



Jerusalem and the Holy Land Sunday
Worship Resources

2025

The Revised Common Lectionary—Year C

Readings

Acts 16: 16-34; Psalm 97; Revelation 22: 12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17: 20-26

Context & Sermon Notes



The Gospel from the Farewell Discourse in John is, perhaps, more poignant than ever as we look from afar on the happenings in the Holy Land. Surely our prayers for unity and for peace that the deepest wish of God's heart should be fulfilled are for such a time as this.

This profound prayer of Jesus calls us to be a people of hope, a people that can look beyond the horizon to what might be possible and to what God desires. Innocent children throughout the Holy Land have paid a terrible cost in this war. This year the Canadian Companions of Jerusalem invite you to join in creating a foundation for their healing. This healing will need to be in body, mind and spirit and is a complex task. The focus of the project will be on the children of Gaza through the work of the Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre (JPBC). The Diocese of Jerusalem's ministry includes parishes, hospitals, clinics and rehabilitation centres of which the JPBC is one.

More than 46,000 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, many of those children. With homes and infrastructure flattened, nearly 2 million people have been displaced, forced to face extreme hunger and disease in overcrowded shelters. We've seen the same trend of death, destruction and displacement in Lebanon too. (Christian Aid 2025) Providing rehabilitation services to the children of Gaza was always difficult, but now and going into the future it is doubly so.¹

The Jerusalem Princess Basma Centre itself is located on the mount of olives in Jerusalem. It started operating in 1964. Since then, the Centre has treated thousands of Palestinian children with disabilities, while hosting their mothers and empowering their families. It is a charitable, nongovernmental, non-profit organization operating under the Anglican Episcopal Church within the Diocese of Jerusalem. You can read more about it here on their website:

<https://www.basmacentre.org>

This year, 2025, the special project for this Jerusalem and the Holy Land Sunday is to ensure one pediatrician completes an accredited training fellowship and supervised placement in pediatric rehabilitation to enable JPBC to continue its work in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.

In times such as these we cry out in horror at what we have seen and we ask what we can do when the needs are so great. This is a place to start, to acknowledge the needs yes, but then to imagine a future where the children of Gaza can be helped on a healing path.

The theologian Karl Barth said that every time we put our hands together to pray –we are rising up in solidarity against the disorder of the world. We all know that the world, and indeed the church – can be disorderly sometimes, the spirit is in us inspiring us to prayer, Jesus is beside us encouraging us to speak to our Father in heaven, our friends in our church family support us, all these things can help us bring order to disorder and calm our hearts in the midst of these times. Let Jesus' Ancient words resound in your heart. This Sunday will you pray with us, will you hope with us and will you act with us for the future of God's dream. Know that we are called to such a time as this for the healing of the children of Gaza.

—Jane Alexander, *Canadian Companions of Jerusalem Advisory Council member*

¹ According to UNICEF, more than 14,500 children have been killed in Gaza since the start of the war: that's more than the number of children killed in 4 years of wars worldwide. 25,000 children have been injured: Gaza has the highest number of child amputees per capita in the world. 17,000 children have been separated from their parents as a result of the conflict, or find themselves unaccompanied following the death of their parents. Over a million children have been displaced. These are terrible figures. The war has destroyed almost all essential infrastructure. (Report to UN Security Council January 2025.)

Additional Sermon Notes

Holding fast to hope in times of terror is a defiant action for people of faith throughout the world. Tragedies in our communities, war and discord in the world are all heartbreaking events. It is perhaps not a surprise that we can become numb or even apathetic in the face of the world's suffering. It is perhaps a symptom of our own heartbreak and despair. The conflict in the Holy Land has brought us all to our knees.

And it is exactly at times like these that we need Jesus. When God shows light in our dark places – we know that God is real, and present, and someone on whom we can rely. I need that assurance in the face of the world right now. I need the assurance that even when things seem so bleak God is steadfast and keeps pointing us to a future of hope and of peace. And God does that even when that hope seems impossible. When we are not sure of what life holds next, when we are in turmoil within ourselves, God says I am right here, I am not going anywhere. God knows we are made for love and for community and for relationship -not just some of us, but all of us. The gospel calls us to live as people who know we are loved and that knowing that love we are to share it. It calls us to proclaim the love and justice of God in Christ. Why? Because we are to live and act and love as one body, one people.

