

June 21 2020
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

"By being baptized, we were buried with Christ into his death. Christ has been raised from the dead by the Father's glory. And like Christ we also can live a new life.
(Ro. 6:4)

Call to Worship

Have mercy on me, O Lord,
for I call to you all day long.
Bring joy to your servant,
for to you, O Lord,
I lift up my soul.

You are forgiving and good, O Lord,
abounding in love to all who call to you.
(Ps 86:3–5).

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father,
you are the God
who comforts his people
and has compassion on all who suffer.
In the life of Jesus we see your kindness,
in His death we know your mercy
in His resurrection we celebrate
your victory over evil.
By your Spirit we become kind, merciful and
courageous.
With joyful, grateful hearts we worship you
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

*Offer praise and thanks in your own words
own words*

Confession¹

Lord, we are like sheep, and we get lost.
We forget the needs of our neighbours

and do not love you above all else.
We need a Saviour, so we long for Jesus.
Come, fill our lives, Jesus. **Amen.**

Silence

*(opportunity can be taken for personal
confession or lament)*

Lord, have mercy.
Christ, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

Scripture

Matthew 10:24-10:39

Collect

Creator God,
In the beginning
your word subdued the chaos
and in the fullness of time
you sent Jesus, your Son,
to rebuke the forces of evil
and to make all things new.
By that same power
transform our fear into faith
that we may have courage to follow
in the way of your kingdom;
through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen

Sermon

- A written reflection is appended to these notes.
- The Sunday Sermon is online²

Response

- What injustices trouble you? Hold them before God in prayer. Ask the Spirit to show you where and how you can act.
- Review the end of each day in prayer. Note where fear kept you silent or prevented you acting in love. Bring this before God in prayer without self-condemnation, asking for the Spirit's help in to train yourself in speaking up for truth and justice.
- Fast (as you are able) from sunrise to noon every Thursday. At noon stop

¹ From the Worship Sourcebook

² <https://durbanvillemethodist.co.za/category/sermons/>

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

These prayers³ may help as you hold before God the needs of our nation and church. Pray them as written or allow them to lead you into your own prayers of intercession.

For freedom from fear and anxiety

Most loving Father, help me to dread nothing but the loss of you and to cast all my cares upon you because you care for me. Preserve me from faithless fears and worldly anxieties, and enable me to hold fast to the faith, even when circumstances threaten to overwhelm me. Help me to discover that you are indeed a very present help in trouble and that I am more than conqueror through him that loves me, even Jesus Christ our Lord.

Deliverance from evil

O God, deliver me from the power of evil; from the fears and faithlessness of my own heart; from the evil which infects the world I live in; from pride and all forms of self-deception; from the misuse of power; from self-concern and indifference to the needs of others; from the blindness which sees no difference between good and evil; and from sloth which allows evil to pass for good.

Almighty God, Father of all mercies and giver of all comfort; deal graciously with

Innocent as doves. Wise as serpents⁴. More precious than many sparrows.

Difficult Words!

Jesus said some difficult things! Like this:

those who mourn, that casting every care on you, they may know the consolation of our love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Those suffering from serious illness

Almighty Father giver of life and health, look mercifully upon those who are stricken with Covi-19, cancer, HIV/AIDS and other life threatening diseases: Grant wisdom and skill, tenderness and sympathy to doctors, nurses, and all who care for the sick; be near to those facing great pain or the prospect of imminent death, and grant them relief and the assurance of your presence; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Home and family life

Holy Father, from whom every family in heaven and earth is named: we commend to your gracious keeping all homes and families. Today, we especially pray for fathers. Grant us the spirit of wisdom and understanding that we our families may become centres of peace, happiness and hospitality; for Jesus Christ's sake.

Our Father...

Sing or listen to a song/hymn

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

³ These prayers are adapted from "My Personal Prayer Book" by Bishop Geoff Quinlan.

⁴ For brevity I don't mention doves or serpents but if you know the context of the passage you will understand. If not, please read Mt. 10.16ff.

*"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn
"a man against his father, a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law (Mt. 10:34-35).*

I've listened to a mother, dying of cancer, tearfully describe her pain. Cancer wasn't causing her agony. What tortured her was knowing that she'd die without seeing her family reconciled. Rejection or division in the family causes terrible pain. Naturally, we ask Jesus to heal and reconcile. It sounds out of character to hear Jesus say, *"I did not come to bring peace"*⁵.

