



Sunday October 16th, 2022 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

from Jeremiah 31:33

But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD:
I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Light the candle

The light of Christ shines in the darkness
and the darkness can not overcome it.

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 Morning has broken TiS 156

Prayer



As your people, God of all times,,
we come to you with grateful hearts.

We give thanks for the wonder of life,
for the blossom on trees growing into fruit,
for nesting birds and tiny tenacious ants,
for blue skies and sunshine,
clouds, wind and rain
and the gentle pulse of surf
as it rolls and breaks onto sand.

We give thanks for the wonder of life,
for the miracle of birth,
for the wisdom of age,

for the choices and challenges of our day
and the rest and replenishment of sleep.

We give thanks for the wonder of life,
for the people who share their kindness,
for the people who gratefully receive,
for our family, friends, neighbours and all
who move our feet and meet our eyes
with companionship and love.

We pause to hold in prayer
our gratitude and awe,
that we are your people
and you are our God.
(pause)

You have written your law on our hearts,
God of the ancient and the new.
In Jesus you have shown us
how you want us to live.
Through the gift of the Spirit
you inspire and guide us.

In the quiet we bring to you
the things we need to lay down,
burdens of shame or regret,
times of turning away,
or failing to live in love
towards ourselves, others and you.
(time of quiet)

We are assured that you are Justice and
Truth
and that you hear us, hold us
and love us, tough and tender,
as your children.

We are forgiven, and free to live
in the covenant of love
and to share this gift of forgiveness
with those in need.
Thanks be to God.

Passing the peace

May the Peace of God dwell with you:

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and also with you.

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

Listening

Read: *from Jeremiah 31:*

31:27 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of humans and the seed of animals.

31:28 And just as I have watched over them to pluck up and break down, to overthrow, destroy, and bring evil, so I will watch over them to build and to plant, says the LORD.

31:29 In those days they shall no longer say: "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

31:30 But all shall die for their own sins; the teeth of everyone who eats sour grapes shall be set on edge.

31:31 The days are surely coming, says the LORD, **when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah.**

31:32 It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt--**a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD.**

31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: **I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.**

31:34 No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; **for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.**

Read: Psalm 119:97-104
Luke 18:1-8

Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

The very idea of a judge who has no fear of God and no real concern for people is quite a worrying one. His only motivation is not to be bothered any further by the woman. I am sure that there really are such judges in the world, though I am equally sure that judges who are caring, considerate and just are the norm.

This story tells me that the Gospels do not shirk away from the realities in the world. There are unjust judges, just as there are women who plead for justice, sometimes for themselves, sometimes for their people and sometimes as advocates for those others experiencing injustice. In the times when the gospels were set and the times that there were written, there were people in great suffering from injustice just as there are now. This was a community who were oppressed by the occupation of their lands, and the judicial authorities as well as the religious authorities were very conscious of playing things in a way which would not "rock the boat" and would appease the occupiers.

So I hear this story through the lens of just such injustice today, through the pain of the 'disappeared' ones, through the mothers who cry "How long, O God?!". I hear it through the unjust incarceration rates of indigenous people and of those seeking refuge on our shores. How often do they plead to unjust, uncaring or disrespectful judges and authority figures like this one? It makes me lend my voice to theirs in seeking justice, in crying to God for justice. Perhaps that is what the final verse alludes to, what this faith on earth really looks like. And so we pray and do not lose

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heart. 2 Timothy asks us to hold steady, to relax into the faith and stand firm. We are to trust in the truth who is Jesus and live life firmly from the teaching in which we are grounded. We are to love wholeheartedly and to rely on the Judge who is truly just. We are to align ourselves with these values and teachings.

The Old Testament readings are full of tasting and sensuality. There is the 'teeth on edge' sour of the grapes and then the dripping sweetness of the wild honey. Both of these passages centre on us being responsible in the end for our own decisions and actions. We are invited personally into covenant relationship which holds us and keeps us close to God and to the teachings which hold us firm. When we step out of this into the sour taste of dissonance we are called back into the sweetness of the relationship. This is why we pray and keep ourselves centred, to not lose heart. This is why we call to the One who is Justice and Truth and persevere in prayer knowing we are loved.

Singing - Holy Spirit go before us TiS 420

Note: there are plenty of tunes that fit this hymn - try: TiS 93

Offering

We bring these gifts, aware of the privilege of being able to share even a little of what we have. Bless the money, the food, the time and the energy that we give. Use it, and use us to bring the light of your loving kindness to the hard and shadowy places around us.

In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

Notices

Today begins Anti-Poverty Week. *From the website:* Anti-Poverty Week supports the Australian community to have an increased understanding of poverty and to take action

collectively to end it. We are a diverse network of individuals and organisations who share this purpose. Since 2002, we have been active each year in the week around the 17th of October, the United Nations Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Our key message is: Poverty exists. Poverty hurts us all. We can all do something about it. It is one of hope, not despair.

Did you know that 774,000 children or 1 in 6 Australian children aged 0-14 years lived in poverty in 2017-18 (the latest available data). At 17.7%, the percentage of children living in poverty is higher than the percentage of any other age group – including those aged 65 years and over. There are some excellent fast fact sheets on the website and some suggestions for hosting an event or getting involved in reducing poverty. <https://antipovertyweek.org.au>

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

(you may want to write your own list of prayer points, or invite people to come with their prayers at each section and light candles)

As your people, God of all times,
we bring our prayers to you.
We ask, because we know your goodness.
We pray, because we sense your presence.
We love, because you first loved us.

Send your Spirit of hope and healing
to these places of pain and struggle:
parents who have lost children
lovers who are grieving
people in prisons
families in poverty
victims of injustice
peoples dispossessed of home
sufferers of disease and trauma
those caught up in warfare

...

Send your Spirit of justice and truth
to these people who can make a difference:
leaders of all nations
state and local governments

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those who work in the justice system
leaders of our churches
people who speak out for change
people who support them

...

Send your Spirit of courage and calm
to these people who offer compassion :
health care workers and teachers
parents and grandparents
social justice organisations
local congregations
chaplains and pastoral care givers
reconciliation groups
welfare agencies
neighbours and friends

...

As we pray together in the language of our
hearts, the words that Jesus taught us,

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 - God of Jeremiah TiS 679

Blessing

from 2 Timothy 4: 1-2

In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus,
who is to judge the living and the dead,
and in view of his appearing and his kingdom,
I solemnly urge you:
proclaim the message;
be persistent

whether the time is favourable or
unfavourable; convince, rebuke, and
encourage,
with the utmost patience in teaching.

blessing continued:

And may the blessing of God
Source, Son and Spirit,
be upon you and remain with you always,
Amen.

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