



Sunday Feb 13th, 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

Have you known blessing in the midst of sorrow?
Laughter erupting after a torrent of tears?
Felt the comfort of a friend in your loneliness?
Blessed are you ...

Light the candle,
Christ is the light of life.

Call to worship

We are blessed to be here today
blessed to be able to worship you
in a community of your people.
We are blessed to be bound together
in faith and hope and love.
We are blessed that God is with us.
We are blessed that we are nurtured and
sustained on the Way.
You call us and we come
in praise and thanks to worship you.

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.

Singing - Yours be the glory TiS 380

w: Edmund Louis Budry M: adapted - George Frederick Handel
Used with permission CCLI 206 729

Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory over death you've won:
angles in bright raiment rolled the stone away,
left the folded grave-clothes,
where your body lay.
*Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory over death you've won.*

See, Jesus meets us, risen from the tomb;
lovingly he greets us, scatters fear and gloom;
let the church with gladness
hymns of triumph sing,
for the Lord is living, death has lost its sting.
*Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory over death you've won.*

No more we doubt you, glorious Prince of life;
life is nought without you: aid us in our strife;
make us more than conquerors
through your deathless love;
bring us safe through Jordan to your home
above.
*Yours be the glory, risen, conquering Son,
endless is the victory over death you've won.*



Prayer

We have so many blessings, O God,
Yet we often fail to name these and give thanks.
For the world you have given us in which to live,
For its beauty and its plants and creatures.
For treasured companions.
For health and comforts we take for granted.
For your life-giving Word which flows continually.
For the gift of your Kingdom, so that we need
never be barren.
For the promise of authentic life and the
assurance of resurrection.
Lord, we pray that out of our abundance, we might
bring your blessing to others.

Yet, we acknowledge that many times our
thoughts are more inclined to be critical, than
looking for the good. We can have a mindset of
condemnation, rather than of understanding and
blessing.

Lord, forgive us, and make us new.

We are sorry for the times we have passed by
others in need, barely conscious of their pain, or
completely oblivious of their circumstances as we
push through life.

Lord, forgive us, and make us new.

We are sorry for not standing with those whom we
might have supported in hard places, for not
speaking out when wrong rears its ugly head, for

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not being willing to become associated with someone who is receiving injustice - because of our lack of courage, care, commitment and obedience to your incisive words to your disciples.
Lord, forgive us, and make us new.

We regret the times when we have remained comfortable at the expense of someone in trouble, when we turn a blind eye and are too self-serving to put ourselves out and walk alongside one whom we could bless.
Lord, forgive us, and make us new.

We have been complicit in wrongs done to others, either knowingly or by neglect. We have failed to notice our grubbiness and are quick to find excuses that sound good and let us off the hook.
Lord, forgive us, and make us new.

We are ashamed that we are all too ready to curse others than to bless, to condemn rather than be the means of sharing your life and hope.
Lord, forgive us, and give us the willingness to turn towards you.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

We so easily allow ourselves to be consumed by our own wants and ambitions.

Yet, with you Lord, there is always the offer to turn ourselves around.

If we bring our lives to you and give you our whole allegiance,

You offer us forgiveness and a new start.

We thank you, Lord.

Amen.

Listening

Read: Psalm 1

Luke 6:17-26

For these words of faith and for Jesus the Word:

Thanks be to God.

Reflecting - Rev Jennie Gordon

Jesus comes with a consistent, radical, and subversive message of a great reversal. The first will be last and the last will be first. There is a new order of things. Those who have been pushed out are now in the centre, and those who have

occupied the centre will find themselves at the edges. Jesus comes with deep compassion, with empty hands and open arms to a world where power, wealth and privilege are held tightly, and defended with aggression and violence. This message of a great reversal, embodied in Jesus, is met by some with hope and healing and by others with murderous rage and anger. It all depends on where you're standing.

Here we have the 'Sermon from the Plain'; an equivalent to Matthew's 'Sermon on the Mount'. Here, in Luke's gospel, after Jesus has spent the night on the mountain in prayer with God and named his twelve apostles, he is surrounded by a great crowd, a multitude. They've come to hear him and to be healed and he is here, on their level. So, he raises his eyes, looks up at his apostles/disciples as if this is the first and foremost teaching that they must absorb, and he says four blessings and four woes. First the good news...

