

Restitution

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 worshipping in "ordinary time". Take some deep breaths as you gather your thoughts towards God.*

Gathering

It is only 3 more Sundays until we begin our preparations for Christmas.

In these last few weeks of the Church year, we are thinking about what God's reign is about and how we talk about it in our world today - what are we hoping for, what are we praying for, and, importantly, what are we *working* towards?

Justice

Restoration

Today ... restitution



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

As we look upon the hills and valleys, the oceans and rivers of this place, we see the love poured out upon this Land by those who have cared for it since time beyond measure.

This land is God's land and God's Spirit dwells here.

We honour those who have gone before and those who are yet to come.

May we be mindful of the calling God places on all humanity to care for Creation.

May we take our lead from the Wadi Wadi People of the Dharawal Nation, whose stories are entwined with the stewarding of this place.

May we learn from them and walk with them.

Call to Worship

Jesus travelled to many places.

Some made him welcome. Others did not.

Yet in all places, Jesus tried to make others feel welcomed.

Jesus seldom missed a chance to tell someone that they were a beloved child of God.

And so in Jesus' name, I welcome you here,
beloved children of our Creator.

When we welcome one another, indeed, we welcome Jesus the Christ into our midst as well.

Community of Christ, let us worship God.

Let us pray...

We welcome you,
Spirit of Christ,
to pass by this way
and call us into your justice.

We welcome you,
Spirit of Christ,
to challenge our ways and renew our living.

We welcome you,
Spirit of Christ,
to call our names and form us in your community. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 30 October 2022, p.126

Sing - On Holy Ground

We sing a song that celebrates the idea of heaven and earth being intimately entwined and invites us to commit to its vision...

The heavens embrace the earth,
then they sing of the new birth.
The earth echoes and resounds
that we are on holy ground.

Do you believe in freedom?

Yes we do Lord!

Do you believe in justice?

Justice for all!

¿Yen la nueva vida? (Do you believe in
new life?)

¡En su espíritu! (In the Spirit)

¿Quién es su liberación? (Who is your
release?)

¡Tú, Señor! (You Lord!)

¡Arriba! ¡Proclamen! ¡Santa Tierra!

We are on holy ground!

Let heaven and earth sing praise
to the one who from death was raised.
Let hearts utter words profound
in proclaiming this holy ground.

Do you believe in freedom?...

Bless earth, water, fire and wind.
Bless your people without, within.
Let beauty and birth surround
in reclaiming this holy ground.

Do you believe in freedom?...

United we join the light.
We are born of the same right.
We've come to release what's bound,
for we are on holy ground.

Do you believe in freedom?...

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Words & Music: Donna Peña

Reading: Habakkuk 1:1-4, 2:1-4

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw.

² O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?

Or cry to you 'Violence!'
and you will not save?

³ Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?

Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise.

⁴ So the law becomes slack
and justice never prevails.

The wicked surround the righteous—
therefore judgement comes forth perverted.

2 I will stand at my watch-post,
and station myself on the rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he will say to me,
and what he will answer concerning my complaint.

2 Then the Lord answered me and said:

Write the vision;
make it plain on tablets,
so that a runner may read it.

3 For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.

If it seems to tarry, wait for it;
it will surely come, it will not delay.

4 Look at the proud!
Their spirit is not right in them,
but the righteous live by their faith.

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!

Prayer

God,
we thank you that there is nowhere we can hide from you.
We are all visible to you, simply because we matter.

Your love is beyond our imagining.
Your grace is immense.
In this place, may we know ourselves seen, loved and forgiven.
And in the light of your love and forgiveness,
may our lives
and the lives of those around us be changed.
Help us to [live confidently],
carrying the light of your love for others so that they, too, may know that they are known
and loved by the God of all creation,
Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 44, Resources for 30 October 2022, p.81

Sing - Song of Hope (Seasons 2-34)

A song that invites us to stay connected with the hope that is the presence and promise of God.

