

# PACIFIC DAY OF PRAYER

Prepared by the Fiji Methodist Women's Fellowship



May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019

## Foreword

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Bula vinaka and warm greetings in the name of God the Father, our Lord Jesus Christ and God the Holy Spirit. May the love, peace and grace of our Heavenly Father bind us together and strengthen our families, our communities and our countries as we unite in prayer on this year's Pacific Day of Prayer.

The theme for this year's Pacific Day of Prayer is "How Can We Sing The Lord's Song In A Strange Land" based on Psalms 137. The children of Israel found themselves as captives again 900 years after being freed from captivity. They had lost their ability to sing the Lord's song. The harps that were dedicated to give praise to God are silent now by the River of Babylon. The harps of witnessing, prayer, fellowship and praise in worship hang on the willows. They wondered how they would continue to endure on foreign soil. How could they continue to sing the Lord's songs which were supposed to be sung in the Temple, in the exile?

Their answer was an oath to never forget Jerusalem. In Babylon, they promised themselves never to repeat that mistake, and never to forget Jerusalem. **True believers can't give up. What we feel is a setback is only a setup for our Lord and Saviour to step through.**

We must pray without ceasing. We must not give up on praying for the issues faced by the Pacific and we have these as our prayer focus – feel free to add yours:

- Gender based violence and sexual abuse.
- Violence against Women and Children
- Global Warming and Climate Change effects
- Natural disasters
- Food security and clean water supply,
- Threats to human settlements and infrastructure
- Consequences of all the above on Human Health

We are asked to specifically remember our brothers and sisters in West Papua in their cry for independent. We acknowledge the Pacific Council of Churches for giving Fiji the opportunity to prepare the program for a day that the body of Christ in the Pacific will unite in prayer. The Committee members (refer to Appendix I) responsible for the program are to be commended for their contributions, a reflection of their love for Christ. We praise The Holy Spirit for his guidance and presence in the Committee meetings and deliberations.

The Program consists of two bible studies and a sermon outline to help you in your sermon preparation and the order of worship. We hope that that it will help you grow in your relationship with God. May God be kind to you and let you live in perfect peace. We also pray that the program will help you keep learning more about our God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.



**Rev. Sainimere M. Degei**  
**Secretary for the Methodist Women's Fellowship, Fiji Islands.**

# Bible Study

**(There are two bible studies prepared and you are asked to do both preferably on two consecutive days prior to the Pacific Day of Prayer)**

## **BIBLE STUDY ONE**

**THEME:** How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

**TEXT:** Luke 4: 17-30

**AIM:** The aim of this bible study is to help the people read and interpret the text to fork out as far as possible the original meaning and be able to apply it to our present situations. The emphasis is in the social context of living in bondage or freedom in the land that we live in.

**OUTCOMES:** At the end of this study participants should be able to:

- a) know the background and context of the text
- b) accept, believe and embrace the biblical truth extracted from the text
- c) know how these Biblical truths affect us spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally and socially
- d) apply or live biblical truths in our lives in various situation.
- e) relate this text to the theme HOW CAN WE SING THE LORD'S SONG IN A STRANGE LAND

## **PROGRAMME**

### **1.0 Prayer**

### **2.0 Read the text six times**

### **3.0 Exploration and Discovery**

#### **Background**

Luke placed Jesus sermon in his hometown of Nazareth as an inaugural message for His ministry. *"I'm the One Isaiah spoke of"*. As he read from Isaiah about divine deliverance (see Isaiah 61: 1-2) the people gave Him their undivided attention (4:16-20). Jesus choice of Isaiah as His subject caused a stir. All Israel believed this passage not only to be the text that announce the Messiah's coming, but also the one that instituted the year of the Jubilee (the year of the Lord's favor). When the Messiah, came everyone was to get a new beginning, - the captives, the poor, the oppressed, the bound, the blind and the indebted. However, when He applied the passage to Himself (4:21-24) and then suggested that God wanted to help the Gentiles as well as Jews (4:25-27) they threw Him out of town and tried to kill Him, but Jesus miraculously escaped (4:25-30).

