

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

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God of the past, present and future, we marvel at the wonder of your creation.

We praise you for gardens growing, birds singing, stars twinkling, and evening sunsets.

Such delightful moments remind us of your goodness. In Jesus' name, by the power of the Spirit breathing within us, we praise you for your loving kindness, and the hope you bring to us day by day. We will live to serve you and offer you our love and loyalty.

Merciful God, we confess we are not always merciful. We turn away in anger rather than seek resolution. We criticize those who differ from us in culture or conviction, rather than seek understanding. We can hold grudges that harm others and ourselves. Open our hearts with your great love that we may love others and ourselves as we love you. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

Hymn Immortal, invisible God only wise (v 1-2) #290

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

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.

Over the last few weeks, we have explored parables about seeds, soil, and weeds, evil, patience, and faith. We continue with the parables in the Gospel of Matthew and step into the story of Solomon.

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

Today Jesus tells of his kingdom and of heaven here on earth. They are common stories about ordinary people—a tenant farmer, a housewife, fishermen—doing everyday things. The young Solomon seeks God's guidance as he learns to govern his people.

Solomon was the youngest son of Israel's king David and his wife Bathsheba. He was about 20 years old when he came to the throne aided by his mother, the prophet Nathan, and Zadok the priest. He had power and authority, with advisors and resources, and it wasn't enough. In his dream God said, "Ask what I should give you." Solomon asked for, "... an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people." Solomon's story encourages us to turn to God when we feel overwhelmed and unsure of how to proceed. It is in our vulnerability that God has the opportunity to work through us. It is in the turning toward God that we find the balance and perspective that we seek. The assurance that we are cared for within this vast creation.

Many of you turn to God in your prayers. Some of you start each day with a morning prayer. A conversation with God about gratitude, frustrations, laments, and maybe some questions. This may be such a routine part of your life that you do not give it much thought. When we have routines, we often go about our day without giving them much thought. The mindless routine catches my attention as I pull out of my driveway and wonder if I did the routine tasks. Things like putting away the iron or closing my office door. It is a reminder that I need to slow down a bit and become more attentive to the little things.

The stories we tell ourselves can fall into this non-attentive zone. We short-form the complexities and create a simple version. Somehow our God becomes distant -somewhere in the heavens – and we become isolated here on earth. The teachings from Jesus remind us that God is present in everything and every moment of our lives.

An American preacher Keith Wagner wrote, "Most people I know believe that heaven is some far, distant place. When folks describe heaven they generally speak of some favorite place, like Myrtle Beach, Hawaii, the Smoky Mountains or a cabin in Canada. The book of the Revelation to John talks about a place where there are "streets of gold, walls with precious stones and pearl gates." Our images of heaven tend to be some form of paradise where everything is beautiful and wonderful. But here in the gospel of Matthew Jesus does not describe "heaven" as a place. He is speaking in parables and in each parable he refers

to heaven as an activity. Heaven is not a destination but a journey. For Jesus, heaven has to do with planting seeds, discovering treasure, selling everything you have and being caught up in a huge net. In other words heaven is not a place where we end up but a process we participate in."

Jesus speaks of engaging our faith within our lives while the disciples urge him to take his place among the powerful kings and military rulers. Jesus describes the kingdom of God in simpler terms. Jesus tells of real women and men as they go about their daily lives. He describes how the everyday embodies the divine as the listener is encouraged to have 'eyes to see' and 'ears to hear'. In other words, we are being nudged to wake up, to see, to hear, to be attentive. He encourages us to see the beauty of God's creation.

Jesus brings our attention to this reality of the divine ...when he heals the ill, gathers the outcast, includes women and people at all levels of society. In the parables today, the insignificant provide bountiful resources. Jesus speaks of things that are small or hidden. There are tiny seeds, the treasure hidden in a field; the large pearl hidden with ordinary pearls; the net full of fish where the good is hidden among the less desirable.

There are diverse and abundant wonders around us. Wonders that are hidden in plain sight. Wonders that may be unpredictable in their very nature and in their unfolding.