Just when our hope was defeated
clear was the voice of the Spirit:
“See how your brothers have not given up
in the struggle to better the world.
See how your sisters have not given up in
the struggle to better the world.”

*God is uplifting the people.
God is the power within us.
Hope is our music and freedom our
song
and together our voices will ring.*

Just when our hope was defeated
clear was the voice of the Spirit:
“Reach out to all of your brothers and build
with each other, a world of peace.
Reach out to all of your sisters and build
with each other, a world of peace.”

God is uplifting the people...

Just when our hope was defeated
clear was the voice of the Spirit:
“I will be with you and I will uplift you and
give you the strength to endure.
I will be with you and I will uplift you and
give you the strength to endure.”

God is uplifting the people...

*Words and Music: Ester Camac and Edwin Mora Guevara
English translation: Bret Hesla
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Listening for God's Voice

Reading: Luke 19:1-10

[Jesus] entered Jericho and was passing through it. ²A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. ³He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.’ ⁶So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷All who saw it began to grumble and said, ‘He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.’ ⁸Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, ‘Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.’ ⁹Then Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.’

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

God, inspirer of zeal, keeper of promises, sustainer of faith; grant us strength, grant us wisdom, grant us hope, we pray. Amen.

Seasons of the Spirit, Resources for 30 October, 2022, p.124

It is a family story to many of us. Zacchaeus is a small man who climbs a tree to see Jesus. Perhaps unusually for many of the events in the life of Jesus, this one seems to contain a lot more specific detail.

Zacchaeus is a *chief* tax-collector. And he was rich (19:2). The implication is that he has accumulated his riches by collecting taxes on behalf of the Roman Empire and so was regarded by his own people, the Jewish people, as a traitor and a thief.

And Zacchaeus wanted to see Jesus but he is too short (19:3) so he couldn't see through the crowd.

We could wonder why, as a wealthy and presumably powerful man, he couldn't have just shouldered his way to the front.

Perhaps the crowd was just too big.

Perhaps Zacchaeus didn't really want to be seen.

Perhaps, Zacchaeus knew he wouldn't be welcome in this crowd and so wanted to stay "low-key".

For whatever reason, he has climbed the tree.

And as Jesus passes by, Jesus stops. Jesus looks up and sees Zacchaeus in the tree and speaks to him, basically invites himself to dinner (19:5) - and presumably his disciples - so a bit of a crowd in itself!

The telling of this story has energy about it.

Zacchaeus, "hurry and come down." (19:5)

So Zacchaeus "hurried down and was happy to welcome him" much to the chagrin of many around him - how dare Jesus eat with someone we don't like and consider to be a "sinner". (19:6-7)

And here is where the language and translation of this episode presents us with a problem... What does Zacchaeus say to Jesus? In the NRSV, it is translated in the future tense: 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I *will* give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I *will* pay back four times as much.' (19:8)

But there is disagreement among Biblical scholars as to the best translation of the tense in verse 8: 'I [will] give' and 'I [will] pay back' or 'restore' in some translations.

It affects the core meaning of the story whether Zacchaeus is making a statement about what he does already: "I give half my goods to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone... I restore it fourfold" (RSV)—or making a pledge about his future behaviour —“(from now on) I will give half my goods to the poor and if I have defrauded anyone... I will restore it fourfold” (NRSV).

In the first case, he is telling Jesus that he is not as bad as everyone thinks he is. It is a story about not judging a book by its covers, not stereotyping people and assuming that all tax-collectors (or Samaritans, or adulterers or prostitutes) are the same. In the second case, his encounter with Jesus' absolute goodness has shown him in an instant all that is wrong in his current lifestyle. It is a story about repentance and restitution. Jesus' response, ['Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost. (19:9-10)] could support either interpretation.

Whichever translation is correct, what is important is that Jesus' welcome and acceptance of this man, whom others despised and who perhaps also had a pretty low opinion of himself, is not dependent on anything that Zacchaeus says or does. Grace comes first, it always does... ¹

Habakkuk is another of the very short books of prophecy that are gathered at the back end of the Hebrew Scriptures, the Old Testament. It is a dialogue between the prophet and God about how we remain faithful to God's vision when all around us the reality of the world seems so far from that vision.

