



## *Sunday April 24th, 2022*

### *The Fig Tree Worship Resource*

#### ***Call to worship - Psalm 150***

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**Praise the Lord!**

**Praise God in his sanctuary!**

**Praise God in his fortress, the sky!**

<sup>2</sup> Praise God in his mighty acts!

Praise God as suits his incredible greatness!

<sup>3</sup> **Praise God with the blast of the ram's horn!**

**Praise God with lute and lyre!**

<sup>4</sup> Praise God with drum and dance!

Praise God with strings and pipe!

<sup>5</sup> **Praise God with loud cymbals!**

**Praise God with clashing cymbals!**

<sup>6</sup> Let every living thing praise the Lord!

**Praise the Lord!**

As we Light the Candle this day,  
this second Sunday of Easter,  
We declare again  
the light and warmth of God's love.  
We declare again  
this Risen Jesus, present in our world.  
**God who was, and is, and is to come.**

#### ***Acknowledging***

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*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander  
Christian Congress*

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which we stand, and respect their elders past, present and emerging. We stand together in covenant, First and Second Peoples, listening, truth telling, justice seeking.

#### ***Singing - Praise with joy TiS 179***

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#### ***Prayer***

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God, you are present through all of time. Present in the past, present in the future. Present in the now of life, present in time and outside of time, the already and the not yet.

We come before you with our fears and our doubts. Hold us in our struggles and the tough times where we are unsure of where to find you.



We know you are risen but sometimes it is hard to find our faith.

Sometimes we feel left out or excluded, or we exclude others from the full experience of connecting as your people. We separate ourselves from you and from each other.

We know your invitation to share in your wounds but afraid, we stand back. The costliness of entering into your woundedness overwhelms us. Give us the courage and discernment we need. Help us to be honest with ourselves, with you and with each other.

You invite us on the journey of healing and forgiveness and offer us peace. You give us the incredible gift of your Holy Spirit.

May we hear your words of peace and may our hearts be renewed.

Forgiveness, healing and peace are freely offered to you and to me.

**THANKS BE TO GOD**

#### ***Listening***

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Read: **John 20:19-31**

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

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

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I'm sure that, if you are old enough, you will remember the momentous event that happened in July 1969. It was, of course, the first time a man walked on the moon

It was the only occasion I can remember when classes at my high school were suspended and everyone sat huddled around black and white televisions watching the events unfold. The picture was often blurry, but we held our collective breath when things could have gone very wrong, and cheered when the astronauts began to bounce across the surface of the moon and when Neil Armstrong said, "A small step for man, a giant leap for mankind."

We had no doubts about what we saw, but there are quite a lot of people who do not believe that men walked on the moon.

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Some people are simply ignorant of these events. They just don't know about them. But there are others who, despite the televised coverage, believe that it was a giant hoax. Some of these are people in Eastern block countries who were told it was western propaganda and lies, but others just don't believe that it was possible.

Now, if people in our day and age, with all the benefits of modern technology and media that can scrutinise and verify the reality of events, still struggle to believe that they are real; how much more difficult would it have been for people in ancient times to believe that something that had never, ever happened before was real?

When we grasp this conundrum, we can see why so many people struggled to believe the reality of the resurrection of Jesus. Even many of those who were in Jesus' immediate circle struggled to believe that he had been raised from the dead.

Now, we know that Jesus had told his disciples and followers that he would die and rise again in three days, but clearly, they hadn't understood or believed. And so, when faced with the reality of his brutal death they saw it as the end. So, when Mary Magdalene and the other women went to his grave on Easter Sunday morning, they went to tend to a corpse. And when they couldn't find his body, they didn't think of the possibility of resurrection, rather the women thought that his body had been stolen.

It was only when Jesus called Mary Magdalene by name, and when she clung to him that she believed he had been raised from the dead.

But her testimony was not enough to convince any of the disciples.

The disciples, in turn, also needed a personal encounter with the risen Christ to believe. For they only believed after Jesus joined them where they were hidden in the locked room. There he greeted them and showed them his wounded hands and side. So then, it was not surprising that Thomas, who was absent from that encounter, struggled to believe. After all, up until this time,

no one believed in the resurrection without a personal encounter with the risen Christ

Jesus obviously understood that the reality of his resurrection was hard to grasp, and that some people thought that he was a ghost, so he willingly and graciously offered his body for scrutiny. He invited the disciples, and later Thomas, the opportunity to touch him and examine his wounds, in order that they could see that he was the same Jesus who had been killed and that he had been resurrected.

In time, there were those who found the testimony of those early eye witnesses credible and came to faith through their testimony. But many others thought that it was a hoax.

It was not until the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost that large numbers of people began to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead.

To me, it is comforting to remember how gracious Jesus was to Thomas (and the other disciples, including those he met on the road to Emmaus) when they struggled to believe that he had been resurrected. He kindly and patiently offered to them what they needed to overcome their doubts.

We, too, go through periods of doubt when we struggle to believe, and although Jesus cannot offer us his physical body for scrutiny, I believe that Jesus will find a way to come to us and reassure us of his presence, guidance and love. For the same Jesus who showed such patience and love back then is the one who loves us and wants to be in relationship with us. Amen.

***Singing- These things did Thomas... TiS 649***

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#### ***Responding:***

#### ***Prayers for World & Community***

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Alpha and Omega, First and Last,  
Present to us in the past, present to us in the  
future, present with us now.

We are reassured in the awesome promise of  
your abiding in us and us in you.

We experience the wounds of Jesus in the  
broken-ness and sadness around us.



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We offer up our prayers for the grief and pain in our families, amongst our friends, and in our church communities. Be present to us in the now of our hurt. We stand in hope and in love together.

How do we ever think that you stand apart from us, not understanding our pain, our doubts and our fears? You invite us instead to enter into the woundedness, to bear witness to your love. Our wider communities are wounded by the labels which are put on people. They are suffering through addiction, through ill health, mentally and physically. Our communities are wounded by power struggles and motivations which are not intended to create an environment of flourishing. Homelessness and socio-economic pain and underemployment cause profound suffering. We pray for the children.

Our world, the creation flowing from your Spirit, is wounded and in pain. May we bring peace and healing to the world around us and learn to live in harmony with the environment. We pray for those impacted by nature's groanings and natural disasters.

We hold those places where peace seems far off, such as the conflict zones we are aware of in Ukraine, Afghanistan, Israel, Sudan and so many others. There are many too of which we are unaware. May our own lives reflect your peace. May we bring hope to this hurting world.

Our own wholeness lies in the degree to which those around us know wholeness. Your word tells us that you love us and you set us free. You make us whole in your Shalom.

We are blessed by the companionship of your Spirit and renewed through our prayers. In these prayers we share our love for you and for one another. Hear the cry of our hearts, God of love. Renew us in our faith.

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.

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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***

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Jesus came and stood among them and said:

Peace be with you

**and also with you.**

### ***Offering***

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All things praise you. We praise you this day by offering ourselves and all we have, to living your Kingdom here in a hurting world. Take all we offer and use it to bless others, to teach us and deepen our faith and our discipleship. Help us to share life in your name.

### ***Singing- Send me Jesus ... TiS 749***

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### ***Blessing***

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Go out to share the love of God  
with all who you encounter.

Be willing to stand in love  
in the woundedness of a hurting world.

Go in the Spirit.

Go in peace.

May the God of all Peace  
accompany you on your way.

*Liturgy: Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson*

*Shearwater Ministry Team*

*Reflection: Rev. Sandra*

*Houghton*

*Presbytery of Gippsland*

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