



Weekly Worship



Pentecost 8

Sunday July 14, 2024

Call to worship & Lighting the Candle

The earth is the LORD'S and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it; for he has founded it on the seas, and established it on the rivers. (Ps 24: 1-2)

Let us worship God with all people of the world.

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.

Singing: Come O God TiS 181

OR: Love divine all loves excelling TiS 217



Prayer

*Naidoc week prayer
from the Catholic Diocese of Cairns 2020*

God of all wonder,
We pause in the busyness of our days to listen deeply to the wisdom of this land and those who belong to it. May our minds be open to dialogue, May our hearts be open to transformation and May our hands do the work of reconciliation. We ask that the Spirit accompany us on our journey of healing on these lands, seas and waterways; We also ask the Spirit of peace be with all those who are living a life of fear, dispossession and distress. As we pray this prayer we also remember where:

we have been too busy to pause and reflect;
we have not listened deeply to wisdom
of the land
and those who belong in it
we have been closed to dialogue;
we have not wanted transformation;
we have seen no need for reconciliation...

We hear through the apostle Paul that your glorious grace has been freely bestowed upon us as we have been blessed in Christ.

For this inheritance that comes to us as gift we say:
thanks be to God. Amen.

Passing the peace

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

Listening

Read: Ephesians 1:3-14 &
Mark 6:14-29

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





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Reflecting

Rev. Arnie Wierenga

I find it hard to engage with the gospel reading this week. It's hardly an edifying story, gory in detail and abuse of power. I resist it like I resist the 24 hour news cycle, too full of gory detail and abuse of power. I want good news, not this stuff. When it comes to the news cycle I carefully curate what comes in, reading headlines to fence off stories of despair and pain. But here it is, the gospel of Mark with a story that cannot be dismissed as just a headline.

It begins with Herod betraying himself with guilt. He seems tormented by what he has done, as though the ghost of John the Baptist has come back to haunt him. "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised." Or maybe there is hope in John's return as though it somehow undoes what has been done.

The telling shows a world of corruption and power where those without power become momentary playthings to amuse those who've lost a sense of life's value. In this telling I feel enraged but also powerless. I think that's the trouble with the news cycle too. Enraged, but powerless. In this story I want Herod to be tortured by ghosts of the past. But this is not the Jesus way.

Jesus is becoming known. He is noticed for his holy work. He is becoming popular as one who speaks for justice, one who welcomes those pushed out, one who feeds the hungry, heals the sick, and releases the captive. It seems that Jesus is everything Herod is not.

And if this is torment, Herod is tormented because it is too close. The headline cannot be dismissed for the story is too real, one that exposes his fragile ego and need to please others.

These fifteen verses expose what human vulnerability and ultimate power can do. We see darkness that can strike fear into innocent hearts. What happens here is almost predictive of Jesus' fate at the hands of powerful corruption and injustice.

In this we also see a world of contrasts. As John's head is demanded, Herod is feasting: a banquet for courtiers, officers and leaders. The dancing is entertainment to please this gathering of powerful men. Herod trips over his vanity and need to please. Rev. Bill Loader describes this as a black eucharist where John's head on a platter is the height of its liturgy! Whatever we might make of that, it seems that Mark wants us to see Jesus as light in contrast to what is dark.

Jesus is becoming known because he shines light into the darkness. He feeds 5000 and then 4000, eucharists of hope. He cannot be stopped by death threats. Instead, he walks with purpose towards Jerusalem where power and injustice will crucify him. On the way he feeds, heals, welcomes and invites all, especially those excluded from banquets of privilege, especially those seen as nothing by the powers that be.

As Jesus shines the light for which he becomes known, we begin to see he shines light even into the dark places of Herod's world. As light shines, with it comes hope. John could not be stopped speaking truth and justice. Jesus could not be stopped sharing the love of God with us all.

As we make the Easter cry like those early disciples that 'Christ is risen', we join with all who know the way of Christ cannot be stopped by dark banquets or abusive powers. As Herod fears what the light exposes, so we claim in the risen One that even death cannot stop the light of Christ from shining in the darkness.

As the news cycle continues to bring us grim and gory stories of exploitative power and injustice, I wonder what is not being reported. Is the risen Jesus there as powers are challenged by those who follow Christ?

I believe so, and this is my hope: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.





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Singing: Beauty for brokenness
TiS 690

OR: Brother sister let me serve you TiS 650
OR: Inspired by love and anger TiS 674
OR: Lord hear my praying TiS 689



Offering

As people of God
we bring ourselves,
all that we have and who we are.
We ask your blessing on these offerings to be used in
your kingdom. **Amen.**

Notices

July 15 is World Youth Skills Day.
July 18 is Nelson Mandela International day.

**Responding: Prayers for
World & Community**

Loving Lord, we come to you with our prayers, our
concerns, anxieties and desires, knowing that you
listen and can lighten our hearts.

We pray for the world, creation, flora, fauna and
all who live in it. Give us the desire and ability to care
for it.

We pray particularly for places where there is conflict
and violence, and for all those who are involved,
intentionally or as victims.

We pray for peace.

We pray for our country, particularly in Naidoc week.
For a desire, a will for reconciliation, in our hearts
and actions and those of our leaders at all levels of
government, in our churches and organisations.

We pray for our church. For the Uniting Church
National Assembly as it meets in Sydney; for all
councils, big and small. May they seek your guidance
in all their decisions.

We pray for our communities, all who work caring for
others, all who seek work, all who do not have a place
to live, enough food, or live in constant pain or despair.

We take a moment of silence to pray for all those we
live and lift the deep desires of our hearts to you.

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: God of freedom TiS 657

OR: Jesus put this song into our heart TiS 670
OR: O breath of life come sweeping through us
TiS 409





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Blessing

By Francis Bodkin of the Bodkin-Andrews clan of the D'harawal Peoples

May you always see the beauty of the Earth.
May you always taste the sweetest fruit.
May you always hear the laughter of the People.
May you always feel the warmth of the Flame.
May you always smell the perfume of the flowers.
May your dreams always be happy ones.
May your friends always be with you when you have need.
May your stomach always be full.
May you never feel hurt.

By Uncle Vince Ross, Mutti Mutti elder and retired UCA minister

May the God of creation warm your heart
like the campfires of old,
bring wisdom and peace as shown
to the first peoples of this land,
shake off the dust from the desert plains
by the refreshing rains,
followed by the glow and warmth
of the sun.
Let the light of God
show us the right path and
stand tall like the big River gums
drawing life from
the ever-flowing waters.

Blessing Song: We are marching TiS 666



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