#### **The Heart of the Message**

The acceptable year is an allusion to the Old Testament Jubilee year which proclaimed liberation for indentured servants and for the land. However, Jesus would proclaim a great liberation – a time of reconciliation with God and freedom from the results of human sin.

The gospel message is ideally suited to the captives, the poor and those who know their need. The Messiah makes all things new and His reign pertains to every aspect of our lives, physical, social, spiritual, financial.

The prophecy came true when Jesus stood to read the scriptures, "the Spirit of the Lord is upon me....." He was the One sent to bring the full benefits of salvation promised to God's people.

**Jesus Ministry**

	TASK	SPIRITUAL	PHYSICAL
1.	Preach the Gospel to the poor	Tell the story of Jesus	Live out the story by helping the needy
2.	Proclaim release for the captives	Teach the sin's bondage is over	Fight for freedom for all
3.	Recovery of sight to the blind	Help remove ignorance of God	Provide Medical Help for the sick
4.	Set free those who are oppressed	Release people from sin's grasp	Help remove injustice from the world
5.	Proclaim the Year of the Lord	Instill hope in the spiritually dead	Work so humans everywhere may be free and thrive

**4.0 Appropriate – Group Discussion**

***(Class to be divided into groups of seven)***

**Questions**

- 4.1 What does the text tell us about the God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit?
- 4.2 What does the text tell us about the people?
- 4.3 Relate what you found out about God and the people to today's situation?
- 4.4 What would have been the Hebrews' answer to the theme, *How can we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?*
- 4.5 What is the Lord's song in the Pacific/church?
- 4.6 Can we sing the Lord's Song in the Pacific today? Yes, No.....Why?
- 4.7 We all want to sing the Lord's song wherever we are today, what should we do to make this possible?

**5.0 Reporting and Assuming Responsibility**

Groups to report their findings.

**6.0 Prayer & Benediction**

## **BIBLE STUDY 2**

**THEME:** What song are we singing? Let us not lose our song.

**TEXT:** Psalm 137 : 1-9

**AIM:** The aim of this Bible study is to help us read and understand the Word of God and to bring out as far as possible its original historical context and meaning and be able to apply it to our all areas in our present situations. The emphasis is in the social context of living in bondage or freedom in our own land.

**OUTCOMES:** At the end of this study participants should be able to:

- a) know the background and context of the text
- b) accept, believe and embrace the biblical truth extracted from the text
- c) know how these Biblical truths affect us spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally and socially
- d) apply or live biblical truths in our lives in various situation.
- e) relate this text to the theme HOW CAN WE SING THE LORD'S SONG IN A STRANGE LAND?

## **PROGRAMME**

1.0 Prayer

2.0 Read the text six times

3.0 Exploration and Discovery

## **BACKGROUND - PSALM 137**

- ❖ GOD had chosen Israel to be a light to the nations of the whole world. This means that they were to witness to the whole world who GOD is.
- ❖ He had covenanted with them, called them out and gave them the promised land.
- ❖ God had rescued them from Egypt the land of slavery, the house of bondage to Pharaoh, the picture of the house of bondage to satan and sin.
- ❖ He delivered them and gave them a land flowing with milk and honey.
- ❖ GOD led them through the wilderness for 40 years.
- ❖ In His covenant, GOD had set a standard of conduct for them as His people. He gave them the LAW, the 10 Commandments, and said they needed to abide by it.
- ❖ GOD said if they obeyed, he would bless them, watch over them, provide for them, and put a hedge of protection around them. But he also said that if they chose to disobey, then he would punish them by pushing back the hedge, and allowing their enemies to pursue and have victory over them.

