Sacredise Daily Worship
Personal Worship Resources for the Week:
30 June – 06 July 2019

Thought for the Week:
There are many things that resist the good in our lives. When we are
faced with those who see things differently, or who do not accept us
as readily or freely as we would like, it is tempting to respond
vindictively and "call down fire" upon them. When the daily stuff of
our lives crowds in - our need for sustenance and shelter, our desire
to do our duty to our families, or our struggle to release the things
that have a hold on our hearts - it can become very hard to stay
faithful to Jesus' call to live the alternative values of God's Reign.
Those around us may not understand the decisions we make, and
the change in our priorities, and this can challenge our commitment
to God's best for us.

The good news, though, is that we are not alone as we strive to
embrace the way of Jesus. God has given us the presence, power
and anointing of God's Spirit - the same Spirit that worked through
Jesus - in order to strengthen and guide us in this new way of living.
As we learn each day to open ourselves to this Spirit, and as we
learn to trust God's goodness, our lives become a proclamation of
the Gospel. We may never say a word about our faith, but when we
live the Jesus way more fully, others will notice it, and they will
notice the positive impact it has on us - and on them. This is the
most powerful witness we could ever have.

This week we explore how embracing God's goodness in the power
of Spirit changes us and those around us.

Sunday 30 June 2019
Reading: Luke 9:51-62

Reflection: The short interactions in this section of Luke's Gospel
are very challenging. They might even make you feel like following
Jesus is the worst thing to do, and that Jesus and his disciples were
not very understanding or compassionate. This section begins with
Jesus setting his face toward Jerusalem, where he knows he will
die. On the way, he passes through Samaria, but is turned away by
a village that is afraid of what will happen to them if they are
associated with him. They have read the signs, and they know that
nothing good awaits Jesus in Jerusalem. The disciples are
indignant, and want to send down judgement on these poor,
frightened people. This kind of indignation can feel really good. It
makes us feel powerful and righteous, but what the disciples had
missed was that their response was exactly the way human Empires
react - and this is what the people were afraid of. Jesus, however,
seems to understand, and simply moves on.

Then we read of a number of people who are willing to follow Jesus,
but within limits. They all have priorities that pull against their
commitment to Jesus' way, and they try to get Jesus to allow them
to live with these mixed commitments. But, Jesus knows that God's
Reign is all or nothing. The priorities of God's Reign are so different,
and so contrary to those of our natural human inclinations, that we
cannot live in both worlds. It's not that these other priorities were
wrong. It's just that they were not God's best, and they would
ultimately draw the hearts of people away from Jesus' way, which
always leads us to love others deeply - if we make it our first priority.

How can you prioritise the values of God's Reign in your own life
today?

Practice for Today: The discipline of confession is not always
about apologising for our sin. Sometimes it can be helpful to use
confession as a way of taking stock. When we examine our hearts
before God, we can more easily recognise our true priorities and
then change anything that draws us away from God's way. Today,
allow confession to help you examine your heart.

Breath-Prayer for Today: If there is anything in my heart that
keeps me from your way, O God, show me and change me.

Monday 01 July 2019
Reading: 1 John 2:7-11

Reflection: It can hardly be clearer than this! When we speak about
the way of Jesus you have probably noticed that we always end up
speaking about love. You will also have noticed that the choice to
love is non-negotiable, and unlimited. No matter whom we may be dealing with, the call to love remains. In this letter, John can't stop speaking about love. He goes back to Jesus' teaching and reminds his readers that this was Jesus' commandment. To the extent that we obey this command to love, we push back the darkness (evil) of our world and spread the light of God's goodness.

The problem is, we find it far too easy to say that we're living in the light, while we still harbour hatred or ill-feeling toward others. It's natural to have those with whom we struggle. But, it's not natural to allow our differences and misunderstandings to deteriorate into hatred. In Christ we have the power of God's Spirit to enable us to love the unlovable, and so we cannot claim to be living in the light if we harbour enmity toward anyone else. If we retain our grudges and hatred, it blinds us, and we will find it very hard to follow Jesus' way. But, if we open ourselves to God's love, our eyes are opened, and we are able to walk each day a little further into God's light. And, when we do this, we also bring the light of love into the lives of others.

How can you embrace the light of love and stand against the darkness of hatred in your own heart today?

