



Weekly Worship



Pentecost 7
Sunday July 16, 2023

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

We come together today as a people of faith, who have made a covenant to praise and worship God.

With hearts full of joy and hope, let us follow the way of the Lord, that God has given to us.

Dear Lord “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105)

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging

As we gather, we acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land and these waters. We pay respect to elders past, present and emerging. As First and Second Peoples walking together, we commit ourselves to be people of the covenant, listening, truth telling and seeking justice for all.



Uniting Aboriginal and Islander
Christian Congress

Singing: Come down, O love divine TiS 398

OR: All people that on earth do dwell TiS 59



Prayer

God who is our Creator, Saviour, and Friend, We give you thanks for all that you have made a world of strength and beauty, long lived and fleeting lives, a world of diversity and contrast, of stability and change, of growth and possibilities a world of loss and remembrance. We thank you for the world which you have made,

a world of grace and love.

God who is Father, Son, and Spirit, We know that we fall short of your commands. We are wilful, selfish, and can be apathetic to the distress of others. We fight for land, dominance, and wealth. We forget to honour gentleness, steadfastness, and forgiveness. We do not listen to your Word, and fail to acknowledge that your gift to us is

a world of grace and love.

God who is the source of all life, peace, and hope, forgive us for our failings, forgive us of our sins, Forgive us, for the injustices in the world that we do not dare to stop, our own actions that hurt others, the words of hurt we let be spoken, the pain we leave to grow in human hearts.

Forgive us, so that we may be your agents of peace, in a world of grace and love.

God gave to us no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1) forgiving us of our sins so that we may set out minds on the Spirit which is life and peace, (Romans 8:6*) that we may put behind us the division of humanity, the desecration of ourselves, (Genesis 25:19-34*) and live a life renewed through God's Spirit that dwells within us all. (Romans 8:11*) For this, with God's mercy, and unending peace

may we live as God's people in a world of grace and love.

In the words of Jesus, the Christ, “Your sins are forgiven.”

Thanks be to GOD!





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Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Psalm 119: 105-112 (responsive)

Your word is a lamp to my feet

and a light to my path.

I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.

I am severely afflicted; give me life, O LORD, according to your word.

Accept my offerings of praise, O LORD, and
teach me your ordinances.

I hold my life in my hand continually, but I do not forget your law.

The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I do not
stray from your precepts.

Your decrees are my heritage forever; they are the joy of my heart.

I incline my heart to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.

Your word is a lamp to my feet

and a light to my path.

Read: Romans 8:1-11

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

For these words of faith
and for Jesus the Word

Thanks be to God.



Reflecting

Rev. Sandra Houghton

One summer in the south of France, I saw wheat fields that were ready for harvest. The wheat was golden and ripe with ears full of grain. Peeping out from among the wheat were bright red poppies and more than a few green weeds.

I couldn't help but think that Australian farmers wouldn't have been impressed by such a sight, as the weeds and wild flowers might well cause difficulties in the harvest and contaminate the grain.

The sight of those golden fields also cast my mind back to that parable which we read today. It is one that is very familiar to many of us, often called the Parable of the Sower, although some other names have been suggested for it. These include 'The Parable of the Miraculous Harvest', 'The Parable of the Careless Sower', and a favourite of mine, 'The Parable of the Extravagant Sower'.

The Parable of the Extravagant Sower, appeals to me because there is something very extravagant about the way the farmer flings the seed so that it lands all over the place.

Now I'm sure that many of you, like me, were told back in Sunday School days, that farmers who sowed seed by casting it by hand, wasted a lot of seed because they couldn't control their throwing well enough and that a lot of seed landed where it didn't have a hope of growing well. But I've come to think that that's nonsense.

I'm pretty confident that we can refute that wasteful sowing theory.

The first reason is that most farmers would have become pretty skilled at casting seed, and would have been able to make sure it landed pretty close to where they wanted it to and pretty evenly.

Reflecting continues

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Reflecting continues

The second reason being that farmers are pretty careful with precious resources, and seed is a very precious resource. The farmers would have been trying to ensure that they grew the best crop possible, as a poor crop would have meant that the farmer's family would not have enough food. Therefore, the farmers would have been very careful not to throw the grain on footpaths or roads, or among thistles or rocks, or on dry, inhospitable ground. The birds of the air they wouldn't have been able to do much about, though I'm sure they did their best to keep them off the crop using scarecrows and trying to chase them away.

One of the features of parables is that they include something unexpected or a surprising twist. Perhaps it is the extravagant, wasteful sowing that is the twist in this parable.

So, let's think about what this might mean to us.

In Jesus' explanation of the parable, he talks about the harvest being the response to the word of the kingdom, in other words, the response to the word or acts of God. Therefore, God is the extravagant sower.

So why might God be such an extravagant sower? And what is it that God sows?

Well, clearly God seeks to sow God's words into the human heart and conscience. God speaks to us about how to live and act and think, not by brain washing us, but by helping us to discern and understand what is good and moral and loving. This God does in and through the life of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Scriptures and as proclaimed in preaching and teaching. God also speaks to us through the written, acted and spoken testimonies of the people of God and in the traditions and teachings of the Church. God also speaks to us through the power of the Holy Spirit prompting our consciences and seeking to guide us in God's ways.

We also know that God gives us Spiritual gifts and abilities. Surely these are God's seed sown in our lives – both the gifts that are individual to each one of us but also the fruit of the Spirit- Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility, and self control,

Carl Gregg suggests that to be receptive to God's seeds we need to till and fertilise the inner soil of our souls by committing to spiritual practices which open us up to God's presence and guidance. Things like regularly praying including spending time in silent, contemplative prayer, and by practicing Sabbath so that we set aside work and other preoccupations and be open to God's presence and to receiving the day in gratitude.