How blissful, translates one version, how blissful are you who are poor, hungry, weeping and despised. Note, it's not – how blissful you *will be*, but how blissful you *are*. There is a present reality in the blessing that is for now. You are blessed, and for the poor there is no waiting room, no postponement, no being held in limbo until you are let in, *for yours is the kingdom of God*. According to theologian Will Willimon, 'Those who are poor, weeping and despised are put at the centre of what God is up to in the world.'

There's also a reality that will come but is not yet present: you will be filled, you will laugh, you will leap for joy. The crisis of this time will not prevail. How often have we needed to hear that? I know that through times in my life of great grief and distress, I have experienced profound blessing in the most surprising ways.

Thích Nhất Hạnh, the revered Vietnamese Thiền Buddhist monk, poet and teacher, who died recently, in his book, *No Mud, No Lotus: The Art of Transforming Suffering* says these things: "The main affliction of our modern civilization is that we don't know how to handle the suffering inside us

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and we try to cover it up with all kinds of consumption.... Without suffering, there's no happiness. ... There can be no lotus flower without the mud." There's no need to seek suffering, it will always find us, grief is the other side of love. Rather we are invited to embrace the struggle, the weeping, as a transformational act that will blossom when the season is right. We are a people of the resurrection; life emerges through death.

Then, there's the not-so-good news... ALAS! Woe to you who are rich, full, laughing and held in high esteem, because this will not, cannot last. My trouble is, by the world's standards I am probably all these things. Standing on the level with Jesus and listening to his words, I am one of the crowd. Right now I hear his warning of woe, prompting me to participate in the great reversal and look around.

Look around with eyes of compassion, Jesus says, not judgement. And if you want to be a disciple of Jesus, then find yourselves amongst the poor, the hungry, the despised and the weeping, where God is already ahead of you, getting up to all sorts of amazing things.

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

Holy God, you have created us
with the ability to choose
between life and death, blessings and curses,
abundance and barrenness.

Help us to reject the advice of the wicked
and a seat with the scoffers,

By your grace, empower us
to put our trust in you.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

We pray for those who trust their own insights
and ability, instead of you,
and for those who smugly deny you even exist.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

We pray for those who put their trust
in those who wield power,

in the 'so-called' movers and shakers,
but find themselves duped and led astray.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

We pray for those who struggle
to make ends meet,
who do not have enough to eat,
who weep.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

We pray for those who are making bad choices
in their lives,
or who find it hard not to fall
into well-worn dead-ends.
May they turn to you for new hope
and new ways.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

We pray for mountains and valleys,
trees, flowers, rivers, streams
and for all your creation
in its beauty and majesty.

Help us to turn away from ways of exploitation
and to embrace care of your precious earth.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

We pray for those who are hated,
despised and reviled
because they dare to be known as your servants.
May they truly realise your joy,
for their reward is great in heaven.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

May those who are rich, or full, or laughing now,
wake up, and open our eyes of compassion.

Blessed are those who trust in the Lord.

Holy God, you have created all people in your
image. Move in hearts and minds so that people
turn to you and want to follow you.

We pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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 forever. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Offering

May what we offer; food, time, money and
ourselves, be used to bring hope and
healing, in Jesus's name, Amen.

Notices

Today, Feb 13th is the anniversary of the 2008
National Apology to the Stolen Generations.
It's an important day for these lands now
called Australia. You can find more
information and stories here:
<https://healingfoundation.org.au/apology-2/>

Singing - Make me a channel of your peace TIS 607

w: based on an anonymous prayer m: Sebastian Temple
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Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred let me bring your love.
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord
And where there's doubt, true faith in you.

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul.
Make me a channel of your peace
Where there's despair in life,

let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light
And where there's sadness, ever joy.

Oh, Master grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console
To be understood as to understand
To be loved as to love with all my soul.

Make me a channel of your peace
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned
In giving of ourselves that we receive
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

Blessing

Go, trusting firmly in the Lord.
Immerse yourself in the Lord's teachings,
for this will give you life.
Share with others the blessings
of the Good News.

Now, may God, the Creator,
nourish and sustain you.
May Jesus, the Christ, guide you on the Way.
And, the Holy Spirit,
encourage and empower you,
this day and always.
Amen.

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