

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield.

Announcements

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

O God, you offer overflowing love and infinite kindness. You are incomparable in glory. Your presence breaks into our lives in the beauty of summer. You refresh us like a gentle breeze on a still day. You renew us as we meet the challenges of life with you. In this time of worship, we offer you thanks in our prayers, we praise you with love, and we honour with our lives.

Wise and patient God, you offer us peace, yet we confess we often feel frustrated and unsettled. You offer us courage, yet we are resentful when life is challenging. You offer us a mission with meaning and purpose, but we are preoccupied with our own plans and desires. You offer us rest and we hesitate to trust in you. Forgive us, O God, and draw our attention back to you.

Assurance of Pardon

Jesus said, Come to me all you who labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest. Trust that peace and forgiveness are God's gifts to you this day. Be renewed by the power of the Spirit that moves with you into each new day.

May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn Joyful, Joyful we adore you #410

To Hear The Word Of God

Prayer For Illumination and Scripture¹

Your Word, O God, comes to us in the translation of ancient scripture. Send your Holy Spirit to open our minds with understanding and our hearts with wisdom in the name of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

¹ Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

Scripture

Tanakh*	Zechariah 9:9–12,	[B#884/W#989]
Psalms	Psalms 145:8–14	[B#581/W#644]
Epistle	Romans 7:15–25a	[B#157/W#164]
Gospel	Matthew 11:16–19, 25–30	[B#11 /W#11]

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

Message

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.

In my preparations for today, I came across a story about a little boy who was helping his dad with the yard work. Dad asked him to pick up the rocks in a certain area of the yard. When he looked over, he saw his son struggling to pull up a huge rock buried in the dirt. The little boy struggled and then gave up. He went to his Dad and said, "I can't do it." His Dad asked, "Did you use all of your strength?" The little boy looked hurt and said, "Yes, sir. I used every ounce of strength I have." The father smiled and said, "No you didn't. You didn't ask me to help." The father walked over and then the two of them pulled that big rock out of the dirt.

Our gospel reading begins just after Jesus replied to a message from John the Baptist. John, was in jail and frustrated. He sent one of his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" Jesus responded to him with good news, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them."

This parable is for people in pain, for people grieving, and people with heavy hearts who are struggling. Jesus is speaking to those who misunderstand the good news. For those with hardened hearts – for people who are critical of themselves and others, for those who are angry, and those living in isolation because they are cut off from others and God. Jesus is speaking to the people who have lost their mercy, their sense of purpose and their connection to love. Diana Butler Bass wrote that Jesus recognizes that people "failed to understand John’s asceticism — "he has a demon" — and Jesus’ hospitality — "he’s a

glutton!" Butler Bass continues by noting that Jesus was not critical of them, he "implies that they've been shaped into a social structure — an identity — that keeps them from seeing the Kingdom of God. They get it wrong because they've been trained to be something God never intended: a subject people. "This generation" has functionally been formed as a colonized people: Jews at the bottom of the Roman Empire, without a sense of their destiny as Abraham and Sarah's offspring, and those who have had their inheritance of the land taken from them. Yes, Jesus is frustrated. But he's angry that God's people are "under the whip" of Rome. And that means they — even the prophet John the Baptist — have a hard time seeing God's spirit moving among them anew." We are shaped by cultural influences that conflict with the teachings of Christ. The conflict can leave us confused, weary and disheartened. Many of us share similar hopes, likes and dislikes. When we scratch the surface, we often find that there are many things that we agree on. We can look at many issues and likely find similar responses. Let's see if this holds true today. If you agree with the statements I make ... raise your hand. If you prefer to keep your response more private ... just nod your head a little... Would you agree with the statement ... I'm a really good singer in the shower or in my car.

second...My pet understands me when I talk to it.

... When I turn the radio volume down - I'm driving my car - I can see better

And finally ... Everyone needs a nap sometimes.

