



Sunday August 4th, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

based on Ephesians 4:1-16

We gather and are encouraged
to lead a life worthy of the calling
to which we have been called,
with all humility and gentleness, with patience,
bearing with one another in love,
making every effort
to maintain the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.

**Come, Spirit of God, inspire our faith,
be present in this time of worship.**

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded land and 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 here to meet him -
TIS 477

OR: Come down , O love divine TiS 398

Prayer



Suggested sung prayer response TiS 712
Create in me a clean heart - (from Psalm 51)

Ever-present God who knows us, inside and out.
You sense our fear, disruption, elation,
disturbances, frustrations and longings,
and you hold us in the joys and struggles
of this time.

In the quiet, we find gratitude

for the way you dwell in us, as we dwell in you.
Through all the triumphs and tragedies,
growing up from the ground of our being,
along the tracks and through the cracks of life,
you bring blessings and we claim them for you:
(hold a good time of silence)

Your constant love never ends, God of grace,
so, in your mercy, dwell in us always.

**Remove whatever keeps us
from living in your light,
because it's so easy to stay in the shadows.**

Break into our closed minds and hardened hearts
with the brilliance of your forgiveness.

**Make us new,
drenched in your presence, washed in kinship,
forever in communion with you.**

Keep us on our toes,
joyfully moving to the music of the soul.
Dance us into life, over and over again.
Amen.

Sung prayer response TiS 712
Create in me a clean heart - (from Psalm 51)

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Listen, hear the good news!
Speak now, we are listening

Read: John 6:24-35
Ephesians 4:1-16

Your word is a lamp to our feet
And a light to our path

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Reflecting - Rev. Sandra Houghton

Shining clearly throughout the Apostle Paul's writings is his passionate commitment to evangelism and to nurturing the young churches scattered across Asia Minor and Europe. His commitment was extremely important to these Christian communities who often faced stiff opposition and persecution, and who often had little in the way of resources. They did not have the New Testament, as it hadn't been compiled yet and had limited access to Old Testament writings. Visits from teachers and evangelists would have been rare, and sometimes there were problems with erroneous teachings.

So, the arrival of a letter from the apostle Paul must have been a cause for rejoicing. And his letters, we know, were valued by these churches as they were often copied (which is why they have survived) and shared with other churches. The letters mix pastoral concern and encouragement, together with his frank and authoritative teachings which he translates into practical advice on living authentic, faithful Christian lives.

Paul maintains his commitment to these churches through all the many difficulties he faced. Never content to merely 'convert' someone to the Christian faith, for Paul, faith was to be much more than assent to a set of beliefs, faith was to be lived out in every aspect of life in action and word. Faith was lived out in a community of believers that worked together, each freely offering their contribution, each seeking to love and support the other, each working to maintain the unity of the whole, and looking to the example of Jesus Christ, head of the Church.

Today is the anniversary of the birth of an extraordinary man, Raoul Wallenberg, who offered his giftedness with grace and courage for the sake of others. He is credited with saving about 100,000 Jews from certain death in Nazi occupied Budapest during the later stages of the Second World War.

Wallenberg was a Swedish businessman who became Sweden's special envoy in Budapest, Hungary between July and December 1944. With the permission of the Swedish government, he issued thousands of 'protective passports' which identified the subjects as Swedish subjects awaiting repatriation and thus prevented their deportation to the death camps. The 'passports' did not have any real legal standing, but they looked official and were generally accepted by the Hungarian and German authorities.

He sheltered thousands of Jews in 32 buildings that he rented and designated as Swedish territory, thereby claiming diplomatic immunity for the occupants. He did everything in his power to save Jews, bribing officials where necessary, making threats to high-ranking Germans of prosecution by war crimes tribunals, and generally defying the authorities. He was killed by the Russians in 1947.

His was the most successful rescue of Jews in the entire Second World War period. Raoul Wallenberg was only a young man, but he had enormous courage, a sharp intellect, and the capacity to act with daring and decisiveness. He used all of his God given gifts to try to save as many Jews as possible.

God calls people in many ways. What is important is that we respond to a call that God makes upon our lives with faithfulness and obedience. **God calls people to action.** Actions that are compassionate, loving, courageous, generous, unselfish and life-giving and consistent with the actions of Christ.

Paul was concerned to ensure that the Ephesians kept their focus clearly on Christ Jesus, as he was aware that they were vulnerable and could easily be led astray. He used the analogy of a boat on high seas that is easily blown off course.

People are often easily led astray. When Raoul Wallenberg made his courageous stand to save Jews from extermination by the Nazis, most local Christians did nothing to help. Many supported



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the Nazis, as they had been taught to be prejudiced against the Jews, sometimes even by church ministers and leaders. Even those who opposed the actions of the Nazis mostly did nothing. Fear paralysed them.

It shocks us, but reminds us that we need to always be focusing on the example and teaching of Jesus Christ, and testing all the pronouncements of politicians, leaders, the media, our friends, and neighbours by that barometer before we decide whether we should support them. Christians are called not to just simply go along with the crowd, but rather to follow in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. This may well lead us onto a 'path less travelled'.

Let us be open to the call of God upon our lives, focused on emulating the example of Jesus, and faithful even when the cost is high. Amen.

Singing - All praise to our Redeeming Lord, - TiS 442

OR: The Church's one foundation - TiS 457

Offering

Bless whatever we give, God of abundance,
and let it be more than enough for now,
to bring hope, connection and healing,
to offer the bread of life
in the places where you need us to be.
In Jesus' name. Amen.

Notices

Today is National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day.

Prayers for World & Community

Abiding God, in whom we live
and move and have our being,
There's so much struggle, pain and hardship,
in our world today,
that it's hard to find the words.
But we know that the Spirit prays with us

in sighs too deep for words, and so we pray.

We bring before you those places and faces
who appear on our screens and in the papers.

We ask your blessing on the forgotten ones
whose images and stories are unknown.

Bless all who are disrupted and disturbed
in mind, body and spirit.

Be with those who are grieving
and give them stubborn strength to go on.

Hold your young ones gently, loving parent,
as they grow up in this emerging world.

Let your Spirit rest beside our elders,
visiting them with memories of blessing,
and bouquets of hope.

Startle those in power with truth
and confront injustice with cries of dissent.
Let wisdom flourish in seemingly barren ground,
and transform selfishness into common good.

Reach out with healing to all living things,
shield them from our greed and denial.
Let your abundance take root and grow.

Where there is hunger, bring your bread of life,
and feed us with the things that last.

Bless us and those we love,
and especially those we are learning to love,
as we pray 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.



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***Singing - Among us and before us, Lord,
you stand TiS 259***

OR: Sent forth by God's blessing TiS 531

Blessing

Go knowing that God is with you
and that you have been filled
with grace upon grace
to be the body of Christ.

Feed the hungry with the food of the ages.
Live joyfully in the abundance of hope.
Follow Jesus, wherever you find yourself,
with all humility and gentleness,
with patience,
bearing with one another in love,
making every effort
to maintain the unity of the Spirit
in the bond of peace.

May the blessing of the Holy,
One in three, Three in One,
be within you always,
and all the people say: **Amen**

Reflection: Rev Sandra Houghton
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