



Sunday August 11th, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Come all you who are hungry.
Here is the bread of life, come and share.
Come and want no more
for here is all that you need to sustain your soul.
Come and satisfy your yearning.
Here is the place to indulge and share freely,
abundantly.
Let there be no complaint of want, of scarcity.

You were invited into this gathering by the Spirit
who calls you and yearns for you.
You are welcome here.

The Figtree Worship Resources go near and far,
you may be worshipping with many
or in a space on your own.
Wherever you are, and whatever time it is,
you are invited and gathered
with the people of God
and offered food for your soul.

Praise be to God
for the remnant we call 'Church',
gathered and apart.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



***Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress***

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.

Listening

Listen to the good news:

Read: John 6:35, 41-51

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

Singing - Here in this place TiS 474

OR: Guide me, O thou great Redeemer TiS 569



Prayer

I cry to you for help, merciful God.

When I am in conflict with myself
because I have fallen short of my own standards,
you heal me and inspire me.

I cry to you for help,

When life hurts and things seem out of control,
when despair is a temptation and inaction feels
like a way out, you heal me and re-energise me.

I cry to you for help,

When being faithful seems too hard, sometimes
even pointless, you heal me and sustain me.

I cry to you for help,

When I am bitter or angry or malicious
and speak unkindly of others, you heal me
and wait patiently for me to catch up
and see others as you do.

I cry to you for help,

When I am not kind and compassionate,
when I am false or unforgiving, you heal me
and forgive me.

When my attitude surely grieves your Spirit,
you redeem me and welcome me home.

Sing praise to God dear and faithful ones. God's displeasure is fleeting and God's cherishing lasts forever. After your tears there is joy and celebration. Your lament is heard and the response is grace upon grace. Praise God from the depths of your soul. Rejoice and be glad, dance and sing.

Your sins are forgiven, **Thanks be to God.**



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Passing the peace

God's deep and abiding peace be with you:
and also with you.

Listening

Read: 2 Sam: 18: 5 – 9, 15, 31 – 33

Eph. 4:25 – 5: 2

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

Reflecting - Rev. Ian Brown

"Family conflict - Biblical proportions"

David has had a bad run! He took Bathsheba, murdered Uriah, was taught a harsh lesson by the prophet Nathan and now his family has a conflict of biblical proportions. Everyone's families have their troubles at times. That's a space we all fill in our own uniquely troubled ways. Harsh words and entrenched positions are not uncommon, but David's family has it with armies on each side and rivers of blood. His son Absalom is killed.

All losses are different. We've all had some experience of deaths; some of it devastating, some that seems timely, but hurts anyway. All have a process of grieving and dealing with the pain. One of the best ways of beginning is in telling the story. The bible does this with razor-sharp honesty.

This episode of loss for David comes with a back story. Absalom was troubled; too handsome for his own good and his crowning glory, his head of hair was magnificent. King David was either spoiling him rotten or reading him the riot act. He eventually led a revolt against his father. On the eve of battle, David was a wreck. He was afraid he might lose Absalom. The boy was the thorn in his flesh, but he was also the apple of his eye.

Given the story, Absalom has an ironic name; it means 'my father is peace'. Our part has the consequence of conflict; with Absalom caught in the branches of a tree by his beautiful hair. Joab finds Absalom hanging there and runs him through with three spears. When they broke the news to David, it broke his heart and he cried out in words that have echoed down the centuries. "O my son

Absalom, my son, my son. Would that I had died instead of you, O Absalom, my son."

A genuine, heartfelt cry of lament. Children are not meant to die before their parents. Nor are they meant to tackle their father's armies. If David could have paid the price for the boy's betrayal, he would have paid it. If he could have given his own life to make the boy alive again, he would have given it. But even a king can't do things like that.

This is tragic. But the final, irreversible tragedy is not one that arrives out of the blue. How many tragedies must there have been in the house of David for a conflict between father and son to have armies behind each side? How much not facing the issues and letting emotional wounds fester would it take? I guess there was fault on both sides. It's a terrible tragedy, but it has roots in everyday human relationships done badly. David is left in tears.

Mourning was the only thing left. Facing the pain, crying, telling the story; the process of grieving was all he could do and David was honest enough to do that openly. That at least, is a good example. Paul gives his friends in Ephesus some good advice, to help keep relationships healthy and perhaps avoid tragedy of this sort.

