

## Seasoned With Grace

---

### Gathering

---

*Create a space for worship - perhaps with a small table with a bible, cross and candle.*

*This week, it would be appropriate to find a **green cloth** or scarf to signify that we are moving into "ordinary time". Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

### Gathering

Whether you walk tall and straight and look the world in the eye,  
or whether you are bent over, burdened by the cares of the world,  
carrying a heavy load, or living in a body that has seen its share of work and worry;  
may you encounter the God who embraces you in love,  
heals broken hearts, and restores us all to life in all its fullness.

### Light Candle

We light the candle - focussing our attention, allowing ourselves to be drawn to its flame. We look to Jesus, the light of the world, a light that shines even in the darkest of times offering hope and healing.

### Acknowledgement of Country

The Ancient of Days, breathed life into this Land and her Peoples. From time beyond our reckoning the Wodi Wodi people of the Dharawal nation have blessed this place through their care and concern.

From river to ocean  
from campfire to hearth

***may the First Nations who have cared for this land be blessed.***

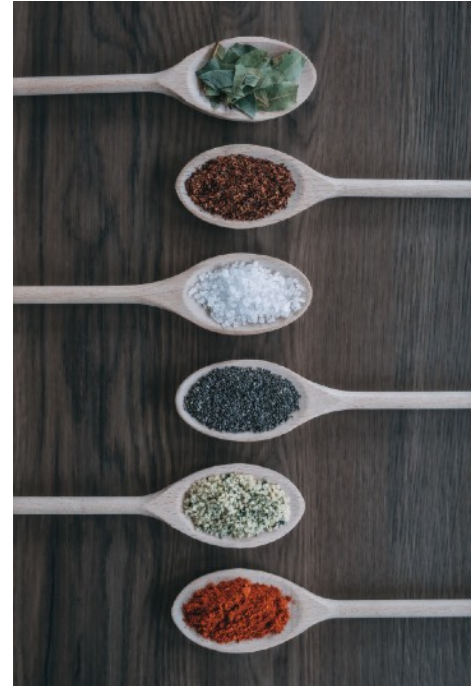
From breath to song  
from step to dance

***may those who follow your Songlines  
guide us on the journey to living honourably in this place.***

From greeting to Amen  
from silence to chorus

***may our worship join with the voices of the First Nations of this Land.***

*(c) 2017, A.Koh-Butler*



*Photo by Tiard Schulz on Unsplash*

## Call to Worship

Jesus saw those who others ignored;  
he called those who were never invited;  
he raised those who were bent down;  
he honoured those who others belittled.

As God drew near to us, in Jesus,  
so, now, we draw near to him.

Let us worship God.

*Spill The Beans, Issue 43, Resources for 21 August 22, p.95*

## Sing - Wellsprings (ATW 435)

*You might notice that our songs this morning don't follow the usual pattern - today we begin with an acknowledgment that sometimes life is hard and we struggle to find the energy to live a life of praise - and so we take ourselves to the source of life, knowing that Jesus will meet us there and replenish our depleted resources.*

*Like the woman of old, each day  
we go to the wellsprings of life  
to find Jesus there.*

Some days the well seems dry.  
We can't reach the water – it's too hard.  
Some days our legs won't take us,  
our hearts are aching, crying.

*Like the woman of old...*

Some days our minds are reeling.  
There's too much happening –  
we need to stop.  
Some days our souls are parched,

we need the water – so thirsty.

*Like the woman of old...*

Some days there's no escape  
life's routine and madness.  
Some days we don't want to go –  
we can't see the rhyme or reason.

*Like the woman of old...*

Some days we're resurrected,  
we feel new life – inside us.  
Some days our faith moves mountains,  
we feel life's glory – earth and heaven.

*Like the woman of old...*

© 1995 Don Stewart

## Prayer

Parent God,  
we gather as brothers and sisters,  
bound by our love for you  
and for the wonderful universe you have created.  
We meet here united as one,  
drawn here by our love for Jesus.

We come to sing and share more of your story,  
we come to listen and learn more of your love,  
and to understand more of what we are called to do in this amazing world.

[Holy God], we are created in your image, we each have a part to play  
in bringing the kingdom,  
here and now.

We come humbly to you now, aware of our faults and failings.  
We come and offer our apologies  
for all we have done

or failed to do this past week.

