



Easter - Sunday April 20th , 2025 ***The Fig Tree Worship Resource***

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

From Psalm 118

O give thanks to the Lord for he is good;
His steadfast love endures forever.
This is the day that the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it.
Christ is risen;
He is risen indeed.

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging



*Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress*

The Ancient of Days breathed life into this land and her peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the *(please name the people on whose land you gather)* People, the Traditional Custodians, have blessed this place through their law and customs, their care and life. We pay respects to their Elders and leaders past and present, and pray for the future of their communities. May we walk gently and respectfully on this Land.

Singing - Christ the Lord is risen today ***Tis 370***

OR: The day of resurrection Tis 361
OR: Jesus is Lord of all the earth Tis 390



Prayer

(based on Psalm 118)

Risen One,
I know in my heart that you are my strength,
but I sometimes seek to find strength elsewhere
and to rely on other things.
You are gentle in reminding me to return to you.

At times I reject the witness of love,
and forget to see with the eyes of faith.
I seek you among the dead

and not among the living.
I look for strength in false things,
aligning myself with those that appear powerful,
forgetting that it is those
who are rejected as faulty
and diminished by society
who bear your image
and are the pivot point of your kingdom.

I find myself lacking in hope in your promises
and forget that your faithfulness
and steadfast love will hold and sustain me.

When I cry to you
and seek forgiveness and restoration,
you throw wide the gates of righteousness
and justice
for me to enter.

You loose all the grave clothes that bind me.
You restore me to You, to others and to myself.
You forgive me
and bring me back into joy and connection.
My sin is forgiven:

Thanks be to God

When I was in tight circumstances
I cried out to God, and God answered me
with wide open spaces.
God is for me,
and I will not be afraid or fearful
for nothing separates me from God's love.
Even when nations rise up against me
I have no need to be anxious
for you are my strength O God.

I will meditate upon you and on Jesus, your Word.
Teach me to sing a new song,
a song of praise and rejoicing for you are my joy.

The stone, rejected by the builders,
is now the centerpiece and foundation.
I stand witness to your amazing, creative,
irrepressible and relentless love.
And with my siblings in community,
I sing with deep thanks and great joy.
This is the day that the Lord made,
and we rejoice in it with gladness.

*The Fig Tree Worship Resource comes to you from the Friends of the Fig Tree, Uniting Church in Australia
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Sing the old chorus together:

**This is the day, this is the day
that the Lord has made, that the Lord has made,
We will rejoice, we will rejoice
and be glad in it, and be glad in it.
For this is the day that the Lord has made,
We will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day, this is the day
that the Lord has made.**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Acts 10:34-43
Luke 24:1-12

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

Reflecting - Rev. Jennie Gordon

"He is not here but has risen." Seven words that hold so much... words of wonder, faith, fulfillment, possibility and promise. Words that are an invitation to memory; "remember how he told you..." Words that are to be shared and believed.

After Jesus was crucified, and died, according to the gospel of Luke, Joseph from Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. He took it down, wrapped it in a linen cloth and laid it in a rock-hewn tomb where no one had ever been laid. The author of Luke goes on to tell us that ... "the women who had come with him from Galilee followed, and they saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned, and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. But on the first day of the week, at early dawn," ... and today's reading continues.

So, the women are making their way to the tomb. Let's go to the reading from the book of Acts. Peter is speaking to the crowd gathered at the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, an Italian Centurion and a devout man. He has summoned Peter because of a vision. Cornelius is amazed that Peter, a Jew, would come at his request. Peter explains to Cornelius and the crowd that he understands that God shows no partiality, but that anyone who believes in God and seeks to live in God's way is forgiven and acceptable to God. Peter goes on to summarise the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the mission that they have been given. Peter truly understands that God shows no partiality. I wonder if part of his understanding came from the scene unfolding in Luke's gospel.