- ❖ In the Promised land, they built their city Jerusalem which means the House of Peace. Under kingship, they prospered but messed up their worship of GOD, they forgot HIM, and worship other gods.
- ❖ They forgot their everyday life of obedience but God remembers.
- ❖ GOD said in Isaiah 1:19-20 "If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land. But if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword."
- ❖ Sure enough, about 687 BC, the armies of Babylon came destroy everything and took them as their slaves.
- ❖ Thus they were taken into exile for 70years. This is because they were supposed to let the land lay fallow every 7th year, but they had not done that for 490 years. God therefore exiled the people for 70 years for the land to receive its due rest, after which they were to return.

### **PSALM 137 - BABYLON.**

- ❖ The people were brutally removed from their land and became the slaves of the King of Babylon... A picture of Satan and of the kings of the world.
- ❖ When human beings leave the area of God's blessing, they go to places that cause them problems.
- ❖ BABYLON : land of slavery, persecution, hardships
- ❖ Uprooted people, homelessness, no longer free, slaves to please slave masters.
- ❖ God where are you? Absence of the Temple,-they were thirsty for GOD. [Ps 63]
- ❖ 70 years in exile-they were in a place of distressed, bitter regrets, weeping, pain and grief, lost of faith, loved ones. Being emotionally crushed, separated, and persecuted.
- ❖ Why didn't they want to sing the LORD'S song in Babylon?
- ❖ Why did they hang their harps on the willows? Had they lost their faith?
- ❖ A PSALM OF LONGING FOR GOD: had they lost their relationship with GOD?
- ❖ How can they sing the LORD'S song in a place of slavery? why not? Do birds lose their songs? Can believers lose their song?

### **ISLANDS in the PACIFIC - LETS NOT LOSE OUR SONG !**

#### **FOR DISCUSSION**

- 1) What is your Babylon? Discuss reasons why the church can be uprooted like Israel and taken into exile? How can we lose our songs? What more can we do to get back to our Christian roots and sing GOD's songs again?
- 2) What is shaping the contours and shores of our faith in the Pacific? Are there issues that we have included that has removed GOD out of our society? Our church? Our family life?
- 3) Is GOD still the center of our church and society? You know we've got some people in the church who are living exiled lives; it's not geographical because you can live in the same neighborhood for several years and still live an exiled life. Who are the exiled in your church? How can we help them?

- 4) What are some of the programs in our churches that would give life, affirm, restore and make whole the faith of the women, aged, parents, youth (young women and young men) and our children now so they can be strengthened?
- 5) Globalization is now part of our movements in the Pacific.
  - ❖ It has changed the periphery of our shoreline, fishing areas, landscape, school curriculum, sexual orientation, family leadership, all sorts of rights, and secularism.
  - ❖ What can we as the Pacific church together keep the faith and how we continue to shine as light, fly our banner JEHOVAH NISSI
- 6) What can we do to help uprooted and exiled non-pacific people, now part of us in our shores to bring them to JESUS CHRIST so the whole Pacific can be saved?
- 7) What ungodly sound we are bringing into the church that can mimic the Gospel yet of a different frequencies which can lead people astray?

**LET'S SING THE SONG : PASIFIKA**

\* Compose songs, skits, drama, from Psalm 37 and Songs of Jesus.

## **Order of Service**

- 1. Call to worship - Psalm 92 : 1 - 5**
- 2. Hymn- Adoration**
- 3. Prayer**
  - Adoration
  - Thanksgiving
  - Confession
- 4. Hymn – Sere ni Tacake**
- 5. Welcome & Response**
- 6. Collection & prayer –testimony-skit/drama**
- 7. Anthem- Trio/Duet/Choir/Solo**
- 8. Bible Reading:**
  - Psalm 137: 1-6
  - Isaiah 61: 1-5
  - Luke 4:17-21
- 9. Hymn – Thanksgiving**
- 10. Sermon**
- 11. Hymn**
- 12. Prayer of Intercession**
- 13. Hymn**
- 14. Prayer and Benediction**

# **SERMON OUTLINE**

**BIBLE READING:** PSALMS 137: 1-4.

**TEXT:** PSLAMS 137:4

**THEME:** "HOW CAN WE SING THE LORD SONG, IN A STRANGE LAND."

## **INTRODUCTION**

This Sermon Outline is prepared for the Pacific Day of Prayer Worship Program. The Text is taken from Psalm 137:4, based on the Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) Annual General Meeting (AGM) Theme of 2018, "HOW CAN WE SING THE LORD SONG IN A STRANGE LAND). Feel free to explore the text further, understand their situation and contextualize which may help you in your application spiritually and theologically. This outline is intended to help and assist you in your Sermon writing for the Pacific Day of Prayer. We hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will guide and empower you in your preparation.

