voice of creation...  
the taste of fresh bread...  
the salty breath of hope...

Could it be wisdom calling?  
Light the candle, love dances in the flame.  
Jesus is the light of the world.

***Call to worship***

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Come, bring your everything  
and lift your voices in singing,  
making melody to God in your hearts  
as you are bound together in one body.

**Come, Spirit of life,  
Come, bread of heaven,  
Come, Source of all,  
bless this time of worship, and remain with us  
as we journey onwards, deeper into you.**

***Acknowledging***

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As we gather we acknowledge the traditional custodians of these lands and waters, and we pay our respect to elders past, present and emerging.  
**Let us live in a way that honors this place and her peoples, walking together in Christ for justice and peace.**

***Singing - Be thou my vision TiS 547***

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Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;  
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art;  
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,  
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true Word;  
I ever with thee, thou with me, Lord;  
Thou my great Father, thy child let me be;  
Thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

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Be thou my armour, my sword for the fight;  
Be thou my dignity, thou my delight.  
Thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower:  
Raise thou me heavenward,  
O Power of my power.

Riches I scorn and the world's empty praise,  
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:  
Thou and thou only, the first in my heart,  
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, after victory won,  
May I reach heaven's joy, O bright heaven's Sun!  
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,  
Still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Gaelic, 8th C. tr. Mary Byrne 1880-1931. Irish trad melody.

***Listening***

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Read: **John 6:51-58**

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



***Prayer***

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Creator God, Source of love, **we praise you.**  
Jesus the Christ, Living bread, **we praise you.**  
Spirit of life, Breath of God, **we praise you.**

One in three, Three in one,  
in the quiet of this moment,  
gratitude flows from our hearts  
for the wonders of your presence  
*(keep silence)*

We pray together a prayer based on Psalm 111

Praise God! I will give thanks to the Source of love  
with my whole heart, in the congregation.  
**Great are the works of the Creator Spirit,  
studied by all who delight in them.**

Full of honor and majesty is God's work,  
with righteousness that endures forever.  
**God has gained renown by wonderful deeds;  
God is gracious and merciful.**



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The Holy One provides food  
for those who fear God;  
who is ever mindful of their covenant.

**People have seen the power of God's works  
in giving them the heritage of the nations.**

The works of God's hands are faithful and just;  
all God's precepts are trustworthy.

**They are established forever and ever, to be  
performed with faithfulness and uprightness.**

The Source of love sent redemption to their  
people; and has commanded their covenant  
forever. Holy and awesome is God's name.

**The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom;  
all those who practice it have a good  
understanding. God's praise endures forever.**

One in three, Three in one,  
in the quiet of this moment,  
we bring to you the things  
that we need to confess;  
the wrongs we have done,  
or the rights we have left undone,  
as your people and as your church.

*(keep silence)*

And we pray:

**Drench us in your abundant forgiveness,  
feed us with your bread of eternal life,  
renew us with your unquenchable Spirit.**

Sisters and brothers in Christ, be assured,  
you are forgiven, fed and made new.  
Be careful then, how you live,  
not as unwise people, but as wise,  
seeking the wisdom of the Spirit,  
in the name of Jesus, Amen

### ***Listening***

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Read: **1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14;**  
**Ephesians 5:15-20**

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

### ***Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton***

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Wisdom is an important topic in the Scriptures. In fact, part of the Bible is often called the wisdom literature consisting of the books of Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. However, talk of wisdom is not confined to those books, but rather the search for wisdom and the desirability of finding wisdom and being wise, is a major underlying theme in the Bible. It is also an important assumption in much Biblical teaching, so perhaps, we should not be surprised that in today's readings we have talk of wisdom in three different books and contexts.

Firstly, we have King Solomon who has the experience of the Lord God coming to him one night in a dream. God offers to grant him whatever he wants.

Wow! What an offer! I don't know about you, but I think I would struggle to decide what I wanted most. So, it's a real credit to Solomon that he gives a carefully thought-out answer. He firstly thanks God for the gift of love that he has shown his father, David, and himself. He then acknowledges that he perceives that his youth and inexperience make governing his people a difficult proposition for him, and so, he asks, "Give me the wisdom I need to rule your people with justice and to know the difference between good and evil." 1 Kings 3:9a

We are told that God was very pleased with Solomon's unselfish request, and grants him his desire, but also grants him wealth and honour.

In Psalm 111:10 (Good News) we have a piece of advice, pertaining to wisdom. "The way to become wise is to honour the Lord; he gives sound judgment to all who obey his commands. He is to be praised forever."

Then, in our reading from Ephesians, there is a command for Christians to choose to live as wise people. And Paul gives a series of directions on the practicalities on how this might be achieved- including doing good, thinking carefully before you act, being sober and clear headed, and praising God.

There is much in these passages to ponder, but I want to focus on a couple of the important principles about wisdom that are delineated.

Foremost, that wisdom is a gift from God that God delights to give to God's people.

