



Fifth Sunday in Lent - Sunday April 6th, 2025

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

It would be fitting and glorious to include some source of sweet fragrance in your worship today - just be careful about people with sensitive noses)

based on Psalm 126

God liberates the captives,
brings dreams to reality.
You have done great things O God,
we sing aloud for joy.
You fill our hearts with gladness,
our tongues give you praise
You have done great things for us,
O God, we sing to you.
Our lives overflow with your goodness,
as dry river beds are transformed
with abundant rain!
We worship God together.

Prayer

Generous God,
without your Word
we have nothing to say here;
without your Spirit we are lifeless.

Open us by your gracious Spirit,
so we can be your people in prayer,
and in action
and be formed in your grace
and joyfully praise your name;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

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 - Made in God's likeness TiS 671

OR: Be thou my vision TiS 547

PSALM 126: - responsive reading - NRSV

When the Lord restored the fortunes of
Zion, we were like those who dream.

***Then our mouth was filled with laughter
and our tongue with shouts of joy;***

then it was said among the nations,
"The Lord has done great things for them."
The Lord has done great things for us,
and we rejoiced.

***Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
like the watercourses in the Negeb.***

May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.

***Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,***
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

PSALM Reflection: a downloadable AV

Resource:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/p4sihu3zu4qc9kl2pb744/Ps126c.m4v?rlkey=p4ukvbnkt8pyacuz3zpqruy7w&dl=0>



Prayer

Gracious God, creator of newness, since the first beginning. You breathe life into our world and energy into all that lives. We thank you and stand in awe.

Because so often we find it hard to start again, to believe that there really are new beginnings, we sometimes fall into bad habits and get stuck in old ways. By your Spirit stir us onward in our journey with you.

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We are grateful that you share your love with us unconditionally, - we are sorry for the times we have not shared in the same way with others.

With those who frustrate us, we have not always responded with patience.

With those who cause us trouble, we have not always looked for ways to find peace.

Forgive us, pour your love into our hearts and transform the debris of our messes with the beauty of your grace.

Be with us in our journey, lead us with your light and give us the assurance of your new beginnings, through Jesus Christ.

Restore our fortunes, Lord,
like the watercourses in the desert,
in your gracious mercy.
We turn again to you.
Forgive us and renew our lives,
through Christ.
Amen.

We rejoice in the good news:
in Christ we are renewed and forgiven;
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Isaiah 43: 16-21
John 12: 1-8

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

Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon

Doing a new thing...

I recently saw the movie 'a complete unknown'; for fans of Bob Dylan, it is a must-see,

in a theatre with great sound. On reading the passage from Isaiah there was a resonance with the 'doing a new thing', that marked the movement that Dylan was leading, from unplugged folk music to electric instruments with a new sound. His lyrics were, and still are, powerful and poignant protest songs, even though they were accompanied by a musical genre that was unfamiliar and crass to the organisers and many of the patrons of the Newport Folk Festival. Bob Dylan was doing a new thing, and he was accused of selling out, of destroying the folk movement dream. Doing a new thing is not always received well.

For the people of Babylon, in exile, at the time of this passage of Isaiah, this vision was not a reality, but a dream. They were being encouraged to embody something that they had not yet witnessed or experienced. The political climate was changing, and so would their world. Their lives as captive people in a strange land was coming to an end, and this passage is an encouragement from Isaiah to tell a new story into the future and not to be held back by the narratives of the past. It's about to happen, people, can you feel it? Can you sense it?

The gospel reading from John also has a new thing happening, and there's contention about how it is being embraced. Jesus' ministry has been a constant battle of doing a new thing; embracing outsiders, eating with tax-collectors, touching the untouchables, loving people back into life and community.

The author of John's gospel wants us to link this text with the story of the healing of Lazarus in John 11:1-45. Right at the beginning of that story we are told that Mary was "the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair" and yet that doesn't happen in the text until now, chapter 12. At the beginning of this story of the anointing of Jesus' feet by Mary, we are reminded that it happened at 'the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead'. Lazarus is fully alive, participating in the meal, reclining with Jesus. We will learn



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later in chapter 12 that there is a plot to kill Lazarus as well. We need to hold these two stories side by side.

