



**DAILY SCRIPTURE & PRAYER RESOURCE for the
WEEK OF PRAYER FOR CHRISTIAN UNITY
12 MAY – 19 MAY 2013**

DAY 3—TUESDAY 14 MAY

“Walking towards freedom”

Scripture Readings

Exodus 1: 15-22	The Hebrew midwives obey God’s law over the command of Pharaoh
Psalms 17: 1-6	The confident prayer of one open to God’s gaze
2 Cor. 3: 17-18	The glorious freedom of God’s children in Christ
John 4: 4-26	Conversation with Jesus leads the Samaritan woman into freer living

“Walking towards freedom”

Today we are invited to celebrate the efforts of communities across our world that are oppressed, like the Dalits in India, as they protest against all that enslaves human beings. As Christians committed to greater unity, we learn that the removal of all that separates people from one another is an essential part of fullness of life, freedom in the Spirit.

Commentary:

Walking humbly with the Lord is always a walk into receiving the freedom he opens up before all people. With this in mind we celebrate. We celebrate the mystery of the struggle for freedom, which takes place even in the places where oppression, prejudice and poverty seem to be impossible burdens. The resolute refusal to accept inhuman commands and conditions – like those given by Pharaoh to the midwives of the enslaved Hebrew people – can seem like small actions; but these are often the kinds of actions towards freedom going on in local communities everywhere, among people caught up in different ways within the patterns of inequality across the globe. So we celebrate the determination for freedom – in dignity, social inclusion, and a proper share in all that is good.

The step-by-step journey into freedom from unjust discrimination and practices of prejudice is brought home to us by the story of Jesus’ meeting at the well with the woman of Samaria. Here is a woman who seeks, first of all, to question the prejudices which confront her, as well as to seek ways of alleviating the practical burdens of her life. These concerns are the starting place for her conversation with Jesus. Jesus himself engages in conversation with her on the bases both of his need for her practical help (he is thirsty) and in a mutual exploration of the social prejudices which make this help seem problematic. Bit by bit the way of a freer life is opened up before the woman, as the reality of the complexities of her life are seen more clearly in the light of Jesus’ words. In the end these personal insights return the conversation to a place where what divides these two groups of people – including where they should worship – is transcended. “Worship in spirit and in truth” is what is required; and here we learn to be free from all that holds us back from life together, life in its fullness.

To be called into greater freedom in Christ, is a calling to deeper communion. Those things which separate us – both as Christians searching for unity, and as people kept apart by unjust traditions and inequalities – keep us captives, and hidden from one another. Our freedom in Christ is, rather, characterised by that new life in the Spirit, which enables us, together, to stand before the glories of God “with unveiled faces”. It is in this glorious light that we learn to see each other more truly, as we grow in Christ’s likeness towards the fullness of Christian unity.

Questions for reflection/ discussion

1. What does it mean to “reflect the glory of the Lord with uncovered faces”, to be transformed into his likeness, and to see that glory and transformation in others? [II Cor. 3:18]
2. How do the prejudices and judgments of the world – with regard to caste, age, gender, race, educational background – stop us, even in our own Christian communities, seeing each other clearly in the light of Christ? How can we change this?
3. What steps can we take – practical, political and ideological – towards justice, freedom and the meeting of basic human needs for people caught up in different ways within the patterns of inequality across the globe?
4. What small, practical steps can we take, as Christians together, towards the freedom of the Children of God (Romans 8.:21) for ourselves and our churches, and for our wider society?

Prayer for the Day: Liberating God, we thank you for the resilience and hopeful faith of those who struggle for dignity and fullness of life. We know that you raise up those who are cast down, and free those who are bound. Your Son Jesus walks with us to show us the path to authentic freedom. May we appreciate what has been given to us, and be strengthened to overcome all within us that enslaves. Send us your Spirit, and by that Spirit set us free from all that inhibits, alienates and divides us, so that with voices united we can proclaim your love to the world. God of life, lead us to justice and peace. Amen.



National Council of
Churches in Australia
Faith and Unity Commission