



Sunday November 3rd, 2024

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Note: We have included the reading from the book of Revelation for All Saints Day (Nov 1st), with the psalm and gospel lectionary readings set for this week.

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Mark 12: 29-31

Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.

Whatever questions we come with,
whatever burdens we bear,
whatever dances within us
we bring it all to worship you,
God who is love.

Let your Spirit alight in our hearts
inspiring our prayers, lifting our song,
enlivening the words we say and hear,
making us one in your love,
in Jesus' name.

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 Traditional Custodians (please include the name of your local First Nations people) 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 - Come, O God of all the earth **TiS 181**

OR: Praise with joy the world's Creator TiS 179



Prayer

Psalm 146

Praise the LORD! Praise the LORD, O my soul!
I will praise the LORD as long as I live;
I will sing praises to my God all my life long.

Do not put your trust in princes, in mortals,
in whom there is no help.
When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God,
who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them; who keeps faith forever;

who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets the prisoners free;
the LORD opens the eyes of the blind.

The LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;
the LORD loves the righteous.

The LORD watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin.

The LORD will reign forever, your God, O Zion, **for all generations. Praise the LORD!**

Passing the peace

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



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Listening

Read: Revelation 21:1-6a
Mark 12:28-34

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

Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

I have no doubt that in some ways the world is better now than it was for my ancestors. Science and medicine have made great progress in a short space of time. Technology has seen astonishing advancements. I remember as a child the challenge of making a phone call to Europe – booking the call, using an operator, and timing it carefully should you get through due to the expense of it.

Do we progress or grow similarly, building on the faith of our ancestors?

I know that my parents had a deep faith, and it is because of them I am a follower of Jesus. They were formed in life and faith between the two world wars and much of their childhood and early adulthood was shaped by the trauma of war. They did not have the luxury of questioning faith or ways of living like I've had. They did not have the same level of safety or comfort that I've known all my life.

We hear an exchange between Jesus and a scribe from the gospel of Mark. The *Shema* was a daily prayer and very well known. "Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength." Jesus adds that we are called to love our neighbour as we love ourselves. This is even more important than observing rules of faithfulness, such as offering sacrifices.

Here Jesus is offering something radical and new. Humans tend to like rules because they make things simple. Rather than keeping the Sabbath day holy and not doing any work, we want to know exactly what can and can't be done, for

example. To promote love above law is provocative for many reasons but also because it demands something from us. It takes us beyond unquestioning religious devotion into considering what God's love might look like.

I was reminded recently of the story of John Newton. He was the captain of a slave ship and benefitted from the slave trade. He had an epiphany, a dramatic turnabout when he realised that slaves were loved by God as he was. His life was devoted to abolishing slavery and he penned the hymn, 'Amazing Grace' in response to this conversion.

From a distance I wonder how slavery or human trafficking can ever be justified. I can't see it fitting in with the command to 'love neighbour as self.' It makes no sense if Jesus is calling us to follow a God of love and compassion.

The *Doctrine of Discovery* is perhaps not well known, but it shows how far the church can stray from the words of Jesus Christ. Under Pope Alexander VI (1493) any land, anywhere, not under the flag of a Christian nation could be taken by whoever 'discovered' it, and whatever indigenous people found there converted to Christianity.

I wonder what definition of love for neighbours that fits into?

Perhaps we have progressed much in faith since those dark days. Except that we easily succumb to justifications or rationales that keep things comfortable. The impact of 'discovery' is still felt by indigenous people globally, including First Nations people in Australia. How is the love of God shown in authentic ways in that sphere of our shared life? Or how do we show love for many in Pacific nations as they are inundated by rising sea levels? Or how do we live into the love and compassion of God when the gambling industry (and government that gains revenue from gambling) lives off the back of vulnerable families? How many gambling advertisements have you or your grandchildren seen this football



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season, or during the racing carnival, for example? And what modern-day issues are we unable to see like Pope Alexander VI or John Newton who sang 'I once was blind'.

We can rightly thank God for those who have gone before us and shown us glimpses of God's love and compassion. My father welcomed migrant families, many of them Italians. In the second world war they would have been his enemy. For his love for neighbour, I offer thanks to God.

Many of our ancestors have worked hard to remind the church and nation what the love of God looks like. We have opportunities to do the same as we remember and celebrate love in this way.

Singing - Amazing Grace TiS 129

OR: Rejoice in God's saints, today and always TiS 470

Offering

As the souls who have gone before us offered their living to you, loving God, so we bring ourselves again into your keeping.

Accept our offering; our money, goods and our lives, and take what we offer to bring about hope and peace in our own small corners.

And all the people say: **Amen.**

Notices

November 5th is World Tsunami Awareness Day

Prayers for World & Community

We pray today for the people of the world
the mothers whose bodies
bear the cost of feeding the family,
the fathers
whose lives are deemed worthless to others,
the children whose families
have been torn apart.

**Through our actions, in your love,
bring hope and healing, God of peace.**

We pray today for the people of the world:
for young ones excluded from education,
for mothers watching starving babies die,
for grandparents carrying grief and pain.

**Through our actions, in your love,
bring hope and healing, God of peace.**

We pray today for the people of the world:
the ones exploited in slavery,
the ones trapped as victims of war,
the ones whose pain is known only to you,
**Through our actions, in your love,
bring hope and healing, God of peace.**

Help us to see people as Jesus did,
and where there is injustice
and where there is bigotry
and where there is screaming silence
there let our voices join with yours,
**and through our actions, in your love,
bring hope and healing, God of peace.**

*Some places of worship will light candles and
speak names to remember those members,
friends and family
who have died during the past year.*

We give thanks for all those who have gone before us in the faith. Those who have lived for justice and spoken the truth to power, sometimes at great cost.

We give thanks for the ones who guided and guarded us as we grew, who walked alongside us in faith and picked up us when we stumbled.

We give thanks for the quiet ones and the noisy ones, for the sainted ones and the forgotten ones, for the public figures and the invisible, persistent pilgrims we have met on our way and encountered through history.

As they did, we do also and pray together, as Jesus taught us:



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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 - For all the saints TiS 455

OR: O for a thousand tongues, TiS 210

Blessing

We go knowing
that the saints who have
been part of our formation in faith
continue to live in and through us.

Their lives continue to bless us
as we go out to offer God's blessing
to a world in need of life and love.

Go to bless and be blessed
in the name of God:
Source, Son and Spirit. Amen.