

Fifth Sunday in Easter
A Liturgy for use at Home

Notes:

*This liturgy may be used at home or in small groups. Feel free to adapt it as you see fit. Children present might enjoy lighting candles, reading scriptures and leading some of the prayers. Words in italics are instructions. Words in **bold** are said by all.*

Preparation

Light a candle as you read

Jesus said: "I am the way; the truth and the life" (Jn 14:6).

Call to Worship

How abundant are the good things
you have stored up
for those who fear you,
that you bestow
on those who take refuge in you.

In the shelter of your presence
you hide them from all human intrigues
you keep them safe in your dwelling

Praise be to the LORD,
for he showed me the wonders of his love
(Ps 31 selected verses)

Opening Prayer

**Too often, O God, we pray, "Listen, Lord,
for your children are speaking."
Today help us to pray, "Speak, Lord, for
your children are listening."
Help our ears to hear your Word.
Help our hearts to trust what you say.
Help our hands and feet to do what you
call us to do. Amen.**

Confession

Merciful God,
we confess that we struggle to listen;
to you, to others, even to ourselves.
We struggle to be still and know that you are
God.
When we don't listen, we miss your still
small voice.

When we don't listen, we miss your words of
love, mercy and delight.
Lord, we humbly listen now.

Silence

Jesus, we receive your love, mercy and
grace. **Amen.**

Scripture

John 14:1-14

Collect

Loving and eternal God,
through the resurrection of your Son,
help us to face the future
with courage and assurance,
knowing that nothing in life or death
can ever part us from your love for us
in Jesu Christ our Saviour;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Reflection

- *A written reflection is appended to these notes.*
- *The Sunday Sermon is online¹*

Response

- Set aside time this week simply to be with Jesus. To listen His words and to ask in His name.
- Continue reaching out in the way of love as you have been. Consider journaling or sharing your experience of how stepping out in love calms a troubled heart.
- Fast (as you are able) from sunrise to noon every Thursday. At noon stop what you are doing and join the Methodists around Southern Africa as we pray.
- Continue the discipline of tithing as you are able.

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession

¹ <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

These prayers may help as you hold before God the needs our church and nation at this time². Pray them as written or use them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.

Benediction

And now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and forever more. Amen

For Mothers

O God, we pray for mothers. May those who mourn know your comfort; those who are worn out be filled with your Spirit, those who labour alone experience your presence, those who are troubled receive you peace, those who are ill feel the touch of your hand, and those who are abused find refuge in you. May your Church be equipped to offer comfort, power, companionship, peace, healing and refuge to mothers in need.

All who minister to the sick

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ went about doing good and healing all kinds of sickness and disease among the people: continue his gracious work among us in hospitals and nursing homes; and send your blessing on all who labour to Prevent suffering and to forward your purposes of love. We pray for doctors and healthcare workers of the DMC family, Bianca, Debbie, Kayla, Karla, Stephen, Philip, Glynnis, Gideon, Liza, Magda³; may you keep them safe and renew them each day by the power of your Holy Spirit.

Dwelling in God's Presence

Lord God, in whose presence is the fullness of joy, and whose power is made perfect in weakness; grant that I may so dwell in your presence that I may ever be glad of heart; and so rest on your strength that I may have victory over evil.

Our Father...

Sing or listen to a song/hymn

Do not let your hearts be troubled Pandemic of Fear

*My heart is in anguish within me,
the terrors of death have fallen upon me (Ps. 55:4).*

² These prayers are adapted from "My Personal Prayer Book" by Bishop Geoff Quinlan.

³ This is not a complete list. Let us know who we have left out so we can pray for you by name.

Prays the psalmist. We feel his inner turmoil, don't we? We are more sensitive to his anguish in this time of "*troubled hearts*". People are troubled, afraid of losing lives to disease, livelihoods to recession, and the land to political turmoil. Some fears are imagined. Some fears are real. All are troubling.

I listened to a Podcast by theologian Miroslav Volf. He says that when a "*viral pandemic like COVID-19 breaks out, the social pandemic of fear is not far behind*".⁴

He believes the modern world lives in a "**Culture of fear**" – i.e. a culture that doesn't know **how to live well** in the face of fear. He believes that's because our modern way of dealing with fear is to eliminate danger. And, thanks to modern technology, we can often do that – a vaccine, for example, eliminates the danger of a virus⁵.

