



Advent 1 - Sunday November 27th, 2022

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship

- from Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me,
'Let us go to the house of the Lord!'
**Our feet are standing within your gates,
O Jerusalem.**

To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord,
as was decreed for Israel,
to give thanks to the name of the Lord.
**For there the thrones for judgement were set
up, the thrones of the house of David.**

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
'May they prosper who love you.
Peace be within your walls
and security within your towers.'
**For the sake of my relatives and friends
I will say, 'Peace be within you.'**

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 **Hark the glad sound TiS 269**

Or - We are marching in the light of God, TiS 666
Or - Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty TiS 132

Prayer



God of the ever-moving times and seasons,
of moments, minutes and millennia,
our seasons are, we guess, in your sight,
less than the blinking of an eye.
Yet we come at the beginning of this season
in confidence and hope,

with a prayer of the ages;
**Grant, O Lord, that we
may cling to you without parting,
worship you without wearying,
serve you without wavering,
faithfully seek you, happily find you,
the only God, blessed now and forever.
Amen.**

St Anselm

ADVENT WREATH

for the history and meaning of advent candles go to:
<https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-d-o-the-candles-in-our-advent-wreath-mean>)

On this first Sunday in Advent – the time when we prepare once again for Jesus coming.
We light a candle to remind us that Jesus brings light into the dark places of the world.

Through the prophets, God promised a future shaped by justice and righteousness.
We share this hope as we wait for the fulfilment of God's promise in Jesus, light of the world.

A purple candle is lit

Singing - **Come, let's walk**

based on Isaiah 2:5
words: Jennie Gordon © 2019
tune: *Twinkle, twinkle, little star*

**Come, let's walk the path of light
through the darkness of the night.
Now the lost don't walk alone,
hungry ones are welcomed home.
Hope in what we do and say,
hope between us on the way.**

The prayer continues,

God of blazing truth and gentle compassion,
we come together to worship you:
O God, we are awed
by the greatness of your love.
We praise you for Jesus,
our saviour and our friend:
as long as rains fall and tides flow.
We worship you:

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in love that's made real
by gentle touch and warm smile.

Your glory fills all the world. May the wholeness
and joy of your Advent in Christ come to us all
with power to refresh and renew.

God, you call us to prepare the way for Jesus'
coming; forgive us if we put our time and energy
into making material preparations ... and forget
to give space for the peace of Christ.

silent confession

God, you ask us to prepare the way for Jesus by
helping to make smooth the rough places in
people's lives; forgive us when we fail to become
involved with the troubles of others, pleading
seasonal busy-ness.

silent confession

God of glory, you call on us to prepare the way for
Jesus by being agents of comfort and mercy.
Forgive us for the times we put our own comfort
before that of others and for seeking our comfort,
with comforting others.

silent confession

God of glory, we confess that all too often we
spend more on our own pleasure than preparing
for hope to be born anew in our lives - in our
families, our community. Help us prepare
faithfully to receive Christ, the coming one, hope
for all the world.

Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Isaiah 2: 1-5
Matthew 24: 36-44

For the Word of God in Scripture
for the Word of God amongst us
for the Word of God within us
Thanks be to God

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

This morning I woke to the news of 100 new
missile strikes by Russia on Ukrainian cities, with
neighbouring Poland in crisis meetings as two
stray missiles hit them. We live in deeply
challenging times, where the list seems to keep
growing. Inflation, lack of housing, rain that never
seems to stop, an energy crisis... It feels
apocalyptic. More on that later.

From the prophet Isaiah:

In days to come

*the mountain of the Lord's house
shall be established as the highest of the
mountains,*

*and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.*

These words are meant to inspire hope but how
can we be hopeful when what we see is so
different from this image in the Scriptures?

*Many peoples shall come and say,
'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob;
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.'*

We tend to feel small and powerless in the face of
calamity. Sometimes words meant to lift us feel
empty, or like a taunt. Advent is a time where we
are invited to slow and reflect, to watch and wait,
to learn and listen. I wonder then, what hope can
you find around you?

