



Sunday September 21st, 2025 The Fig Tree Worship Resource



Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

This house of prayer is a house of grace.
We gather here to learn our needs:

not to justify ourselves
but to say we are sorry,
not to cling to the familiar
but to risk the untested,
not to enjoy our own decency
but to worship a holy God,
not to practice positive thinking
but to be caught up in God's joy.

(from UiW2)

We light the candle,
**The light shines in the darkness
and the darkness cannot overcome it.**

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 - Joyful joyful we adore you TiS 152

OR: Lord of earth and all creation TiS 672
OR: Praise our God the great creator TiS 165

Prayer

Holy One, Holy Three,
**You are sung in the song of the dawn
lifted in the laugh of the kookaburra.**
You are heard on the breath of the morning,
laden with wattle and ti-tree blossom.

**You are glimpsed in the bright clear light of day,
reflected in the moon when night falls.**
You are present in the darkness,
mysterious realm of the quiet night creatures.
**You are life, through generation upon generation,
spanning aeons, beyond our imagining,
knowing and loving each one of us.**

In the quiet we bring our hearts full of gratitude,
(generous time of quiet)

And yet, we confess: **sometimes we forget
that you are the source of life and love.**
(pause)

And yet, we confess: **sometimes we forget
that you meet us on the road.**
(pause)

And yet, we confess: **sometimes we forget
who it is that we serve.**
(pause)

**Help us, O God of our salvation, for the glory of
your name; deliver us, and forgive our sins, for
your name's sake. (Psalm 79:9)**

Siblings in Christ, just as sure as our breathing out
and our breathing in, we can be confident that we
are forgiven and set free to live fully and joyfully in
the gifts of love and grace. **Thank you God! Amen.**

Passing the peace

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



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Listening

Read: Luke 16:1-13

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

Reflecting - Rev. Karen Eller

How annoying when the schmuck schmoozes his way into the good graces of the very people he ripped off, and gets praised by the owner. It pricks our sense of self-righteousness – the righteous shall have their reward – not the cheats...

This is perhaps the most puzzling parable we read in the three year lectionary cycle. Perhaps that is because it jars our sense of fairness. We expect the shoddy manager to be harangued for easing off on the farm tenants, and further diddling the owner - the manager is sleazily currying favour for himself further down the track. But that's not what happens in the story Jesus tells. We hear that the farm owner, whom we translate to represent Divine Justice, commends the soon-to-be-dismissed farm manager for his shrewdness. Whaaaaaat??

It comes as a jolt to any self-respecting, law-abiding citizen, that a weasel manager, who has only looked after his own interests, when he finally does a half-decent thing in reducing the debts of the tenants, would receive plaudits. Which prompts the question – why do we want to see him punished, or even humiliated. Is it to prop up our own sense of self-righteousness? Why does it matter to us how the self-serving manager is regarded by the owner? It gives pause for reflection.

Oh that's right, this is the reflection!

The response of indignant self-righteousness that many of us will experience with this text does not stand in isolation in Luke's gospel. Had we been reading Luke's Gospel all the way through we

would have just finished reading what we know as the Parable of the Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32).

(I recommend reading Luke right through, so that you can make this sort of connection for yourself.)

In the Parable where the young foolish son grovels back to his family, we very often side with the hard-working older son who is very put out when the squandering son returns and is received with a lavish celebration. What about me? Where are the accolades for me? Why haven't I been the special guest to a fatted calf feast? Why should he get all the attention? What about meeeeeee?

Can you see what's happening? When the attention is inward, on me, me, and only me, our heart for God's generosity is severely diminished. Jesus, as remembered in Luke's Gospel, was teaching about God's radical hospitality to all, even the cheats and squanderers when they wake up to themselves. If our attention is on our own self-justification, we have missed the point altogether. How exciting though, that if the self-serving manager of the parable does the right thing by the tenants, if only for his own future benefit, how much more will God bless the righteous!

The parable of the dodgy steward is one that calls us back to the upside down nature of God's reign, not to puff ourselves up with self-righteousness, but to live with God's generosity to all, even people who have squandered their opportunities. Our God welcomes all who centre our lives on Christ Jesus, the One who saves.

Singing - Christ be my leader TiS 624

OR: I want to walk as a child of the light TiS 643

OR: God of freedom, God of justice TiS 657



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Offering

Knowing that each member of Christ's body
contributes to the whole,
we bring our gifts to share
in the unity and diversity of Christ.

(from UiW2)

Bless these gifts and use them, and us,
for the sake of the world,
in Jesus' name, Amen.

Notices

Today is the *International Day of Peace*.

Next Sunday will be the *World Day of Migrants
and Refugees*.

Prayers for World & Community

These prayers are in the form of lament, using the
reading from **Jeremiah 8:18-9:1** - you may choose
to have one person read the biblical text and
another speak the prayer response.

My joy is gone, grief is upon me, my heart is sick.

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and
colours, in prayer we bring to you the people in our
world who do not know peace and we lament the
heartbreak, brokenness and grief: the countries at
war, the nations divided and the communities and
families in crisis.

(pause)

***Hark, the cry of my poor people from far and wide
in the land: "Is the LORD not in Zion? Is her King
not in her?" ("Why have they provoked me to
anger with their images, with their foreign idols?")***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and
colours, in prayer we bring to you those people who
feel abandoned, lost and isolated through the
devastation of disaster, global or personal.

(pause)

***"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we
are not saved."***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and
colours, in prayer we bring to you all the broken
hopes and dreams, the devastating sense that we
may have missed our many opportunities to heal

and hold the planet, to feed the hungry and to show
love to each other, the big regrets and countless
disappointments of our time.

(pause)

***For the hurt of my poor people I am hurt, I mourn,
and dismay has taken hold of me.***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and
colours, in prayer we bring to you our pain and grief,
from things deep inside us, and through empathy
with others, as we sometimes struggle to hold on to
hope.

(pause)

***Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician
there? Why then has the health of my poor people
not been restored?***

Holy One, whose children are of all creeds and
colours, in prayer we bring to you our plea for
peace. Why is it so hard to bring justice to our land?
Where is healing to be found? Why does it take so
long to hear the stories that need to be heard?

(pause)

***O that my head were a spring of water, and my
eyes a fountain of tears, so that I might weep day
and night for the slain of my poor people!***

Our tears fall night and day, springing from the wells
of compassion within us, pouring together, small
tributaries forming a great river of lament, surging
onwards to the deep sea of your indwelling.

(pause)

**We join our voices together, knowing that you hear
us. Seeking comfort, assurance and peace for all
the world in the words that 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.



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Singing - Inspired by love and anger TiS 674

OR: God of Jeremiah TiS 679

Blessing

Through song and scripture,
prayer and pauses,
we worship you,
Holy One, Holy Three.
Send us out as peacemakers,
and let our lives continue to be
an expression of worship,
an outpouring of your loving kindness.

Go knowing that you are not alone.
We are bound together in kinship
from the unending source of love.
Go in peace,
Amen.

Reflection: Rev. Karen Eller,
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