

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2023 03 19

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this chilly 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Lent March 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Announcements**

**HYMN Praise God #306**

**CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]**

**Psalm 23**

**[B#501/W#553]**

**PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON<sup>1</sup>**

Gracious and loving God, you are the Source of all that sustains us. You are compassion, embracing us when we call for mercy. You are mercy guiding us through anxious times. You are wisdom, revealing truth to challenge and renew us. Holy One, you bless us with your presence day by day, so we turn to you in worship, to seek your blessing.

God of life and love, these days we confess that events around us shake our trust in your love. When terror strikes, we wonder if love can defeat violence. When truth is twisted by misleading claims, we wonder if love can prevail over lies. When we face trouble, we wonder if you love us at all. Forgive us, God, when we lose our trust in your love.

We offer our love and loyalty, our prayers and our praise, for you are Love, Light and Life for us, and we belong to you. We pray in the name of Christ, Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**

Friends, remember the words of St Paul: "Neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus." Today, let us trust that, no matter what is happening around us, no matter what we have done, God's deep love will never let us go. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

**To Hear The Word Of God**

**Prayer For Illumination and Scripture<sup>2</sup>**

Light of the world, your Word brings new vision and hope. Shine your Spirit on us as we listen to the Scriptures, to open our eyes on your Word at work in the world and show us the path we can follow. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> PCC Worship Planner Advent December 2021 Year C

<sup>2</sup> Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

**Scripture<sup>3</sup> to be read within sermon**

Tanakh\*           **1 Samuel 16:1–13**                           **[B#259/W#288]**

Gospel             **John 9:1–41**                                       **[B#102/W#105]**

May God bless our understanding of this, God's holy word. **The word of the Lord.**

**Seeing**

O holy One, by the power of your Holy Spirit at work in the word read and proclaimed, may the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you.

Amen.

Our readings today tell of wrong perceptions, of people who are overlooked, diminished, and unseen; and of seeing the world through the loving eyes of God.

Tanakh\*           **1 Samuel 16:1–13**   **[B#259/W#288]**

God told the prophet Samuel to visit a family where one of eight sons would become the king of Israel. When Samuel met the family he presumed the oldest, tallest, strongest son would be the chosen one. He was surprised when God told him to keep looking. It turns out the most unlikely, the youngest, smallest son, David, would be the next king of Israel. The passage from John encourages the reader to become aware of the revealed Jesus. You may recall from previous weeks the stories of Nicodemus and, then, the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Both develop their growing awareness of Jesus from very different perspectives.

Gospel             **John 9:1–41**                                       **[B#102/W#105]**

We are pulled into this passage with a question from the disciples, when they asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind." The disciples were seeking an explanation - why does this happen, they asked. As we listened and read, you discovered the disciples were asking based on their belief held that blindness and other challenges were a direct consequence of sin - where there was suffering there was sin - either the parents sinned or the child was sinful, or both. This faulty reasoning continues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Blame is laid on people for life situations that are beyond their control. Perhaps it seems easier to lump poor choices and difficult circumstances together. However, Jesus teaches that it was neither a choice nor a consequence.

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<sup>3</sup> Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

When we look into the ancient times, we discover that the blind man and his family were isolated; they were shunned. We may be able to empathize with them, the family. Memories of imposed isolation became a reality for most of us during the shutdowns in the pandemic, when COVID pulled us away from one another. The isolation wreaked havoc with many people leaving them feeling vulnerable and exposed. Many continue to struggle with the consequences of that isolation.

Some have shared the ways in which their faith gave them strength during difficult times. The imagery of God as your shepherd has provided comfort and reassurance in times of trouble. God is with us through all things, in all things. Deep resiliency in faith develops when we are able to pivot toward God when crisis occurs. It is a time to lean into the strength of our relationships with God and with others who are able to provide comfort. In the midst of difficulties, you have reached out to me, to your friends and family, and to your church family for support. It is in our sense of community that we persevere in difficult times. We are able to hold onto a glimmer of hope and, sometimes, hold onto the hope of others until we can see the way through to the light.