I recall a story from Easter this year. In a
bombed-out shell of a church, Ukrainian
Orthodox priests who remained in the warzone at
great risk offered words of hope that Christ is
risen. For grieving civilians and beaten-up soldiers
alike, hope was found amongst the ashes as
bread and wine were blessed, broken and shared
among them.

Perhaps the words of the prophet are realised in
some measure in moments like this. As folk who
are broken and beaten receive the broken body



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of Christ, they are being renewed, being taught the ways of Christ in the most visceral of ways and are walking in God's paths.

Is that something that draws us towards hope? Are there signs here that the ashes we experience (whatever those hardships are) have elements of hope springing from them? Are these places where we unexpectedly find God's resurrection love and life?

The words of the prophet continue:

*He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into ploughshares,
and their spears into pruning-hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.*

Here we find a vision for the apocalypse, the end times. That literally means to uncover the dark forces, to bring them to the light, to see them for what they are. Uncovering enables us to see clearly, to imagine a new heaven and a new earth, to perceive God's ways and see that God is at work in the renewal of all creation.

Apocalypse is with us now, but it is not yet the end of history. As we begin another Advent we are invited into the journey of uncovering, of exposing things to the light of God's ways, to be part of God's new creation, where swords are beaten into ploughshares.

In the Ukraine as bread is broken amongst the rubble, hope springs forth. As we do likewise in our own gatherings of faith, hope springs forth. Can you see light breaking in in these places?

We wait, watch and listen. We look for signs of hope around us. In a few weeks we remember and tell the story again, where God takes the form of a vulnerable one to sneak into our world and call us into God's light.

***Singing - Come, thou long expected Jesus,
Tis 272***

Offering

Bless these gifts we bring, God of hope, and bless us, that together we may participate in your future shaped by justice and righteousness.

Notices

November 29th is the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. You can find out more about it here:

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-solidarity-with-the-palestinian-people>

How do you respond to Isaiah's call to 'pray for the peace of Jerusalem'?

Responding:

Prayers for World & Community

Gracious God of love, you are always coming to us in new and surprising ways.

We delight in wonder to remember that you come as one of us, as a baby, helpless, dependent and vulnerable.

As the season of Advent reminds us to celebrate your coming into our world and to think about our preparation for your coming to us, we remember that there is much that is wrong, hopeless and painful in our world, so we pray for your help;

We pray for those finding it hard to come out of isolation; for those exhausted because of the extra load they have borne and those who found the quieter life easier to manage and now don't know what to do. Give your grace and peace.

We pray for those who can't seem to get beyond the trimmings for Christmas; the shopping and busy-ness, with little sense of the wonder and joy your coming means; for those who have forgotten and those who have never really heard - break into this shallow world again to bring new hope and peace, even with our humble words and simple actions.



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We pray for those who, in this time face being even more lonely, even less at peace, or at their wits end. Be your surprising Good News for them too.

We pray for those whose families are split by clashes of nations, ideology, or death, those whose feelings are numbed by tragedy and where togetherness is forced. Be your surprising Peace for them.

We join in prayer for those we know in need and name them to you in the quiet:

For them and for ourselves we join in the words Jesus taught us 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 Hark a herald voice is calling **TiS 264**

Or - Community of Christ, TiS 473

Words of mission and blessing

Scripture reminds us of our need;
'Be watchful, stand firm in your faith,
Be courageous, be strong.

Let all that we do be done in love.'

1 Corinthians 16:13-14

The Celebration need not cease.
It can echo in our lives,
in our words and in our deeds,
in our mood and in our dreams.

Take wonder and joy with you wherever you go.

**Let us be a blessing to others,
in our going and our coming.**

May the God, whose love you see
in all the colours of creation
bless you with a sense of awe,
expectation and wonder.

**May the love and grace of God
be a strong presence with us, now and always.**

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord
in the name of Christ, Amen.

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