



Second Sunday in Lent - Sunday March 16th, 2025

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

Blessed is the One who comes in the Name of the Lord!

Welcome to worship today, knowing that in this Lenten journey we travel together as disciples toward the foot of the cross. As those who hold to the story of freedom through Christ, we know that we must give up what we have to answer God's will for today and tomorrow.

Lighting the candle

But on this journey, we will never be alone. We are reminded of God's faithfulness to us through Jesus Christ, the Light of the World.

Acknowledging



**Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress**

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded lands and waters. We pay respect to Elders past and present. 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: Do not be afraid I am with you TiS 16

OR: Begin my tongue some heavenly theme TiS 116

Prayer



We come Gracious God, seeking renewal of ourselves, trusting in the power and joy of your presence. We know that we can never wander beyond the reaches of your love. We know that your presence is always with us, that every moment is a Holy moment. We give thanks for your faithfulness, and wonder and adore you, humbles by your invitation to us again and again

to be part of your continuing creativity in the world.

And yet Lord, we acknowledge the shadowed corners of our lives. Where we are partially committed, half hearted in our acceptance of these gifts. Our desire to remain at the centre of our own lives means we withhold ourselves from the true depths of living in you. Frightened by the riskiness of this full commitment Lord, we seek excuses and explanations for our beliefs and our actions. Lord during this time of Lent, let our reticence be exposed, our shallow faith be deepened, and our acceptance of your deep and abiding love for the whole of your creation be acknowledged.

Come to us now Lord.

(silence)

Hear our prayers Lord.

(silence)

Accept me Lord.

(silence)

Forgive our sins Lord.

(silence)

Hear then the unconditional promise of God to us through Christ. In him and through him, your sins are forgiven. **Thanks be to God!**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Philippians 3:17-4:1 &
Luke 13:31-35

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



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Reflecting - Rev. Arnie Wierenga

Foxes and hens don't make great neighbours.

If the fox is Herod and the hen is Jesus protecting the chicks, it seems we are in for trouble. Jesus appears to be running the gauntlet, today, tomorrow and the next day. Three days. And we wonder if then 'it is finished'.

Is Herod as fox a fair judgement? If we think of John the Baptist whose head he has reluctantly demanded, then maybe so. Jesus potentially inflames the situation by rebuffing an audience and alluding to him as a sly and cunning creature. Herod was haunted by John's preaching. Jesus might be near enough to trouble this regional commander as well. John was highly critical that Herod had taken his step-brother's wife, and as it broke Levitical law, there's no reason to think Jesus would have thought differently. Herod has removed one nemesis, only for another to rise in his place. The troubles of a guilty but cunning man continues.

There seems to be more at stake for Herod than the annoyance of these two. His powerbase is at risk. The eastern flank of the Roman empire was unstable, and like insurgents, religious fanatics could bring unexpected surprises. Jesus, like John, could stir up the people and unrest is an unwelcome guest. The fox needs to take care of the hen.

That seems to be the way of power. Our world seems less stable day by day. Commentators are beginning to say the whole world order is at risk through the actions of a few powerful men. Foxes need to consume hens to keep unrest at bay and to maintain or increase the power they have.

Herod may not have been as powerful as some current world influencers, but the dynamic of power and keeping hold of it at all costs is as old as history.

And the hen knows it.
Today, tomorrow and the next day. Three days and it is finished.

We read back from the events of Jerusalem. We recognise the three days as those in the tomb. We hope and pray there will be life after it is all finished. But we also know what happens to hens that garner the interest of foxes.

Jesus offers a stunning image of care, compassion, protection. 'How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings', he says. We may think a mother hen fragile and vulnerable. But the image of embrace, warmth, care and home offers great comfort.

The contrast between fox and hen could not be greater. The fox consumes, desires, threatens and fights for more and more. The hen offers love and compassion despite the risks and the cost.

Here is Jesus. Doing the work of God. Offering love and hope to those in need. Casting out demons, performing cures so that those touched by God's love will have a tomorrow, even if Jesus' own time is limited. This is love that is giving of itself for all. This is Jesus doing the work of God to set people free and restore dignity for those who are overlooked and downtrodden. It is in stark contrast to all who would devour the most vulnerable to get their own way. Jesus protests in this most tangible way against all who abuse power for their own selfish ends.

Even though the hen may have only a few days before things are finished, these days bring great hope for the world. Can love truly change our destiny? Can freedom bring us hope against foxes and greater tyrants?

In Jesus' words, it appears that all prophets from before, and maybe even we who follow him, are the fulfilment of God's love and compassion for the world. All who do the work of God are like hens gathering the chicks into the safety of wing and breast. If that is true, then the work of God, the work of Jesus, the work of the hen continues beyond the journey to Jerusalem. It continues



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The Fig Tree Worship Resource

beyond the three days until 'it is finished'. It continues beyond resurrection and the first apostles. It continues in all of us who believe.

In all of that, we are called to love in Christ's name. We are called to the same acts of care and compassion and courage to stand against foxes and all tyrants. In these challenging days, may we find hope in the one who cares so courageously despite foxes nearby. May that hope join us in living like caring and compassionate hens in a fox driven world. In the name of Christ, may it be so. Amen.

Singing - God of grace and God of glory

TiS 611

OR: There's a wideness in God's mercy TiS 136
OR: All praise to our redeeming Lord TiS 442

Offering

We bring these gifts as a symbol of the hope we have in you Lord and the belief that you will do much more with us and our resources than we could ever imagine. In your grace Lord, take and multiply all that we are and all that we have.

Amen.

Notices

Beginning March 17 is *Harmony week*. March 22nd is both *Earth Hour* and *World Water Day*.

Prayers for World & Community

Blessed indeed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.

We call before you now Lord, all the names and circumstances where we long for hope, healing and reconciliation. Blessed are they Lord. Because they are beloved by you. All people at all times everywhere.

(Silence)

The ones who are in darkness, of slavery, exploitation, war and famine.

The ones caught in the thralls of power and arrogance.

The ones who are frustrated, angry and who feel hopeless.

The ones who are lost and are losing others.

The ones who wander in hurt, pain and shame.

The ones who are broken and healing. The ones who are in the last stages of their lives.

The ones who have never encountered your resolute love.

Blessed are they Lord. Let your will be done today in these places and spaces.

Lord, we bring to you again the names of those people and matters that sit in our hearts. But Lord, let us not command you to do something, but ask you to help us see where we might be the ones who bring hope, healing and reconciliation.

(Silence)

It is in the times of change Lord, in the times of hopelessness that we look to you Lord, and today Lord we ask again that we may find your will for all people – as we pray together 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.

Singing - Forth in thy name TiS 571

OR: Be thou my vision TiS 547
OR: Love will be our Lenten calling TiS 684



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Blessing

Beloved. On this journey toward the foot of the cross, you will find many challenges. But let that not deter you from the journey. For you are blessed to be a blessing to others. Go now to show the world that God creates a faithful people in this and in every age.

In the name of the Creator, the Redeemer and the Sustainer. Amen

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