

28 February 2021 (Lent 2)

A liturgy for use at home

Notes:

A liturgy for use at home. Please adapt it as you see fit. Words in italics are instructions.

*Words in **bold** are said by all.*

PREPARATION

Light a candle as you read these words:

If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, you will be saved (Mk 8:35, NLT).

Call to Worship

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the author and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy set before him endured the cross,
scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of God.

Let us consider him who endured such opposition from sinful people,
so that we will not grow weary and lose heart.

Hebrews 12:2-3

Prayer of Invocation¹

All-knowing and all-caring God,
we gather this day drained by another week.
We are like a parched desert, empty and in need of replenishment.
Visit us with your presence, saturate us with your Spirit,
and bathe us in your streams of living water,
that our lives might acknowledge and worship you
to the praise and honor of Jesus Christ.
Amen! (based on John 4:13-14; 7:37-38)

Prayer of Confession

God, we make so many mistakes;
we turn away from you so often.

We need you so much.

Thank you that you so loved the world
that you sent Jesus to die on the cross
to save us from our sins..

silence

Hear then the word of grace,
In Christ's name our sins are forgiven!

The Peace is shared

MINISTRY OF THE WORD

Scripture

Mark 8:31-38

Collect

Christ, Son of the living God,
who for a season laid aside the divine glory
and learned obedience through suffering"
teach us in all our affliction
to raise our eyes to the place of your mercy
and to find in you our peace and deliverance.
we make our prayer in your name.

Amen

Sermon

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

THE RESPONSE

- Lent Disciplines to consider:
 - fasting of some kind (food/social media etc.)
 - In place of, or in addition, to fasting some find it helpful to add a practise e.g. keeping a gratitude journal,

¹ Prayers from The Worship Sourcebook

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

being intentional about sharing your faith and hope in Christ, volunteering to serve etc.

- We learn with and from one another so please share with us the creative practises you are planning for Lent.

to help us resist evil in all its forms in our individual lives and institutions.

Help us turn toward you,
eager to receive the fullness of all you
promise. Amen.

Prayers of Supplication and Intercession³

*These prayers 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.*

God of grace and glory,
in this season of repentance and hope:
Help us to turn away from evil **and turn
toward you.**

We pray that your people everywhere
will receive the courage
to turn away from evil **and turn toward you.**
We pray for the leaders of the nations and all
people,
that they may turn away from evil **and turn
toward you.**

We pray for every ministry of our community,
that as we minister in your name,
we may turn away from evil **and turn toward
you.**

We pray for each of us as we live among
neighbors, people whom you love:
help us to turn away from evil **and turn
toward you.**

We pray that even now as we worship you,
your Holy Spirit will be at work,
teaching us how to turn away from evil **and
turn toward you.**

silence

Lord Jesus Christ,
in this Lenten season,
we hear your call to repentance.
We pray for a generous outpouring of your
Holy Spirit

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.**

³ Prayers of Adoration and confession from "The Worship Sourcebook"

Letting go⁴

"It is an evil wind that blows" said one leaf to the other. And although the seed quivered, shook and rattled he felt safe. Afterall, he nestled, cosily in the womb of a pod, tightly held by a giant tree. A tree that seemed older than history itself. Roots so deep, so strong that no evil wind could threaten.

It is that type of a tree that, if you love trees like I do, you'd give a great big hug – embarrassing your teens. Does that make me a tree hugger? It's one of those trees that children gravitate to – playing games, and discovering the wonder of a mini ecosystem. Yes, a sanctuary for birds who praise God with the rising sun. For generations, under this tree, men proposed to wives, artists waited for inspiration, prophets received grace to call the world to justice and grandparents set up picnics, telling their grandchildren, "*when I was your age we played under this tree*"!

The seed was so very proud to be part of this tree. Home. Rooted. Loved. He'd never leave.

"*Aye, it is an evil wind that blows*", replied the other leaf. The wind shouted, swore, blasphemed, it blamed and lied, it spread rumour and gossip and then with that a great gust ripped off the seed pod, dashing it to the ground and tearing the seed from his womb – he shrieked, he screamed, he pleaded for help. The tree looked on ever so kindly but, thought the seed, "*she doesn't lift so much of a branch to save me*". In her younger years, when she was more sapling than tree, she remembered weeping when seed scattered. She was wiser now.