Jesus encouraged the disciples to turn their focus away from dwelling on the problem and to look to God for direction. He went on to explain that there was much work to do and little time to do it. We might hear the expression... make hay while the sun is shining. Jesus and his followers are to do God's work while there is time. Jesus proclaimed that now is the time to recognize the inherent value of all God's people. God sees into our hearts and is not distracted by superficial expectations.

Jesus made mud for the man's eyes and told him to go to the Pool of Siloam, one of the great ancient structures. It was a feat of engineering at the time. The pools of water were created because of the risks of invasion. Invading armies might hold the city under siege, cutting off their supplies of food and water. The Pool of Siloam ensured they had a source of water. Hezekiah initiated the project to dig out a 533 metre tunnel under the City of David. This underground tunnel allowed water to flow from the Gihon Spring, which was outside the city walls. The water flowed into the city to different pools, including the Pool of Siloam. Hezekiah's Tunnel carried fresh water into Jerusalem for centuries. The blind man went to the Pool of Siloam to wash the mud from his eyes.

When the Pharisees heard reports of Jesus working on the Sabbath, that he had healed the man, they set out to question him. The formerly blind man spoke of his experience with Jesus, proclaiming him as a prophet. Some neighbours recognized him and acknowledged the miracle, however, there was doubt over his identity and doubt of the healing. The authorities questioned him and his parents to substantiate his identity. The Pharisees dealt with two issues. First, the formerly blind man testified on the healing powers of the prophet. Secondly, the healing was on the Sabbath and that was forbidden unless it was a life-threatening situation. After the Pharisees banished the healed man, and after Jesus sought and found him, the man experienced the revelation of Jesus as the Son of God. You may recall the Samaritan woman at the well grew into her understanding of Jesus. First she recognized him as a prophet, then as the Messiah. This man grew in his understanding. Insight often arrives in stages, as dawning realizations. Insight allows us to recognize when our way of seeing shifts into a new perspective and the old way is no longer adequate to describe our new understanding.

This passage from John's gospel speaks to the hope of shifting in how we experience ourselves in relation to others and to God. Our perspectives shift in order to grasp the ways in which God is present. These are the many challenges that alter our perception. Consider the shift that occurs when you experience illness. When your health is good, it may be difficult to imagine the experience for those with compromised health. When our cupboards are full it can be difficult to imagine what it is to live with food insecurity. When our bills are paid and assets are debt-free, it can be difficult to recall or even imagine the fear of debt and employment insecurity. We are called to shift our perspectives, to seek an understanding of the challenges faced by others.

We are more than our individual selves. We are more than our towns and nations. We are more than our congregation, our denomination. We live in a shared humanity within God's creation. Our individual perspectives and actions have an impact on the people around us and on people around the world. May your insight deepen and expand over the coming days and months. May we learn to live with respect and consideration for one another here and around the world. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

**Hymn**                    **Open my eyes, that I may see**                    **#500**

**THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD**

**Quote**    The power of the future lies not in the hands of those who believe in scarcity, but of those who trust God's abundance. Walter Brueggemann – scholar, theologian  
Our lives overflow with the goodness of God. Sharing what we have so abundantly received, we bring our offerings of time, talent, and financial resources to share within God's creation with gladness and gratitude.

**Doxology**    We give Thee but Thine own, What e'er the gift may be; All that we have is Thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from Thee.

**Prayers of the People, Blessing of Gifts**

God our faithful Shepherd, we depend on you for everything we need: for daily food, for guidance and protection, for healing in injury and comfort in sorrow. You respond in abundantly. Thank you for your tender care of us. Thank you for soothing the wounds of this life.

Knowing your faithfulness in our lives, we bring before you the lives of others, the cares of this world, entrusting all things to your goodness and mercy. Bring healing to those who are ill in mind, body, or spirit. Bring release to those who are held captive by old hurts or new bonds that oppress and entangle. Bring freedom to those unjustly accused, relief to those burdened with debt, comfort to all who suffer from abuse of any kind.