Jesus catches our attention when he describes, "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed"

Lori Wagner wrote, "At first, ... one may feel that Jesus is describing "our job" in finding God's hidden treasure or our responsibility to value God or the scriptures. But if you read those mini-parables carefully again, keeping in mind the context in which they are given, you find that the meaning is actually reversed. You (God's valued disciple) are God's treasure. You are the pearl of great price. Jesus is the seeker. ... He will go to any lengths to net every fish, even rotten ones or dead ones, because he knows you are among them and that some of you are his. God will sacrifice his own son, for the sake of you. He will do anything to keep you, his beautiful, valuable pearl. Jesus so values you, that he will do anything, even give his own life, to save you and restore you. For you are that valuable to God. Jesus came to seek lost sheep, those who no longer know God but whose hearts are beautiful, those who have fallen down, those who are hidden among the crowds. God will find you."

More often than not, we want to draw boundaries around our understanding of the divine, of heaven. We listen and settle on what feels comfortable for us and then we push away the uncomfortable. In our congregations, we yearn to find comfort in the familiar. We have familiar hymns, creeds, rituals, and buildings. We have boundaries—nice neat rows of carefully tended practices. And yet...the Spirit of God moves among us, within us, and through us. Just when we develop comfortable patterns and ways of being, there is a whisper and a nudge. Something catches our eye and our attention. We discover the familiar is being pushed to make room for something new and comfort zones need to expand.

In the moments when the familiar seems to be shifting, you may discover that your breathing has become shallow. In that moment, shift your focus onto your breathing. Take a breath, hold, then release. As I am speaking have you noticed your breathing pattern? Do you find your breath catches and releases before your lungs are filled? Be patient, practice. Give it a try now if you are able. Draw in your breath slowly. Hold ... and release slowly. Now again. Inhale hold... release. You can continue this as you listen. The breath of God is within you, each moment of your day. Something many of us regularly overlook and yet it is vital to our health and well being. Perhaps.. the focus on our breath helps us to develop a deeper awareness of the Spirit within and around us. When we become aware of our larger capacity... our capacity to take in more of our being, to expand our awareness of God's creation...we become more aware of the needs ... of our needs, of the needs of others. Perhaps we become aware of how our comfort in shallow breathing was not really comfortable at all – it was simply familiar.

This regular, repetitive act of being attentive to our breathing might seem to be just ordinary ... yet we discover it is so much more. Just as the mustard seed is much more. Each breath allows us to be in connection with the divine when we allow ourselves to hear and to see. Matthew 's gospel encourages us to discover the true and expansive family that surrounds Jesus. Those who have ears to hear listen and understand. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Be thou my vision (v 1-2) #461

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote Everyone can be great because everyone can serve. Martin Luther King Jr.,
minister, activist

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.

Blessing of Gifts God of all creation, we offer our gifts with thankful hearts, knowing you abundantly provide all that is needed. Bless these gifts so that your goodness is multiplied to touch the lives of those in need, for Christ's sake. Amen.

Public Profession of Faith: An Affirmation of Baptism

The Presentation

Public Profession of Faith: An Affirmation of Baptism

When children grow up in a church they often become members as youth or young adults. When people move from one church to another within the Presbyterian Church in Canada a transfer of membership occurs. During the pandemic, Lois Kascandi transferred her membership from her former church in Toronto to Knox Bayfield. Quite often, for diverse reasons, the transfer of membership does not occur. People may come from different faith traditions or other countries. When this type of situation occurs, it is customary for Presbyterians to affirm their baptism by publicly professing their faith and declaring their affiliation with a congregation. Membership also includes voting privileges in a congregation or being eligible to hold office. The Affirmation of Baptism is not a sacrament, it is an outcome of baptism and an important milestone on the Christian journey. Today, **Lois, Jan, Gerry, Judith, and Susanne** will become members and I ask them to join me as we sing the hymn.

Hymn

Open my eyes

#500

The Presentation

Friends: **Gerald, Judith, Jan, Susanne, and Lois** have been baptized and are members of the body of Christ. They have been nurtured within the Christian community and instructed in the belief and practice of the church.

In making the public profession of their faith, they desire to affirm their baptism, and to claim the rights and responsibilities associated with membership in this congregation of Knox Presbyterian Church, Bayfield.

