

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]**

One: The God of our ancestors calls us to worship.

**All: Praise the Lord!**

One: Allow your hearts to rejoice in seeking God.

**All: Let us worship God together!**

**PRAYER OF ADORATION AND ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

Holy, Mysterious, and Ever-loving God, in you we live and move and have our being. You are the beginning and end of all things. In you, we find mystery. We wonder at your love for us, we who are such a small part of your whole creation. In Jesus Christ we meet your generous grace. In the Holy Spirit, you inspire our action and fill us with hope. And so we worship you in humble praise, Holy God, ever Three and ever One, now and always. Faithful and forgiving God, we confess we do not live out your love and mercy. We cling to old hurts and familiar habits. We nurse anger and envy. We are self-absorbed as we turn our backs on those in need. Forgive what we have been, amend who we are, and guide us toward who we may become according to your generous grace. Amen.

**Assurance of Pardon**

The Apostle Paul declared that we regard no one from a human point of view. If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation. Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start through God's embracing grace. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

**Hymn We cannot own the sunlit sky #717**

**To Hear The Word Of God**

**Prayer For Illumination and Scripture<sup>1</sup>**

God of wisdom, you teach us with love, you touch us with mercy, and you challenge us with truth. Send your Holy Spirit to help us grasp your love, mercy and truth in the Scriptures as we encounter your living Word today. Amen

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<sup>1</sup> Page #'s for pew bibles with Blue or White edged pages

## Scripture

Tanakh*	<b>Exodus 3:1–15</b>	<b>[B#50 /W#55 ]</b>
Psalms	<b>Psalms 105:1–6</b>	<b>[B#556/W#615]</b>
Epistle	<b>Romans 12:9–21</b>	<b>[B#162/W#169]</b>
Gospel	<b>Matthew 16:21–28</b>	<b>[B#18 /W#18 ]</b>

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.

Each of these passages calls us to open our ears to hear the deeper gospel message. The passages are intended to be heard by people, ordinary people, who can gain meaning and perspective in everyday life. In the letter to Romans, the apostle Paul describes the ways in which God's love becomes embodied as we embrace the ways of Christ. In Matthew, Jesus was calling to his disciples. The passages from Exodus tells of God calling to Moses. As a child, Moses was raised with the influence of the Pharaoh and the influence of his birth mother's faith. As a man, when Moses saw the Egyptian abuse of the Hebrew people, he took action. This led him to flee to Midian. He married Zipporah and became a father. It is here that we enter the story of this man who was born a Hebrew slave, became a member of the Pharaoh's family, and then a shepherd tending his father-in-law's flock. It was on Mt Horeb that he was called to lead the Israelite's out of oppression and into freedom.

God called out to Moses to take action, to respond to the cries of the Israelites. Moses was trained as a shepherd in preparation for his unfolding role as the leader of the Hebrews. It is interesting to note that the negative aspects of being a shepherd at that time in Egypt. In the book of Genesis<sup>2</sup> we discover that "all shepherds are abhorrent to the Egyptians." Moses, raised in Pharaoh's home, took on the objectionable role of shepherd. Moses, as a shepherd of Israel, would use his shepherd's staff to guide the slaves out of Egypt.

In this part of the story, we encounter the familiar scene of Moses at the burning bush. There was an angel. The call of God. And, Moses replied, "Here I am". This is similar to

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<sup>2</sup> Genesis 46:34,

God calling Abraham to a holy mountain where there was fire and sheep. We hear it again when God calls Samuel by repeating his name ... with the same response. A similar interaction occurred with the angel Gabriel and Mary. Each individual replies with, "Here am I" Faithful individuals respond to God's call. Ordinary people who become intricately involved in the divine plan for God's creation. Ordinary people who are intimidated by the overwhelming nature of the call. People who seek ways to step away from their call. People who see the barriers that will prevent them from fulfilling such important tasks. Yet, they respond.

Brevard Childs wrote, "What began as just another day doing the same old thing, turned out to be an absolutely new experience for Moses. The old life of shepherding was ended; the new life of deliverer was beginning. The transformation is recorded in the interaction of God with Moses. The initiative is shifted from Moses to God. The ordinary experiences emerge as extraordinary. The old has been transformed into the new."

Moses took the bold step to question God. Yet, these very questions result in Moses receiving clear instructions. Perhaps this can provide us with assurance for our questions, debates, and hesitancy. Perhaps, when we step back and consider the events unfolding in our own time, we can see a fuller complexity of the individuals involved in the scriptures. In our witness to their very human responses, we can better understand our own lives and our choices. When we discuss our wonderings about God and the people in the scriptures, we discover where God is leading. We also discover how God is leading in our story. It is in the relationship that God develops with individuals that we come to recognize our inherent value as God's children.

In their sermon on this passage, Duncan and Ackers wrote of a conversation shared by Will Willimon. He wrote of a conversation with a member of one of his congregations. "The man told him that one evening, returning from a night of poker with pals, he had a vision of the presence of the risen Christ. Christ appeared to him undeniably, vividly. Yet though this event shook him and stirred him deeply, in ten years the man had never told anyone about it before he told Willimon, his pastor. Willimon pressed him on his silence. Was he embarrassed? Was he fearful that others would mock him or fail to believe that this had happened to him? "No," the man explained, "the reason why I told no one was I was too afraid that it was true. And if it's true that Jesus was really real, that he had come personally to me," the man continued, "what then? I'd have to change my whole life. I'd

have to become some kind of radical or something. And I love my wife and family and was scared I'd have to change, to be somebody else, and destroy my family, if the vision was real." This was that kind of decision moment for Jesus' disciples. And it should be for us as well. Jesus is "really real," in that man's words. That's good news, of course. But it is also life changing news. If we take it seriously, then some changes might need to take place in our list of priorities. It was decision time for the disciples.<sup>3</sup><sup>4</sup>

The gospel stories invite us to die to our old way of being, in order to rise up in this new way of Jesus Christ. In this transformation, God's love guides us out of a futile life into a fruitful life. This new life is for all people, the faint of heart and the inherently courageous.

