



Sunday May 21st, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

You might want to play this clip as worship begins:

As I went down to the river to pray:

[O Brother Where Art Thou: Down in the River to Pray](#)

(It goes for about 4 mins)

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

As we gather we bring the all of life into this place of worship. We hear in the Scriptures that through life's troubles, the light of Christ shines and brings glory to God's work; to bring us to abundant life and bring us into oneness with God.

We take some time to breathe, to renew, to find our sanctuary in Christ.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

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 - Praise to the living God, TiS 102

OR: Like the murmur of a dove's song TiS 419

Prayer



Ascending Christ who draws our gaze upwards, we marvel at those tangible things we see of God's created order - the Milky Way of the night sky; mountains with a hint of snow towards

another ski season; beaches and oceans becoming wild as the winter approaches.

Your glory surrounds us in the beauty of the world, in the intricate web of creation, in all that sustains our physical lives.

The Psalm (68) reminds us:

Sing to God, sing praises to his name; lift up a song to him who rides upon the clouds--his name is the LORD-- be exultant before him.

We sing of the life you give us. We sing of your love for us. We sing of your desire that we be one as you are one.

But even as we sing we hold the troubles of life as they seem to cling to us. So we confess there are many things that weigh us down.

We hear of the early church folk constantly devoting themselves to prayer, but often we are distracted and our prayer lacks devotion.

We hear of you being an awesome God who gives power to your people, but we tend to struggle in our own diminished power.

We hear of troubles being a pathway to your glory, but we often struggle to see your glory through them.

Siblings in Christ, hear these words of hope and promise from the Scriptures:

the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, support, strengthen, and establish you.
(1 Peter 5:10)

In and through Jesus Christ, our risen and ascended One, we are restored to abundant life in his name to God's glory. **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

Readings: Acts 1:6-14
John 17:1-11

For the words of faith
and for Jesus, the Word, **Thanks be to God.**

Reflecting - Rev. Gospel Ralte

Preference, Promise, Power and Prayer

Our individual preference, inclination and agenda all have a personal boundary. Sometimes, weighing our own preference may endanger and cross over the boundaries of others. This could happen unknowingly or unintentionally. Looking only at our own interest may become a blockage of blessings to us and others.

Here is Acts chapter 1, the disciples who were with their resurrected Lord had another agenda, the restoration of the kingdom of Israel. For them it was the right time to establish the power of the kingdom. The preference of the disciples and the priority of the Lord were in contrast. The worldly preference to establish the kingdom of Israel crossed over its boundary, trying to interfere in the providence of God. Therefore, Jesus told them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."

However, the priority of the Lord focuses rather on the fulfilment of the Father's promise to send the Holy Spirit so that the disciples will receive the power of the Holy Spirit. There is one thing the disciples have to do: stay in Jerusalem and wait for the gift that the Father has promised. In our Christian day to day life, weighing our

visions and plans, are there times when we unintentionally get in the way of God's work?

With a deep longing heart, the disciples remained on the Mount of Olives, looking up to sky as their Lord was disappearing from their sight. With the assurance that their Lord will return to earth, following the instruction of Lord Jesus, they waited on the promise of the Father in the upper room, joining together constantly in prayer. They continued to commune with their Lord in prayer.

In one accord, the disciples spent time together in prayer. Prayer binds and unites believers. Prayer brings our hearts to oneness in Christ. There is peace in prayer and for the people who pray. We need to spend time together in prayer, waiting for renewal of the power of the Holy Spirit today. POWER? Indeed, the power to become the witnesses of the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ.

It is not easy to share the gospel of Christ with our own families and with others. We need the power, strength and passion to do it. To get the needed power, we need the Holy Spirit. To receive the Holy Spirit, we need to open our hearts in prayer.

Jesus prayed a doxological prayer, asking the Father to glorify him with the glory and authority Jesus had before the world began. Jesus glorified the Father through completing the works the Father sent him to do. The aim of Jesus' prayer is that his disciples would have eternal life by knowing the one true God and Jesus Christ whom God has sent.

Jesus prayed for the belongingness, oneness and protection for his disciples. All this can be done only through the name of Jesus Christ. There is power in the name of Jesus. Witnessing comes after receiving the power of the Holy Spirit. In witnessing the one true God and Jesus Christ, Christians are equipped with



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double power: the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of the name of Jesus Christ.

Today, in our churches and in our own lives, if we feel lack of the power of the Holy Spirit, we are encouraged to wait upon the Lord in prayer. We may need to put aside our plans, wisdom, skills, knowledge, wealth or success to spend time in prayer. When our plans do not go well, indeed, at all times, let us open our hearts and minds to receive the renewing touch of the Holy Spirit, who will come not as our preference, but in her own gentle ways. Amen.

Singing- Filled with the Spirit's power TiS 411

OR: What a friend we have in Jesus TiS 590

Offering

God of glory, bless all that we offer. May all of who we are move towards your glory and live in the life you offer, towards the renewal of all. Amen.

Notices

Today is the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development
Tomorrow is the International day of Biodiversity

May 26th is National Sorry Day

In 2017 the Statement from the Heart was made at Uluru.

A referendum for a First Nations Voice From the UCA Assembly website:

<https://uniting.church/voice/>

This year all Australians will be invited to vote on whether we should recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution. It is a rare opportunity to consider a change to our constitution in a way that will honour and celebrate First Nations people at the heart of the nation.

The Referendum will ask whether we support the invitation of the Uluru Statement for a Voice to Parliament to be enshrined in the constitution.

Doing so will provide an opportunity for the diversity of First Nations voices in this country to be heard and to give First Nations people a practical tool to have a say in decisions which impact them.

A First Nations Voice is a step towards truth telling of our nation's history, and will empower First Nations Australians, making them feel valued by their own country.

<https://uniting.church/voice/>

Prayers for World & Community

TiS 741 - O Lord hear my prayer,

O Lord, hear my prayer, when I call, answer me.

**O Lord hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer,
Come and listen to me.**

We pray for our world and her troubles - places of war and violence both seen and hidden; places of power and inequity; places of injustice ...

(we offer specific prayers - in silence or shared together)

TiS 741 - O Lord hear my prayer

We pray for our country and the issues before us - housing pressures and financial stress; walking together as first and second peoples as we note this week is National Sorry Day and we as a nation will have a say on the voice in a referendum later this year ...

(we offer specific prayers - in silence or shared together)

TiS 741 - O Lord hear my prayer

We pray for our church - for our President Rev. Sharon Hollis; for our Moderator Rev. David Fotheringham; for our Presbytery; for our congregations, people, leaders, ministers. We pray for people of faith and those struggling to find hope or belief ...



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(we offer specific prayers - in silence or shared together)

TiS 741 - O Lord hear my prayer

We pray together then as 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 - Lord of all hopefulness TiS 613

OR: Who would true valour see TiS 561

Blessing

As followers of Jesus, go in peace
with hearts, minds and lives open
waiting for the whispers of the Holy Spirit.

Pray at all times.

Shelter each other with love and compassion.

And may the God who birthed you in love
continue to guard and guide you
this day and forever more
Amen.

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