After the storm the seed was still near enough to hear one leaf say to the other "*a holy wind blows*", "*aye*" said the other leaf

"the healing wind of new life".

But the good breeze rolled the seed further from his home. He rolled and bounced and tumbled. He shook his fist, he cried out, "*Holy wind, I thought you were good, what do you think you are doing? Home is that way, stop I say, stop.*" For he was a feisty, prickly, courageous little seed – just the kind the Good Wind sought.

The seed ended up in barren land where wicked men had felled every good tree. From the dry, hard ground the parched seed shed his final tear, "*answer me O holy wind, do you not care, I've lost everything, I'm dying, why have you uprooted me*". The good wind responded, dumping a bucket load of rain on his head, burying him deep in the ground, ... and the wind whispered "*I'm not uprooting you, I re-rooting you, I'm growing a forest kingdom.*" But the seed didn't hear. He'd breathed his last.

If you visit that site today you will find no tombstone saying "here lies a feisty seed, RIP". No. But you will hear the song of birds praising God at sunrise, and the delighted shrieks of children at play. And under a great tree, in a once barren, lifeless land, men propose to wives, artists wait for inspiration, prophets receive grace to call the world to justice, grandparents set up picnics, telling their grandchildren, "*when I was your age we played under this tree*"!

If I was as wise as the good tree I might stop here. But, since this is my last sermon at DMC, I will depend on your goodwill and say a little more.

Remember how Abram (later Abraham) was told to leave his homeland? That must have seemed like a curse. But God said, "*I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you...and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.*" (Gen 12)

⁴ This sermon written by Rev. Sean McGuigan, 27 February 2021

Abraham's compatriots, hearing his story on social media of the day (read his tumultuous story in Genesis) likely said – "what a cursed life, I'd never leave this land". But we don't know their names, no children sing about them "father Abraham had many sons...". They made no sacrifice; they left no blessing.

Grace leaves for Varsity tomorrow. She. Leaves. Home. I've known this day would come since I held her in my arms on the day of her birth. I'm not ready. Nor is Sarah-Jane. Grace is ready. If we refused to let her go, a counsellor, describing our family situation, would use the word "toxic". Young people do not grow in a toxic climate of manipulation and control. We must let go.

Letting go, giving up, surrender – it is a principal of life. As Jesus said "unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds (Jn 12:24).

So, I don't know why we find it shocking when Jesus says, quite plainly "whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."

Maybe because our adulterous (see Mark 8:38) culture worships those who "save their lives", who make themselves the ultimate reference point, securing wealth, fame, power, success?

Maybe because what shatters apart our "cosy pods" is often an evil wind hell bent on destroying us? We don't immediately trust that God works all things, even evil storms, to bring life.

Maybe because it's just so hard to let go, to surrender control?

My family and I have been uprooted 5 times in 15 years. Sometimes we wanted to go. Sometimes we didn't. Sometimes we thought

the church chose wisely. Other times we were not so sure. The first time it was such a shock leaving behind my home, my job, my friends, my family, my sport – all of which beamed "success and happiness", that I got sick, I couldn't eat for three days. But God has always been faithful. Always brought life. Always sustained us.

Had it been up to me I'd have stayed with you a little longer. We will miss you. Our children grew up here. This is home. You are our brothers and sisters. It sure tested our faith living through the uncertainty of pandemic not knowing where we would go.

But nothing is impossible with the God of resurrection and vindication! Do you know, a dream has lain dormant within me for many years; the dream of serving as a school chaplain. It seemed so impossible I long ago surrendered it to God. By God's grace and in the way only God can work, I now have the privilege of serving in this capacity. I feel profoundly called to this work.

"Answer me O holy wind, do you not care, 'I've lost everything, I'm dying, why have you uprooted me'? The good wind responded, raining a bucket load of rain on his head, burying him deep in the ground, ... and the wind whispered "*I'm not uprooting you, I'm re-rooting you, I'm growing a forest kingdom*" But the seed didn't hear. He'd breathed his last.

Mother tree closed her eyes and prayed, letting go hurt, it always hurt, but she'd learned to trust that though her prayers seed became sapling, sapling tree and tree home to birds at worship and children at play.

May those with ears to hear, hear.
Amen.