We know that Jesus' prayer for us is that we are to be one, united in love and held together by the power of the Holy spirit. Isn't that an amazing prayer? Jesus prayed for the unity of God's family. That you and I might be brothers and sisters, not friends, not acquaintances, not kissing cousins, but brothers and sisters. Our job is to make his vision of the church a reality. In the collection of letters and papers from prison, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, wrote: The church is the church only when it exists for others.... The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary human life, not dominating, but helping and serving.... It must not underestimate the importance of human example which has its origin in the humanity of Jesus.

Yusef Daher, coordinator of the Jerusalem Liaison Office of the World Council of Churches in Jerusalem has said that amid violence and devastation, the only place left for hope is the Bible. "We ask ourselves what Jesus would do in such circumstances," he said. "When we look at the displaced people of Gaza or any other refugee camp in the West Bank, we see how important their steadfastness is."² We know that Jesus would pray and call upon the Father. We know that Jesus would cry for peace, comfort those who mourn and draw the children of the Holy Land to himself. Knowing this our task is clear. We are called to a steadfastness of prayer and of global witness.

² <https://www.oikoumene.org/news/yusef-daher-one-day-this-killing-and-madness-will-stop>

This Sunday we can join with people across the Anglican Church of Canada and search for a common vision, to see ways in which the world can be transformed, how lives can be enriched because that is what Jesus calls us to do. To make sure no one is invisible and to welcome all even seemingly the smallest, least important people as the world would see them. We pray for our brothers and sisters in the churches of Palestine and in the Diocese of Jerusalem. That we might be one – not clones of one another but a united family of God sharing hope in faith and love. We pray for all people made in the image of God who live in the Holy Land.

Some of our finest moments in the Christian churches and communities are when we work and witness together. The consistent voice of prayer for peace, the consistent call to our leaders to advocate for an end to the war. This is our work at a time such as this. The thousands of children in the Holy Land are counting on us not to forget them. They are our family and we are theirs.

Additional Prayers

God of justice, we pray with hopeful hearts
that your beloved children of the Holy Land
will be spared a future of sustained violence and unrest
and that a recognition of the humanity of all people will prevail.
from American Friends of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem

Prayer for Peace in the Holy Land

O God of all justice and peace, we cry out to you in the midst of the pain and trauma of violence and fear which prevails in the Holy Land.
Be with those who need you in these days of suffering
we pray for people of all faiths – Jews, Muslims and Christians
and for all people of the land.
While we pray to you, O Lord, for an end of violence
and the establishment of peace,
we also call to you to bring justice and equality to the peoples.
Guide us into your kingdom where all people
Are treated with dignity and honour as your children –
for to all of us you are our Heavenly Father.
In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

*Archbishop Hosam
March 2024*

Spirit of the living God,
come afresh on your holy land.
Help your people to restore broken relationships.
Give them patience to break down barriers of suspicion and mistrust;
ability to discern personal prejudices and the courage to overcome fear.
Teach them to respect each other's integrity and rights
so that your kingdom may be established on earth.
For Jesus' sake. Amen.

Rt Rev Riah Abu El-Assal, from In God's Hands, WCC

God, hear our prayers for peace in the Middle East.
May all people in the region be protected, safe from harm.
We pray that this crisis will end now, with no further loss of life.
God, may the injured and distressed know your healing presence.
May the powerful and the decision-makers
follow the paths of justice, mercy and peace.
We pray for recognition of the dignity and value of every life.
May the clamour of violence cease,
Replaced by the beating of swords into ploughshares.
God, in your name,
Amen

Christian Aid

We believe that God is present
in the darkness before dawn;
in the waiting and uncertainty where fear and courage join hands,
conflict and caring link arms, and the sun rises over barbed wire.
We believe in a with-us God who sits down in our midst to share our
humanity. We affirm a faith that takes us beyond the safe place: into
action, into vulnerability and into the streets.
We commit ourselves to work for change
and put ourselves on the line;
to bear responsibility, take risks,
live powerfully and face humiliation;
to stand with those on the edge;
to choose life and be used by the spirit
for God's new community of hope.
Amen.

Iona Community

Additional Music

Ancient Words – Robin Mark

CP 401 How can I keep from singing

CP 572 Let there be light

CP 73 One bread One Body

CP 465 Gather us in

Lord Reign In Me – Brenton Brown

How Good and Pleasant It Is – Graham Kendrick

Your Grace is Enough – Chris Tomlin

O Freedom - [https://hymnary.org/text/freedom is coming - instances](https://hymnary.org/text/freedom%20is%20coming%20-%20instances)

Consider Universal Child as a piece to play during reflection

<https://youtu.be/0nInCpOvDC8>