

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

Announcements

HYMN Praise God #306

CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

One: The Lord be with you.

All: And with you also.

One: Lift up your hearts.

All: We lift them up to the Lord.

One: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

All: It is right to give God thanks and praise.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession [**Responsive**]

God of possibility and power, on the first day you began this creation with light to shine upon this world. You brought order out of chaos.

On this first day of the week, you call us to gather in your holy name. We arrive here, today, eager to listen and wonder, to sing, pray, and be fed. By the gift of your Holy Spirit, make us your instruments of hope in a hurting world.

God of majesty and mercy, we confess to you the things we have done knowingly and things we have left undone; hurts we inflicted unintentionally and hurts we have tried to disguise, selfish things we have done just to please others, and those just to please ourselves. Forgive us we pray. Help us choose to follow in the ways of Jesus. Amen

Assurance of Pardon

God's amazing love allows each of us to receive his grace and be at peace with God, with yourselves and with each other. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn Breathe on me. breath of God #389

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*	Genesis 1:1-5	[B#1 /W#1]
Psalms	Psalms 29	[B#504/W#557]
Historical	Acts 19:1-7	[B#139/W#145]
Gospel	Mark 1:4-11	[B#34 /W#35]

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

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.

This is the first Sunday after Epiphany. This time of epiphany is between the celebration of the birth of Jesus and the coming season of Lent and Easter. The Twelve Days of Christmas start Christmas day and go until January 5th. The Twelfth Night is the eve of Epiphany January 6th. It is the day to recognize the epiphany revealed to the Gentile Magi as they encountered the divine Jesus. We often think of Epiphany as a sudden sense clarity when a deeper meaning or understanding is revealed. It is an intuitive grasp of a concept, an illuminating discovery, or a realization. The season of Epiphany celebrates the realization of God's promise as we celebrate the light of Jesus Christ breaking into the world. The first Sunday after Epiphany comes at the start of the new year. A time when we re-start, a time to reflect on the past and a time to live with hope in the present. New beginnings point us toward the good news of the beginning of creation. In Genesis, God creates light and it is good.

The readings this morning encourage us to recognize that the scriptures are earthy, grounded in the real, tactile world. In Genesis, God commanded creation into being. For centuries, people have shared the ways in which God spoke life into being. In the beginning when the wind of God swept over the face of the waters... and then we continue in the Gospel of Mark where Jesus was baptized in the waters of the Jordan. The text affirms that life and order are dependent upon the creative acts of God. The Torah, the prophets, all prepare the way. Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Miriam, King David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, John the baptizer all prepared the way. John proclaimed that Jesus had the authority to baptize with the Holy Spirit. In the chapters that follow, we will see Jesus

act out that authority—the authority to teach, the authority to heal and cast out demons, and the authority to heal physical illness.

The passage from Mark's gospel takes place at the Jordan River. Picture for a moment the scenery. Living here in Ontario we have likely had many encounters with rivers and lakes. Imagine standing on a shoreline. Imagine the distinct odours that were present at the edge of the water as the crowd gathered ... the rich waters of the river, the mixed scents coming from the crowd, the wildlife that live in the waters and along its shores, and, John living in the wilderness with his camel hair clothing and locust diet. The earthiness of this event is grounded in the spirituality of God's creation.

The baptism of Jesus recalls what God did in the beginning ... in Jesus we find the embodiment of heaven and earth, divine and human. In our own baptism, we are re-born of water into the holy promise of God's loving grace and the Spirit among us.

John lived in the wilderness as he pursued God's calling on his life. The wilderness is a strong image and a consistent theme throughout the scriptures. God called Moses to lead the Hebrews out of Egypt, out of slavery and into their lengthy wandering in the wilderness as they journeyed to the promised land. John baptized people in the Jordan river, which acts as a natural border between wilderness and rich fertile land. His way of living embodies the wilderness of creation.

Isaiah's prayer, that God would tear open the heavens and come down was answered. John the baptizer announced the arrival of Jesus, both in the womb and as an adult. When Jesus was baptised and rose up out of the waters of the Jordan, the heavens were torn apart. God declared, "This is my beloved child, with whom I am well pleased. " The promise was fulfilled for finding a way in the wilderness.

