

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2023 09 24

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

God of all creation, you create the world around us and fill it with your love and purpose. Each creature declares your praise – the mountains state your majesty; the fertile field, your generosity; and, soaring birds sing of your freedom.

Our actions declare you in our lives. We pray that our efforts will honour your justice and mercy; and that our relationships speak of your love and compassion. We praise you, O God, in this time of worship and in each day.

God, you are the giver of all good gifts, yet our generosity is limited. We complain and compare ourselves to others. We share and then we worry about having enough. Help us to live with generous hearts that trust in you each day. Amen

The mercy of our God is from everlasting. Believe the Good News! In Jesus Christ, God's generous love reaches out to embrace us. In Christ, we are forgiven and set free to begin again. Thanks be to God! May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. And also with you.

Special Music

Jan Searle, Flute

To Hear The Word Of God Prayer For Illumination and Scripture

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

Tanakh*	Exodus 16:1-15	[B#62/W#69]
Psalms	Psalms 105:1-6, 37-4	[B#556/W#615]
Epistle	Philippians 1:21-30	[B#196/W#209]
Gospel	Matthew 20:1-16	[B#21 /W#22]

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.

Many of you are familiar with the ways in which the scripture stories unfold each week. The stories are familiar. When we encounter the familiar we don't always pay much attention to the detail, we remember the ways in which the stories play out. It is helpful to listen with your imagination... imagine what they experienced as the story unfolded. We have been following the story of Moses as he led a reluctant people away from slavery and oppression. How was it for those who followed Moses? Does their doubt and anxiety make sense? What was it like when food and water was scarce as they travelled through the desert? The Israelites witnessed many signs of God's presence yet they doubted, grumbled, and complained. The daily manna was given yet some would try to hoard and hold onto more than their share. Are there times when we covet what others have, wanting a bigger portion for ourselves. Can you relate to their discontent?

Jesus speaks to God's abundant provisions in our gospel reading this morning. Just before the parable, Jesus encouraged the rich man to sell all that he owned and to follow him. The previous chapter concluded with ... But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first. In Christ's teachings, we are to live with the belief that God deeply and profoundly loves each individual and all of creation, that we are made in the image of God, and that there is nothing to be done to earn or deserve God's generosity and grace ... When we embrace this belief, we choose to live with the knowledge of God's abundance. The premise from which we live ... shapes how we live. This premise changes how we encounter the manna from heaven. This premise changes how we perceive generosity and how we encounter one another.

Difficulties occur when the generosity of God is interpreted through a competitive perspective. We struggle to understand God's generosity when we experience life with a sense of scarcity rather than abundance.

Jesus shared the parable, beginning with the owner of a vineyard going out to hire day laborers. The owner and the laborers agreed on wages for the day. It was a challenging way to survive, and day laborers lived hard and often short lives. Jesus spoke to the

reality of day laborers and the economic chaos of their lives. Many of the social and economic hardships of the ancient world continue today throughout the world.

The owner returned to the marketplace multiple times to hire laborers, with the promise of a just wage. When they were paid at the end of the day, the last hired were paid first and received the full daily wage. The first hired anticipated they would be paid more than those who worked fewer hours. They were upset when they received the same. The landowner reminded them of the agreed wage for the day, of his right to do so, and that it was generous and just.

It may be difficult to comprehend that justice and grace are not items on a balance sheet to be reconciled with one another. They are both part of the character of God. Confusion and conflict may linger and you may find yourself re-reading the passage to determine whether you missed a piece of the story.

Scripture teaches that God creates and re-creates. In the story of Exodus we discover God creating new life for slaves who barely survived under a system of domination, submission, power, and oppression. In the process of forming the new way of being ... God provided for their needs with the gift of manna. Manna is basic sustenance, "daily bread." It is a gift that cannot be controlled by human desire or need. It is a gift given for the needs of the people. Everyone has plenty and it is not possible to have more than the daily need. All receive the same amount. The people who work all day and the people who have little to do ... receive the same amount. The able and the disabled receive the same amount: plenty, but not too much—and it is all a gift. This theme is evident in diverse ways throughout the scriptures and throughout history. You may recall when Jesus fed thousands with a few loaves and a couple of fish, and everyone has plenty and no one had too much. The stories help us to understand how God works among us and within us. Jesus shared the parable as the disciples struggled to understand this new way of being. Through this unsettling story we continue to discover how we might struggle to understand the ways of Christ. It is unsettling when cultural beliefs are in conflict with the ways of Christ. It is unsettling when the familiar transitions into a new way of being. Dorothy Day wrote, "Jesus spoke of the living wage ... in the parable of those who came at the first and the eleventh hour." A living wage for everyone, rather than the competitive struggle and inequality of the marketplace. Shared abundance.

