

Prayer on Sunday 14 February 2016

Living God – full of grace and full of truth – on this Sabbath day we pause to acknowledge you and honour you.

We gather to confess with our lips that you are Lord.

We confess that you are loving in every way and that your love is without measure.

We confess that we love only because you first loved us.

We confess that you love all – all people – including each one of us.

We confess that this love for us is complete – totally and utterly complete.

We confess that there is nothing we can do to make you love us anymore and we confess that there is nothing we can do to make you love us any less.

We gather to proclaim this miraculous mystery, even as we struggle to understand it ourselves.

It is difficult to get our head around the fact that, that which we need most in our life is a free gift that cannot be manufactured, or manipulated or merited by us in any way.

Lord this is so counter-cultural it is nearly impossible for us to trust to be true – and so even as we reach out to receive it we find ourselves denying it and fighting it. Like others before us, we believe, but help our unbelief.

Lord we meet during these early Lenten days freshly reminded that we are dust and to dust we will return. That our lives are not ours to do with as we please – but since you breathed your very self into the dust of our being we have the sacred responsibility and privilege of sheltering and honouring your holy presence within us.

Lord we confess that we fail to treasure your holy presence in ourselves and revere it in others.

Guilt and shame blind us to your presence within our own lives as fear and prejudice blind us to your presence in the lives of others.

In our blindness we do terrible things to others and to ourselves. We ignore, we take for granted, we exploit, we reject, we hurt, we belittle, we betray, we feel numb towards and destroy. Forgive us father for we do not know what we are doing. We do not know what we are doing because we have forgotten who we are. We have forgotten that we are your beloved children – precious to behold and as a people we have forgotten that we are one family who share your identical image at our core.

Lord as you breathed life into that original dirt breathe again in our lives especially when the dirt of our sin – the things that rob us and the world of life – cling to us.

Fill us with hope in your transformative power – that you are the God who brought life out of nothing – so that when we feel as good as nothing we will be reminded that you have all you need to resurrect *us* to new life – to the way of life that Jesus invites us to when he says: “Follow me.”

Before we return to dust set us free with renewed urgency to live for your praise and glory. Before we return to dust give us courage to be more honest with ourselves and more truthful with others.

Before we return to dust release us from the stranglehold of our possessions to risk greater generosity. Before we return to dust free our hearts to love more vulnerably. Before we return to dust open our eyes to the preciousness of the person sitting next to us.

Amen.