Ancient societies didn't have that luxury. They couldn't eliminate every danger. Famine, disease, drought, enemy attack were daily realities– the only way to live well was to cultivate the courage to face danger without being overwhelmed by fear.

Friends, that's the way Jesus leads us in. The way of courage – the way of living well in the face of danger & disruption!

Jesus

Notice that Jesus doesn't deny or ignore troubling realities. In fact, just a few verses before Jesus said "*don't let your hearts be troubled*" we read:

"Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, "Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me."

Jesus knew Judas would betray him. Jesus knew he'd be arrested, tortured, crucified. That troubled him. But he was not overwhelmed. He calmly confronted Judas. He was fully present with the disciples, speaking with love, grace and wisdom. I find that remarkable. When my heart is troubled, I struggle to be fully present, struggle to think and speak clearly.

The invitation to trust

Friends, Jesus says, today, to you, to me, to every follower of His "*Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me*".

We don't have to be troubled because Jesus prepares a place for us in the Father's house. In the father's presence we are safe.

Like Thomas we might wonder how we get to that place of peace in the Father's house. We would quite like set of instruction: "Ten steps to an untroubled heart". "A recipe for peace". Jesus doesn't offer ten steps. He offers himself. He says, "*I am the way, the truth and the life*".

We often read this passage at funerals – does that mean I must die first to go and be with Jesus in the Father's house. No – Jesus is offering assurance for this life. He later promises "*I will not leave you as orphans*" – we are never alone – He is with us always.

Still, there is a kind of death involved. It's the one Thomas later experienced. Remember, we read about him on the second Sunday of Easter. He lost the Way – didn't meet with the disciples and missed out on experiencing the risen Lord. But his friends pointed him back to the Way – he was there the next Sunday and after seeing Jesus' wounds declared "**My Lord and my God**".

If Jesus is My Lord, then I've died to my own self-interest.

⁴ <https://for-the-life-of-the-world-yale-center-for-faith-culture.simplecast.com/episodes/01-the-culture-of-fear>

⁵ Of course, as Volf makes clear, if danger can be eliminated, as when developing vaccines etc. it the loving thing to do.

In life or death, famine or feast, pandemic or health I live for His glory. I obey His commands. I entrust my life to His care.

The Way of Love

I said earlier that Jesus doesn't offer us ten steps to peace. But that doesn't mean there is no practical action. The Way of Jesus calls us to obey one command. You know what it is: **Love** (13:34, 14:21, 24, 28 etc). We love Jesus – and because we love him, we spend time with him, listening to him. And, because we love him, we obey His command to love our one another.

And that, friends, is the way from a troubled heart to a heart of peace. I don't say that to you as a pastor reminding people what to do (as much as that is sometimes necessary).

I say that as an observation. I see you doing this. And when you do – you step outside the troubled heart. You go the way of courage.

I've experienced it personally. Many of you have called me or sent messages to find out how I am doing, or how the family are doing, or to express gratitude for the online services. I know you are calling others. Some of you are paying employees who are not able to work, or making soup, making meals for neighbours, spending time on your knees praying, sharing in different ways.

At home you are showing grace, patience, forgiveness with one another.

You will find, if you look back, that when you follow the way of love fear loses its grip on you.

Upon reflection we may also find that we have been most troubled in heart when we have acted more like Judas – pursuing our own gain, our own ideas, betraying others. What a blessing to be called back to the Way.

Ask

Another friendly command accompanies the Way of love – **ask**. Jesus says, *"ask anything in my name and I will do it"*. Pride rejects asking. Love lives by asking.

Jesus answers any request in harmony with His Way. The Way of Jesus is a way of peace and love. Therefore, this prayer *will* be answered. Pray it with me: *"Jesus give me peace, an untroubled heart with courage to do what is right – to act in love, for God's glory"*.

May you receive these words as the first fruit of Jesus answer to our prayer:

Conclusion

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid (Jn 14:27).