



Sunday August 25th, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

What did you do to get ready for worship today?
What did you put on?
What will you be clothed with when you leave?

Paul's letter to the Ephesians instructs:

*Stand, therefore,
and belt your waist with truth
and put on the breastplate of righteousness
and lace up your sandals
in preparation for the gospel of peace.*

Spirit of life, be with us,
dress us with what we need for today,
and all days,
and all the people say: **Amen**

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

As we gather, we acknowledge the *(please name the people on whose land you are meeting)* Traditional Custodians of these unceded lands 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 - This day God gives me - TiS 642

Tune : BUNESSAN (Morning has broken)

OR: *Who would true valour see - TiS 561*

OR: *Come as you are TiS 693*

Prayer



Refrain: John Bell's simple chant:
"We will take what you offer,

we will live by your word.

We will love one another

and be fed (led) by you Lord"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olnB7yubJKU>

God who covers us in love,
we open our hearts to you
full of gratitude for the simple gifts you give,
that cover us in joy:

the glory of the sunrise and sunset,
the wonder of small and large animals,
wild and companions,
the song and flight of birds
the comfort of the bush
the kindness of neighbours and strangers
the awakening of a poem
the mystery of a painting
the transport of music ...
(you might want to add things here)

All these things and more feed our souls
and drape us in your unimaginable glory.
And so we say/sing in praise:

Refrain: John Bell's simple chant:

"We will take what you offer,

we will live by your word.

We will love one another

and be fed (led) by you Lord"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olnB7yubJKU>

We confess that there are times
when we have turned away from you.

**We have shrugged off
the simple garb of the disciple
and preferred our own elaborate costume
of self-sufficient styling.**

Like some of the disciples,
**we have left your path
when the going got too confusing.**

Like some of the disciples,
**we have denied your truth
and betrayed your trust.**

And still, you run towards us
arms open in expectation,

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holding out the robe of forgiveness
swaddling us in grace,
feeding us with the bread of life,
more than deserve or imagine.

And so we say/sing in gratitude:

Refrain: John Bell's simple chant:

**"We will take what you offer,
we will live by your word.
We will love one another
and be fed (led) by you Lord"**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olnB7yubJKU>

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Ephesians 6:10–20
John 6: 56–69

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

Reflecting - Rev. Amanda Nicholas

This week's gospel reading marks the closing of a five week journey through John 6. A chapter jam packed with miracle, wonder, question, mystery, desertion, abundance, repetition, disbelief, intimacy of relationship and some might even suggest a little on the gory side. By the time we read its closing words it can sometimes feel like we are caught in a loop. We may even check ourselves to see if we are reading the correct verses as it seems we have been saying the same thing over and over, and if truth be really told, do we even understand what it is that we have been hearing over the last five weeks?

It starts out nice enough. Jesus creates the miracle feast of loaves and fishes when the gathered crowd is looking for answers about what it is that will nourish and sustain them in their hunger and Jesus feeds them until they are satisfied and there is an abundance remaining.

Reading on, though, things become a little trickier. The continual returning and referencing to eating flesh, drinking blood and the bread of life by the end of the chapter has followers grumbling. Disputes erupt among themselves and many walk away in offence with even the closest of the disciples exclaiming what Jesus is teaching is difficult and questioning who would accept it.

Sometimes when we are faced with challenging things, we want to retreat, to put blinkers over our eyes, maybe even scoffing a little, questioning the claims of its validity and how can this possibly be accepted. We might even respond with "yes, yes, we know" or "we've heard this before" trying to brush off the discomfort we feel and move on to something more palatable, more comfortable with a sense of urgency that is telling of our internal disruption. Yet, when we pause and allow ourselves to feel the feelings rather than ignoring and being swamped by them, we find the truth that sits within is revealed, just as the disciples did.

Jesus doesn't try to calm the disciples or attempt to brush over what it was that had them feeling disturbed but rather engages them with a sense of curiosity and wonder. Where some might suggest Jesus getting frustrated with the disciples (after all they've been on this journey together for quite some time and they still don't get it?!) I see a gentle enquiry from Jesus opening the way for a meaningful encounter with the disciples offering the space between them for real connection and conversation. A deepening of their relationship with one another which is revealed in the response from Simon Peter's declaring "where would we go? You have the words of eternal life".

Sometimes when things are challenging, we need to pause, be offered the space enough to check ourselves and name our feelings in all their reality before making the choice for ourselves as to how we will proceed and what we will say.



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Church is hard. Community is hard. Faith is hard. Yet when we are offered a space of grace with one another to remember who we are and to whom we belong, there is an honesty in our conversations that deepens our relationship with one another. We can find our way through the things that challenge us when we feel free and safe enough to ask questions like Jesus' "Do you also wish to go?", when really what Jesus is asking of the disciples is "tell me what you really think?".

The choice remains ours alone to decide to see one another as more than our differences. To see one another as beloved of Christ, made in God's own image and to feed on the Bread of Life, leaning into one another to find our way forward, even in the most difficult of circumstances.

Singing - Be thou my vision TiS 474

OR: Jesus the Christ said 'I am the bread'. TiS 239

Offering

God of love and peace
as we take what you offer,
so we ask you to take what we offer:
these gifts and our time, energy and life.
take them and use them in your way, we pray.
Amen.

Notices

August 26th: 2001 Tampa Affair and the rescue of 433 refugees

August 30th: International Day of the Victims of Forced Disappearances

Prayers for World & Community

You might want to have a sand bowl and taper candles for people to light prayerfully.

We read the news, hear the stories,
watch the images, see the footage
and feel helpless
in the face of so much struggle and suffering.

So we offer these prayers to you, God of all,
because we cannot carry them alone,
because you listen,
because you love the world we inhabit.

We bring those people and places
that are most on our hearts today:
*You might like to leave a time for people
to light a candle and offer their prayer*

For the hungry and the homeless

For the lost and the forgotten

For the grieving and the suffering

For the abused and the imprisoned

For the broken and the rejected

Let your light shine into the darkest places:
shine with justice where there is none,
shine with hope where it is lost,
shine with healing and connection.

And let us be bearers of that light,
in the small corners where we are,
in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

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 - Guide me O thou great Redeemer TiS 569

OR: Your words to me are life and health - TiS 450



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Blessing

Spirit of life, be with us as we go,
clothe us with grace to spare,
swaddle us in loving-kindness to share,
dress us as your people,
today, and all days,
and all the people say: **Amen**

Singing - Send me Jesus TiS 749

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