Quite often when I'm preparing the sermon I come across short stories that are relevant to the passage and, sometimes, they seem too dated to use. In part, the rapid advance of technology creates this dilemma. Recently, I saw a posting on social media from a fellow minister that links to a short story that I will today. She is a gifted singer and recently delivered a 'singing telegram' as a birthday present to a friend. When she told her adult children about the gift, they were confused. They did not know what she meant by 'telegram'. Her experience connects to a short story that goes like this,

"Back when the telegraph was the fastest means of long-distance communication, there was a story about Robert, a young man who responded to a newspaper ad. Robert went

to a large, noisy office where, in the background, a telegraph clacked away. A sign on the receptionist's counter instructed job applicants to fill out a form and wait until they were summoned to the inner office. Robert completed his form and sat down to wait alongside several other applicants. After a few minutes, Robert stood up, crossed the room to the door of the inner office, and walked right in. The other applicants were curious - why had this man been so bold? They muttered among themselves that they hadn't heard any summons yet. They reached a consensus ... they decided that the young man who went into the office would be reprimanded and he would be dis-qualified for the job. Imagine their surprise when a few minutes later the employer announced, "Gentlemen, thank you very much for coming, but the job has been filled by this young man, Robert." The men grumbled to each other, and then, one spoke up, "Wait a minute -- I don't understand. He was the last one to come in, and we never even got a chance to be interviewed. Yet he got the job. That's not fair." The employer smiled and said, "All the time you've been sitting here, the telegraph has been ticking out a message in Morse code: 'If you understand this message, then come right in. The job is yours.' None of you heard it or understood it. Robert did, so the job is his."

This story seems to connect to the ways in which the Spirit moves us. Jesus told his disciples that the Spirit would be with them ... "do not worry about... what you are to say; for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what you ought to say" The gospels teach us to speak on behalf of God's work in the world. When this is done with the power of the Spirit the world is changed.

During this season of the Epiphany be attentive to the ways in which you share the light of Christ. Listen for the Spirit. In the quiet moments of prayer, in your relationships with one another, in the still moments of your life. Be attentive to the ways in which God is calling to you. The Spirit nudges and strengthens each of us to participate in diverse ways through relationships, mission, giving voice to our faith, and to witnessing the truth. We are able to proclaim God's good news to the world. The Spirit inspires us as we are called to trust that with God ... it is possible. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn

Spirit of the Living God

#400

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. *1 Peter 4:10*

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 holy One, we offer our gifts to you. We are thankful for your gifts to us in Christ and in creation. Bless what we bring and who we are, so that your gifts will bless the world you love in Christ's name. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of Grace, we turn to you in prayer with open and hopeful hearts.

We thank you for the work of your church in all its expressions and for all that brings your love, healing, and justice into the world. We pray for churches struggling financially, for churches enmeshed in conflict, for those that are tired and in need of renewal; and for congregations with a new sense of mission and purpose. We pray they will receive the wisdom and strength you provide.

We pray for people around the world who must confront danger and conflict in their daily lives; for those working for justice in the face of oppression; and for all who know hunger and homelessness. We pray they will receive the wisdom and strength you provide.

God we ask that you strengthen us to serve you with our words and our actions. Help us to see others with your vision. Teach us how to work together and follow you in changing times.

We thank you for the healing we have known in our lives: for times we have been forgiven; for relationships repaired and strengthened; for comfort in times of grief; and, for pain eased and recovery from illness. We pray for those struggling with the lingering impact of COVID 19 and we pray for those in health care struggling with challenges. May they find hope and the courage.

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 ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Judith & Gerry; Jim T; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; 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.

Hymn All things bright and beautiful #435

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

The season of Epiphany celebrates God's light breaking into the world in Christ Jesus. May the light of God lead you, the light of Christ embrace you, and the light of the Holy Spirit enliven you so that you know hope and peace this day and forever more.

Postlude Amen