Healing God, when we shoulder burdens not ours to carry,

***unfold us with your grace.***

When we clench our fists and our hearts with rage and anger,

***unfold us with your grace.***

When we let ourselves become overwhelmed with things around us and ignore people,

***unfold us with your grace.***

When we make unwise choices, or ones that we know are unfaithful to you,

***unfold us with your grace.***

When we allow our doubts to shut us down rather than open us up to new wonderings and new possibilities,

***unfold us with your grace.***

Give us strength and courage to step out in your name.

Help us take your love to all in need.

So be it.

Amen.

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 21 August 22, pp136-7 and  
Spill The Beans, Issue 43, Resources for 21 August 22, p.95*

### **Affirmation**

God – who is our rock, our refuge, the one who rescues, heals, and loves us – also forgives us and sets us free to new and everlasting life.

***Thanks be to God! Amen.***

*Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 21 August 22, p.137*

### **Sing - A Voice Is Heard (ATW 430)**

*And so we are able to affirm the presence of God in all the seasons of our days...*

*Come, let us praise our God,*

*come let us sing for joy.*

*With a heart of thanks we give honour.*

*You are a mighty God,*

*you are the source of life.*

*Creator God, we give praise.*

Through the darkest night – a voice is heard.

Through the breaking dawn – a voice is heard.

Through the heart of life – a voice is heard.

All creation sings! God is heard!

*Come, let us praise our God...*

From the deepest seas – a voice is heard.

From the highest hills – a voice is heard.

From the rich dark earth – a voice is heard.

All creation sings! God is heard!

*Come, let us praise our God...*

© 1998 Trish Watts & Monica O'Brien

---

## Listening for God's Voice

---

### **Reading:** Colossians 4:1-18

<sup>1</sup>Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving. <sup>3</sup>At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ, for which I am in prison, <sup>4</sup>so that I may reveal it clearly, as I should.

<sup>5</sup> Conduct yourselves wisely towards outsiders, making the most of the time. <sup>6</sup>Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

<sup>7</sup> Tychicus will tell you all the news about me; he is a beloved brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow-servant in the Lord. <sup>8</sup>I have sent him to you for this very purpose, so that you may know how we are and that he may encourage your hearts; <sup>9</sup>he is coming with Onesimus, the faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. They will tell you about everything here.

<sup>10</sup> Aristarchus my fellow-prisoner greets you, as does Mark the cousin of Barnabas, concerning whom you have received instructions—if he comes to you, welcome him. <sup>11</sup>And Jesus who is called Justus greets you. These are the only ones of the circumcision among my co-workers for the kingdom of God, and they have been a comfort to me. <sup>12</sup>Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ Jesus, greets you. He is always wrestling in his prayers on your behalf, so that you may stand mature and fully assured in everything that God wills. <sup>13</sup>For I testify for him that he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and in Hierapolis. <sup>14</sup>Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. <sup>15</sup>Give my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church in her house. <sup>16</sup>And when this letter has been read among you, have it read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and see that you read also the letter from Laodicea. <sup>17</sup>And say to Archippus, 'See that you complete the task that you have received in the Lord.'

<sup>18</sup> I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.

### **Reading:** Luke 13:10-17

<sup>10</sup> Now [Jesus] was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. <sup>11</sup>And just then there appeared a woman with a spirit that had crippled her for eighteen years. She was bent over and was quite unable to stand up straight. <sup>12</sup>When Jesus saw her, he called her over and said, 'Woman, you are set free from your ailment.' <sup>13</sup>When he laid his hands on her, immediately she stood up straight and began praising God. <sup>14</sup>But the leader of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had cured on the sabbath, kept saying to the crowd, 'There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be cured, and not on the sabbath day.' <sup>15</sup>But the Lord answered him and said, 'You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his donkey from the manger, and lead it away to give it water? <sup>16</sup>And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen long years, be set free from this bondage on the sabbath day?' <sup>17</sup>When he said this, all his opponents were put to shame; and the entire crowd was rejoicing at all the wonderful things that he was doing.

For the Word of God in Scripture,  
for the Word of God among us,  
for the Word of God within us,  
**Thanks be to God!**

## Reflection

Let us pray,

God as we come to these ancient stories and letter, open our hearts and minds to hear what you want us to learn today. Help us to shape our lives in response. Amen.

I wonder if you can imagine the scene.

It is the day of rest, the sabbath day and the temple is full - alive with people coming to pray and offer thanks to God.

In the midst of the crowd is a rabbi, Jesus. He has already gained somewhat of a reputation for his wise and sometimes challenging teaching and a crowd is gathered around him listening to him. Perhaps you are one of those people, leaning in, straining, wanting to capture every word he utters.

