



Sunday July 17th, 2022 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

We have come
to sit at the feet of Christ and learn

All: like a green olive tree in the house of God.

God convenes this gathering
and by God's Spirit, is among us.

**By Christ's grace we joyfully worship
the God of glory**

Who will always stretch far
beyond our comprehension,
yet whose love is as simple and present
as the air we breathe.

we will trust the steadfast love of God forever.

We light a candle as we remember the light of
Christ shines among us.

Acknowledging



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 - TiS 693 'Come as you are'

Prayer



We begin our day, O God, in praise,
For the day is yours and we are yours;
We could not live without depending on you,
Without your gifts, without your grace and love.

We begin with praise for the gift of life,
For the gifts of our life together
in your beautiful world,
For the gift of life in your church,
for the witness to hope.

You alone make and remake heaven,
earth and us too,
You give justice, liberty
and extravagant mercy.

You are over all and in all – Over the big picture
beyond our comprehension
and in all the smallest details,
so with us too.

We praise you, we are grateful, we open
ourselves to you.

.... Lord Jesus, we confess that the busyness of
our lives often makes it difficult to listen deeply
to your voice.

**Transform our priorities
so that we make space in our lives
to be quiet and listen to you.**

Jesus, seeker of the lost, we recognise that your
call on our lives is not always easy to hear.

**Transform our values
so that they are shaped by your concern
for the unloved and unlovely, and
for the weak and powerless in our society.**

Jesus, friend of the poor,
we know that too often our response to you
in service, mission and outreach
is weighed against economic cost.

**Transform our thinking
so that we risk believing that all things
are held together,
not by the financial bottom line,
but by you.**

Jesus, you call us to follow
your way of reconciliation
but all too often in our faith communities,
we harbour hurts,
we bear hostility towards one another.



Sunday July 17th, 2022 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Transform our hearts
so that we are filled with the desire
to forgive one another
and to make peace.

Loving Jesus,
may the posture of our lives
be shaped by listening to you;

the goodness of our actions
be shaped by love for you;
and the service of our lives
be shaped by a humility like yours.

This we pray in your name.

Assurance of Forgiveness

“In Jesus all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Jesus all things, whether on earth or in heaven, have been reconciled to God.”

Friends, believe the gospel: in Jesus Christ we are forgiven. **Thanks be to God!**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Colossians 1:15-28 &
Luke 10:38-42

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

Singing - Tis 745 ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God’

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

At our recent Uniting Church Synod meeting (Victoria & Tasmania), many of us enjoyed a Korean meal in a local church. We were fed with startling efficiency. While walking there, I was ‘slowed down’ by some Tongan friends delighting in meeting again and cherishing their time together. What we value shapes our response to the gospel story of Jesus at Mary and Martha’s place. There we find Martha busy with the tasks at hand while Mary seems content to slow and cherish the moment.

While Jesus commends Mary on choosing to sit and listen, I suspect we are not called to value one sister over the other, or indeed one cultural approach over another. It is tempting to judge from our own point of view but these verses are from a larger narrative of Jesus and these sisters; and Jesus was at times efficient and focused on attending to tasks while at other times he slowed and cherished the moment.

Many of us are shaped by ideas of what it means to be disciples without even realising. Centuries ago, John Calvin thought our eternal destiny must be determined in advance. If God is aware of all we do even before we are born, then whether we go to heaven or hell must be predestined. A long story short, this causes many to be anxious about something we cannot change. Anxiety drives people to be doers in the name of Christ. If faith without works is dead, then some work will express a pulse. More work will be better. Even more work must show a strong faith...

Many of us are biased to see Martha as doing the right thing. How comfortable are you in slowing down to sit idly with friends when there is work to be done? Both sisters are both sharing in the household economy. Mary and Martha both contribute as they attend to their guest, expressing different forms of hospitality.

In recent weeks I’ve been *wintering*. It’s not a term I knew until I was given the book by Katherine May of that title. It essentially unpicks a



Sunday July 17th, 2022 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

cultural inability to winter, that is, to slow down for a season to emerge at some point stronger for the slowing. When we found easy ways to light up our evenings and keep warm at night, we began to push back against seasonal variations. Living through winter requires more energy and effort than other seasons. Fighting the dark and cold comes at a cost. If we no longer winter, we can deplete our reserves and consequently not bounce back so well when the sun begins to warm our bones again.