Jesus addressed an issue almost all of us can agree on: we are weary and heavy burdened. We need relief. People have lived with stress and burdens since the beginning of time and that is unlikely to change. When stressors and worries accumulate we become particularly weary. It's a weariness that feels physical, it impacts our ability to think clearly, and it can create a spiritual burden. Jesus invites us to, "Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Just to be clear, the yoke we are referring to is not the yolk of an egg. A yoke is a beam and it's a term used in different ways with similar meanings. In a canoe, the cross beam in the center connects the starboard and port side. In certain airplanes, the pilot uses the

yoke to control the altitude, pitch, and roll. It can be used to help carry or pull heavy objects by distributing the weight evenly on both shoulders of animals and people. When animals are unequally yoked, they injure one another because they move at a different pace and sway differently. When properly yoked, they are equal in strength, height, and type. The yoke keeps the animals facing forward, helps them to share the weight of the load, and the yoke keeps them in step and moving in tandem.

Perhaps we can understand the passage in this way – when the yoke of Christ connects us, it relieves our burdens and strengthens us, and in this we discover the peace of Christ.

When we are yoked to Christ, we are never truly alone. Our isolation is eased by a growing awareness of Christ's presence. In his presence, we begin to move in his ways and the yoke helps us to move in tandem.

We discover that his strength helps to carry our burdens. The Apostle Paul struggled with overwhelming burdens and found relief by relying on the strength of Jesus. Jesus assured Paul, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." In 2nd Corinthians Paul writes of his weaknesses so that Christ's power would rest on him for "When I am weak, then I am strong."²

Jesus embodies the goodness and faithfulness of God. When we spend time in prayer, when we ponder the goodness of God we find our burdens and fear dissipating.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Brown tells of a man he visited in the cardiac ICU in New York City. The man had experienced complications from a recent heart surgery, and he was scared and exhausted. In his helplessness he realized that he had never been at peace. The next morning, the hospital chaplain came for a visit and offered to pray and read a Bible passage. The man was hardly paying attention until he heard the Bible passage the chaplain had chosen. It was from John 14: "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." The man said that these verses struck him "like a spiritual hammer." The hospital chaplain had no idea of this man's struggles and yet he chose the very words that spoke to his deepest need. Peace. The ICU patient realized that the peace he needed could only be found in Jesus Christ, and he began that day to yoke his life to Jesus and found peace

² 2 Cor. 12: 9-10

in the goodness and faithfulness of God.³ Author J. Oswald Sanders once said, “Peace is not the absence of trouble, but the presence of God.”

Christine Miserandino created The Spoon Theory when her best friend asked her about living with the chronic auto-immune disease Lupus. The medical definitions were not much help since it did not describe the impact of the disease. One of the many challenges with Lupus is the inability for others to see the impact. In fact, her website is called “But you don’t look sick”, which Christine hears frequently from people. The Spoon Theory is an analogy of the ways in which the disease affects her daily life.

In the analogy, each spoon represents a finite unit of energy. Healthy people may have an unlimited supply of spoons, but those with chronic illness need to carefully ration their spoons to get through the day. Spoon theory has become a shorthand to explain how they're feeling and coping day-to-day.

The spoons illustrate this point. Each day could bring a different number of “spoons”. You may be familiar with this. You may wake up in the morning and discover that your energy is low, your body won’t move properly, or you simply have no energy to get moving. If you are familiar with this, then you are familiar with a low spoon supply. On such mornings you are not able to do the things you want to do because you simply do not have the energy.

The spoon theory illustrates the need to be aware of your energy level and to choose wisely. Often the choice is very limited – you may run out of spoons by noon or even 10 am. If you push through the pain and over-extend yourself it may mean a significant illness or unbearable pain. It may mean you end up in bed for an extended time as your body tries to heal.