## **CONTEXT**

The opening expression of "sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept," as they remembered Zion, by the Israelites in exiled or enslaved in Babylon is recalling that experience of homesickness or having deep memory over the destruction of Jerusalem and their Temple. Their gathering together is also regarded as a community lament or a ceremony of mourning over their land. The Israelites in captivity or in exiled in Babylon were not able to sing the Lord Song after they had been asked by their captors or tormentors to sing to them. For them it was a strange and foreign land, the Babylonians were pagan and heathen because they worshipped other gods. How can this be possible when the Lord's Song is for their sacred worship to their God Jehovah alone and none other? Suffice to it, Jerusalem was ruined together with the Temple and because of that impossibility they hung their harps on the willows and poplar trees while they work as slave laborers; hence the reluctance of singing the Lord's Song. The Lord Song for them could only be sung in ZION, in Jerusalem and belongs only to the Temple where their Lord God abodes.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

The Israelite exiles in Babylon happened around the 6<sup>th</sup> Century, 586 BC, after Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians. According to the Bible in Ezekiel 2:3, the cause of captivity or exile was SIN. Also in Ezekiel 20, their Lord God was also disgusted with how they rebelled against him by worshipping idols and breaking the Sabbath. Thus, this time of the Psalter in our text, Psalm 137:4, happened sometimes around the Israelites 70yrs of exiled in Babylon. It was also clear to them at this time that Jerusalem was in ruin and the Temple was no more.

## **SETTING**

It was by the riverside of the Euphrates that the exiled Israelites community moment was interrupted probably during one of their breaks by the request of their captors, to sing them a Lord's Song, hence, the reply; "How Can We Sing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land?" Some commentators mentioned that these may be some of the "faithful remnants," who have their worship of God Jehovah at heart and who are not too easily compelled to entertain pagans and captors with their Lord's Song.

## **CONTRAST**

What the Lord's Song meant for Israel was precious to the soul; but for the Babylonians it meant merely entertainment, and sensational enjoyment in terms of material wealth. The Babylonians may sound ridiculing, but for the Israelites it was reverence and respect. It was preserving their worship and cultural traditions but as for the Babylonians, it was a slave master relationship. For the Israelites the city of Babylon was totally different from Jerusalem in terms of landscape and multiple images of deities. These are two main world examples of Godly and heathen or pagan nations revealing how God punishes and rewards accordingly.

## **THE STORY**

Was how the Psalter reminisced the riverside experienced while they were in exiled in Babylon as they reacted to their captors request by saying , "How can we sing the Lord's Song in a strange land?" This was not so easy a request from their heathen oppressors because for them, Babylon was filled with idolatry worships and a dense atmosphere of SIN, and singing the Lord's song was kind of strange and difficult. And according to their belief, the Lord's Song is sacred and is sung only in worship to their God Jehovah, and in his Temple only in Jerusalem. It's a big no in the strange land and to pagans.

## **GOD**

In this episode, God was in full control, for they were taken captive because of their SIN and their rebelliousness against God (Ezekiel 2, Ezk. 20, Ezk. 11:14-21). The Israelites knew quite well that they could not voice this sentiment because they had the sense that they had been rejected and the guilt that they were cast off by God. With the Israelites experience one can tell that they strenuously deny the existence of the Babylonian deities, but deep inside them, God was still first and foremost, hence, the Psalmist assertion of the absolute supremacy of the Lord God in them.