The women come to the tomb bearing spices and are perplexed because it is empty, and the stone is rolled away. This turns to terror when they meet dazzlingly clothed men, angels, and as their faces are bowed to the ground the angels ask, "Why do you look for the living among the dead?" Eyes cast earthwards; they have forgotten the promises of heaven. Encountering emptiness, they have forgotten the promises of fullness of life, even in grief and death. Then they remembered his words, made their way back to the eleven and all the rest, told them and were not believed.

Why was their story dismissed as an idle tale? One reading from the Greek is; "but these words seemed like nonsense to them." Probably because the story came from the mouths of women. The account in Luke goes on to say that Peter went and looked for himself and came back amazed. Was he amazed that the women were speaking the truth? Women? Or amazed that they were the first to know of the resurrection and the first ones to tell the story? Or was he amazed because of the emptiness and the fulfillment, if he paused long enough to remember? Maybe all the above. Maybe he realised here that God does not show partiality but reveals the truth to those who come with care and compassion. Maybe he discovered that



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we should look for Jesus amongst the living, amongst those who have encountered the holy, regardless of gender, race, age, ability, or all those other descriptors that threaten to divide and diminish us.

He is not here but has risen. God of life, today we celebrate that we have heard the story, and we believe. We believe that you are the living God, and that nothing can separate us from your love; neither death nor life, nor anything else. Help us to follow Jesus and to look for him amongst the living, however surprising his presence or form might be. Help us to tell our stories with conviction and courage and hold the stories of others with respect and gentleness.

Help us to remember what he told us;
he came so that we might have life.
May it be so, Amen.

risen

Luke 24:1-12

oh dawn that rewrote every morning
yet to awaken and long since gone
what gift you bring to ears that strain
to distinguish dreaming
from your soft impossible refrain
while limbs that long to dance
unencumbered by the shroud of night
shake loose and follow you,
into the weeping, gathering light

oh dawn that makes full use of space
engaging emptiness to host
a void that only God could fill
when woe had donned her veil of black
and armed with ointments keened for lack
of something real
to heal
her punctured heart
you stood beside the sharpness of her fear
and whispered; just be glad, he is not here.

© Jennie Gordon from *Dad & Daughter, Prayers and Poems on the RCL*. (I have a few copies still available)

Singing - At the dawning of salvation

TiS 392

OR: Now the green blade rises TiS 382

OR: Morning has broken TiS 156

Offering

You have opened the gates of righteousness. We dedicate these gifts and ourselves to serving you in the common-wealth of your Kin-dom. Take our gifts this day and bless them to your service, just as you bless us to your service also.

Prayers for World & Community

Loving God, you have defeated death and sin, yet when we look around and there is so much death and suffering. It is hard to hold the light of hope into places of war and pain, of ugly words and displays of power which diminish people.

Bring hope

The rich and powerful make great profit,
the little people are cast aside;

Bring humility.

Into places of stress and dysfunction,
into places of arrogance and greed;

Bring your peace.

Where there is illness, sadness, grief;

Bring your love.

Where there is no freedom,
where people are hurting,
where there is despair;

Bring your grace.

As we hold in our hearts
those who we know in our community
who need our prayers this day;

Bring your healing.

There are those situations
that we are especially touched by today,
and we hold these in our hearts.



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**Risen One, in and through you
we have hope for transformation.
Open the gates of righteousness and justice
that we may enter in.**

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 - Yours be the glory TiS 380

OR: This rewrite by Sarah Agnew of the hymn above:
<https://praythestory.blogspot.com/2019/04/open-invitation-now-abundant-life.html>

OR: Lord of the dance (Sydney Carter)

Blessing

He is not here; He is risen.
Let go all that holds you back
and go out to serve in joy and celebration,
in the strength of the steadfast love of God
which endures forever.

The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone of construction
of the kingdom of God.

And may the love of God,
the grace of Jesus the Christ,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.
And all the people say: **Amen.**

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