



Weekly Worship



Pentecost 17
Sunday September 24, 2023

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

In joyful trust we sing God's praises
that we shall be blessed as those long ago;
hear stories of a generous and loving God that
cares for God's people,
providing quail, and manna, and fresh running
water
in a land that was barren, in a land that was
strange.

Come and worship,

God who loves us

Come and worship,

God who cares for all people

Come and worship,

God who is present.

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: Morning has broken,

TiS 156

OR: Father of mercy, God of consolation TiS
472 OR:TIS 217; Love divine

Prayer

Loving God,
we give you thanks for all that you have created-
for the generosity of your gifts that we receive
daily,
and for your Son, whom you sent as Saviour to
the world.

We thank you God.

Forgive us for the damage that we do to your
earth,

for the evils of war, and war itself.

We pray for the innocent and dispossessed that
we do not see suffering in our midst,
for those who are despised for their difference
that we do not include,
for people on life's edge that we leave to face the
future on their own.

We are sorry.

For times when we are less than kind,
when we refuse to help those in need and
despair.

When we do not speak truth to power,
when we are hesitant to speak your name,
when we take from others in our greed.

We are sorry.

(A time of silence)

God hears the pleas of the people.
God feeds the hungry of body and soul, in the
deepest deserts of our own making.

Hear then Christ's word of grace to us:
"Your sins are forgiven."

Thanks be to God.



Weekly Worship. Season of Pentecost 2023. Presbytery of Gippsland, Fig Tree Worship Resource



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



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Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Exodus 16:2-15
Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45
Matthew 20:1-16

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

Reflecting

Rev. Sandra Houghton

One of the enduring skills I gained from my childhood is to be able to divide or cut just about anything into five or seven even pieces. This is because I was one of five rather competitive children, whose parents insisted on fairness. My parents strove not only to be fair to each child, but also to ensure that we were fair to each other. Hence, if you were given the task of cutting a cake you were to ensure that everyone got a fair share. This was reinforced by the family rule, that if you were the one doing the cutting, you got the last piece. This, as you can imagine, ensured precision cutting.

Fairness is an aspiration for most families and groups. It is one of the ways that we try to value each person and aim not be discriminatory. Most people have had the experience of someone being shown undeserved favouritism- perhaps the 'old boy' network ensuring that a young man with education in an elite private school gets a job or promotion ahead of an applicant with a state school education. This kind of unfairness 'smarts', and we understand it to be unethical.

It may then come as a shock to read today's parable about the owner of the vineyard and

his employees. For there appears to be an unfairness about how the labourers were treated. How can it be fair that those who laboured for long hours in the sun are paid the same as those who had barely started working before knockoff time? Certainly, those labourers who had worked all day saw it as unfair.

But the owner of the vineyard dismissed their grumbles about unfairness, saying that he had paid them that which belongs to them, and noted that it is his choice if he chooses to be generous to others.

But why would the owner of the vineyard pay those who had worked only a few hours a full day's pay? And paid the ones who had worked all day the same?

Perhaps it might be useful to know that the amount all the workers were paid was a denarius, which was the normal daily rate. It was also the amount of money that a worker needed to be paid in order to live in any sort of reasonable manner. If a worker received any less money than that, then he and his family would probably not be able to afford sufficient food, clothing, etc. The itinerant labourers of Jesus' day were very vulnerable. A few days out of work could be devastating for them and their families.

So, the owner of the vineyard was graciously ensuring that those who only worked for a few hours had sufficient money to live on, as did those who worked the whole day. His actions answered that line that we pray in The Lord's Prayer 'give us today our daily bread' for all his workers, whether they deserved it or not.

This understanding has neat parallel in the Exodus story we read today. The Israelites travelling through the wilderness are given what they need. They are given food for the day in the form of manna and quails, given each day.

Reflecting continues





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Reflecting continues

This is given to them by God's grace out of response to their needs, not because they deserved it, but because they needed it and God had promised to care for them.

In both stories, all the people are given the dignity of having what they need, regardless of whether they deserved it or not. This is something to think about next time we are in a situation where it is suggested that those in need that we are being asked to help are undeserving, for one reason or another. Maybe it should encourage us to show some generosity of heart.

Certainly, the parable points to a God who acts out of gracious generosity. In the same way that God gives salvation out of grace, the owner of the vineyard pays out of grace giving full wages to those who haven't earned them.

We may feel some sympathy for those workers who worked hard all day, and got the same pay, but they did get exactly what they had asked for at the beginning of the day. It raises the question, do we short circuit God's generosity when we bargain for what we think we deserve? And do we, despite all the Scriptural teaching about salvation being by grace, still think we have to earn our salvation? Or do we think we deserve more than those who haven't served so well or so long or so hard in the church?

The parable asks of us the question- Can we be freed of our notions of fairness, and instead let God be generous, and let God be free to love us without us trying to put conditions on our relationship?

And it asks us- Can we, too, can act out of generosity and love in our own lives, imitating the love and generosity of Jesus Christ? Not because we will earn some greater reward that way, but rather because we can share in the joy of generous living and loving, and because this is the way that God calls us to live. Amen.

Singing: All the sleepy should have a place to sleep TIS 697

Or: Community of Christ, TIS 473

OR: For the fruit of all creation, TIS 168



Offering

We bring our offering in silence, naming in our hearts the gifts we are grateful for.

Notices

September 26 is the International Day for the Total Elimination of Nuclear Weapons.





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Responding: Prayers for World & Community

Holy God,
we bring before you the prayers of your people.
May you walk beside us each day, filling the Church with your Spirit.
We pray for the Uniting Church as we go through the process of Act2,
may we listen for your voice as we listen to your people.
God of love and peace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the world, facing disasters of fires and melting icecaps,
islands of rubbish that fill the oceans,
disappearing species,
let us be guided towards answers and solutions to save the world for future generations.
God of love and peace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for the leaders of the world; may they listen to your wisdom and be filled with your mercy. We ask that they may take action against the exploitation of the earth and its resources,
against slavery and trafficking of people, that they may put an end to war in Ukraine and work to help victims of earthquakes, fires, floods and drought and economic disasters that plague their countries.
God of love and peace,
hear our prayer.

We pray for all who experience suffering, war and poverty, displacement and hunger, pain and loss,
those who are struggling financially to provide homes and food for their families.
Let there be healing and let there be hope.

God of love and peace
hear our prayer.
We pray for our families, our friends and ourselves.

May you keep us in your loving care and fill us with your peace.

Amen.

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 are your people, TiS 468

*OR: Christ's is the world in which we move,
TiS 677 OR: TIS 690; Beauty for brokenness*





Weekly Worship



Blessing

God forever bless us with the bounty of your love.

God who is present,

be with us always.

God who cares for all people,

help us to care for others.

God who loves us

go with us into the world.

In the name of Jesus, the Christ, go to love and serve the Lord.

Amen.

Blessing song: You shall go out with joy, TIS 755

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