



Sunday August 13th, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Leader: It is good to gather because God is with us, lovingly blessing all.

All: Let everyone give thanks,
calling on God's name
It is good to be here because Christ is here whenever two or three meet in his name.
Sing to God, sing psalms,
tell of all his remarkable doings.
It is good to be here because the Spirit is here, leading us into truth that really matters.
We will seek the Lord and his strength, we will seek God's face.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

PRAYER OF APPROACH: - we join in prayer with others across time and around the world with a prayer from the 7th century: [UIW]

O loving God, you are the light of the minds that know you, the life of the souls that love you, and the strength of the hearts that serve you. Help us so to know you that we may truly love you; and so to love you that we may faithfully serve you, whom to serve is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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 Jesus calls us o'er the tumult - TiS 589

OR: God has spoken by his prophets - TiS 158



Prayer

PSALM 105: 1 - 6, 16 - 22 - [link to audiovisual reflection at the end of this material.](#)

Gracious God, you are Lord of all, creator of new beginnings since the very first beginning. You breath life into our world, energy into all that lives, creativity into your marvellous creation.
We thank you and stand in awe.

Because so often we find it hard to start again, to believe that there really are new beginnings possible for us, we get into bad habits and get stuck in old ways. By your Spirit stir us onward in our journey with you.

We are grateful that you share your love with us unconditionally, and we are sorry for the times we have not shared in the same way with others. With those who have hurt us, we do not always forgiveness or the chance of a fresh start. With those who cause us trouble we have not always looked for the possibility of peace. With our love, we have often not shared enough; Forgive us, pour your love into our hearts and transform the debris of our messes into the attractive aroma of your grace.

Be with us, lead us with your light, and give us the assurance of your new beginnings, through Jesus, restore us, O Lord, reform and reshape us. Friend of sinners, you bring hope in our despair.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.



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Healer of the sick, you give strength in our weakness.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Destroyer of darkness, the light of your love brings life.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

forgive us,

that we may know your gracious love,
as grateful children and honoured friends.

Through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Genesis 37:1-4, 12-28

Romans 10:5-15

Matthew 14:22-33

Teach us wisdom, O God;

let your word bring us light.

** A moment of quiet for reflection.*

Reflecting -

There is something truly elemental and frightening about being caught in a storm at sea. Most of you, I'm sure, remember when 1998 Sydney Hobart sailing fleet was caught in a catastrophic storm. Only fifty out of the 114 yachts that sailed out of Sydney Harbour made it to Hobart. Five yachts were sunk, seven were abandoned and six sailors drowned. The crews of rescue helicopters and of other ships risked their lives to pluck survivors out of the raging sea. They rescued fifty-five sailors in the biggest peace time search and rescue operation Australia has ever seen.

If this can happen in modern times, then think about what it was like in the era before lifeboats, coastguards, life jackets, and other safety equipment. Back then, when sailing ships were often the only option for long distance travel, the risk of shipwreck and drowning was very real. There are 700 or so shipwrecks, mostly from the era of sailing ships, that lie off the Southwest coast of Victoria. They signify a huge loss of life in just a small area. It is perhaps no surprise that older hymn books often included hymns like 'Will your anchor hold?' that included imagery of storms and ship wrecks, and extolled trusting Jesus in the storms and travails of life.

The Sea of Galilee is a very large, but shallow inland lake. It is very exposed and is known for the winds that blast off the Golan Heights sending the lake into incredible turbulence. When Jesus' disciples were caught in a storm on the lake, they had every reason to be frightened. The wind was against them and their ship was battered by waves (the original Greek word was 'tortured'), and they would not have been able to see land. In addition, they lived in a time when the sea was believed to be a place of chaos and threat. Very few people knew how to swim. The disciples were alone, probably very seasick, unprotected from the elements that threatened to engulf them, and afraid they were going to drown.

At their very lowest point, when they despaired for their lives in the early hours of the morning, Jesus appeared to them, walking across the water. Jesus showed his divine authority to them, overcoming the storm, the waves and the wind. But their initial reaction to his coming was terror- absolute terror and fear! For they could not imagine it was Jesus. They thought that what they saw was a ghost, an apparition of death.

But as Jesus called out to them, Peter began to believe that it could be Jesus. And somehow, Peter also begins to believe that as Jesus has called them to emulate him in all that he does, that if Jesus could walk on water maybe he could, too. So, Peter, calls out to Jesus, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." Jesus responds, "Come!"



