



Sunday August 20th, 2023 The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

There is dew on the ground: God's blessing of life evermore.

There is a song in the air: God's presence in joyful melody.

Look! Behold how good and pleasant it is when we are together in worship!

It is like precious oil touching our skin – reminding us that we are God's own.

Look! Behold how good and pleasant it is when we are together in worship!

It is more precious than any gold – more perfect than any achievement.

Come, people of God. Let us worship in thanksgiving and praise.

And let us feel the anointing of God like the oil of forgiveness and the balm of healing. Come, let us worship.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

PRAYER:

Precious and good is the fellowship we share.

We give thanks for meeting us in our worship and offering us such grace.

As we share today in the harmonious sound of our music and the words of our songs, so may we share together in harmonious relationship.

In the nourishment of silence, and in the strength in our shared liturgy,

may the gifts that we bring be inspired by your creative love and grounded in your truths.

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.

The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Presbytery of Gippsland, Uniting Church in Australia with blessings and permission to use the content in worship services with acknowledgement.

Singing - Christ the healer, TiS 638

OR: Come as you are - TiS 693

OR: She came to Jesus

Tune: SLANE - trad. Irish melody (Lord of Creation)

She came to Jesus
from outside the fold -
Canaanite woman!
Persistent and bold!
Looking to Jesus,
she wanted to see
one who would help her
and set her child free.

Claiming a blessing,
a touch of God's grace,
she knew God's love
was not bounded by place.
Jesus, you listened,
debated then healed -
for in her asking,
her faith was revealed.

God, you still bless those
who seek you in prayer.
You welcome dreamers
who faithfully dare.
In Christ, now risen,
your mercy extends,
those on the outside
are welcomed as friends.

Words: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette 2002
Singing the New Testament
Faith Alive Christian Resources, 2008



Prayer

Have mercy on us Lord, Son of David,

In our times of torment reach out to us as we reach out to you.

We suffer and are audacious to call out to you in our need. Respond to us we pray.



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We see dear ones suffering and in need and we call upon your healing touch.

It is a fine thing to live together in unity, but there have been times when we have been all about ourselves and not appreciated the differences in others. When we have rejected others and not brought life and healing into our relationships. We have allowed the hurts to fester and deepen.

The scriptures today show us the value of real and true forgiveness, readily given and shared. What a radical gift we have to offer. Just as you offer it so freely to us.

You promise us your mercy in our disobedience. Mercy and even more mercy. You free us from our imprisonment in the consequences of our foolishness.

Reunited with God and with one another we are brought into the loving fellowship of the good food around the table. In your grace we find ourselves included and healed. Let the oil of your forgiveness be to us a soothing balm.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Genesis 45:1-15

Matthew 15: (10-20), 21-28

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

Reflecting -

Psalm 133 NRSVUE

How very good and pleasant it is
when kindred live together in unity!
It is like the precious oil on the head,
running down upon the beard,
on the beard of Aaron,
running down over the collar of his robes.
It is like the dew of Hermon
which falls on the mountains of Zion.
For there the Lord ordained his blessing,
life forevermore.

As a much younger person, before study and marriage, before parenthood and career, with thanks to the guiding and scouting movements, I participated in bushwalking. I lived in the Western District of Victoria, with easy access to the Great Ocean Road and some good hiking trails. Notwithstanding the hike on which I forgot to take my bathers, these were good times. It was not unusual for the hiking group to break out into song, walking songs, such as
I love to go a-wandering,
along the mountain track,
and as I go, I love to sing,
my knapsack on my back.
There was a comfortable rhythm to the singing which fitted in with the walking. There was also a comfortable sense of belonging in the singing together as we walked along together as a unit.

This little psalm, Psalm 133 is likely to also be a walking song. It is the second last psalm of a collection of Psalms called the Songs of Ascent. There are fourteen in all, from Psalm 120 to Psalm 134 and they are characterised by their brevity. We know through scripture that in Jesus' day, pilgrimage to Jerusalem was expected of every able person for each of the festivals.

Scholars speculate that these particular psalms may have been sung by groups of pilgrims as they made their way to Jerusalem. Other scholars have speculated that these songs have liturgical purpose and were sung as the worship leaders made their way up the Temple steps and into the



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Holy of Holies. And perhaps at different times other purposes came to the fore.

It is fascinating that of the group of fourteen psalms, this one, Psalm 133, is given place of honour, perhaps at the threshold of the Holy of Holies. This is approaching the pinnacle of what it means to be God's people. To be community together, in which kindred – the family of God – dwell together as one.

This gives credence to the prayer that John remembers Jesus praying, "That they may be one." This is God's hope for God's people, that we would live together as one, and as the Psalmist suggests, how precious that is!

It is precious, because the reality is, that this is all too often, not the case. While we might aspire to living in love and compassion with one another, where peace, hope, joy and love are everyday gifts shared in abundance, all too often fear fouls it up. We see the impact of fear in the \$80 billion spent on atomic weaponry last year alone. Imagine if this had been spent on settling refugees and shoring up food security!

In this country we are now seeing fear cruelly cancel the initial bipartisan movement to empower First Nations peoples to have input into what is needed to start closing the gaps in education and health, in poverty, incarceration rates and deaths in custody. Imagine if the indigenous peoples could share their wisdom for caring for country and community, how much all our lives would benefit. Imagine love finding a way!

For the precious ideal to become a lived experience, love needs to find its way to put fear and fear-mongering to rest. In the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, we know deep in our beings that God's love always has the last say. May all our decision-making be grounded in this love and not out of death-dealing fear. May God's hope for God's people to live together in harmony with God's creation and one another come to fruition, as we pray or sing, your kingdom come.

Singing - How good, Lord, - TIS 2340

OR: Beauty for brokenness, TIS 690

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 22nd International Day Commemorating the Victims of Acts of Violence Based on Religion or Belief.

August 23rd International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition

August 26th Remembering the Tampa Affair and Rescuing of 433 Refugees in 2001

Prayers for World & Community

Come before God with your prayers for one another. Perhaps pass some oil around for people to wipe on their palms.

Called to unity we are indeed kindred.
We feel one another's pain and acknowledge how it is to feel deep compassion.

Lord have mercy.

As we cup our hands to 'hold' one another, we acknowledge the pain of grief and loss which is so real to many of us right now. We acknowledge the pain of change and adjustment in loss, losing people, losing relationships and in losing fellowship and connection.

Lord have mercy.

We hold before God those who are depressed or anxious. Those who have shame, or fear, or sadness.

Lord have mercy.



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The news of hardship and pain and suffering continues. These things weigh heavily on those who are impacted, and heavy on our hearts. Guide our decision makers into compassionate and loving choices.

Lord have mercy.

We hold the 'little ones', the voiceless and the desperate and those who plead on their behalf.

Lord have mercy....

hear the cry of our souls. May your generous mercy be like warm oil to our pain.

Just as the oil flows, so also is the generosity of God. Let your own mercy and grace flow generously to others in gratitude for the mercy of God.

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 - Great is your faithfulness, TiS 154

OR: Father, Lord of all creation (many tunes will fit) TiS 631

Blessing

We are given mercy and forgiveness as a free gift to share.
Go now to share these gifts generously and lovingly.
Show the world by your actions and your intentions that the Kingdom Jesus shares with us includes them.

This radical love is to be shared in harmony.
May the tune of the Kingdom be ever the
tune to which you dance.
God the Trinity of love is with you.

Blessing Song; Aaronic blessing, TiS 776

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