



Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 27th, 2022

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Gathering & Lighting the Candle

'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.

This Shaker song is believed to be written by Joseph Brackett (1797–1882). The tune *Simple Gifts* can be found at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simple_Gifts

Light the candle.
The light shines in the darkness
and the darkness cannot overcome it.

Call to worship

Psalm 32:11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Ever grateful for your love,
we come to worship you,
God of many names.

Stretch out your arms again
and welcome us home.
You are our God
and we are your people.

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 followers of Jesus we have been given the ministry of reconciliation. 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 - Praise and thanksgiving TiS 627



Prayer

This prayer was written by Rev. Ron Gordon, from the book, *Dad & Daughter, Prayers and Poems on the Gospel*.

Parent God, your Son shows us how you accept us, though we may reject you; how you await us when we flee from you; how you dance at our homecoming party and how you wait with us in the sullen darkness. For your amazing grace towards us, we adore you Father of Jesus, in whom you are close to us all.

Parent God, you are beyond us: our minds cannot comprehend your greatness or the rich wonders of your love. By your grace your Son meets us on our level, down to earth, eye to eye as Jesus of Nazareth who speaks, acts, suffers and dies and is raised by your affirming power as Lord of all. For such grace beyond our dreaming, we worship and adore you.

Lord Jesus, you sat down and ate with all kinds of people: those who thought themselves righteous, and those who were notorious sinners. You suffered scorn and derision, and the cruel judgements of the powerful and the powerless. You opened your arms on the cross to call us all to God and the kingdom: you are grace abounding to saints and sinners alike. We worship and adore you.

Most Holy Spirit, you prompt us towards faith, opening the scriptures to us, pointing us towards Jesus and his word, and confirming the truth for us of all that he gives and asks. Aid us in our hearing and decision making that we are open to his presence with us and for us, now and always. We worship and adore you.

On our lack of true repentance, **Lord, have mercy.**
On our self-centred vision of ourselves and our world: **Christ, have mercy.**
On our neglect of true grace towards others and their needs: **Lord, have mercy.**
Hear then Christ's word of grace to us;
'your sins are forgiven' **Thanks be to God. Amen.**

The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.



Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 27th, 2022

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Listening

Read: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

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

Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

At Adelaide Writer's Week one year, two authors were asked 'What are the great themes of story-telling?'. One replied 'finding your way home', and the other 'grace'. Well, this week's Gospel story centres around these two great themes and draws them together beautifully.

In the parable we often call the Parable of the Prodigal Son, it seems to me that there are two people who need to find their way home again.

Obviously, the younger son is one. He clearly was lost. He was lost because he made some very bad choices in his short life which have impacted badly on him and his family. He has been dissolute and squandered his inheritance. He has failed to be a good son and brother. And he has ended up broke, without the means to support himself, living in squalor and is desperate.

Home is the only place where he could possibly find help, but he knows that he is not deserving of help. He has to decide whether to take the risk that if he goes home, he may well be rejected. But he decides to go anyway and throw himself on the mercy of his father. Much to his surprise he is welcomed home with joy by his father. His father's reaction to the return of his errant son is pure grace.

Ernest Hemingway wrote a poignant short story called "The Capital of the World." In it he tells about a Spanish father who wants to reconcile with his son who has run away to Madrid. In order to locate the boy he takes out this ad in the El Liberal newspaper: "Paco, meet me at the Hotel Montana at noon on Tuesday. All is forgiven. Love, Papa."

Paco is a common name in Spain, and when the father goes to the square he finds 800 young men named Paco waiting for their fathers.

What drew them to the hotel? As Hemingway tells it, it was the words "All is forgiven." Notice that the father

did not say, "All WILL BE forgiven IF you do this or that." Not, "All WILL BE forgiven WHEN you do such and such." He simply says, "All is forgiven."

That's the sort of grace shown so beautifully in the parable in the actions of the father towards the younger son, but it is not appreciated by his older brother. When the older brother comes home after the day's work he is angry and resentful to find that his father has thrown a welcome home party for his brother.

We can well understand his ire. After all, he has been very responsible and hard working. And, clearly, his younger brother has done some dreadful things-squandering his inheritance and leaving his family in the lurch. This may well have led to his older brother having to work harder and take more responsibilities in his family and on the farm.

Now, clearly his brother has been very irresponsible, but ... but he is still his brother, and he is still his father's son, so surely the older brother must have been aware of just how much his father's heart was breaking over the loss of his younger son?

But, no! Anger and resentment dominate his response. Unlike his gracious father, there is no grace forthcoming from him. No forgiveness and no reconciliation seem possible.

Even when his father comes out to try to get him to come in and join the party, he refuses. Instead he reveals his own estrangement. He is dutiful, but not loving. He needs to come home to his father's love which is big enough for them both, in fact big enough for the world. He needs to come home to grace and forgiveness. Home to the father who says, "Everything I have is yours. All that I am is for you, and I've been waiting for you."

Standing at the centre of our life is the God who says also to us, "Everything I have is yours. All that I am is for you, and I've been waiting for you."

Whether we are like the younger brother who has done some dreadful and irresponsible things, or like the older brother simmering with resentments and grumbling over our responsibilities and duties, God is waiting for us. Waiting to forgive us, waiting to show us grace and love, waiting to share everything God has with us, and waiting to welcome us home. Amen.