But in the midst of his teaching, Jesus stops.

He has seen something, or rather, someone.

It is an old woman, bent over, walking slowly through the crowd, being jostled occasionally as she is unable to look up and avoid the more agile people around her.

Most days, she would walk unnoticed through this place.

She had little influence and most people thought she was of little consequence.

Harmless enough.

But not valued enough for anyone to stop and take notice of her plight.

Invisible.

But today, someone notices.

Jesus notices. Jesus sees her.

And calls to her.

And speaks to her, "Woman, you are set free from your ailment" (13:12)

And touches her.

And she stands up straight - for the first time in 18 years - "Praise God!" (13:13)

But the leader of the synagogue is not impressed.

How dare something like this happen today, on the sabbath the day of rest!

And Jesus replies - "You hypocrites!"

You each take care of your animals - no matter what day it is.

And this woman, is one of God's precious children - like you are - and she is suffering.

Why should she not be set free - no matter what day it is!

The men who questioned him, slunk away.

And the crowd - well there was much rejoicing -

for Jesus' actions in relieving suffering;

and his words of hope and love in the face of legalism and bondage.

By the time the letter to the church at Colossae is written, some several decades later, this story would be told as part of the story of Jesus. The author of the letter concludes the letter by imploring those to whom it is addressed to:

<sup>2</sup> Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving.

<sup>5</sup> Conduct yourselves wisely towards outsiders...

<sup>6</sup> Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer everyone.

How do you ensure that prayer becomes and stays a foundational part of your every day? And before all the self-help gurus got onto the benefits of gratefulness, the followers of Jesus knew the importance of giving thanks - so how do you practice thankfulness?

Then, how are we wise to people who are “outsiders”?

These days, I am always bit cautious with the term “outsider”. It is a word that sometimes creates division, usually based on assumptions that are not always helpful.

There is no doubt that the Greek term used here is referring to someone who is not part of the community, perhaps, not a follower of Christ.

While I would not use a term like that today, the rest of the advice here is what is important - conduct yourself wisely, look for opportunities to speak and share the stories of Jesus, and then...

Speak with grace - a seasoning that is both healing and hope filled - a seasoning that enhances flavour and preserves life.

So we choose our words carefully, shaping our words to be gentle and kind and compassionate - to be life-giving.

We know that words can wound as much as, if not more than, our actions can and do.

Yet we also know the power of words that encourage, enable and offer hope. So chose the latter.

Jesus words in the story from Luke 13 - offer hope and healing to the one who has been suffering - an old woman - largely ignored or forgotten in the day-to-day activities of the temple.

And Jesus’ words challenge deeply the ones who have imposed the suffering - without the tone, it is hard to interpret how harsh or angry Jesus may have been with the “hypocrites” around him. Just because it upset the leaders of the synagogue doesn’t mean it wasn’t said with grace. Sometimes grace-filled words of correction are hard to hear - we all know that - we all at sometime have reacted badly to someone’s attempts to correct our understanding or behaviour(!)

The reaction to our words is not our’s to control - but the tone, the choice of words, the framing, even the timing - they are all for us to determine. So may we be people whose words are grace-filled: enhancing each other’s experience of the world and drawing one another closer to the love and way of God.

The letter to the Colossians is wrapped up with the usual list of greetings - but let’s not skip over this part too quickly. What might we notice about the people named:

There is Onesimus (4:9) - perhaps the same one as is the subject of the letter addressed to Philemon - the runaway slave who Paul urges Philemon to forgive and receive into the family of the church

There is a reference to the “circumcised” - presumably referring to fellow Jewish followers of Jesus (4:11)

A woman is named - Nympha (4:15) - and the church that meets in *her* home. It seems Nympha is a home-owner in her own right (otherwise, presumably, the reference would have been to her husband’s home). And this Nympha is facilitating the meeting of the church in that place.

Archippus (4:17) - wouldn’t you love to know what he is supposed to have done and clearly hasn’t?!

It is also clear from the reference to the letters from and to Laodicea (4:15-16) that there are other letters circulating and it is expected that these letters will be shared between the various towns and churches.

Lastly, the letter claims again to be written by Paul, probably from prison (4:18). It may be - but it is also possible it was written, or at least edited, by someone who was close to Paul.