Our lived experiences and cultural understandings and practices will shape how we respond to the actions of Mary and Martha, and therefore perhaps invite confusion about Jesus chiding one sister over the other. Through wintering, I see their household in a new way. I see them as a whole, two sisters as two necessary parts, both needed for a healthy household. For them to be their best, there will need to be seasonal biases, sometimes doing, sometimes resting, often both. In this gospel moment Mary is commended but it is also just a moment. Jesus has insight into their needs and his own in a way we do not. It reminds us we need to be nourished at the feet of Jesus, to be fed for the journey, to draw deeply from the wellspring of life, to be renewed before being sent out again in Christ's name.

Becoming aware of our preferences allows us to attend to that which makes us whole and strong. For me in this moment, the better part is to spend more time like Mary at Jesus' feet because that is what I need. I may be more comfortable being like Martha, but right now being busy can wait until the Spring calls me out with renewed vigour.

Whatever your better part in this moment and all moments in Christ's name, may it not be taken from you.

Singing - TIS 691 'Faith will not grow from words alone'

Offering

Lord Jesus Christ, we rest at your feet to be nourished by your words. We rise to respond in your name as we are ready. All that we are is yours, and we bring both our need to be fed and our capacity to respond to you. Bless all that we are and all that we offer that it may feed your world in the name of Christ. Amen.

Notices

This week is the Sixth Sunday of Pentecost. The season of Pentecost continues through to November.

July 18 is Nelson Mandela International Day.

Responding: Prayers for World & Community

God for all your marvellous, diverse creation we are so thankful.

For your generosity of giving that we see in Jesus, we are awed and have no words good enough to express our gratitude. We acknowledge our debt to you and look for your grace in helping us to respond to your love in our living.

We thank you for a free and fair land, for the blessings of an accountable democracy and the gracious opportunity to look back at past actions with new understanding, to review and rebuild relationships.

We listen for your voice in the voices of those in need;



Sunday July 17th, 2022
The Fig Tree Worship Resource

For those we know sick, sad or lonely,
for others we know who have lost friends, family,
for all who miss loved ones today and for the
many ill now, surround them with your love,
healing and peace.

Lord in your loving mercy
Hear our heartfelt prayer

We pray for all who face challenges and tough
choices. Out of the habits of the past, and the
comfort of the familiar, make us good candidates
for your newness; ready to embrace challenges,
make changes and rise to new heights in loving;

Lord in your loving mercy
Hear our heartfelt prayer

We want to go on being part of your giving to
others, to live as your people, eager to see a
world where everyone has a chance, is valued
and able to find their place.

We pray for help to be your people, not aspiring
to be able to love everyone adequately ourselves,
but as part of a loving community, able to reach
out with your love and share what we have with
the same generosity we've been shown;

Lord in your loving mercy
Hear our heartfelt prayer

We pray for the many who have great needs and
no voice.

In these days of cash being lavished on weapons
and military defence, may the will to shoot and
bomb run out faster than the desire to feed the
hungry, shelter the destitute and aid the
oppressed. We pray for all suffering in
dependency,... unemployment,... poverty,...
with chronic conditions,... and from violence,...;

Lord in your loving mercy
Hear our heartfelt prayer

in the name of Jesus, who taught his disciples to
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.

***Singing - Tis 657 'God of Freedom, God of
justice'***

Blessing

Go your way with thanksgiving.
Enjoy those who love you most
and pray for those who dislike you most.
Be compassionate in the face of human need
Listen for the whispers of the Spirit in creation.

The gentle grace of Jesus,
the always present love of God,
and the warm fellowship of the Spirit,
be with you now and always,
enticing, enabling and nudging you on.
Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
in the name of Christ. Amen

Liturgy: Rev. Ian Brown
Reflection: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
Presbytery of Gippsland
Editor: Rev. Arnie Wierenga
pastoral.ucagipps@gmail.com

