



Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

The heavens are telling the glory of God.
The skies tell of God's creative work.

As we gather, we seek that which
revives
is perfect
and pure

Let the words of our mouths
the meditation of our hearts
be acceptable to you
O Lord, our rock and redeemer.

based on Psalm 19

Light the candle - Christ is with us.

Acknowledging

As we gather, we acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of these unceded land and 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: Let all creation dance TiS 187

OR: TiS 156 Morning has broken

OR: TiS 163 God who stretched the spangled
heavens



Prayer

God of creation,
when we gaze upon blue skies
rain or clouds of amazing shape and colour;
when we ponder the night skies
the glory of the milky way
the awesome motion of planets
and comets and shooting stars
we witness your creative delight
in making our world
and declaring it good.

We have seen your dancing creation
build up massive energy
to strike us in powerful storms
and we have watched as power
blackouts enable the Milky Way to shine.

Forgive us when our energy is used
against that which is good,
when we harness, control and direct
in selfish ways that harm
others and all of your handiwork.

Forgive us when we receive your commandments
as fixed and empty words carved in stone
rather than relationship,
covenant declaring your love for us,
and perhaps your effort to
save us from ourselves.

Forgive us when we lose sight of all that
revives
is perfect
and pure.

We pray:
Let the words of our mouths
the meditation of our hearts
be acceptable to you
O Lord, our rock and redeemer. Amen.

Weekly Worship. Season of Lent 2024. A Worship Resource from Friends of the Fig Tree.



Uniting Church in Australia
SYNOD OF VICTORIA AND TASMANIA



Weekly Worship



*Third Sunday
in Lent*

Sunday March 03, 2024

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Exodus 20:1-17 &
John 2:13-22

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

Reflecting

Rev. Jennie Gordon

Jesus cleans up.

I quite like 'angry-active Jesus' this week. He's refreshing. We spend so much time in the church avoiding conflict, smoothing things over, being nice and creating endless committees to come up with recommendations to address the issues of the moment or the millennia. Here's Jesus making a whip out of cords, which is a craft in itself and should be applauded, and then taking action into his own hands.

Let's get this straight from the outset; Jesus is not angry because there is sacrifice happening in the temple. It's not because there are animals there; purchasing animals for sacrifice in the temple was an accepted part of Jewish religious practice. It's not because there were moneychangers: someone needed to convert the foreign currencies into the half-shekel temple tax. Jesus gets angry because the ordinary people in this house of God, where he is kin, as they are kin, are being taken advantage of. The exchanges are not being made in a just way. The authorities are treating this holy place as if it was a house of market, not a house of prayer, driven by greed and self-interest where those who have less are at the mercy of those who have more and more and more. Make a whip of cords, drive them out, do a clean sweep of all that oppresses and excludes people as they come before God.

It's all there in the reading from Exodus. The list of commandments issued from God who has delivered these people from bondage and can now claim them as their own. Don't do anything that gets in the way of people living simple, honest lives of faithfulness turned towards the source of love. In this reading from the Hebrew scriptures, there isn't any need for a list of punishments that match the crime, it's simply – If you love and fear God and love each other, just don't do it. Don't oppress, harm and exclude people.

Unlike the writers of Mark, Matthew & Luke who have this turning-the-tables-in-the-temple story as one of the triggers for Jesus' arrest, the writer of John's gospel puts this story at the very beginning, the first very public act of this astonishing prophet is to clean up God's house. Why? I wonder if the clue is in the dialogue between Jesus and the Jews. When asked for a sign, Jesus refers to the destruction of the Temple, the building, which we know happened in 70CE. The author of the gospel then explains the raising up in three days as a reference to Jesus' body, a post-resurrection understanding that helped the disciples to believe.

The Jewish Annotated New Testament^[1] explains it like this:

"'Temple of his body'; a proleptic reference to the crucifixion and resurrection as marking the destruction and restoration of Jesus' body, but also a reference to the Johannine theme that whereas the Temple in Jerusalem was formerly considered the site of the most direct encounter with the divine, that role is now – since Jesus' coming – fulfilled by Jesus."

We are to read John's gospel with this understanding. In the account of the wedding at Cana, we see Jesus' hospitality and sense the delicious abundance of God's provision of love. Now with this story we are asked to shift our gaze to the end and beyond, destruction and restoration, crucifixion and resurrection, scripture and Jesus' word, so that we too might believe and encounter the divine in the Word made Flesh.

Reflecting continues

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Reflecting continues

We are to live our lives of faith and shape our communities with this understanding. We are to make a whip of cords and drive out anything that oppresses, obscures or obliterates people's access to the holy. What is it that we're doing/ saying/being as church that is getting in the way of people encountering the audaciously hospitable, outrageously abundant, crucified and risen Divine Love? When angry-active Jesus shows up on Sunday, what will he drive out?

[1] The Jewish Annotated New Testament, 2nd Ed. NRSV, Editors: Amy -Jill Levine and Marc Zvi Brettler, Oxford University Press. 2011.

Singing: Inspired by love and anger **TiS 674**

OR: *TiS 356 Here hangs a man discarded*

OR: *TiS 179 Praise with joy the world's creator*

OR: *TiS 665 Jesus Christ is waiting*

OR: *TiS 689 Lord hear my praying*

Offering

Bless these offerings, creator God.

Bless us as we embark on this amazing journey with you through Jesus the Christ.

Bless us in all that seems foolish yet remains strong in you.

Bless us as we follow the one who is a living temple.

In the name of Christ. Amen.

Responding: Prayers for World & Community

we pray for a world
in need of renewal.

We pray for places where the marketplace
favours those who already have too much.

We pray for places where the marketplace has been
replaced by oppression or invasion.

We pray for places impacted by market forces that
create incessant waste and damage the earth.

We pray for places where zeal consumes and
distorts what people and places truly need.

We offer prayers for particular places and people
who are known to us...

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.**



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Singing: Community of Christ TiS 473

OR: TiS 665 Jesus Christ is waiting



Blessing

Go with zeal for the way of Christ,
share abundantly his love
which is God's love.
Overturn tables if need be,
if it invites and includes and welcomes
those who are otherwise cast out.

Go to bless and be blessed in the name
of God our creator
of Christ our redeemer
of the Holy Spirit
wind, breath, fire, sustainer. Amen.

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