

Summer Worship Series

The Inventions of Summer

"There is no end, believe me! to the inventions of summer..." -Mary Oliver, *The Roses*



Worship Title: SUNFLOWERS: Pronouncing a Blessing
Taking Up the Offerings

Invitation to Gather & Candle Lighting

In this season of long light and growing things,
we gather in the presence of the Holy.

We come to notice, to listen, to pray.

**In the quiet work of creation, God is near—
in what delights us,
and in what troubles us.**

God meets us here, in the ordinary.

In the gifts of the earth, creation teaches us gratitude.

(Light the candle.)

**We open our hearts—
to wonder, to wisdom, to the Spirit's gentle leading.
So, we worship.**

Opening Prayer

Maker of all that grows and breathes,
we come to you
**in the beauty, the abundance,
and even in the disturbances of life.**

Open us to your presence in the ordinary.
**Open our hearts to receive what the moment teaches.
Open our lives to become a blessing in the world.**

In this time, may *string beans*
teach us your way—

**the way of praise,
the way of gratitude,
the way of compassion,
the way of faithful prayer.**

We come in wonder, in honesty, in hope. Amen.

Scripture Reading

PSALM 113

"From the rising of the sun to its setting
the name of the LORD is to be praised." -- Psalm 113:3

PAUSE FOR REFLECTION

The poet Mary Oliver calls the sun the "best preacher that ever was."¹ That makes a field of sunflowers the best congregation ever. Don't you just love their bright colour and how they turn themselves to face the sun? They make a journey every day.

Some varieties of sunflowers grow over 12 feet tall. I think they are elegant. They are also practical. Sunflowers are used for medicine, dye, food, and oil. They attract bees. Deer find them tasty when the plant is young. (This might not be a good thing if you are not a deer.) Birds enjoy the seeds; one sunflower can contain up to 2000 seeds. Artists love their uniqueness.

Sunflowers are one of my favourite “inventions of summer.” They spark awe in me. Their turning with the sun makes me think they are very good at praising the Maker. They are practiced in blessing.

In Psalm 113, the Psalmist thinks the Sun’s daily journey across the sky is a source of wonder. With the sunrise we awaken to the day and look expectantly to new beginnings, fresh possibilities and novel joys. With the sunset we say thanks, we let go all that is undone, deal with what is unsettled in us and seek rest in the stillness of the evening.

Like sunflowers who follow the sun, we are part of this rhythm. This is our daily prayer. We receive the day with the intention of seeing the Divine in every place, in every creature, in every hour. Here is God. And here. And here. God is pouring God into sunflowers and into all that is around us. We are not alone. Blessed be!

Each day is different. Some days it is easy to be delighted and bless the Maker. It’s delightful to be part of the journey from the rising of the sun to its setting. Some days our feelings are ragged, and our emotions run deep. These days make it difficult to trust

in that Sustaining Mystery. We find it hard to see the sun.

Blessing is a choice we make every day. When we rise up and when we lay down and all the moments in between. Indeed, we can bless the Maker in all things and every situation. Some days it just takes more effort, more practice.

Prayer Bench

What are the ways you bless the Maker? What helps you notice the Presence of God in

all that is around you? What is your morning practice of welcoming the day? through the journey of the day? when evening comes? Might you find a sign or a symbol of Sustaining Mystery as you go through this day? As you set your face to the sun today, how many ways will you find to praise the Maker?

BREATH PRAYER

Sing praises to the Maker of the Universe.

PRACTICE “PRONOUNCING A BLESSING”

“Pronouncing a blessing.” It has an old-fashioned air to it, doesn’t it? What images come to mind?

The work of pronouncing a blessing belongs to all and it isn’t limited to the human species. The sunset pronounced a blessing as it dipped in glory. The friend who called or texted “just because” pronounced a blessing on your friendship.

Blessings call out goodness in ourselves, in others, and in the world around us. “Bless you, Sun, for you are faithful in your daily journey across the sky.” “Bless you, Sunflower, for you bring cheer to many hearts.” “Bless you human one, may you be well this day.”

Pronounce blessings today.

Bless the experiences and encounters of this day remembering the Sustaining Presence

of the One with us in all times, in all places, and in all circumstances.

Bless the earth, its creatures and all the elements, as you come across them today.

Affirm their essential goodness.

Bless the humans, whether you know them or not, and trust the blessing reaches what

is good and true and beautiful in them.

Bless aloud. Bless silently. Be generous in pronouncing your blessings.

After you have blessed, allow your heart to swell with gratitude.

Write a poem. Dance. Journal. Sing.

BREATH PRAYER

“A divine voice sings through all creation.” – from a Jewish Prayer.

PRACTICE “TAKING UP THE OFFERINGS”

Find a giving position for your body. Seriously, try out a few postures and gestures. You will know when you have found the giving gesture that is right for you.

Hold this gesture and make silence for at least 5 minutes. Allow gifts to come to your heart. As a gift arrives, breathe in your thanks. Like this: A tree...

breathe in thanks and then let go the thought. Return to silence and receive another gift. The gift of what you ate for lunch ... breathe in thanks and then let go the thought. Allow other gifts to come to your heart. Delight in other inventions of summer. Accept all gifts that arise even the ones that may not initially feel like a gift. Accept and let go with gratitude in your heart.

When your 5 minutes has passed (or however long you decide to pray) ask yourself: What is the gift I will give today that changes the world a little bit? Notice during the day the times you are offering gift to the world. Keep gifts in motion.

2 “Returning the Gift” by Robin Wall Kimmerer posted in the Centre for Humans and Nature, online article accessed May 2020. <https://www.humansandnature.org/earth-ethic-robin-kimmerer>

Prayer of the People

A Prayer of gratitude for the day so far.

God of this day and yesterday
we name in our hearts
all that unfolded:
the moments seen and unseen,
the work, the rest, the conversations.
We remember *(Pause)*

We give thanks
for small kindnesses,
for beauty glimpsed,
for strength we did not know we had.
Listen to our heartfelt thanksgiving ... *(shared aloud or in silence.)*

For what is unfinished,
or heavy,
or uncertain
we place it in your care. *(Pause)*

For the concerns our community,
our community of faith,
our world,
use the willingness of our hands to help.
“What is the gift I will give today to change the world a little bit?” *(Pause)*

Receive our willingness,
our hopes,
our lives as they are.
Stay with us in what remains of this day,
and shape us gently in your grace. Amen.

Closing Blessing of Gratitude
As you go from this place,
may you receive what is given.
In the small harvests of your days,
in what is enough,
in what is shared,
and may you recognize the gift.

Silent Prayer

**And as we have received,
we will also return blessing
to the earth,
to one another,
to the Giver of all good things. Amen.**

<https://vimeo.com/1172144922?fl=pl&fe=sh>