Singing - Amazing Grace Tis 129

The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.



Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 27th, 2022

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

On the fourth Sunday in Lent, O God,
we hold before you all who are lost,
far from home in so many ways,
and ask for your loving embrace.

Embrace those who are lost within themselves,
people struggling with different kinds of pain,
continuing to feel isolated and lonely,
without a safe homecoming space.
(time of silence)

Make us channels of your peace,
Open our arms of welcome and love

Embrace those who are lost to each other,
separated by grief, war, flood and violence,
tormented by the current realities of life,
overwhelmed with what might lie ahead.
(time of silence)

Make us channels of your peace,
Open our arms of welcome and love

Embrace those who are lost to you,
lost to the fullness of life,
lost to the healing forgiveness you offer,
lost to the possibility of being loved,
(time of silence)

Make us channels of your peace,
Open our arms of welcome and love
as we 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

All that we are and all that we have
comes from you, God of many names.
Bless these gifts we bring
and bless those who will use them
to bring your love to people
in need of welcome and a place at the table.
Amen.

Notices

Last night, March 26th, from 8.30pm to 9.30pm
was Earth Hour, a worldwide event from the
WWF. If you missed it you can do it tonight! Turn
everything (non-essential) off; lights, tv,
appliances etc. Light a candle, give thanks and pray
for the life and health of our planet, our home.
<https://www.earthhour.org.au/>

April 2nd is World Autism Awareness Day. What
do you know about autism? The sails of the Sydney
Opera House will be lit up in a beautiful blue to
recognise this day.

You can find more about it here:
[https://www.autismawareness.com.au/aupdate/
world-autism-awareness-day-2nd-april](https://www.autismawareness.com.au/aupdate/world-autism-awareness-day-2nd-april)

Singing - Praise with joy TiS 179

Blessing

Go in peace, to be people of peace,
love without measure, find the lost,
support the grieving, live lightly,
and live with respect for all,

and know that if you go too far
you can come home
and you will find the embrace of love
and there will be a party,
Amen.

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia
with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.*



Fourth Sunday in Lent, March 27th, 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Beneath the Fig Tree

a daily Lenten space:

For each day of Lent we will offer a bible reading and a comment or question for you to sit with. You could create a space that you go to each day at a particular time, light a candle, journal the images and thoughts that come to you, listen to music, or simply sit in silence. The prayer words might remain with you for the day and open you to the needs of others and the yearnings within.

prodigal

Luke 15: 1-3; 11b-32

for brother two

can you hear the music
when you leave with pockets bulging
filled with all that I can offer
as you claim it as your right
take the freedom you've demanded
take your path of self destruction
take your pills of dark distraction
as you leave the realm of light

can you hear the music
when you're far from home and hungry
as I wait with ageless patience
while you find your point of pain
in the sharpness of your absence
I will sing a song of longing
I will sing a song of longing
I will sing your lost refrain

can you hear the music
when you turn to face your homeland
while you formulate your speeches
as you beg to earn your place
I am running out to catch you
you can keep your explanations
I just need to hear your heartbeat
feel your life in my embrace

for brother one

can you hear the music
when you're working in the paddock
you're the one who never squandered
never wandered from the farm
but you're lost in fierce resentment
burning deep through years of labour
you have always been beside me
now I need you to come home

for both of you

can you hear the music
when you wake up the next morning
in the same room as your brother
and you smell the breaking bread
can you hear the music
as you gather round the table
it's my song of resurrection
you're alive, who once was dead

Rev. Jennie Gordon *from the book, Dad & Daughter, Prayers and Poems on the Gospel, Years A, B & C.*
pdf copy is available, please contact the editor.

Monday March 28th - Read: Isaiah 43: 19

Can you perceive a new thing that God is doing by bringing life where it is lacking, in an unexpected way? Keep your eyes and heart open.

Prayer words: springs / wilderness

Tuesday March 29th - Read: Psalm 126:6

Do you know someone who needs to hear this message of hope and encouragement? Is it you? What is it like to reap the harvest of your hard work?

Prayer words: sowing / sheaves

Wednesday March 30th - Read: John 12: 2

Can you imagine being present at this dinner, with Martha and Lazarus? Go on, take a seat at the table. Listen, look, bless, eat, ask, receive ...

Prayer words: served / table

Thursday March 31st - Read: John 12: 3

Are you still in the room with them? What's going on? Even if you divert your eyes, can you still smell the fragrance? Fill your own house with fragrance.

Prayer words: anointed / fragrance

Friday April 1st - Read: John 12: 5

Does Judas' question resonate with you? The poor are not in the room but the disciples are. In your context, who are the poor and where are they?

Prayer words: disciples / poor

Saturday April 2nd - Read: John 12: 7

Jesus honours Mary's extravagant gift and defends her. If she bought it for his burial, why use it now? Are you still there? What has happened in the room?

Prayer words: alone / burial

*Reflection: Rev. Sandra Houghton
Currawong Ministry Team*

*Liturgy: Rev. Jennie Gordon
Presbytery of Gippsland*

*Editor: Rev. Jennie Gordon
pastoral.ucaqipps@gmail.com*



The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.