## **THE ENCOUNTER**

Sees few important areas:

1. The River/Water: Israel's captivity in Babylon is often associated with rivers (Ezr.8:14, Ezk. 1:1, Dan.8:2); the captives may have been used as slave-labour on irrigation works. The NT also relates to Jesus association with wells, lakes and rivers as places of His preaching, teaching and healing ministry.
2. The Strange Land: It is strange because they do not belong to the land. They have a feeling of being alienated and separated from God. For them God does not dwell in strange lands, only in Zion. The strange land belongs to people as well, who are considered pagans and heathen, who now had been asking to hear the Lord's Song from them. Living in a strange land can also be our experience depending on the kind of treatment and condition of the land.
3. The Harps and the Lord's Song: These two goes together in terms of worship but has been hung up on the willows and poplar trees since when, we do not know. These could be considered as instruments of witnessing and evangelization and if hung up? The Lord Song can also be regarded as your Calling, your gift and talents, your role, your duty, and etc. in the church and community.
4. The Captors: they are also regarded in the book as tormentors. Those that watched and controlled them around the clock at the same time ill-treating them. They can also be regarded as Masters. They were heathen and pagan worshippers but now asking the captive Israelites to sing the Lord's Song to them.

Sometimes Masters can be barriers to our singing of the Lord's Song either culturally, theologically and spiritually.

5. Community Solidarity: Even as captives, enslaved and in exiled in Babylon, the "Strange Land" the Israelites maintained their togetherness. For them at that time, God dwells in Zion only and in the Jerusalem Temple, but as Christians today, God dwells among us, in all places at the same time, and at all times. Therefore, we should rise above all others for Christ and keep the Faith.

### **LESSONS TO LEARN**

1. SIN is and will always be a reproach to God and humankind and our own sinful action can enslave us.
2. In every strange situation there is always an opportunity to witness Christ. Make use of it.
3. Do not ever give up witnessing Christ, and always feel free to sing the Lord's Song regardless of the circumstances or situation.
4. Never ever belittle your Christian faith wherever you are or even amongst strangers. Remember, God is with us always until the end of the ages.

### **QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTIONS**

1. Have you experienced deep grief? Did you hang your harps or were you pressured to sing? When is it OK to hang our harps? Do you feel a sense of belonging in the group or are you in a strange land? How could you feel at home?
2. How do you value the work of memory by remembering past events for the benefit of the future?
3. These captive Israelites continued on as migrants in Babylonia. Therefore, migration is a big issue globally today.
4. Our solidarity as Christians and as Pacific people is very important. How can we maintain that at all times and in all places in terms of singing the Lord's Song together?

### **APPLICATION**

1. Migration is our story – we are all migrants, constantly moving, similar to stories in the Bible of migrants – people leaving their own lands and travelling, venturing out, exploring, looking for greener pastures, escaping slavery and some exiling etc.
2. Our **God** is a migrant God that moves with all, dwells and shares, resist and endures hardships and lives with all. That's what God did and that's how migrant churches should follow.
3. How do you talk about God and how do you make Him known in our migrant multicultural, pluralistic and violent societies today?
4. Let us not leave the Lord's Song to memory alone, let us continue to sing it aloud AND SING IT WITH FAITH especially in our challenging Pacific.

**Let us prayerfully move together in support for one another by singing the Lord's Song with courage and faith for all to hear.**

**"HOW CAN WE SING THE LORD'S SONG IN A STRANGE LAND? (PSALM 137:4).**

## **A PARTICIPATORY PRAYER OF INTERCESSION**

**(Suggestions- use two leaders)**

**Leader:** We uplift your Name O Lord and we Praise you for you are Holy, you are Magnificent, you are King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We thank you that through the Name of your son, Jesus Christ, we stand before you and pray with joy and confidence, for through your Will and your Divine Grace, you hear us O Father.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** Today, we pray for our Pacific neighbours, our Pacific sisters and brothers who are faced with gigantic problems and issues which are beyond their control. We pray for the people of the Central Pacific low-lying atoll islands and the ensuing rising sea levels, the increased salinity of their fresh drinking water and the gradual erosion of their coastal shorelines.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We also pray for the future massive displacements of the Pacific people, touch their hearts O Lord, and instil in them the heart to accept changes in the face of the ever changing environment we live in. They will be hurting and will be reluctant but shower them with your Spiritual gifts so that they are able to put their trust in You and to praise you wherever they may be.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We pray for our Pacific leaders and those in authority Lord. Give them your mind Lord and guide them through all the decisions they make. Allow them to be just O Lord and surround them with divine counselling so that they can exercise fairness and integrity.

