

**54C*THE TIMELESS PSALMS:
A CALL TO WORSHIP
PENTECOST 15C 2013 [Ordinary 22C] & [Proper 17C]
PSALM 81: 1, 10-16**

Come, you people of God, come and gather in God's holy presence.

God said: *"Come and listen to my word of truth, and follow in my way."*

Come, you people of God, come and worship the God of the ages.

God said: *"I am the God who rescued you and I will satisfy your needs."*

Come, you people of God, come, for God said: *"I am the Lord your God."*

**God said: *"In my mercy I will accept you back from your wrong paths,
and through my generosity, I offer you the anticipation of a new beginning—
with every gift you need from God's bountiful store of grace and goodness."***

Thanks be to our Generous and Saving God who is always ready to listen. Amen.

Acknowledgements:

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**PRAYERS OF CONFESSION & PETITION:
PENTECOST 15C 2013 [Ordinary 22C] & [Proper 17C]
PSALM 81: 1, 10-16**

Generous God, you have so graciously given us the option of making our own choices in life, in relationships, and in the way we accept or reject our God, as our Maker and Saviour. We confess to you and each other, that we have not always chosen wisely; and that we have abused God's gift of free choice in how we choose to live, and even whether we choose to worship our Gracious God. In our pride and arrogance, we took advantage of the freedom with which God has blessed us and we failed to take any blame or responsibility for our own or our shared actions. We have even rejected the wisdom of our own past experiences - quite sure that we knew what was best for ourselves, and for our community. God only asked that we listened for God's words of truth and grace, and to willingly make ourselves vulnerable, and God would shower us with all of life's gifts we would ever need – but no – we always knew best!

Help us, O Eternal God, to listen to your truth and faithfully following your paths.

Faithful God, you even gave us rules to follow if we so choose, to enable us to live in peace and harmony; but in our foolishness, we always thought we knew what was best and right for us, individually and collectively. Despite these failures, God still called to us to listen to God's words of mercy and grace, and having been so generously rescued us from our self-inflicted pain and woes; God invited us once again to return from the mess we have made of our individual and shared lives. Through the grace and goodness our compassionate and saving God, we were offered another fresh start in life, and to return to the true worship of God.

Help us, O Forgiving God, to listen to your truth and faithfully following your paths.

Our Holy God's response to this foolishness was to remind us: *"For it was I, the Lord your God, who rescued you..."* In God's gracious generosity, God continued to treat us as God's very own people - loved and wanted - and our God yearned for us to listen and be guided and blessed. Through God's infinite love, we were allowed to follow our own path and to become familiar with evil, and to learn what it meant to live in a society that was immoral, and to be exposed to all that denied and defiled God. The Psalmist continues to invite us to know and experience once again the strength of God, and the capacity that God has to overcome and defeat evil. If we choose to turn from that path of evil's entrapment, God will shower us with the blessings that enrich life. So, *"Sing praises to God, who is our strength, Sing to our God..."* For God has promised to *"...feed you with the best of foods. I would satisfy you with wild honey from the rock."* How satisfying is our God's grace and mercy!

Help us, O Welcoming God, to listen to your truth and faithfully following your paths. Amen.

**A PERSONAL MEDITATION:
PENTECOST 15C 2013 [Ordinary 22C] & [Proper 17C]
PSALM 81: 1, 10-16**

Generally, the ancient people of God led a quite orderly life of worship and praise of God with special Psalms created to be used in their religious festival events. Psalm 81 is one such Psalm, to be celebrated in the seventh month of the year during the new moon - known as the "Feast of the Tabernacles"—at the completion of their gathering of their harvests. It was also a time for remembering God's goodness and mercy towards God's people throughout their long and diverse history. The people of God were also clearly reminded of their many past failures to listen to God's words and wisdom; and for the ways they had flouted God's commands, and then suffered for their mistakes.

Creative pause: Do we give thanks to God for the gathering in of our harvests?

Despite their orderly life of worship observances, the ancient people of God were also exposed to other influences through their apparently endless wars and conflicts with neighbouring nations, and through their times of defeat, or being exiled from their home land and their subsequent forced social integration. Evil and immorality has continued through countless centuries, and people are still forced to live within that environment, whether they wish to or not, and each individual has to make the choice in how that deal with these issues. I grew up in a very sheltered environment, but after leaving school, I discovered a world where evil's face was unveiled in all its crudeness and filth! What a shock that was, especially when sexual abuse became part of that reality. The Psalmist sang: "*Sing praises to God, our strength....*" That was my personal experience as God's strength enabled me to confront my oppressor, and to be freed of that evil. The sweetness of God's generosity remains a living memory for me, and the promise that as we become vulnerable before God, so we are fed with life's richest blessings and God's goodness and mercy. Thanks be to God – always.

Creative pause: "*Sing praises to God, who is our strength....*"

A few years ago I was involved in a "Parish Review", which included a review of the spiritual health of a congregation, and I remember being quite shocked by the minister's complacent remark that he had provided a "maintenance ministry" for his congregation. In my experiences within the "world church", congregations are either moving forward or they are retreating - they are never static or "maintained". "*The Basis of Union*" document of the Uniting Church in Australia concludes with the following paragraph: "*The Uniting Church affirms that it belongs to the people of God on the way to the promised end. The Uniting Church prays that, through the gift of the Spirit, God will constantly correct that which is erroneous in its life, will bring it into deeper unity with other Churches, and will use its worship, witness and service to God's eternal glory through Jesus Christ the Lord.*" Amen and Amen!

Creative pause: Am I faithfully following "*.....on the way to the promised end....*"?