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So, Peter hops out of the boat, and walks across the water toward Jesus! Imagine that! And for as long as he focused on Jesus, he was fine. But the moment he noticed the storm and the wind, and took his focus off Jesus, he started to sink. The power he needed was in Jesus, and as he began to go under the water, he realised this, and called out to Jesus to rescue him.

Jesus caught him, admonished for his doubt, and then they joined the others in the boat. At that moment, the wind dropped and the sea calmed, and all the disciples realised that Jesus possessed God's power and authority, and they worshipped him.

The early church saw this story as a metaphor for their experiences. They saw their lives in the church as like being adrift in a little boat adrift in the ocean of chaos that was the world. Their little fragile craft (the church) was buffeted by terrible affliction and persecution, but they saw that Jesus did not leave them alone, but rather came to them in the midst of the storms and chaos, and ultimately rescued them. They saw themselves as called to emulate the faithfulness of Peter who took the risk of trying to imitate Jesus, even if he did not always succeed.

They, thus, took the risk of preaching the gospel, and of meeting for prayer and worship, even when it was illegal. They didn't see themselves as being immune from persecution, but rather believed that Jesus would be with them to give them the strength and courage that they needed. And so, they sought to be faithful even under the threat of martyrdom.

But how do we expect our faith to work? How do we ride out the crises, the setbacks and the storms of life?

The Christian faith comes with no guarantees of a trouble-free life, as Jesus often made very clear (remember Matthew 10:34-36), but like the early church we can be sure that we are never alone in our troubles. Remember those wonderful words from 2 Corinthians 12:9b that Jesus gave to Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness." This is what Peter learned when he faltered when walking on the Sea of

Galilee. This is what we who so often struggle, falter and fail need to learn.

For when we call to him in our weakness and loss and sorrow, Jesus comes to us like he did to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee, bringing us strength to endure, guidance to find the right path, hope for the future, and love to lift us up and enable us to continue into the future he has planned for us. Thanks be to God.

Singing - TIS 580; Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us; TIS 582; Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom

OR: Inspired by love and anger TIS 674

Offering

We bring our gifts to you, Lord God,
In gratitude and hope.
In dedicating them, we dedicate ourselves
again to be your people in the world,
In the strength and power
Of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

TiW 274

Notices

August 19th is World Humanitarian Day: On 19 August 2003, a bomb attack on the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, Iraq, killed 22 humanitarian aid workers, including the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello. Five years later, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution designating 19 August as World Humanitarian Day (WHD). [World Humanitarian Day | United Nations](#)

Prayers for World & Community

God of all grace, we are thankful for everything that you bless us with and for the identity you give us as part of your family. We mostly like the idea of being 'pilgrim people, on the way to a promised goal', until the way gets rough or risky.

We join you in your concern for the vulnerable and at risk in the storms of life and pray for your



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presence to guide and your loving grace to calm the winds:

we pray for those anxious because the winds of racism and fear are being whipped up again; may your justice and truth show the way,

we pray for those fearful that the small boat of their lives will be sunk by the violence of war, the bullying of abusers or the greed of others, may your calming hand reach out with peace,

we pray for our national church as the waves of pressing matters, of governance and resourcing buffet our faith building communities, may the blessing of your Spirit keep us safe and blown along the way of self-giving love in your mission to all, keep us from dropping anchor, help us be responsive to your direction and open to risk and new possibilities.

we pray for those close to our hearts; those sick, troubled, lonely or fearful and we name them to you in the quiet ...

Loving God, you notice our storms and know our needs, strengthen us, help us to know how to be part of the answering of our prayers, which we bring in the name of the one who comes to us with an outstretched hand to help.

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 - Holy Spirit, go before us - TiS 420

OR:138 Eternal Father, strong to save
569 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

Blessing

In days of firm faith, serve God joyfully.
In days of struggle, serve God courageously.
In times of joy may we sense God's smile.
In times of grief may we feel God's tears.
In times of failing, trust God's mercy.
In times of success, give God thanks.
Go knowing that God who holds all things
will be with us in stormy times, in rough waters,
that Christ who calls us friend
will walk the way alongside us,
and that the Spirit who dreams our story
will mark our way with light and hope.
in the name of Christ. Amen

Psalm link:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/lz1eugmdl62f0mwwdg4kc/Ps105-16-22.m4v?rlkey=55ojm9xt4hz5d4bf2jg80qdd3&dl=0>

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