

Prayer 21 05 09 – Alan Storey

Holy One, with the psalmist of old we gather to sing you a new song ...
With all of creation we gather to make a joyful noise.

With the clouds that pattern the sky:

- that provide a playground for the birds
- that provide sporadic-shady-relief for labourers
- that join the heavens and earth with life-giving rain...we praise you.

With the trees that pattern the land:

- that provide a playground for the millions of insects and trillions of microscopic life forms that our lives unknowingly depend on
- that provide shade to sit for a morning cup of tea
- that draws water from the life-giving soil, overcoming gravity, into leaf and light of day ... we praise you.

With the people that pattern our lives:

- that provide homes not only for our bodies, but for our hearts
- that provide shade from burning judgement and rejection
- that draw our love out of our depths by their loving – keeping our hearts from turning to stone... we praise you.

We sing your praises for as the psalmist says, you have done marvellous things Oh Lord. You, secure victory after victory. And the victory you secure is the constant memory of your steadfast love and faithfulness. This really is your greatest victory as it was for Jesus – remaining true in steadfast love and faithfulness no matter the circumstances...including crucifying circumstances. We confess that we forget this. We forget your steadfast love and faithfulness, and your call to only concern ourselves with the victory of love and justice.

We confess that we are often obsessed about other victories that are no victory at all. The childish type of victory that depend on the defeat of some – the exclusion of some – the impoverishment of some – the estrangement of some – the belittlement of some... and even the death of some. The victories that alienate and hurt, that over time fester into fresh conflict...demanding another battle and probably another victory that is no victory at all because it to excludes, impoverishes, estranges, etc. etc. and so on and so on.

Forgive us for wasting your time with our prayers that seek to enlist you on to our side...as if you took sides in our childish ways. Forgive us for failing to remember that you do not have favourites. Forgive our logic that says for there to be a winner there must be a loser. Forgive our culture that prizes competition over co-operation. That says first place is the only place and that no one ever remembers who comes second. Remind us that in the end the last will be first and the first will be last. Remind us that you favour justice, mercy and humility ... and care little for our categories of nationality, religion and culture, around which we have shed so much blood.

You rejoice when we find common ground with our neighbours and celebrate when we humbly discover that we are no different from our enemy. By your Spirit open us to the wonder of all people. By your Spirit free us from all our beliefs that keep us separate from others. By your Spirit prod us past our prejudice to discover and rejoice in the full diversity of our human family. Help us to climb over the hurdles of our own arrogance to engage with others on the level ground of dignity and respect. By your Spirit enlist us in your ever-expanding embrace of the world. That we may put flesh on your love for all – all meaning all. Amen.