Jesus taught in a way that mirrored a good shepherd tending to their flock. He lived with, led, and fed his sheep, healed their wounds, and laid down his life for them. He endured suffering as the shepherd of the real and messy people. In this passage from Matthew, we find them at a major transition - Jesus was heading into his final journey to Jerusalem and his teaching was becoming more intense. Although the disciples affirm their faith in Christ, they have difficulty fully grasping his teachings.

Peter struggled to understand that Christ would suffer when he rebuked Jesus, saying, "God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you." In response ... Jesus reprimanded him, telling him to literally stop getting in the way. The temptation to impose our will on God is not new. How often do we object to the way things are - seeking the easier, less painful route. How often do we plead with or try to bargain with God?

Jesus admonished Peter for his lack of telos. The Greek word speaks of the inherent goodness or purpose in everything. Aristotle explained that what makes something good is when it fulfills its primary purpose or virtue. For example, a chair is good when it serves as a seat for someone. Humans are good when they act virtuously. The Greek philosophers believed the ultimate telos comes from reason and results in honorable and ethical behavior. Jesus expanded on this understanding. The disciples are "good" when they accept God's will and direction. Jesus points to God as the only true "wisdom", God is the source of all authority, purpose, and goodness. We are to be attuned to God's purpose and intent.

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<sup>3</sup> The Best of Will Willimon: Acting Up in Jesus' Name. Abingdon Press.

<sup>4</sup> Duncan and Ackers, Good News, Bad News

In this passage, Peter objected to God's plan. He saw a different way forward, a more reasonable strategy. When Peter tried to lead by his own reasoning Jesus referred to him as a "skandalon" a stumbling stone. Last week Peter was compared to a sturdy foundation – a rock upon which the church could be built. Today the metaphor shifted to a stumbling stone. Peter (the rock) must choose whether he will be a disciple humbly rooted in God's purpose or if he will rely on his own reasoning with actions against God's purpose. Jesus clarified that to be a disciple means to listen and follow God's guidance. We are to be rooted in prayer and focus on God's mission and purpose.

Jesus helps us to see that it is **not** possible to escape suffering. Even the messiah in his human form did not escape suffering and death. What does it mean to you, to take up your cross? This expression can also be found in the gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Thomas. We know that crucifixion would have been a familiar sight to people in Palestine at that time. It was a method of intimidation and control used by the Roman empire. When Jesus carried His cross up Golgotha it was not a symbolic burden. In that time and place, the cross was the reality of an intensely painful and humiliating death. The cross is much more than a symbol of forgiveness, grace, and love. It is a symbol of surrender to the divine, a symbol of giving up one way of being in order to embrace the ways of Jesus Christ.

The gospel stories connect the divine with the earthly. God chose to be present among humanity, in part, to demonstrate a different way of being. Jesus lived as a Jewish man in the Roman Empire, within the messiness of humanity. To follow in his way we too must become vulnerable within ourselves and with one another. We step into the messiness of life with a willingness to embrace one another just as God embraces us. We join together in recognizing God's presence among us and within us. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

**Hymn                    I, the Lord of sea and sky                    #592**

**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  
In his letter to the Romans, Paul encourages people to allow their love to be genuine in caring for God's creation. 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**

O God, we ask your blessing on our offerings of time, talent, and financial resources. We trust that, with your blessing, your Holy Spirit will accomplish more with the gifts than we can ask or even imagine in Christ's name. Amen.

**Prayers of the People,**

O God in you we live and move and have our being. We come to you in prayer as the summer season shifts into autumn. We give you thanks for the moments enjoyed this summer. We are thankful for the opportunities to savour the beauty of your creation, the moments of connecting with family and friends, and time for recreation & restoration. Thank you for every good thing that restores us.

We remember those for whom this summer has been difficult: those whose homes and communities have been ravaged by fire, storm or flood this year; those who go hungry; those who encounter violence in our own community and around the world; and, those who face economic struggles. May your Spirit linger with each one to encourage them in their struggles.

O God, Jesus walked with so many people in their pain and grief. We remember those who have faced crises this summer - with tragic death, unexpected loss, critical illness, injury, and pain that seem to have no end.... Holy One, surround them with your comfort and compassion.

O God, Jesus faced many demands and rejection. We pray for all those who have struggled to find rest; for leaders searching for solutions for their communities; for those whose jobs and responsibilities present new challenges; and, for all who seek secure and affordable housing. May they know your strength and assurance day by day.

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. 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. O God of the lonely and sorrowing, in Christ you experienced the loss we know when

loved ones die and the pain of betrayal by friends. We remember before you those who grieve the loss of their beloved and those who are lonely.

God of compassion, we lift up families who travel the long journey of grief. We ask you to linger with all who mourn 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 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.

**Hymn Brother, sister let me serve you (2-4-6) #635**

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

Moses met God unexpectedly, as a bush burst into flame. Consider that you may meet God in unexpected places, for God can make any space holy ground. May the God of mystery embrace you. May the Christ of mercy renew you. May the Spirit of life move with you through each new day.

**Postlude**

**Amen**