



Sunday October 23rd, 2022

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Praise is due to you, O God.
By awesome deeds you answer us,
O God of our salvation.
You are the hope of
all the ends of the earth
and of the farthest seas. *(from Ps 65)*

We light a candle as a sign that
the light of Christ shines among us.

Let us worship God.

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

TiS 100 All creatures of our God and King
TiS 119 I sing the almighty power of God

Prayer



God of the prophet Joel,
We offer you our thanks and gratitude.
When we struggle you still pour out
your spirit on all flesh -
so that the young may prophesy;
the old may dream dreams;
the young shall see visions.

It is right that we shout for joy
as you fill us with hope,
as you guide our living,
as you pull us from places of despair.

Yet there are times when our confidence or success leads us to feel contempt for others. Forgive us when we offer thanks that we are not like other people we imagine you despise. As we compare ourselves over and above thieves, rogues, adulterers or tax collectors, we become blind to our need for mercy and grace.

Forgive our hubris; forgive our need to compare, to be better, to be self-righteous or sanctimonious. Lead us towards humility and soften our hearts so they be open to you.

silent reflection

God is merciful to us as we seek God's restoration. To repent is to re-align ourselves to God's way and call. As we do, Christ lifts us up. We are restored, **thanks be to God. Amen.**

Song idea:

TiS 647 Comfort, comfort all my people

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18 &
Luke 18: 9-14

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

Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon

We, in the Western world are steeped and schooled in dualist thinking; right and wrong, black and white, up and down, young and old, forwards and backwards, male and female, past and future: it's all there. We love certainties and we love to take sides and know that our side is the right side, or the left, depending on our politics!

Take for example this parable in Luke's gospel. Here we are, dismissing the Pharisee and siding with the tax collector. Saying in our hearts,



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“Thank you God that I am not like that Pharisee, so full of himself, so righteous, so ...” Can you hear what you are saying? Does it not sound like the Pharisee’s words? By rejecting the Pharisee and aligning ourselves with the tax collector, the parable has trapped us like a Chinese Finger Trap, the harder we try to escape, the more we try to defend the humility of the tax collector against the hubris of the Pharisee the tighter the trap. If we relax and begin to wonder about the paradox of this parable, we may find a way out.

A quick stroll through Readings on Lygon St in Carlton, (is a quick stroll in a bookshop possible?) reveals a mind-boggling plethora of self-help books. All you need to know about being a better person is right there on the shelves so there must be a market, and I have purchased my fair share over the years. As parents we hope that our children develop enough self-esteem to stick up for themselves, to be proud of who they are, to take their place in society with confidence about what they can learn and what they can offer. We are taught to stand tall, to look people in the eye and to celebrate our achievements, not to hide our light under a bushel. Might this be what the Pharisee is doing? Honestly? Pleased that he’s able to stand in this holy place and to celebrate where he is and who he is? Some Jewish scholars suggest that he may have been an inspiration for the tax collector. The words from Paul in the reading from the second book of Timothy relate to this; *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.* Does that sound a little like the Pharisee?

I can be thankful that I am currently in a place of peace. I can sit beside someone who can’t even look up from the metaphoric depths of the cave and be grateful that I am not there, in that distressing darkness. The problem arises when it all points inwards and we begin to judge others as less than us, and we put ourselves on a pedestal.

Jesus is teaching about humility, about not being ‘self-righteous’ and not treating others with contempt, and he is on the way to the cross. The cross, the very symbol of our faith is an instrument of humiliation and torture used by the

oppressors to silence and scare. Jesus reverses everything, turns it all upside down and dismantles the duality that we are so fond of. There is no longer Gentile and Jew, male and female, good and bad, saint and sinner, now all are one, brought together by the God who stooped low enough to become flesh and die on a cross, to lead us to life. Jesus came for the least and the last and the lost. That’s us friends, that’s us. When we come open handed and hungry to the table of the Lord’s Supper, begging for forgiveness and a taste of life, we come with the tax collectors’ words on our tongue, the seed of the Jesus Prayer from the Eastern saints, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.”

Did you know that the Greek word translated as ‘rather than’ in verse 14, can also be read as ‘alongside’. What does the parable offer if we read the text this way? *I tell you, this man went down to his home justified alongside the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.*”

Singing - O Saviour, in this quiet place

*Author: Fred Pratt Green, alt – Jennie Gordon
Meter – 86 86 (eg: St ANNE)*

O Jesus, in this quiet place,
where anyone may kneel,
with hope we come to ask for grace,
believing you can heal.

When pain of body, stress of mind,
destroys our inward peace,
in prayerful stillness, may we find
the blessing of release.

Have mercy on us, gentle friend,
take all that makes us stray,
bring light into our dark, so we
can humbly walk your way.

Upon our thirsty, searching souls
pour out your living streams
refresh our lives with visions bright
and plant your wildest dreams.

You hear our prayers and bid us rise

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and lift our eyes to see
our oneness in your endless love
now and eternally.

Offering

God of our journey,
bless all that we offer in your name.
Inspire us as a pilgrim people.
May our sharing come with humility,
that you may lift all, towards Christ,
in the name of Christ. Amen.

Notices

Oct 19 marks the SIEV-X sinking in 2001, when
343 asylum seekers drowned.
Oct 24 is United Nations Day.
Oct 24 is the start of Disarmament Week.

Responding: ***Prayers for World & Community***

God of all creation, as we pray for our world and
community. Inspire us to fight the good fight, to
finish the race, to keep the faith.

Often global issues seem so immense we wonder
what earthly good we can be. We are reminded
of the courage and faithfulness of the Apostle
Paul and like him offer prayer and action to God's
glory.

Where there is war ...
Where there is violence ...
Where people are displaced ...
Where power is used unjustly ...
Where hope is in short supply ...

... guide those capable of making a difference
with vision and courage. May those who are old
dream of what is possible, and those who are
young have visions that bring about your
kingdom.

We pray for places closer to home, that the
apostle's example may inspire us to live fully in
service to you.

We pray for communities around the country
impacted by fickle and changing weather ...

We pray for conversations of king, colony,
republic and all who are impacted
by opinion and power on these matters ...

We pray for the state of Victoria as we head
towards another election - for good leadership
and governance, for responsible use of resources,
for ways forward for those struggling to get good
healthcare, housing, decent wages and the like ...

We pray for our church,
that we may find ways to prophesy,
to dream dreams and see visions
that are inspired by the Holy Spirit,
that will join us faithfully
with the needs of our community.

When we are lost for words to pray, we are
reminded that you call us back with these words
of Jesus:

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 411 Filled with the Spirit's power
TiS 547 Be thou my vision O Lord of my heart

Blessing

As gathered community we find
blessing, nourishment and inspiration
for the dreams and visions needed
to walk the way of Christ.

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Our time of departure has come
because we are called beyond,
even to the ends of the earth
and the farthest seas,
to keep the faith in word and deed.

Go with blessing and joy,
knowing that God is with us
to lift, to restore, to inspire
as we walk the way of Christ.

The blessing of God be with you now and always:
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Song idea:

TiS 755 You shall go out with joy

Other Song Suggestions

TiS474 Here in this place new light is streaming
TiS 421 Where the Spirit is there's freedom
TiS 681 Lord let me see see more and more
TiS 672 Lord of earth and all creation
TiS 690 Beauty for brokenness hope for despair

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