In our reading today, the prophet Habakkuk repeats the cry of many of the prophets - how long do we need to wait for God to act or for God's justice to be known when the world around us seems to be crashing in around our ears? (1:1-4)

In chapter 2, Habakkuk affirms the realisation and reality that even though it may all seem dire right now, God's vision is still held before us and we need to watch and wait, remaining attentive to where God's grace is breaking into our world (2:1-4).

¹ Spill The Beans, Issue 44, p.78

And then here is another translation challenge - in the last line of the reading - the NRSV bible translates it as “the righteous live by their faith” (2:4). Other translations say something like “the righteous shall live by *his* faith”.

The word “their” in the NRSV is included rather than “his” to be gender-inclusive.

Now this seems to imply that people who remain in relationship with God are strengthened by their own faith - that is, that it is all about us.

But the Hebrew is a little more nuanced and the early Greek translations of the Hebrew certainly carried a very different meaning. Without going into the technical detail,

The Hebrew could translate to something like “the righteous one lives by *my* faithfulness”.

And if we remember that Habakkuk places these words into the mouth of God, so this is God speaking - we get a meaning more like, the righteous will live by *God’s* faithfulness or steadfastness, that is, life is found in the faithfulness of the divine - not in ourselves.

Looking then at Jesus’ life and teaching, and in particular, this story of his encounter with Zacchaeus, we can see again that it is *God’s* faithfulness that comes first.

But that doesn’t let us off the hook in relation to talking about restitution.

Zacchaeus’ encounter with Jesus invites us to think about how we respond to God’s grace and God’s justice, how do we offer restoration and restitution.

It is something we have been wrestling with as a church in the context of our relationship with First Nations. It is something we need to wrestle with as a nation.

We demand restitution in our courts of law when someone has been injured or their business has been affected by another person’s wrong-doing - but what does it mean for us to think about it for ourselves in relation to the bounty we enjoy in our own lives?

I mean, how many of us are tempted by a \$5 t-shirt because it is cheap, even though we know that the people who have grown the cotton or made that shirt are not paid a living wage, and we know we could afford to pay for a shirt that is realistically priced and where a fair price is paid for the raw materials and labour? Sure we save a few dollars, but at what or, rather, whose, cost?

Whether Zacchaeus is paying restitution already or it is a response to his encounter with Jesus, does not absolve us from asking ourselves whether any of our abundance is enjoyed at the expense of others? And, if so, how might we engage in a serious conversation about restitution - for this is also part of the way in which justice is known, relationships are restored and God’s vision is embodied in our world today.

These are hard questions to ask of ourselves and of our communities - no doubt.

But we do so assured of God’s grace and faithfulness as we do.

As Jesus stops and sees Zacchaeus, so Jesus sees you.

You, also, are a child of God, invited into a conversation about how we embody God’s love and justice out of the love and justice we know for ourselves.

Let’s pray...

God of grace,

we give thanks that you meet us with your grace,
that you remind us day after day of your faithfulness.

As you embrace us in love, give us courage, we pray, to ask ourselves some harder questions, and to shape our lives to reflection your love and grace in the world. Amen.

Responding

Sing - Lord, Your Almighty Word (TIS 447)

In praying for others, we shine light into the world, we pray for light to shine in the dark places of the world, we offer ourselves to carry the light for the people around us.

Lord, your almighty word
chaos and darkness heard,
and took their flight:
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light.

Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving holy dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the waters' face,
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light.

Saviour, who came to give
those who in darkness live
healing and sight,
health to the sick in mind,
sight to the inly blind,
now to all humankind,
let there be light.

Holy and blessed Three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might,
boundless as ocean's tide
rolling in fullest pride,
through the earth far and wide,
let there be light.

John Marriott

Prayer for Others (Rhonda Back)

Loving God, you know us, and you call us by name.

You grieve when your children suffer. You weep with the sorrows of the world.