We pray for people living precariously in the midst of war. Protect, we pray, citizens and soldiers alike, and teach us to put away our weapons, taking up instead words of peace and reconciliation. By the power at work in Christ, break down the walls of hostility we build so that we may learn to live together graciously. We remember those living in the midst of drought and famine. We pray for rain to fall and crops to grow, and for generosity to overflow from our own hands and resources, until all your children receive their daily bread; until all your children have clean water to drink; until all your children have adequate shelter and medical care. God our Good Shepherd, receive the gifts offered by the good people of Knox Bayfield and bless them with your love. Use them to bring light and healing to the world you love for the sake of Christ.

Compel us to be better stewards of creation. Loving God, help us to see the world as you see it; to see others as you see them; and to see ourselves rightly, too. Because you have come into this world for judgment, we can leave our judgments behind. Pursue us all with your goodness and faithful love until goodness and faithful love fills every heart and guides every action.

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Before we call, you answer, God. Before we speak, you know our voices. Hear our prayers. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. Equip us to offer support for those who are near to us. God of light and love, draw near to those who must confront illness, loss or changing circumstances. We are thankful for healing and we are thankful for the end of suffering. God of compassion, we lift up families who travel the long journey of grief. May their memories be a blessing. We ask you to linger with all who mourn Ruth; Lyle; and Danielle.

God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges: Brian; Stephani, Judith & Gerry; Carter, Jim, & family; Rob, Valerie, Jim and Jane; Stephanie and family; Betty Lou; Ruth George; and, Rudy, Audrey, & Grace. We are thankful for Carter's successful surgery. Holy One, we ask you to linger with Rudy and the medical team caring for him. Strengthen his family and friends as they gather to be with him. We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges. Where new life is beginning and hope dawns; where there is laughter and joy, healing and positive change, where there is good news to celebrate, send your Spirit with rejoicing and gratitude. Joined together in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all majesty and honour are yours, Holy One, forever and ever. These things we pray in Jesus' name, gathering our prayers into one voice in the words he taught, Our Father who art in heaven, hallow'ed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

**Hymn                    I'm gonna live so God can use me                    #648**

**To Go Forth In God's Name                    Commissioning and Benediction**

Go peaceably, looking upon the hearts of others. Live in Christ's light, even in the darkest valley. Trust that he is able to open your eyes for you to walk by faith in his name. May the love of God pursue you, the light of Christ enfold you, and the Holy Spirit keep you; as you dwell in the house of the Lord, this day and forever more.

**Postlude                    Amen**

**64 Be still and know**

Be still and that I am God x3

I am the Lord that health thee x3

In thee, O Lord, I put my trust x 3

**306 Praise God**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God all creatures high and low;

Praise God in Jesus fully known; Creator, Word and Spirit, One.

**500 Open my eyes, that I may see**

Open my eyes, that I may see Glimpses of truth thou hast for me; Place in my hands the wonderful key That shall unclasp and set me free.

**Refrain** Silently now I wait for thee; ready, my God, thy will to see;  
open my eyes: illumine me, Spirit divine!

Open my ears, that I may hear Voices of truth thou sendest clear, And while the wave-  
notes fall on my ear, Everything false will disappear. **Refrain**

Open my mouth, and let me bear Gladly the warm truth everywhere; Open my heart and  
let me prepare Love with thy children thus to share. **Refrain**

**648 I'm gonna live so God can use me**

I'm gonna live so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime! I'm gonna live so God can  
use me anywhere, Lord, anytime! I'm gonna work so God can use me anywhere, Lord,  
anytime!

I'm gonna work so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime! I'm gonna pray so God can  
use me anywhere, Lord, anytime! I'm gonna pray so God can use me anywhere, Lord,  
anytime!

I'm gonna sing so God can use me anywhere, Lord, anytime! I'm gonna sing so God can  
use me anywhere, Lord, anytime! I'm gonna sing so God can use me anywhere, Lord,  
anytime!