Hearing Jesus rightly

How do you imagine Jesus tone to us? Is he angry?

*"I did not come to bring peace, **but a sword!**"*

Or sad?

"[sigh] I did not come to bring peace, but.... a sword"

This verse is key to hearing Jesus' tone, listen:

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from the will of your Father. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So, don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows (Mt 10:29–31).

Jesus is comforting followers who fear persecution. When He says, *"I did not come to bring peace, but a sword"* he is stating fact, **not** intention.

According to Christian tradition Peter, who had once denied Christ, was crucified upside down! Most of the apostles were martyred. Even today there are places in the world where martyrdom is possibility for followers of Jesus. Imagine how comforting Jesus' words are to them.

We, who don't experience violent persecution, might feel like children listening to an adult conversation. Let us not think *"that's irrelevant for us"*, but rather listen as children willing to learn.

Seeing the Father- Goodness Beauty Truth

As children, eager to learn, we are in awe of the Father! Think about it – how many sparrows in the world? Who can possibly keep track of every single sparrow? But not one sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's knowledge! The Father has the time and inclination to count the hairs on your head! If that does not make you laugh with delight – see your physician immediately.

Parents, remember caressing the head of your infant child? Soft, silky hair, the steady rhythm of their pulse. We studied them with delight. Jesus reveals a Father who **delights in us**. John Wesley once suggested: *Should not every parent, as soon as a child begins to talk, or to run alone, say something [like]: "See! what is that which shines so over your head? That we call the sun. See, how bright it is! Feel how it warms you! It makes the grass to spring, and everything to grow. But God made the sun... In this plain and familiar way a wise parent might, many times in a day, say*

⁵ We are meant to remember the angels sang just the opposite at Christ's birth and to wrestle with the tension

something of God; particularly insisting, “[God] made you; and he made you to be happy in him; and nothing else can make you happy.”⁶

Imagine that whispered to us, again and again, from birth! We’d know that the Father delights in us and provides all we need.

Seeing the “World”: Evil, Ugliness, Lies.

Why do we need to hear of the Father’s all sufficient love again and again? Because another voice attempts to lure and deceive. The voice of the thief who, Jesus said, comes to kill and destroy. We are born into a world of struggle between good and evil, right and wrong. That war wages in our own hearts until Christ is King. That battle is waged in the world. Young people know this intuitively. I think that’s one reason why the Harry Potter books are so popular. Harry’s struggle, and ultimate victory, to do what is right offers an imaginative framework for thinking about good and evil.

My first station as a probationer was in Tigane, a poverty-stricken township north west of Klerksdorp on the road to Lichtenburg. A friend of mine who pastored an independent church in Johannesburg called one evening: *“I have a Baptist minister from England with me. He wants to see more than the suburbs. Can he visit with you Thursday?” “Sure, we have a confirmation class, but he can join us, be great for the teens to meet an overseas minister”.*

My visitor had years of experience with young people and soon developed a rapport with the class. He gently guided conversation into the everyday experience of Christian teens. Then he asked something I’d had not thought to discuss. It was revelatory to me. He asked how they experienced “persecution”. He struck gold – this was their everyday struggle, at school and in community.

They needed to know that this battle is a normal part of Christian life! They needed to know victory in Christ. So do we! Scripture says, **“everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted”** (1 Tim. 3:12)

Conclusion

Jesus said, *“The gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it”* (Mt 7:13). There will always be opposition to the Kingdom of Heaven. Friends, if we, the Church, had been a more intentional about equipping people to do right – even at personal cost – many of our struggles would be overcome. Racism would die a swift death. State Capture would have stumbled early on. The SACC’s unburdening panel found⁷ that many Christians knew what was happening. But they feared loss of employment, even loss of life – and remained silent. Nations suffers when fearful Christians, by our silence, are complicit with evil.

It’s tempting to skip Jesus’ hard words. I hope we now see how vital they are. May the Spirit convict us to live with courage – yes to speak truth even if our voices shake.

The very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Amen

⁶ Sermon 114, The Unity of the Divine Being. Wesley, J. (1999). Sermons, on several occasions.

⁷ <http://www.kzncc.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Unburdening-Report-to-SACC-NEC.pdf>