Bless those who are grieving the loss of homes and loved ones, whether through the horrors of war, oppression, or natural disasters. Bless them with the comfort of your love that they may face each new day with hope. Give them the strength and will to bear their heavy burdens as they struggle to comprehend life's hardships.

May we O God, who weep too, find ways to transform our grief, just as Zacchaeus' encounter with Jesus was cause for joy, hope and renewed transformation. May we seek and work for the righting of relationships, the building of healthy community and the healing of creation today. To all who despair, may we find shards of hope to offer. May we feed the hungry, bind up the broken hearted and shelter the homeless, and may we not cry out to you until we have truly done all we can ourselves.

Loving God, show us the paths of peace, for we have lost the way. We pray for peace in our homes, in our neighbourhoods, in our nations and throughout the earth. We lift to you the peoples of Ukraine, Pakistan, Rwanda, Myanmar and all those suffering at the hands of others.

As we pray, may we commit to broker peace in our everyday lives, - at home, at school, at work and in every place you call us to be.

God, inspirer of zeal, keeper of promises, sustainer of faith, grant us strength, grant us wisdom and grant us hope, we pray.

Amen

Based on a prayer from Spill The Beans, Resources for 30 October 2022, p.81

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.

We pray...

You have given us so much, O God,
we pray for a just and equal sharing of all the earth's resources
and we commit to costly love and service in answer to our prayer,
'your kingdom come, your will be done.'

May the daily bread we enjoy
be shared with all in need
in the knowledge that we serve you
in serving one another. In the name of Christ. Amen.

Spill The Beans, Issue 44, Resources for 30 October 2022, p.82

Sending

Sing - The Summons

Jesus invites Jesus to come down and to come with him and spend time with him, to follow him.

We go singing a song that asks the question of us - will you follow?

Will you come and follow me if I but call
your name?

Will you go where you don't know and
never be the same?

Will you let my love be shown, will you
let my name be known,
will you let my life be grown in you and
you in me?

Will you leave yourself behind if I but
call your name?

Will you care for cruel and kind and
never be the same?

Will you risk the hostile stare should
your life attract or scare?

Will you let me answer prayer in you
and you in me?

Will you let the blinded see if I but call
your name?

Will you set the prisoners free and
never be the same?

Will you kiss the leper clean, and do
such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean in you and
you in me?

Will you love the 'you' you hide if I but
call your name?

Will you quell the fear inside and never
be the same?

Will you use the faith you've found to
reshape the world around
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?

Lord, your summons echoes true when
you but call my name.

Let me turn and follow you and never be
the same.

In your company I'll go where your love
and footsteps show.

Thus I'll move and live and grow in you
and you in me.

Sending and Blessing

As we go from this time together,
may we imitate Christ
with all our heart, soul and mind.

May we open our doors and our tables
to all who need or want to encounter Jesus.

May we open our hearts
to those excluded or shunned by others.

May we show the grace and love of God this day and always.

Spill The Beans, Issue 44, Resources for 30 October 2022, p.83

Be blessed in the name of the Creator, Saviour and Sustainer, today and always. Amen.

Rev Kath Merrifield
30 October 2022

Something further

This week is also brings a range of celebrations with various interpretations and understandings.

Traditionally, it all focusses on Tuesday - 1 November - which, in the church, is All Saints Day, also known as "All Hallows". It is a high feast day for the orthodox and roman churches celebrating that we are all part of the "communion of saints" - Meredith might touch more on that next week.

From "All Hallows" we also get the name of tomorrow's festivities - "Halloween" - a derivation of "Hallow Eve".

Tomorrow's date is also important for the reformed church - because it marks the day Martin Luther pinned his theses (his complaints, if you like) to the door of the church - knowing that lots of people would see it as they came to church the next morning - and kicking off, in Europe, what we now call the Reformation.

If you want to read more about what these are about, if only to be able to speak into what seems a strange appropriation - see: <https://kiama-jamberoo.unitingchurch.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Musing-201028.pdf>