In the sacrament of baptism the church recognizes God's covenant of grace. We receive God's gift with reverent joy and respond in faith and obedience.

Remember your baptism and give thanks. By the waters of baptism and the power of the Holy Spirit - God claims us and calls each one by name. God unites us to Christ in his death and resurrection and grafts us into the body of Christ as members of the church. God washes us clean by forgiving our sin; commissions us to be a royal priesthood with Christ in his ministry to the world; empowers us to live in newness of life as people of the Word; and invites us to be renewed at the Lord's Table until we feast with him in glory. By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God.

Susanne, Lois, Judith, Gerry, Jan ...

You stand before God and this company of people to affirm the covenant God made with you at your baptism, to acknowledge your growth in grace and to assume responsibility as a disciple of Jesus Christ in this congregation and the world. Are you ready to make public your profession of faith? **I am ready**

Renunciation and Affirmation

Trusting in the gracious mercy of God who has been faithful to us in all generations, do you turn away from sin, renounce evil and all powers in the world which rebel against God or oppose God's rule of justice and love? **I renounce them**

Do you renounce the ways of sin which separate you from the love of God? **I renounce them**

Do you turn to Jesus Christ accepting him as Lord and Saviour, trusting in his grace and love? **I do**

Do you desire, in dependence on the Holy Spirit, to mature as a Christian in the church, to seek the guidance of Christ as you listen for his Word, to celebrate his death and life at the table he provides, and to engage in his mission to the world? **I do**

Do you, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, promise to guide and nurture **Judith, Jan, Lois, Susanne, and Gerry** by word and deed, with love and in prayer, encouraging them to follow the way of Christ and to be faithful members of this church? **We do**

We will recite **The Apostles Creed** in a different way today. You will be responding to questions, as outlined in the bulletin insert...

Let us, with all people of God, confess the faith of the church.

Do you believe in God the Father? **I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ? **I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit? **I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen**

THANKSGIVING AND INTERCESSION

Gracious God, we praise you for calling us to be your people and for gathering us to be the church, the body of Christ.

We thank you for leading our siblings in Christ to this time and place in affirmation of your gifts to them in baptism. Together, may we live in your Spirit, grow in faith, hope, and love, and be faithful disciples of Jesus the Christ, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit we give honour and glory, now and forever. Amen

THE BLESSING

Child of God, may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

And all the people say, **Amen**

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

Prayers of the People

Ever faithful God, we offer our deep appreciation to you. You are the source of rest and right relationship within your creation. Today we pray for the earth and its well-being. Encourage us to care for the earth in all that we do so its resources are protected for coming generations.

Holy One, we offer you our thanks for you are the true source of wisdom and generosity in a world struggling to make ends meet. We pray for all who face difficult decisions about

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their finances: for those struggling with bills and budgets; for all who have limited choices and resources, and for those who have many choices and want to make them wisely.

Loving God, we offer our appreciation for you are the true source of love and forgiveness in a world suffering with criticism, cynicism, and self-doubt. We pray for those in difficult relationships. Holy One, we seek your guidance to strengthen us to reach out to the people we ought to call but just haven't. Help us to find a way to strengthen our relationships.

God of grace, you call us to a common ministry in the name of Jesus. We praise you for working in the lives of Judith, Susanne, and Gerry to bring them to this moment of affirmation and the acceptance of the rights and responsibilities of life in your church. Together, may we give witness to your wonderful deeds and might acts. Together, may we uphold justice and work for peace. Strengthen us by your Spirit to fulfil the vows which unite us in common faith and purpose, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

O God of the bruised and broken, we are grateful that, in Christ, you 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. Loving God, by your Spirit, surround us with strength and love. We remember before you those who grieve the loss of their beloved and those who are lonely. We are thankful for healing and we are thankful for the end of suffering. 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: Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Don, Phyllis, and Shawn. 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 through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage 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 I am ... You are the church! (V 1-2) #475

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

As this week unfolds, think of the Holy Spirit breathing with you, in every deep breath, and in every long sigh of frustration or satisfaction. Let your breath remind you that God is with you. And may the deep love of God never let you go, the friendship of Christ hold you steady, and the presence of the Spirit fill you with strength and courage to face each new day.

Postlude Amen