



Sunday October 30th, 2022 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Come and be curious, the parade is passing.
Will you climb a tree so you can see?

Come and be curious, the Word is being heard.
Will you quiet other noises so you can hear?

Come and be curious, Jesus is here.
Will he have a place at your table?

Lift us up, open us up and be with us,
God of surprising hospitality.
Let your Spirit guide our worship
and our living,
as we light the candle,

light in the darkness
love in the world.
Always and ever, Amen.

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 God whose almighty word TiS 447

Prayer



You may know the refrain as a Taize song and be able to sing it, otherwise read it together.

Habakkuk 2:2-4

Then the LORD answered me and said: Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely

come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.

(pause)

Thank you God, for the vision that you bring us of a life lived in faith, plainly written, true to the Word.

**Wait for the Lord, whose day is near,
Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart.**

Thank you God, for the prophets who bring this word to us, the ancient and more recent saints and those amongst us now.

**Wait for the Lord, whose day is near,
Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart**

Thank you for the encouragement to be patient, to trust in your promises, to lean into the covenant of love between us.

**Wait for the Lord, whose day is near,
Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart**

These are words we need to hear, because often we're lost, wandering along tracks of our own making, diving down deep wombat holes of doubt, forgetting to watch where we put our feet and missing the signs of the Spirit.

Forgive us for our foolish haste, our selfish desires and our destructive habits that harm us and others, and damage your gentle earth.

(time of quiet)

Siblings in Christ, hear Jesus' words to Zaccheus, from the gospel of Luke, 'For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

**Wait for the Lord, whose day is near,
Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart**

Christ's word of grace reaches out to us.
Your sins are forgiven. **Thanks be to God, Amen.**



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Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: 2 Thessalonians 1:1-4, 11-12
Luke 19:1-10

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

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

If you've been hanging about for any amount of time in the world of Jesus and his disciples, you will be keenly aware that tax collectors were despised. They were the ones who by their very occupation reminded fellow Jews of the imperial might of Roman rule. Taxes helped oil the wheels of the Empire and each act of collection was an insult and reminder that the Jews were not free. It wasn't just seeming acts of treason or even that tax collectors profited from their fellow people. Deep within the Jewish psyche is the idea that Jerusalem is God's chosen and Holy City. The occupying forces reminded Jews that God's covenant with them was severed.

Zacchaeus would have only been tolerated because Jews had no other choice. The Romans had his back. That he was a chief tax collector probably meant he was a good and loyal servant of the empire and that his personal wealth compensated somewhat for being a social pariah. As Jesus passes through Jericho, a curiosity is sparked within the villain. He tries to see who Jesus is, but he can't because he's short. Like a child he runs ahead and climbs a tree. This is surprising because it's demeaning for an adult to behave like a child. But when you are despised, you probably don't care what people think of you. Running, and climbing will not make things worse for Zacchaeus.

Despite the crowd, Jesus notices him. The others can only see a sinner. They grumble because Jesus invites himself over to Zacchaeus' house which means he gets an audience but the crowd

does not. None of this seems fair. The outcast finds home, those who do the right thing seem to miss out.

Zac responds to Jesus. He hurries out of the tree and is happy to welcome him. What began as curiosity has grown into something far greater. The outcast is known and loved for who he is. He is a 'son of Abraham' in the words of Jesus. In other words, he belongs as much as any of the religious leaders or the crowd. His occupation or social status don't change any of that. Despite what others think of him, he remains precious to God.

By now it seems Zac is overwhelmed by love and acceptance. Perhaps you have encountered this too and have been bowled over by it. If he began by being curious, he now seems to have grown up a bit. Wealth might be a good backstop if you have no friends, or nothing else going for you. But if you know love, perhaps money is no longer the prop it once was. After all, money can't buy love or happiness, but love and happiness offer riches far deeper.

Zacchaeus' heart seems to melt in the love and acceptance shown him by Jesus. He offers half his possessions to the poor. More than that, if he has defrauded anyone, he will pay back fourfold! That's a dramatic turnaround for someone so reliant on wealth. It also shows why Jesus noticed Zacchaeus and left the crowd to dine with him. For the Son of Man came to seek out and save the lost.

I'm sure there are many things that keep us feeling a bit short of what we hope or imagine for ourselves. Probably most of the things that shame us are more private than was the case for Zacchaeus. Shame and alienation have a way of creating reactive responses, shields, or pseudo-armor to protect us from the judgement of society, friends, family, the church. But only a little curiosity can open us to the overwhelming love of Jesus. To be loved is to be known. To be known is to be loved.



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In that recognition and unconditional love comes salvation. This is the work of Jesus. It is also the call upon us. For us to be open to God's reconciling love for when we have fallen short of the glory of God. And for us to share the overwhelming love of Jesus with people like Zacchaeus. Not to despise, overlook or assume things about others. But to see, to notice, and to offer love.

In other words, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and love your neighbour as you love yourself.

Singing

TiS 674 Inspired by love and anger

TiS 689 Lord hear my praying, listen to me

Offering

Bless the hearts and hands that bring these gifts, God of goodness. Reaching out with an offering of hospitality, unsure of how or where it will be received.

Bless these gifts. Use them in ministry and mission, and use us, to bring the hospitality of your grace to the people and the places where we are. **In Jesus' name, Amen.**

Notices

November 5th is World Tsunami Awareness Day. World Tsunami Awareness Day was the brainchild of Japan, which due to its repeated, bitter experience has over the years built up major expertise in areas such as tsunami early warning, public action and building back better after a disaster to reduce future impacts. UN Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) facilitates the observance of World Tsunami Awareness Day in collaboration with the rest of the United Nations system. By the year 2030, an estimated 50 per cent of the world's population will live in coastal areas exposed to flooding, storms and tsunamis. Scaling up international cooperation to developing countries will help ensure that 100% of communities at risk of tsunami are prepared for and resilient to tsunamis by 2030.

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/tsunami-awareness-day>

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

We pray for all people who struggle with being unseen in our world. People who are looked down upon, physically or socially. People who call out and never feel heard. People who are not noticed, or counted, or cared about in a way that brings fullness of life. Help us to see them, to learn their names, share their tables and to work together for equality and justice.

We pray for the crowds moving away from homelands devastated by flood, famine, war, dangers and disease. For the crowds gathering to protest injustice, to glimpse something inspiring or to simply be part of a bigger movement, a collective voice, a shout out for the common good.

We pray for our Uniting Church leaders, For Sharon Hollis, President of the Assembly, and for David Fotheringham, Moderator of the Synod of Vic/Tas. As they move around amongst Ecumenical partners, Synods, Presbyteries, Agencies, Schools and Congregations, may they find welcome, hospitality and a good vantage point to see and articulate your vision for our church in these times.

We pray for our friends, family and our neighbours whose names we know and those we don't know. Help us to be hospitable, kind and caring to them and to ourselves, because we are all your children.

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



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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- Rejoice in God's saints TiS 470

Blessing

The blessing of the Holy,
One in Three and Three in One
be upon you and within you
and remain with you always.

Go in peace;
may you carry God's Wisdom,
speak forth God's Word
and embody God's Presence
wherever you are.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

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