Secondly, wisdom seeks justice. It helps discern the right way forward out of difficulties and injustice.

This is shown in the story that follows on from the lectionary reading in 1 Kings 3. Two rather disreputable women come before King Solomon to



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settle a dispute. Both women had given birth to sons, but one baby has died, and both insist that the living child is theirs.

Solomon's solution seems drastic. He orders a servant to cut the child in two. One of the women pleads for the life of the child, saying spare the child and give it to the other woman. Whereas, the other woman is willing to let the child be killed. Solomon, in his wisdom, discerns that the real mother spoke out of love for her son, seeking his life even at the cost of losing him. In her love, justice lay, and Solomon restored the child to her.

Not all problems are easily resolved even when there is much wisdom. But as that story reminds us, love, along with justice, are two of the underlying principles of wisdom. For wisdom seeks to fulfil the gospel call to love God and love neighbour. But it might well need to be the kind of love that is prepared to make tough decisions and to stick it out for the long run. Wisdom is not necessarily widely accepted, nor can it be assessed by opinion polls or popularity votes. History shows us that.

Remember how Florence Nightingale strove to reduce the appallingly high death rates in the military hospital at Scutari during the Crimean War. She advocated for good hygiene, attention to sanitation, improved diet and nursing care. She was often ridiculed and rejected, but eventually her reforms were adopted and death rates fell.

In this time of COVID, we should be praying for wisdom for our leaders. They have many difficult, sometimes unpopular, decisions to make. Pray that they may be guided to make good and wise decisions. And remembering the words of Seneca, that "No (one) was ever wise by chance," pray also, that we may be wise and loving as we, too, face tough times. Pray that we may not turn inwards, but rather pray that we may act with wisdom and love. Amen.

### ***Responding: Prayers for World & Community***

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Holy One,  
Let your Spirit of wisdom be the guide,  
your living bread meet the hunger,  
and love be our common language,  
**in hospitals and places of care across the world,  
where the pandemic takes a heavy toll.**

Holy One,  
Let your Spirit of wisdom be the guide,  
your living bread meet the hunger,  
and love be our common language,  
**in marketplaces and meeting places  
where people come to find food and friendship.**

Holy One,  
Let your Spirit of wisdom be the guide,  
your living bread meet the hunger,  
and love be our common language,  
**in halls of power and bodies of authority,  
where a few decide the fate of many.**

Holy One,  
Let your Spirit of wisdom be the guide,  
your living bread meet the hunger,  
and love be our common language,  
**in schools and homes, in churches and carparks,  
where we meet each other every day.**

**Holy One,**  
**Let your Spirit of wisdom be the guide,**  
**your living bread meet the hunger,**  
**and love be our common language,**  
**in our souls, in our bodies, in our hearts**  
**this day and everyday, as we pray:**

### ***The Lord's Prayer***

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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.

### ***Passing the peace***

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



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### **Offering**

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We offer what we have, from the abundance of your blessing, God of wisdom and light. Take these gifts and use them to be bread for the hungry, connection for the lost and wisdom for us all, in Jesus' name, **Amen**

### **Singing - God who sets us...**

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Metre: 87.87. D Tunes: HYFRYDOL, BLAENWERN, AUSTRIA, or LEWIS FOLK MELODY

God who sets us on a journey  
to discover, dream and grow,  
lead us as you led your people  
in the desert long ago;  
journey inward, journey outward,  
stir the spirit, stretch the mind,  
love for God and self and neighbour  
marks the way that Christ defined.

Exploration brings new insights,  
changes, choices we must face;  
give us wisdom in deciding,  
mindful always of your grace;  
should we stumble, lose our bearings,  
find it hard to know what's right,  
we regain our true direction  
focused on the Jesus light.

End our longing for the old days,  
grant the vision that we lack –  
once we've started on this journey  
there can be no turning back;  
let us travel light, discarding  
excess baggage from our past,  
cherish only what's essential,  
choosing treasure that will last.

When we set up camp and settle  
to avoid love's risk and pain,  
you disturb complacent comfort,  
pull the tent pegs up again;  
keep us travelling in the knowledge  
you are always at our side;  
give us courage for the journey,  
Christ our goal and Christ our guide.

*God who sets us on a journey* - Words: Joy Dine (1937 – 2001) © Revd Mervyn Dine. Reproduced with permission; available for reproduction for the purposes of worship.  
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/posts/god-who-sets-us-on-a-journey-website-on-ly/>

### **Blessing**

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Continue to bring your everything  
and lift your voices in singing,  
making melody to God in your hearts  
as you are bound together in one body.

Go knowing that you are loved,  
by the everlasting source of love,  
feast on the Bread of Heaven  
until you become like him,  
and seek the Spirit in all you do,  
asking for guidance to light your path.

May the God who blessed Solomon  
bless you also,  
with wisdom and with peace,  
over and over again,  
**Amen**

Reflection: Rev. Sandra Houghton, Sale (supply)  
Prayers & Liturgy: Rev. Jennie Gordon

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