He says; *'let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours, for we are members of one another. Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,.. and be kind to one another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us.'*

And the advice on how we use our tongues is just as timely now: "Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up."

'Do not let the sun go down on your anger' are words both David and Absalom needed to hear! It's not that we can get rid of anger. Anger is an emotion. We humans have emotional responses to what happens around us. Anger will happen;



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it's not a bad thing in itself, the issue is how we deal with the anger. We are not told to never get angry, we are not meant to paper over emotion, conflict or real issues with a 'nice' sunny approach to everything!

Paul gives practical help for living in 'love' – the sort of giving love that God shows in Jesus. It's realistic, wholesome advice, yes, be angry – it's a natural response to being hurt, to injustice or abuse, but don't let it lead you into doing something bad, like a fight or a war!

The ecumenist and hymn writer, Fred Kaan pleads to God:

'God! When human bonds are broken and we lack the love or skill, to restore the hope of healing, give us grace and make us still. Give us love to go on learning: God encourage and renew.'

'Amen' is the appropriate prayer at the end of this; Amen – may we be restored, renewed in love and grace.

Singing - God, when human bonds are broken TiS 683

OR: When human voices cannot sing TiS 682

OR: Feed us now, Bread of life TiS 538 (Communion song)

Offering

God who knows us and loves us anyway, accept these gifts as we bring them and our lives to you. May all that we have, all that we do and all that we think, be like so many small stones that build the path of peace for all. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Notices

Have you caught up with the decisions of the UCA's 17th Assembly? There's a summary here: <https://uniting.church/act2-decisions-summary/>

August 12th is International Youth Day.

Prayers for World & Community

People of God,

These people, us, called 'church' are asked to pray and to hold one another in tough times. Pray always, build each other up. We know we do not always get it right and being kind and compassionate can be a hard thing. But then we remember to see through your eyes, God who is love, and we remember how pain feels. We remember that joy may come in the morning, but the tears that fall in the night are truly painful.

And so we pray for those who suffer this day. We think of those in our own communities who are hurting, those who need our prayers to carry them. We think of those in our church groups, those on our fringes and those in our towns and vicinities.

We pray for people near to us, around Australia and around the world who are:

struggling with health,
marginalised,
isolated,
lonely,
facing struggles of addiction,
mental health issues,
socioeconomic struggles,
and family relationship problems.

We pray for those in places of conflict.

We think of the various agencies and groups who work to alleviate the issues; the Royal Flying Doctor Service, Frontier services, other church agencies and our own *Uniting*. Other groups we know who work for others, and for the many volunteers and carers in our communities. And we know it all makes a difference.

We pray for our church and the future we are all working toward. We are so much more than our

own small groups. Spirit of life, work in us as we discern together the ways forward. Give us all guidance and wisdom as we seek your ways. Help



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us to live out this vision in kindness and in tender care of one another. Amen

SPECIAL PRAYER FOR OUR UNITING CHURCH

At the recent (17th) Assembly the Uniting Church was asked some special carefully discerned things and we come to prayer to respond lovingly as people of God at this time and this place.

The vision for us as local faith communities is that we will sustain a life of worship, build one another up in love, grow disciples of Jesus and participate in God's mission. These diverse communities of faith will shape their life in response to God's call in their context and deepen their relationship with God, one another, the wider church and the world.

A visible and accessible network of intentional communities engaged in life-long learning to equip people to courageously follow Jesus and participate in God's mission in contemporary Australia.

A network of deeply connected councils responding to God's call to enter more fully into mission through healthy oversight of ministry and mission, celebrating our diverse and shared identity and being faithful stewards of our common life and wealth.

The church is called to live out the vision for sharing our common life and wealth, to prioritise sharing our resources with one another for the benefit of the whole church.

One of our responses is prayer. The other is to ask ourselves where we might be part of this vision. Is there a way to share our common wealth, a way to be involved in life-long learning and celebrate our diversity? How might we deepen our relationships and be more faithful stewards? Strengthen and enliven and envision us we pray, Spirit of God, lead us on. Amen

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 - Loving Spirit, loving Spirit TiS 417

OR: Inspired by love and anger TiS 674

Blessing

Go out to live kindness and compassion,
to build others up with words of grace.
In imitation of Christ, forgive, live in love
and be a fragrant offering.
Go into your daily lives
knowing the Spirit goes with you.
May the face of God turn toward you
and give you peace.
and all the people say: **Amen**

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