*As we travel through this week, may we take extra care and attention to ensure that we do not talk about people as if they are invisible.*

*May we take the time to ensure that all in our midst are seen, heard, listened to and respected as children of God, who are equally loved and known.*

*May we speak words that are grace-filled, and may our actions always match our speaking - a seasoning of hope and grace in the world we serve.i*

Let us pray...

Loving God, you see us, each one of us, as your beloved children.

Help us to see each other, and the people of our community and the world, as you do.

Teach us to see people that are otherwise unnoticed in our communities.

Help us to engage with them, speak with them, embrace them.

When we get caught up in rules, or are tempted to use the rules as an excuse not to act, prompt and nudge us into action - for the sake of your love and your way in the world.

Amen.

---

## Responding

---

**Sing** - We Cannot Measure How You Heal (StF 655)

*As we lead into a time of prayer, this song invites us to name the struggles but also affirm that we find healing in community - in the touch and care of the people around us.*

We cannot measure how you heal  
or answer every sufferer's prayer,  
yet we believe your grace responds  
where faith and doubt unite to care.  
Your hands, though bloodied on the cross,  
survive to hold and heal and warn,  
to carry all through death to life  
and cradle children yet unborn.

The pain that will not go away,  
the guilt that clings from things long past,  
the fear of what the future holds,  
are present as if meant to last.  
But present too is love which tends  
the hurt we never hoped to find,  
the private agonies inside,  
the memories that haunt the mind.

So some have come who need your help  
and some have come to make amends  
as hands which shaped and saved the  
world  
are present in the touch of friends.  
Lord, let your Spirit meet us here  
to mend the body, mind, and soul,  
to disentangle peace from pain  
and make your broken people whole

*John L Bell and Graham Maule*

## **Prayer for Others** (Wendy Fenton)

Loving God

our simple prayer and our deep hope is for your kingdom to be found -  
between our neighbours

in the love we share between our nations,  
in the compassion we offer between all people,  
in the peace we make.

There may we all see your kingdom grow.

And so we bring our words and our longings  
and shape them into the relationships we build  
and affirm the truth that in our relationships is where your kingdom will be found.

We pray for those in conflict, for refugees and the displaced,  
for so many who suffer in so many ways from disease, hunger, fear, and division.  
This is not of your kingdom and it does not need to be the story of our world.

We pray for our governments,  
for people who serve in Canberra and in our state and local governments  
and we pray for governments around the world who make decisions that affect us all,  
and the longing to find stability and a future that is balanced and fair,  
equally shared, and Kingdom-shaped.

We pray for our congregation, for our neighbours around us  
and the way we live and speak together of love and grace and truth.

And we pray for our families and friends,  
for those who are ill and those recovering,  
for those grieving and hurting,  
those anxious and worried, fearful and afraid  
and for the love that directs us and calls us and challenges us to be your people,  
to see your kingdom, between us, among us and through us.  
So be it. Amen.

## **Offering**

*We make space now to think about what we have heard and seen today and consider our response.*

*As we make our offering - we remember again that this is not just about money - either here in the plate or through a bank transfer - this is also about how we are generous with our time and energy and gifts; and about how we resolve to live differently because we have encountered the living Christ.*

Bless our gifts, Loving God,  
and grant that this offering may be for us a sign of a greater giving:  
the offering of our time and our talents,  
our loyalty and our love,  
indeed, the offering of our whole life  
for the service of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Uniting In Worship 2, Supplementary Resources*



---

## Sending

---

**Sing** - We Give Thanks (Seasons 5-44, vv1,3)

*And so as the writer to the Colossians encourages us to be committed to prayer and thanksgiving, we go into the rest of our day and the week ahead with thanksgiving on our lips and in our hearts.*

We give thanks for the goodness of love that is shared.

We give thanks for this table around which we are fed.

We give thanks for this circle of friends and family.

We give thanks, we give thanks, and we give thanks.

We give thanks for tomorrow and thanks for today.

We give thanks for the journey and faith along the way.

We give thanks for the promise of Jesus with us now.

We give thanks, we give thanks, and we give thanks.

© Trish Watts and Monica O'Brien

### **Sending and Blessing**

As God has drawn near to us, in love,  
let us go from this time of worship,  
and draw near to others,  
in that same love.

May the God who sees the neglected,  
who calls the rejected,  
who raises the dejected,  
and who honours the disrespected:  
guard you and guide you,  
bless you and keep you,  
and inspire you to acts of care and compassion  
in Christ's name  
and as Christ's people.

*Spill The Beans, Issue 43, Resources for 21 August 22, p.97*

Rev Kath Merrifield  
21 August 2022