Martha is serving, that's not new. Mary is sitting at the feet of Jesus, the place of the disciple, that's not new either, she's been there before. But what she is doing is surprisingly novel. She is using the costly perfume she purchased to anoint his body for burial, (Jesus says that it has been bought for the day of his burial) and she's pouring it on his living body, and using her hair to wipe it, to soak it back into herself. That's new.

Judas is righteously indignant, not appreciating the scene, dismissing the offering from Mary. The voice of the author tells us plainly not to trust what he is saying, he is a betrayer, a liar and a thief. But Judas points out something that has merit. The money could have been used to help others. Surely that's the mission of God? But Judas has reduced the gift, diminished the anointing to its monetary value, he only knows what he can count. But we need people who can count, and who can call us to the bigger justice issues of our time.

So –

Yes, to Judas, whatever his motivation and role, we need people to work on the bigger, systemic, societal issues. To pour resources into lifting the downtrodden and feeding the hungry.

Yes, to Mary, with her fragrant outpouring of oil. We need people to respond to the need in front of them with costly, outrageous and surprisingly generous love.

Yes, to Jesus, God made flesh, who did so many new things, including defending Mary as she sensuously touched and blessed him and filled the house with fragrance. Yes, to Jesus, who raised Lazarus and is about to walk to the cross. Yes, to Jesus who is still working with the Holy Spirit doing new things. Can you perceive them?

Postscript: Yes, to Bob Dylan, just because...

Singing - Take my life and let it be

TiS 599

OR: Comfort, comfort all my people TiS 647

Offering

Bless what we bring today, God of abundance.
Bless these fragrant offerings of time, money, and
our very selves.

Bless them and use them.

Bless us and use us, where we are needed,
for your purposes, however new and surprising,
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Notices

April 7th is World Health Day

Planning ahead;: Reconciliation Week is May 27th to June 3rd. There's an opportunity for your choir to sing the awesome song: Solid Rock, and be part of the celebrations...

[Choirs - Reconciliation Australia](#)

Prayers for World & Community

Liberating God, too often we struggle to believe in the new things you promise:

Our news feeds us with stories of the success of missiles and weapons and the angry threats of more of the same. And we see the devastation in the crumbled remains of homes and cities, then worse, in the faces of children and their families doing their best to just survive.

So we pray for all who embody your love, God - in warzones, within families, among world leaders, amidst peace negotiators, among activists, for those seeking truth against censorship and misinformation.

We pray for all who look for things new and wait for them to spring forth in God's name. We pray for those seeking a way through the challenges of a world going mad at an ever more alarming rate.



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We pray for those finding it difficult because of rising living costs. We pray for those anxious about losing jobs or finding work. We pray for all who find themselves in need in a world disturbed and out of balance with itself.

As we turn our attention to Australia, we pray for those who are hoping to make a difference in coming elections.

We pray for whistle-blowers and truth tellers, that seeds of light and hope might be planted and all in our land benefit, not just those who can buy influence.

We pray for our churches that are looking to plan a way forward together; for those having to plan endings and those enabled to look to new beginnings. Continue to bless us with the reality of your new surprises and the willingness to embrace them.

Loving God, we pray for those near to us, for all who feel lost, isolated, unwell or overwhelmed with grief. We offer our personal prayers for them in a time of silence....

Bless, enfold, heal and keep us all. And may our love and compassion for all people be as wide and varied as the grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, as we pray in his name, together:

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 - God gives us a future TiS 687

OR: Forth in your name TiS 571

Blessing

May the fragrance of Jesus' grace,
draw you on and lead you in God's way.

The blessing of God's abundance, poured out,
rich and indiscriminate, fill and inspire you.

Love, even as God has loved you!

Grace, mercy and peace be yours today
and always.

We go as stewards and healers of creation,
consolers of the afflicted
and midwives of justice.

In the name of Christ, Amen.

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