



Sunday September 7th, 2025

The Fig Tree Worship Resource

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

We gather in many and diverse ways as a church community.

As we gather we LET GO of all things which encumber us, in order to LET COME all good things on offer to us.

We bring the tough stuff of our week and set it aside for a bit, O God. And then we 'let come' all the promises of your deep and abiding love for us.

God who knitted us together before our birth and has known us since before time, bring us into your community in this moment wherever and whoever we are. And receive us in your mercy and grace.

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 - Lord of creation TiS 626

OR: Jesus put this song into our hearts TiS 670

OR: God who stretched the spangled heavens TiS 163

Prayer



You have searched us and known us O God. You notice even our finest movements and you even know our thoughts. You know everything there is to know about us, even what we are going to think or say next.

You know that there are times we do not get it right, times we wish we could take things back, rewind and redo.

You know the things we say and do which reveal more about us than we would like.

You know that our desire is to mirror your wonderful works, to reflect the character that has intricately woven us. And yet this is our constant struggle.

Despite all this, you hold us and embrace and surround us. In this constant creative weaving together in relationship you continue to fearfully and wonderfully make us, and you behold us through the eyes of love.

And so, we hear your words of forgiveness and love. **Thanks be to God.**

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Philemon 1:1-21 &
Luke 14:25-33

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



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Reflecting - Rev. Deacon Wendy Elson

It is a little hard to make sense of the Gospel reading today, encouragement to hate rather than love is surely a bit puzzling. So, I got to thinking and this is what emerged.

Listening to a program on homelessness recently, I heard about how things had transpired to create the housing crisis we have today. It talked about the Australian Dream and the quarter acre block and how it came about that we lost it all to the point where most of our young generation are faced with the knowledge that they will never ever own their own home. How did we create such a dire situation? Part of it is to do with the accumulation of 'stuff' and how we have had to make big houses to accommodate this. Some of us have held onto the 'more' leaving others with the 'less'. I thought then of all the effort we have to go to, firstly to attain the stuff, then to store it, then clean and protect it, even the effort to dispose of it later has become an issue. Ridiculously, I thought of a small device I once saw for cleaning the ripples on the lid of a plastic food storage container and wondered if there ever was anything else more stupid. Our stuff requires more stuff. Why can't we more easily let go? Especially when I can see how all of this impacts on others such as the next generations of people desperately wanting to buy a home.

But then I was reading something that flipped 'letting go' into 'letting come' and I think this sheds a little light on how to interpret this story in Luke. If you are planning a journey or a building something or cooking or crafting or anything else, you first plan and think about what is valuable and what you will prioritise and hold onto. And then the text tells us to let all else go. This was an enlightening thought for me because I am usually pretty swayed toward the letting go rather than the 'letting come'.

Opening our hands can be hard but as we let go, our hands are open for what comes. And this allows others to have their hands open to receive as well. Luke 14:33 specifically talks about letting

go our possessions, but it means more than this, holding tight to relationships that prevent us being our best selves are also problematic. It is really hard to let go of these sometimes and even to know where the line between holding on and letting go can be discerned.

I suspect though, if the degree to which we can receive may be reliant on the degree to which we can let go. We ask for blessing but sometimes we neglect to make space for it. What do we want to come to us, to receive in our empty hands?

The Philemon reading provides us with a great counterpoint, Paul's appreciation of Philemon as a shining example of following Jesus. Grace and peace, joy and encouragement. But even Philemon is challenged to think again about what is valuable, what to let go of in order to offer warmth and welcome to others.

So, to be honest I still find the Luke reading a little awkward and confronting in its strange use of the word 'hate'. But I am challenged all over again about the "letting go/letting come" aspects. May you have the courage to think again about those things that are vital and of great worth, and be bold to let go of the rest!

Singing - O Breath of life TiS 409

OR: Christ be my leader TiS 624

OR: Master, speak, thy servant heareth TiS 597

Offering

We pray that the sharing of our faith and of Gospel love might be effective. May we do all good things in Christ. Take these gifts and use them for love and encouragement and to refresh hearts.

Take all we offer, generous God and use us in your service.

Notices

September 8 is *International Literacy Day*.



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Prayers for World & Community

What beautiful words from Paul's letter to Philemon!

Firstly: *a greeting of grace and peace*. Followed by this sentiment: *Every time I think of you I thank God for your love and your faith. You give me joy and encouragement through your love, and through you others have also been refreshed.*

Let your own heart settle and give thanks for people who are your 'Philemon's.

Philemon was challenged to think about his welcome of others and asked to welcome Onesimus a slave who perhaps has done him wrong.

Who are you being asked to welcome and forgive?

Paul asks for a guest room to be prepared for himself too.

Are there some means where you can offer hospitality and accommodate others? Be creative in your thoughts and responses here.

Paul ends with special words "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit".

Who needs these words from you today?

—

Wondrous and compassionate God, we receive your blessing of grace and peace and look for ways to pass it on.

Those who are sad and hurting, those who are affected by tough times. Those who struggle financially, who have no real home, are subject to the whims of others or are facing illness and physical problems.

There are those in places of terrible conflict and strife. Our hearts are overwhelmed when we see babies and small children suffering and dying. It is hard to sit in these places even just in our prayers. Whole populations are in pain and in fear

and sometimes we don't know what to pray. Our deepest longing is simply for mercy and your grace and peace.

Sometimes it is hard to watch precious and hard won liberties lost too easily, and it seems like our world is regressing. The gap between rich and poor seems ever widening and again our prayers seem weak or futile.

As we sit in quietness, holding such situations of loss and struggle and pain in our hearts, the words come back to us: Grace and peace, grace and peace, grace and peace. Help us live subversive lives of radical and relentless love and hospitality. And may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirits.

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 - I, the Lord of sea and sky TiS 658

OR: Take up your cross TiS 583

OR: O Love that wilt not let me go TiS 602

Blessing

It would be so easy to remain 'gathered' and hold all of these blessings to ourselves.

But we are a 'sent' people and we do not go alone. Go to be people of welcome and hospitality.

Go in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, present always with your spirit.



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