



Sunday April 23rd, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.

May our eyes be open to Jesus on our journey.

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?"

May our hearts burn as we worship and the scriptures are opened to us today.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here. We acknowledge the..... People, traditional custodians of this land under God. We commit ourselves again to working for reconciliation in this land.

Singing - TiS 279 'The King of glory comes'

OR TiS 727 'In the presence of your people'

Prayer



Psalm 116:1,2,16,17

I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications.
Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.
O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant. You have loosed my bonds.
I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD.

Like the disciples, we do not always see Jesus in the faces of those around us. Forgive us when we ignore those who need our help.

The hungry, the homeless, the sick and distressed. Forgive us when we see them and ignore their need.

In the busyness of a holiday season, we quickly forget the message of Easter, the sacrifice, the lesson of death and new life and become involved in our own interests and activities. Forgive us and help us to be more aware of your calling and presence and our faithful responsibility to follow to love and care.

**In the name of Christ,
who sets us free
and makes us whole. Amen.**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Reading: Acts 2:14a, 36-41 &
Luke 24:13-35

Reflecting - Rev. Ian Brown

'On the road with sorrow'

They say misery loves company. I think it's true. One person complains and others are likely to join in. In family disputes, one vents a grievance and others unite in their shared sense of hurt. Misery loves company. As Woody Allen said, 'life is full of misery, loneliness and suffering, and it's over much too soon.'

A man visiting the cemetery tried to strike up a conversation with the local gravedigger. He wasn't necessarily miserable, but I guess he wasn't looking for company either. The visitor asked, "Do people die often around here?"

"Just the once," came the reply.

"Have you lived here all your life?"



Sunday April 23rd, 2023

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

"Not yet," said the grave digger.
"Can you tell me which road I should take to the city?"
"I shouldn't take any" he said. "They have enough already." Perhaps it's only some misery that loves company.

This gospel story is not abstract chatter. The 'after Easter episode' is a road trip story. It's late afternoon, the disciples are on foot. They trudge away from Jerusalem in the aftermath of this tragic Passover. One step at a time, one foot after the other; that's all we can manage sometimes in the thick fog of grief. You can imagine that trip. If you were there, slowly walking that dusty road, what you be talking about with your friend?

Grim and long faced, the disciples keep each other company; miserable company, but company. They're immersed in sadness, who can blame them? We know the dynamics of grief. We all cringe a bit at a funeral when a cheery, death-denying speaker says, 'We shouldn't be sad, we come to celebrate.' The disciples deserve the dignity of their grief and perhaps the benefit of the doubt.

Of the two disciples one is named, Cleopas – it's his only mention. Their destination is a place named by others, but Emmaus this close to Jerusalem is no longer known. Luke says it's 60 stadia from Jerusalem, that's Hammat. The truth is we don't know who they are or where they were going, but it's a well-loved story anyway.

A classic post-Easter story, the details are vague. The disciples are more so. At the centre is the baggage the disciples carry, even if that's not named. Their burden of grief, the disappointment they carry, the sadness is heavy. They represent everyone whose eyes are downcast because of their burdens. And then, with the surprising presence of Jesus, it's a story of transformation and renewed hope.

Grief has blinded them to hope. Loss is all they can embrace. Their spirits are at the mercy of what they think of as their failed hopes. "We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel". They chat about the odd events the women reported, but then, "Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they didn't see him".

There's something happening here, but they've not woken up to it. Sorrow and grief are not things we snap out of. They walk with their new companion and perhaps would have passed the Risen Jesus by, if it weren't for the warmth they felt on the road as he spoke and their memory of the Lord's Supper that kicked in when the stranger blessed and broke the bread.

The text says, "their eyes were kept from recognizing him." Perhaps the story was meant to reassure readers who hadn't seen the Resurrected Christ that he can still be walking by their side. For them, for us, we might lack spiritual perception because of our experiences. Experiences like never having heard stories of faith, or being at the bottom of a pit of depression, struggling with bereavement or abuse, or being knotted up with anxiety.

How long will the disciples continue down the road without recognizing that the Risen Jesus walks with them? How long will you and I walk with them, in their footsteps, not knowing who walks alongside us?

How long will the sad human condition of expecting failure and sorrow where we should have life and joy keep us in the dark? Keep us walking through a valley of the shadow of death, darker than it needs to be because we've closed the blinds?

We need to have a use-by date on the pessimism that stomps out every spark of hope. How far down the road will we go with these "misery loves company" disciples before we say "no" to negativity and hopelessness and "yes"



Sunday April 23rd, 2023

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

to the presence of the Risen Christ walking by our side?

They said to each other, when they finally twigged, "Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the scriptures?" And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem'. Now that they have good news to share. Surprising Good News! Amen

Singing - TiS 545 'Shout for joy'

OR TiS 392 'At the dawning of salvation'
OR TiS 530 'Now let us from this table rise'

Offering

God of our journeys, bless these gifts and put them to use for all pilgrims on the way. As we journey with others, may our hearts burn and our lives be lifted through the presence of the risen one. Amen.

Notices

April 25 is ANZAC day (see Defence Force chaplains [worship resource](#)).

Prayers for World & Community

Loving Lord,
Our world is still full of those who have not heard the good news of Jesus of Nazareth, "who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people." We know that he did not come to redeem the world through war and conquest but to bring peace.

We pray for all places where there is violence and not peace, in places of war, in places of poverty and homelessness which are unsafe, in homes where there is disunity, discontent and violence results. We pray for victims and perpetrators, for those who work to bring peace. Help us to work towards reconciliation in our patch.

We pray for places where there are natural disasters, floods, fires, storms. We ask that you will help us to care for your world, to consider how we use resources that you have given us, not to waste but to share and be generous.

We pray for our leaders that they will consider the least as well as the most powerful. May we consider how we can make the place we live more just and generous, may we demonstrate life in your kingdom

We pray for the sick, the elderly and those without anyone to care for them. We thank you that we have hospitals, aged care homes and people to work in them. Let us not forget to show our appreciation and to do what we can for others. We pray for our families and all those we hold in our hearts.

May we notice when you walk beside us and open our eyes and ears to the story of Easter, the promises of resurrection in our journey. Remind us that we walk in the resurrection faith, knowing your love and our need to share it as we join in the prayer you 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 - TiS 242 'I danced in the morning'

OR TiS 382 'Now the green blade rises'



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Blessing

Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?

Remember the Easter message:

Christ is risen

He is risen indeed

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

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