

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2023 07 16

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]

Hymn Teach me, God, to wonder #704

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God of wisdom, you are the strength of those who serve you and rest for those who seek you. God of growth, you sow and you gather, you tend and you prune, you judge and you save. God, we come to you in worship, to rest from our responsibilities, to turn from our distractions, and to hand over our concerns to you. We seek nourishment with your Word, so that we may grow in Christ rooted in the presence of the Holy Spirit. Faithful God, you plant the seeds of faith in us and we confess we neglect those seeds well. We think we already know enough, rather than pursue deeper encounters with you. Forgive us, God, when we think you have nothing more to offer us. We pray all of this in the name of Christ. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

God forgives, restores, and strengthens us through the risen Christ. Know that you are forgiven and be at peace. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Special Music Something Worth Living For Duet: Muriel Manley, Dick Roe

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.

Scripture

Abundant Seeds

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

2023 07 16

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.

I often wonder how you hear the scripture readings on Sunday morning. In my preparation for today I read the passages many times, study various commentaries, and pray seeking guidance for the message. Each week, in the announcements, you will find the Reflection - questions related to our readings. I hope you are able to ponder and sometimes wrestle with the questions. The scripture readings for the next week are also included. I appreciate when you share that you are reading the passages ahead of this morning and, perhaps, you have already given thought to the reflection questions.

I would like to begin with an excerpt written by James Liggett where he expands on the concept of the Glass Half Full. Liggett wrote, "Everybody knows the old bit about optimists and pessimists—how a pessimist says the glass is half empty and an optimist says the same glass is half full. It's a familiar platitude. But did you ever stop to think about how terribly important the issue here is? It really matters how you understand that glass. What if someone asks you to share whatever is in it? What if you wondered whether you were blessed or needy, rich or poor? What about choosing to live gratefully and generously, or resentfully and selfishly? One perspective (the glass is half empty) easily inspires one way of living; just as the other perspective (it's half full) inspires a radically different way. Yet they are both based on the same objective facts: the same glass, the same stuff. It matters how we see things. The parable Jesus just told us has at its heart this notion of perspective, of how you see things."

When we study the gospel stories it is important to consider the people – the real people living in a complex time. We understand the challenges of living in a complex world. All of us deal with discouragement and frustration. Jesus and his disciples also dealt with discouragement and significant frustration. In today's passage Jesus sensed that the discouragement of the disciples and he told three parables that are recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew. In the midst of increasing opposition, Jesus spent time teaching those who were interested in following him. In Matthew 13 there are eight parables that explain more about Jesus and his kingdom. Jesus did not often speak in absolutes; he spoke in parables. Saint Augustine taught that parables can function like a hidden code - that every detail stood for something. This is how the early church

understood the parable. In time, we began to see the parable more clearly as a simple story that uses concrete imagery to make a single point.

In our gospel reading this morning Jesus compared the Kingdom to a sower going out and spreading seed. The sower went out to sow. What did he do? He threw the seed everywhere. It may seem a foolish way to spread seed when most of it will never take root. He showed no caution, no preparation, no hesitation, and so the seed went everywhere. He did not prepare the ground, pull up the weeds, or remove the stones. He didn't chase away the birds, block the sun, or chop down the thorns. There is an abundance of seed for the generous sower to toss.

Jesus painted a picture of soil that had become packed down over time. This was hard soil where seed could not take root and the birds simply came along and ate it up. The seed of the gospel cannot take root in the hardened heart so the seed of faith never takes root. Jesus said, "When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart... As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. "

Some seed fell in thorns that choked out new growth. Jesus described the weeds as distractions, such as worry and wealth, "As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing."

There is an old story of the lure of wealth. A wealthy man visited a rabbi to talk about his ongoing despair. The rabbi took the man by the hand and led him to a window. "Look out there," he said. The rich man looked into the street, "What do you see?" asked the rabbi. "I see men, women, and children," answered the man. Again the rabbi took him by the hand and this time led him to a mirror. Now what do you see?" "Now I see myself," the rich man replied. Then the rabbi said, "Behold, in the window there is a glass, and in the mirror there is a glass. But the glass of the mirror is covered with a little silver, and no sooner is the silver added than you cease to see others, and you see only yourself." In his commentary, Brett Blair wrote that the problems arise when we allow distractions to crowd out the priorities of life, when focus on self interest crowds out caring for others, prayer, and worship.

And, Jesus said "But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty." Yes, the seed falls where it does not grow and yes, the seed falls where it thrives.

Bob Shaw, in *Sowing the Seeds of Love*, wrote, "... There is the seed that falls upon the good earth and takes root and grows to maturity. This crop, we are told, is a harvest that will bear fruit a hundredfold. Jesus mentions this last because it is the thrust of the story. Now, here is the hard part. Our efforts in life are not always measurable. Sometimes, you may not see the final product. You may not enjoy the harvest. Sometimes all we can do is plant a seed, and trust that God will do the rest."