**Practice for Today:** Even though we may want to curse those who have hurt us, who mistreat us, or who disagree with us, it is a simple thing to fight this darkness in our hearts. When we make a conscious choice to speak blessing over others - especially those we want to curse - we allow God's light to spread in our hearts. Today, make a commitment to try and speak blessing in every situation.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** May your words of love and blessing be the vocabulary of my heart, O God.

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**Tuesday 02 July 2019**

**Reading:** Ephesians 5:6-20

**Reflection:** There is much, in our world, that is "popular" and "accepted" and "commonplace" that is not life giving and good. We easily try to excuse our quests for power, pleasure and possessions by appealing to what others do. But, the fact that "everyone is doing it" does not protect us from the damage that these "dark" works bring. Paul knew this and so he wrote to challenge the Ephesian Christians to give up anything that is not filled with the light of Christ. This meant that they should live with care and thoughtfulness, with wisdom and with a readiness to make use of whatever opportunities for goodness became available. They were to open themselves to God's Spirit and fill their lives with thanksgiving and joyful worship.

It does not come naturally to live like this - it takes work to be reflective, to be careful of our words and actions and to constantly stay open to God's Spirit. But, if we are willing to do the work, on a daily basis, we will discover that God's light floods through every moment, every task and every interaction. We will develop a capacity to sense what is good and right in each moment, and an ability to shine God's light into the lives of those around us. In this way, we will find life and joy for ourselves, but we will also bring life and joy to others.

What work do you need to do today to open yourself to God's light?

**Practice for Today:** The practice of reflection may seem to be a waste of time in our busy, action-oriented world. But, when we take the time to examine our lives, we are able to identify what harms us and what heals us, and work toward greater wholeness. Whether it's through a moment of silence, or through journaling, or another reflective practice, take time to examine yourself today.

**Breath-Prayer for Today:** As I examine my life in your presence, O God, show me how to live carefully and worshipfully.

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**Wednesday 03 July 2019**

**Reading:** Jeremiah 23:16-22

**Reflection:** Jeremiah was not the only prophet to God's people. There were a number of others who spoke messages that were very different to that of Jeremiah - which made his job so much harder. He could see what was happening in his nation and in the world, and he knew what the consequences would be, so he spoke the truth about the situation. But, the people preferred to listen to the "prophets" who told them what they wanted to hear - that everything would be fine, and that God had promised nothing but blessing.
There was no challenge in their words, and, as a result, the people felt no need to change the way they lived - with injustice, idolatry, self-centredness, and self-indulgence. It may have seemed to some of these false prophets that it would be best to reassure the people of God's love and to speak kindly to them rather than upset or offend them. But, Jeremiah knew that goodness is not permissiveness. Sometimes the best thing we can do is confront the destructive behaviour in our lives, the lives of those around us, and in our society, and warn people of the deceit in the words of the false prophets.

It may be a bit frightening to think of living prophetically like Jeremiah did. You may not be a confrontational person, and you may not want to challenge the darkness around you. The good news is that we don't all have to be prophets to live prophetically. The best way to challenge the bad is to live the good. As you embrace the humility, simplicity, and self-giving of Jesus, your life automatically reflects the light of Jesus and challenges the darkness. In fact, even if you do feel led to speak, you can only do so if your life is already speaking louder than your words!

How can you let your light shine today?

Practice for Today: One of the toughest things to do can be to stay true to our convictions in the face of opposition. This is not an ability we can find in a single moment. It takes practice to strengthen our convictions - and the practice of dedication, in which we consciously commit our way and our hearts to God, is a good conviction-strengthening exercise. Today, and every day, dedicate yourself to God again - out loud if possible.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Even when it is hard to do so, I dedicate myself to you and your ways, O God.

Thursday 04 July 2019
Reading: Romans 7:14-25

Reflection: I find these words from the apostle Paul very comforting. It's good to know that Paul struggled, as we all do, with apathy and self-indulgence. He knew what it was to desire to do good, but to fail. And he knew what it was to try not to do what is wrong and to do it anyway. As he admitted this brokenness in himself, Paul taught that it is the same for everyone. We all have regrets, "What-was-I-thinking?" moments, and sinful desires. That's why we need a power beyond ourselves to break free of our worst selves.