A difficulty that arises is the cultural message that you “should” push through the pain or discover some other source of energy so you can do...what ever that ‘to do’ is. The cultural messages are there and have been for a long time. Nike’s Just get do it! Hang in there. Don't give up. Keep pushing. Stay strong. Never give up. Come on! You can do it! Plus of course... no pain, no gain

When we speak of yokes, the cultural yoke seems to include a harsh driver with a cutting whip. This is not the yoke that Christ speaks of. Jesus teaches us to lay down our burdens

³ #7 Duncan & Akers

and to rest. To intentionally take the day of Sabbath and reconnect – physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Freedom comes through leaning into our relationships, with God and with one another. We all carry a metaphorical yoke - the physical, emotional, and spiritual “baggage” that we accumulate. Worry, stress, difficulties, need, desire, responsibilities, and our sense of purpose. Our yoke provides focus and it can become heavy. It can weigh us down, exhaust us, and create a sense of despair.

I have come to recognize when the burden has become heavy and a sense of tiredness sets in. My feet actually seem to get heavy and clumsy, tripping over themselves. When I’m not attentive, the tiredness turns to exhaustion. I’m getting better at recognizing when that is creeping up. When distractions get in the way of resting, when priorities get a little muddled. It’s a time for me to count the spoons and re-align with the highest priorities. In the gospels Jesus uses the analogy of the yoke to help us re-align our sense of purpose and our sense of self care. We are all learning to walk in his way so we can live as God intends us to be. “Come to me, all you who are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” “Learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

When we follow the teachings of Jesus, we discover that life changes, that we change. He provides a new way of seeing and experiencing life. Allow your heart to beat with new life by accepting the love of God into your heart. Let go of the troubled worries that circle around like a mouse on a wheel. Feel the sense of relief as Christ lifts your past, your burdens, your heaviness from your heart. Accept God’s grace and allow yourself to rest in your relationship with Christ. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn I heard the voice of Jesus say #671

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote The only right stewardship is that which is tested by the rule of love. John Calvin
- theologian, pastor, reformer

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.

Prayer of dedication

Gracious God, receive our gifts as tokens of our gratitude for your goodness to us. Bless the offerings so that they become seeds of generosity, bringing needed gifts to others in the name of Jesus the Christ. Amen

Prayers of the People

Ever creating, ever loving, God. We turn to you in uncertain times, trusting in your steadfast love. We pray for your peace to descend upon those who are anxious, and those who are overwhelmed by responsibilities, and those who live in fear of conflict and violence.

God of all compassion, we pray for courage and hope for those who are lonely and isolated, and those longing for love, and for those who are in unhealthy relationships, and those who are grieving the loss of their beloved.

God of tender strength, we pray for healing and hope for all who feel pain in their bodies, minds, and spirits.

God of trustworthy truth: we pray for wisdom and hope for all leaders. May they strive to care for your creation and its vulnerable inhabitants. O holy One, may all people stand against unjust policies or practices. God in whom we live and move and have our being: by your Spirit, shine the light of Christ's love into each life.

O God of the bruised and broken, we are grateful that, in Christ, you have taken up the cross and know by heart all that causes suffering and pain. We pray today for all those in need of healing and comfort, whatever the source of their pain.

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.

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 Rudy and Danielle.

God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges:

Stephani, Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey, & Grace; Don, Phyllis, and Shawn; and, Warren & Lori.

Keep our eyes open for your Spirit at work among us. Give us the courage we need to face our future, assured of your presence and power to sustain us. We offer all that we are and all that we hope for through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together as his people: 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 Love divine all loves excelling (v 1, 2) #371

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

The world now is too dangerous and too beautiful for anything but love. May your eyes be so blessed you see God in everyone. May your ears be so blessed, you hear the cry of the poor. May your hands be so blessed that everything you touch is a sacrament. May your lips be so blessed you speak nothing but the truth with love. May your feet be so blessed you run to those who need you. And may your heart be so opened, so set on fire, that your love, your love, changes everything.⁴ Amen

Postlude Amen

⁴ A Blessing, Black Rock Prayer Book