



## ***Pentecost 17 - Sunday September 15th, 2024***

### ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

#### ***Call to worship & Lighting the Candle***

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Wisdom cries out in the street;  
in the squares she raises her voice.

- Proverbs 1:20

We gather seeking wisdom,  
to listen to the offerings  
of our creator God.  
Do we hear hearing the sweetness  
of God's commands,  
sweeter than honey,  
so much sweeter than honey!

Come, let us taste and see  
seek and find  
the goodness of our God.

*Light the candle - Christ is with us.*

#### ***Acknowledging***

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*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 - Lord of creation TiS 626***

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OR: Let all creation dance TiS 187

#### ***Prayer***

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Glorious God,  
we sing with the psalmist  
as we gaze upon the skies  
and wonder at your glory -  
that speaks of your handiwork  
of your creative love and beauty.



Even as the breezes carry pollens that irritate  
we witness the springing of life  
as seasons chaos makes way for  
lengthening days and the hint  
or perhaps tease of new warmth.

Help us read your wisdom  
in the winds and stars and storms and calm.  
May creation revive us in spirit -  
revive heart and soul  
and renew vigour in our care  
for your blessed creation.

But if we choose to see  
if we seek your wisdom  
if we hear the whispering speech  
of the winds and waves  
and energy of earth  
we know there is much  
that is broken where blessing should be.

Forgive us our collective greed  
that has exploited creation  
to breaking point.

Forgive our desire for mastery  
to subdue rather than steward  
creation beyond what she can bear.

Forgive us for failing to work with our neighbours  
where we need each other and your wisdom  
to restore and renew the earth.

Forgive us when wisdom has  
cried out in the street  
and we have failed to hear or act.

May wisdom move us,  
as the love of God renews us.  
**Let the words of our mouths  
and the meditations of our hearts,  
be acceptable to you, O Lord,  
our rock and our redeemer. Amen**

#### ***Passing the peace***

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



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#### ***Listening***

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Read: Psalm 19,  
James 3:1-10 &  
Mark 8: 27-38

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

#### ***Reflecting - Rev. Ian Brown***

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"May the words of my mouth and the meditations  
of our hearts be acceptable to you, O Lord, our rock  
and our redeemer."

Words, words, words! Like any tool, words have so  
much potential for good and for ill. James warns  
about the power of the tongue with vivid, chilling  
effect. The Psalmist uses words majestically, for  
praise and instruction. Words have much power.  
Words have been used to bring about more real  
change than anything else.

Words can cause doing; words create action.  
In the language of Genesis, when God said, "Let  
there be light," there was light.

In the poetry of Psalm 19, the heavens tell of the  
glory of God, day to day pours forth speech, the  
night declares, the voice goes out, words - to the  
end of the world."

What effect do these words have?

- the law revives the soul
- the decrees make wise the simple
- the commandments of the Lord  
enlighten the eyes.

These words have effect. Full of power, these  
words of God are "more to be desired are they than  
gold, sweeter also than honey." God never seems  
to weary of speaking such words to us.

James begins his new train of thought with the  
confronting words, "let not many of you become  
teachers." Teachers trade with words. Teachers  
communicate and pass on wisdom and instruction  
with words; lives are shaped, thinking is developed,  
attitudes informed and prejudices passed on.

Yes, we all make mistakes, we all have tongues that  
slip sometimes. So, watching your tongue, says  
James is like bridling a horse or controlling the  
rudder of a boat. He means more than the physical  
tongue. I think if James were writing today, the  
category "shock jock" would have been at the top of  
James' list of examples for how not to use the  
tongue.

The issue at stake here is not making errors in the  
way we put words together, stumbling over our  
grammar, but what we communicate. If we use  
speech to attack and abuse, to gossip, James has us  
in his sights. James focuses on the effect of the  
tongue. How many fights start just with a few  
words? It's about how we relate and our attitudes.  
It's a spirituality based on getting these basic things  
right.

Taming our tongue is more than learning to be  
tactful. It's a core part of who we really are. We  
are, in a sense, what we communicate. James'  
intention becomes clearer as we read on into the  
final verses. Do we bless God and curse people?  
The problem with cursing is not so much that we  
are all made in the image of God - as if only the God  
aspect matters - but that to curse people runs  
contrary to God's command to love.

James is quite pessimistic about the chances of  
people being healthy communicators. He is realistic  
enough to say that we all make mistakes. It's  
another way of saying we are in process, not that  
we are doomed to always make the same mistakes.  
There is good news; we can bridle the tongue. The  
wisdom here is as relevant today as it was then. It's  
good to be reminded that communication does  
things to people, the givers and the receivers.  
Words have real effect. Wisdom is about getting  
this together, seeing how they connect, and  
becoming more of a whole person.

Advice like this is good, but it's more than a set of  
morals, more than sage advice for living a happy,  
well-adjusted life. These words are part of a larger  
reminder. The way we speak, the way we act, the  
things our words bring into being, or that our



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tongues cut down, are our part of being a signpost pointing to the way of God's kingdom, or away from it.

It's a reminder that my tongue and yours can point others to, or away from the way of Jesus. Our words will bear fruit, they may be signs of hope, of healing and of heaven. They might start fires of the Spirit that enliven or inspire, or destructive fires that damage and consume.

What words and whose words direct us? James words are hopeful. Hopeful that we, as Jesus' followers, can be in control of our words, that we can speak and live the things of God's realm into being around us. I'm hopeful that we too might join with the heavens and all of creation in telling the glory of God. Amen

#### ***Singing - Make me a channel of your peace*** ***TiS 607***

OR: Father in heaven TiS 465

#### ***Offering***

Creator God, bless these offerings given in the name of Jesus, named by Peter as the Messiah. As we recognise Messiah, help us to journey as pilgrims on the way. Amen.

#### ***Notices***

Today is the *International Day of Democracy*. On September 21 we observe the *International Day of Peace*.

#### ***Prayers for World & Community***

God in who we wonder in the majesty of creation, we offer our prayers for a world gasping under the strain and burden of many conflicts and challenges.

We note the pressures upon democracy in countries that have once been flag-bearers for the cause. As people polarise and nations forget how to hold meaningful public conversations, we pray for new flag-bearers of love and compassion to show us the way.

As we near the International Day of Peace, we wonder at the places where peace is longed for but seems too far away. For places of conflict, war, violence and threats we pray that peace may be known. May brave souls act with your peace for the sake of the world.

We pray for churches that struggle with governance, through distraction or loss of capacity. May all groups of faith find renewed vision in your wisdom proclaimed on the streets, in the squares, and through creation.

We pray for ourselves and those we know or have heard about who struggle in different ways. Open hearts to love, to see truth, to care for flora and fauna and the whole of creation as you do.

We offer prayers of our own ...

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 - Community of Christ TiS 473***

OR: We are your people TiS 468



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#### ***Blessing***

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in the squares she raises her voice.

May wisdom guide us and bless us  
as we move beyond this time together.

May our understanding of Messiah  
touch and enliven us,  
in the way of Christ.

The blessing of God be with you:  
Creator, Redeemer & Sustainer. Amen.

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