**All:** Heavenly Father, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We pray for our neighbours, who on their own homelands are divided and are at war, those that cry out for justice, the tortured, the violated, the sufferers and all those that have been treated unfairly.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We pray for those, who in their own countries, are facing gender inequality issues. We remember those that are being oppressed because of their restrictive patriarchal societal norms and cannot have their voices heard in their evangelical desires to glorify you Lord.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We pray Lord for all your followers, in the Pacific and the whole world. Allow them to deepen their love for you and for the people around them regardless of the situation they are in. Enable their hearts to feel for the needs of those who they live with and those that surround them. Continue to nurture them Lord so that they can help call out to others that your Divine Grace has everything prepared for them.

**All:** Nurture us Heavenly Father with your Divine wisdom.

**Leader:** Lord please guard your followers from worldly trials and challenges that can derail them from doing and fulfilling your Heart's desires. Empower your followers Lord so that they can be steadfast in the face of glaring trials and continue to serve you faithfully at all costs.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We pray for all the grandfathers, fathers, uncles, brothers, sons and all the male relatives in our homes, to turn their hearts to you O Lord, so that they can look after their individual families with sincere love and care. Allow them O Lord to do their duties dutifully so that domestic violence can be prevented. May the male members of all homes become more responsible and trust worthy. Help the fathers and the mothers in the homes strengthen their own families and those closest to them. May their love for you Lord help them to love and forgive others so that they can make a difference in the world.

**All:** Lord hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We pray for the lost, we pray for the lonely, we pray for those that have migrated to other lands and countries and are in unfamiliar social surroundings. We pray for them because they may no longer be free to worship You Lord. May they continue to hold on to their faith, may they continue to Praise and Worship you Lord, may they continue to Trust you Lord in all that they do so that the beliefs and the values instilled in them remain intact. May they know Lord that you are an Omnipresence God and that You can be at many different places at any one time.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We pray for those who resort to drugs to find happiness, peace and friendship. They are causing damage to their lives and causing havoc with their unruly behaviour, their unexpected mood swings and their non-conformity to the social norms and behaviour of the community and society. Touch their hearts O Father and instil in them the need to turn to you for you are the only Friend who can give them True Inner Peace, Happiness and Satisfaction.

**All:** Lord, hear our prayer.

**Leader:** We pray for the poor, we pray for the neglected, we pray for the homeless, we pray for all our unfortunate neighbours, we ask for your Divine Intervention Lord. Please give them your peace so that in whatever unfortunate circumstance they are in, they are well rested. All this we ask in and through the Mighty Name of Jesus Christ our Lord and our Saviour. **AMEN**

## **APPENDIX**

### **PACIFIC DAY OF PRAYER COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

- |    |                          |   |                            |
|----|--------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 1. | Rev. Sainimere Degei     | - | Secretary MCWF             |
| 2. | Mrs Titilia Vakadewavosa | - | MWF Executive Committee    |
| 3. | Rev. Cema Vakanavue      | - | Saioni Circuit             |
| 4. | Rev. Lanieta Nasedra     | - | Wainimako Circuit          |
| 5. | Ms Lesila Raitiqa        | - | Senior Deaconess (Retired) |
| 6. | Mrs Vaciseva Manulevu    | - | Davuilevu Division         |
| 7. | Mrs Rubena Karakaua      | - | Rabi Division              |
| 8. | Mrs Akanisi Tarabe       | - | Secretary                  |