We are bombarded with news of horror and abuse. It is important to share the good news provided by God. The Spirit nudges us to live faithful lives caring for one another within God's creation. This congregation consistently responds to the needs of the local community and the world. You respond to the needs of the FoodBank, PWS&D/Presbyterian Sharing, and other groups. The school supplies collected will be delivered to your former minister Susan Moore for the Grand Bend Rotary and then shipped off to the Rotary Clubs in Africa. Children in African countries will receive these generous gifts from Canadians. Seeds of faith shared around the world.

We never really know the impact we will have. When he was 13 years old Samuel Dzobo heard singing from the nearby school where Christians were holding a worship service. After he joined in that day he couldn't wait to go back. He said, "It just turned my whole world around . . . I look back and that is how Christ Jesus got me in. That is my home church." Samuel attended church regularly, studying the Bible and growing in his faith. He began preaching when he was 16 years old. He has gone on to pastor a number of churches in Zimbabwe and the United States, presiding over 2,000 baptisms. He has led many mission trips to Zimbabwe and his work with the US congregations helped to build a church and a well in Dzobo's village. He continues to live out the Gospel message that was planted many years ago.

One more ... Wendy Farrell, founder of a non-profit named "1U Project," is an example of listening to the Spirit. In 2013, Wendy and her husband, Ryan, adopted a 15-year-old girl from a Ukrainian orphanage. Even though the Farrells had four other daughters, they believed God would provide for their expanding family. Two years later, Wendy founded

the 1U Project to provide support for an orphanage in Lviv, Ukraine. [pron. LeVu, Ukraine]. When God gave her the vision to found this organization, Wendy was intimidated. She didn't think she had the skills or resources to create something so impactful. But then, a thought popped into her head: As she put it, "The Lord created the one and only me for 1 purpose which is to share the love of Christ with others. And just like that, the 1U Project was born." With the help of her church, she led the fundraising for money and clothes for the children of Ukraine. She also led trips to the Ukraine to introduce her friends to the orphanage. Her hope was to plant God's passion for the orphans in her friends' hearts, so they would also consider adopting a child or supporting the orphanage.

in February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine. With the help of her church and the director of the Children's Path Orphanage, she flew to Poland and helped 31 orphans to escape from Ukraine and settle in Poland.

In his book Atomic Habits, James Clear writes, "Every action you take is a vote for the type of person you wish to become. No single instance will transform your beliefs, but as the votes build up, so does the evidence of your new identity."

Those who seek to live in the ways of Christ draw others to Christ. The seeds are planted abundantly and their witness to the power and love of God becomes contagious.

In closing, Robert Schuller noted, "Anyone can count the seeds in an apple, but only God can count the number of apples in a seed." The wonders of God's creation grow from tiny seeds. God breathes life into his abundant creation, into the soil and the soul. In the name of the sower, we are to generously spread the seed of God's kingdom. Open your hearts to welcome the word of God and nourish it in your hearts to follow the ways of Christ.

Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Brother Sister let me serve you (v 1,2) #635

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

QUOTE The Lord loves a cheerful giver but will accept a gift from a grouch. Unknown

Our lives overflow with the goodness of God. We see growth in the gardens around us and remember that the seed of God's Word bears fruit in each life it touches. The gifts we offer today help to sow the seeds of God's Word throughout the world.

Offertory

Muriel Manley

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.

Blessing of Gifts

God of seeds and souls, we offer our gifts in thanksgiving. May your blessing multiply this offering to reflect your love at work in the world. God, bless the supplies collected for the children in Africa. Bless the work of Rotary Clubs in Canada and Africa as they minister to the needs of children within your creation. May the seeds of hope inspire faith in the souls they touch, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Tender and loving God, you formed the earth to be a place of abundance for all your creatures. We give you thanks for food and the people who grow it, transport it, market it and prepare it. We pray for those who cannot afford enough food. Holy God, we are concerned for the impact of extreme weather, uncertain prices, and social upheaval. Help us care for the earth and its fruitfulness; help us to care for one another in our common need.

God you gather people in communities to care for each other and enjoy each other's company and creativity. Thank you for the support we find in this congregation and for the impact they make in the larger community.

Holy One, wherever there is division in the world, bring unity and peace with justice; Where there is difference, give wisdom to see what is important; where people are tired and anxious, bring strength and courage.

God of compassion, you call us to be bound together by prayer and love of our neighbours. By your Spirit, equip us to serve one another in Christ's name, so that your compassion touches lives with love and mercy. 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.

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. We ask you to linger with all who mourn Rudy and Danielle.

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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; Rudy, Audrey, & Grace; Don, Phyllis, and Shawn; and, Warren & Lori.

We lift up all who are on our hearts as they face immense challenges.

O God of hope and new possibility, in Christ you opened the way into the future for us through the power of your redeeming love. 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.

Special Music Standing on the Solid Rock Duet: Muriel Manley, Dick Roe

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Walk in the light of God's Word as you go out into the world. Watch for seeds bearing fruit around you. Wonder at the ways in which you bear the fruit of God's Word in your life. May God the Spirit bring you growth. May God the Son tend you with wisdom. May God the Source of all life bless you with all you need to thrive.

Postlude

Amen