Reflecting continues



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Reflecting continues

I would also want to add that time spent reading and studying the Scriptures and other writings that help us think about our faith, also help open us up to God's leading. Gregg expresses concern that over-busyness, especially when accompanied by fear, anxiety and selfishness, is toxic to our spiritual lives and growth. Gregg acknowledges that this overbusyness is not always our choice, but suggests that we do whatever we can to free ourselves from overbusyness so that we can till the soil of our inner lives.

He also suggests that works of mercy – like feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and helping the poor, help cultivate the inner soil of love. For as we practise setting aside our egos and engage in acts of loving-kindness toward others we find that love becomes more and more our second nature.

These ideas are, I believe, well worth contemplating.

Going back to the idea of God as The Extravagant Sower, then we can see that God, out of love, does not give up. God is all the time trying to sow seeds of love into the hearts and souls of all people.

God wants everyone to respond to God's word in Jesus Christ, and so God keeps on sowing in the hope that a harvest will finally come. May we produce a harvest of love, faith and hope in our lives, and may we be open to God's continuing revelation to us. Amen.

**Singing: Christ be my leader
TIS 624**

*TIS 597; Master, speak, thy servant heareth
Holy Spirit, ever dwelling TIS 410*

You may choose the tune NETTLETON - TIS 392 OR: Your words to me are life and health TIS 430





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Offering

We bring our gifts to you, Lord God,
in gratitude and hope.
In dedicating them, we dedicate ourselves again
to be your people in the world,
In the strength and enabling power of
Jesus Christ, our Lord

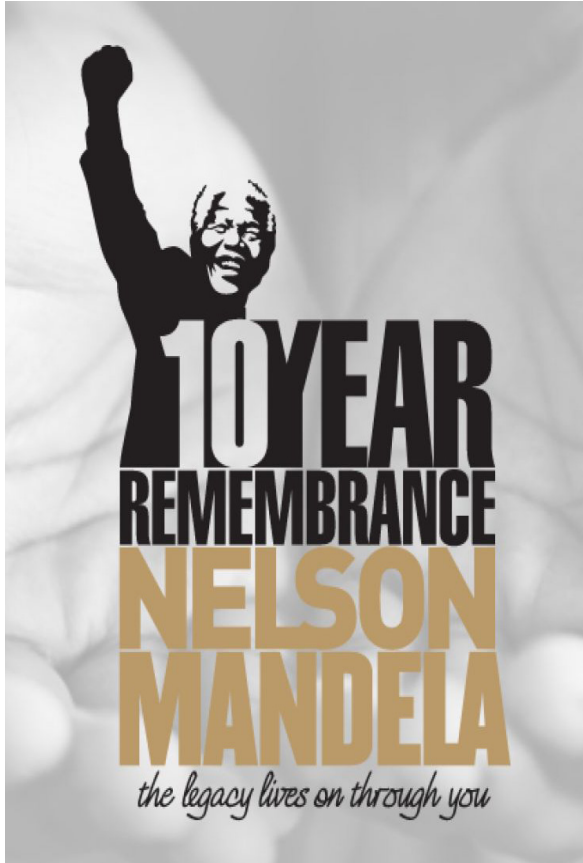
Amen

(UiW2, p.274)

Notices

July 18th is Nelson Mandela International Day.
In 2009, when the United Nations General
Assembly declared Nelson Mandela's 18 July
birthday Nelson Mandela International Day,
Madiba called on the people of the world to
honour him by helping their communities.

Mandela Day



Responding: Prayers for World & Community

God, we bring before you the world in prayer.

A world that looks to us as if it is caught up in a
cycle of tragedy and dispare of our own making.

We pray for the world's plants and animals that
are facing loss of habitat and resources. We pray
for the end to pollution of rivers and seas. For
the dangers of climate events that destroy and
starve people across the world.

We pray for those killed and dispossessed by the
war in Ukraine; and for other conflicts around the
world that continue despite the devastation they
bring.

We remember in our hearts all who struggle to
make changes for the better and who campaign
for human rights and pray that your peace will
come.

We pray for those in government around the
world and here in Australia. May compassion and
mercy bring good governance and wise decision
making. May all people be free and equal.

We pray for the Uniting Church in Australia, for
the Assembly President Sharon Hollis and for
our Victorian Moderator David Fotheringham.
We pray for all congregations that are still
wrestling with the impacts of Covid and the
economic changes that have happened since.
We pray for resilience and support for many
who are struggling. We pray for presence of the
Holy Spirit to fill your church, for the continued
good work of our agencies and schools, and for
individuals of faith.

In prayer we bring before you those who are ill
and infirm, those who are dying and those who
are grieving. Grant them the knowledge that they
are never alone for you are with them.

Prayer continues





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Prayer continues

We pray for ourselves and our families and friends. In all we do, may we reflect your love for the world in our lives.

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 for ever. Amen.**

Singing: We plough the fields **TiS 130**

OR: This day God gives me, TiS 642

Blessing

We came together today as a people of faith, and we have fulfilled our covenant to praise and worship God.

With hearts full of joy and hope, let us follow the way of the Lord into the world that God has given to us.

May God bless you and keep you safe from all that is evil.

Dear Lord, may "Your word be a lamp to all our feet and a light to our paths."

Amen.

(Psalm 119:105*)

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