The parable speaks of another way of being, a different sense of order within an established structure. We witness within our Canadian society the impact of social safety nets and basic provisions for the care of people. Our Canadian healthcare system strives to ensure that basic health needs are met. When we look south of the border there is a marked distinction between the two systems.

In many ways this parable helps us to discover where our beliefs are rooted. Do you see winner and loser, insider and outsider? When you pray the Lord's prayer, do you pray for your daily bread or daily bread for all people?

Perhaps we can begin to see that the first workers, those who had worked all day long, were concerned about more than the day's wages. The real issue, Carter notes, is superiority: "you have made them equal to us" . Work is more than wages, it is more than a job, it is also a symbol of place in society which can reinforce the beliefs of winners and losers, superior and inferior.

The passages remind us that our ideas of right and wrong, of what is just and unjust, are not necessarily God's ideas. Perhaps we need to see things from a new perspective, a different way of understanding how we fit within creation. You and I are invited and challenged to look at where we find ourselves in the story. To see ourselves through honest and loving eyes. Most importantly we are reminded to see ourselves as beloved children of God.

John Claypool, in 'Life Isn't Fair, Thank God!', shared a rabbinic parable about a farmer that had two sons. ... As soon as they were old enough to walk, he took them to the fields and he taught them everything that he knew about growing crops and raising animals. When he got too old to work, the two boys took over the chores of the farm and when the father died, they had found their working together so meaningful that they decided to keep their partnership. So each brother contributed what he could and during every harvest season, they would divide equally what they had corporately produced. Across the years the elder brother never married, stayed an old bachelor. The younger brother did marry and had eight wonderful children. Some years later when they were having a wonderful harvest, the old bachelor brother thought to himself one night, "My brother has ten mouths to feed. I only have one. He really needs more of his harvest than I do, but I know he is much too fair to renegotiate. I know what I'll do. In the dead of the night when he is already asleep, I'll take some of what I have put in my barn and I'll slip it over into

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his barn to help him feed his children. At the very time he was thinking down that line, the younger brother was thinking to himself, "God has given me these wonderful children. My brother hasn't been so fortunate. He really needs more of this harvest for his old age than I do, but I know him. He's much too fair. He'll never renegotiate. I know what I'll do. In the dead of the night when he's asleep, I'll take some of what I've put in my barn and slip it over into his barn." And so one night when the moon was full, as you may have already anticipated, those two brothers came face to face, each on a mission of generosity. The old rabbi said that there wasn't a cloud in the sky, a gentle rain began to fall. You know what it was? God weeping for joy because two of his children had gotten the point. Two of his children had come to realize that generosity is the deepest characteristic of the holy and because we are made in God's image, our being generous is the secret to our joy as well. Life is not fair, thank God! It's not fair because it's rooted in grace. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Guide me, O thou great Redeemer #651

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote Giving is not a debt you owe; it is a seed you sow. Unknown

This Sunday The Presbyterian Church in Canada celebrates the ministry and mission we accomplish together through Presbyterians Sharing. Your gifts to our shared work in Jesus' name accomplish amazing things across Canada and in different parts of God's world. So give with generous hearts.

Offertory Jan Searle, Flute

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 Generous God, you are the source of all good things, of life itself and all that sustains it. O God, bless the gifts we share so they touch lives of those in need and become roots of justice in the world, for the sake of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayers of the People God of mystery and wonder, we see the beauty of the world and appreciate your attention to creation. We witness the aching of the world and ask your blessing on the work of faithful people who care for the environment. Help us to protect all that is at risk.

Thank you for the gifts you plant in the heart of humanity. We see the aching of the hungry and hurting, and hear the groans of parents whose children die in their arms

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Resources: PCC Worship Planner, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/> Feasting on the Word, sermons.com

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and the cries of children who fear tomorrow. Bless the ministries of our church across our country and around the world that bring healing and hope to lives at risk.

God of promise and possibility, we witness the conflict between people and the terror imposed by nations. We worry about our communities and our children. Thank you for the ministry of the faithful who advocate for justice and peace.

God, sometimes we doubt that we can make a difference or have an impact. Challenge us to recognise the ways in which we are able to affect change with love and compassion, and courage and commitment. In these gifts we know your power at work within us and among us.

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.

God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with health challenges: Jim T; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Warren and Lori; and, 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.

Special Music

Jan Searle, Flute

To Go Forth In God's Name

Commissioning and Benediction

As you go out into the community remember God's generosity to us in Christ and share the gift of generosity with others. May the power of the Spirit strengthen you. May Christ fill you with the love of God this day and evermore.

Postlude

Amen