The good news, though, is that God has already given us all we need to find healing. In Christ the power of evil is destroyed, and through God's Spirit, the power of love and life is within us. All we need to do is learn, a little more each day, to allow Christ's love and justice, Christ's peace and servanthood to fill us and guide us. If we will learn to recognise and acknowledge our brokenness, and to open to God's Spirit each day, we will discover that we grow to be more like Jesus over time, and our lives radiate the light of Christ increasingly strongly.

What struggles with sin do you need to acknowledge to God today? How can you open yourself to the power of God's Spirit to overcome these temptations?

Practice for Today: It is one thing to confess our sins to God. But, if we don't receive the power to overcome our worst, we end up repeating the same mistakes. This is why we need to invoke the presence and power of God's Spirit. Today, allow the practice of invocation to strengthen and liberate you.

Breath-Prayer for Today: Come Holy Spirit, give me the power to overcome sin and live in the light.

Friday 05 July 2019
Reading: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7

Reflection: We love it when God works in dramatic and miraculous ways, but this is not always the way God chooses to act. In fact, it's not even the norm. Most often God's work is done by ordinary people going about their ordinary lives, but with a sense of God's purpose and presence within the routine.

In today's reading Paul appears to have been raising funds for the church in Jerusalem. For some reason - perhaps because of the persecution they had suffered - the Jerusalem church was struggling, and so on his travels, Paul asked the churches to which
he ministered to share some of their resources with their brothers and sisters in Jerusalem. There may have been some question in the minds of the Corinthian church about the purpose of these gifts, and so they may have been reluctant to give. Paul, however, tells them about the tremendous, sacrificial generosity of the Macedonian churches. Although they did not have much themselves, the Macedonians were eager to contribute and gave beyond what they could really afford. It is small acts of love and self-giving like this that manifest God's Reign in our communities. Paul did not deny the ways that God was working through the Corinthians. He lists a number of ways they "excel" - all of which are also simple, natural ways that God's grace is expressed and experienced. But, he also longs for them to embrace giving as part of their life of faith, and that's why he writes these words.

In what ordinary ways do you see God at work in your life? How can you respond in gratitude and generosity today?

**Practice for Today**: One of simplest and most profound of Christian disciplines is that of giving. When we share some of our time, talents and treasures with others, we are reminded of how we have been blessed, and we are able to enjoy the privilege of sharing the blessing. Furthermore, when we give, we become participants in the work of God's Reign in our part of the world. Today, look for as many ways as you can to be generous.

**Breath-Prayer for Today**: In thanksgiving for all I enjoy, O God, I give to others in your name.

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**Saturday 06 July 2019**

**Reading**: 2 Kings 4:32-37

**Reflection**: Today's reading tells the story of a dramatic miracle performed by the prophet Elisha, but the story starts in very ordinary ways. As a prophet, Elisha traveled a lot. In the town of Shunem, a woman invited him for a meal. Then, whenever he passed through, he would eat with her and her elderly husband. After some time, she asked her husband to help her create a guest room where Elisha could stay when he was on the road. It was a small and simple act of hospitality, but it clearly meant a lot to the prophet. In return he promised her that she would bare a child - since she had no children. Sure enough, to the joy of the woman, the prophecy came true. But, then, the boy died quite suddenly, and so she went to Elisha to ask for his help. After trying some other alternatives, Elisha finally arrived at the house himself, and found the boy lying in the guest room. It was a natural response for Elisha to do what he could - raise the boy back to life. It may have been dramatic and miraculous, but in the context of Elisha's relationship with this family, it was a very natural progression.

It seems that this is how God loves to work - and we will explore this more tomorrow. God's love and grace are experienced in the simple daily acts of kindness, generosity and hospitality that we share. Then, when crises hit, somehow the miraculous work of God feels very natural - like it's just a part of the ordinary flow of life. This is why it can sometimes be really easy to miss the miracles when they happen. The key, though, is to ensure that we don't despise the small, ordinary ways that grace breaks into our world.

How can you open yourself to God's "ordinary" activity today?

**Practice for Today**: Sometimes we make prayer only about the supernatural and the miraculous. When we do this, we rob our prayers of power. The real impact of prayer is when our whole lives are filled with prayer, and when we recognise that, in small and ordinary ways, we can be the answers to our own prayers. Today, allow your prayer to fill your life, and to be an ordinary part of how you live and love.

**Breath-Prayer for Today**: In every moment, and in every interaction, may I be a channel of your grace, O God.

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