

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, BAYFIELD

2024 03 03

May the grace of Jesus Christ be with you ... **and also with you.** Welcome to worship at Knox Presbyterian Bayfield on this 3rd Sunday of Lent

Announcements

Mission Moment

As part of a Caring Community Initiative, the Presbyterian Music Camp piloted a Mental Health Workshop program during the summer of 2023. The program included mental health support and workshops run by a qualified health professional on the topics of anxiety, depression, ADHD, self-harm, suicide and other mental health topics. The opportunity for attendees to express themselves in a caring and safe environment with professional leadership took safety to the next level for the camp, and provided an opportunity for individuals to explore some of their struggles with support. The program continues to grow by providing Mental Health First Aid training to staff and volunteers as well as exploring ways that art and music therapy can be offered in a camp setting.

Next week the clocks will 'spring ahead', our worship will include the annual congregational meeting, which starts at 11:30. And, following the meeting we will share in a congregational lunch.

The 2021 changes to the PCC's theology and practice regarding LGBTQ+ inclusion resulted in changes to our congregational policies. An upcoming webinar will provide an opportunity to learn more about the decisions. There will be a time for participants to ask questions. The webinar will take place on Wednesday March 13th and will be recorded.

Then, on May 1st, there is the opportunity to take part in a workshop offered by Camp Kintail. Speakers from *Transplaining* will help us learn more about the issues, which will help us better understand issues. You can register by calling Camp Kintail.

The people of Knox Bayfield acknowledge with gratitude the territory upon which we live, work, play and worship. We live on the traditional lands of the Chippewa and Haudenosaunee, 'People of the Longhouse,' Anishinabewaki, Attiwonderonk (Neutral), and Mississauga peoples within Treaty 29, of 1827. We are all treaty people. We make this acknowledgement, knowing it is incomplete and inadequate. May we listen, learn, and repent.

HYMN Praise God

#306

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CALL TO WORSHIP [responsive]

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 majesty and mercy, you set the cosmos in motion and call all creatures into being. Mountains and molehills speak of your majesty and attention to detail. You know each of us by name and make yourself known to those who seek you. We gather in your presence to listen for your wisdom for our times and our lives. To you, O God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, we offer all honour and glory in our prayers and our praise this day and every day. We join our voices together in confession to you.

Wise and welcoming God, you always us out and we confess we are easily distracted from your presence.

We envy those who achieve worldly success as we pursue our own desires. We fail to question the cost of our desires to the earth or those in need. Forgive us, O God. Re-awaken us to your purposes and re-ignite our commitment to pursue them. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ. 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 Lord of all power

#626

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 20:1-17 [B#66/W#73]

Psalm Psalm 19 [**responsive**] [B#498/W#550]

Epistle 1 Corinthians 1:18–25 [B#166/W#173]

Gospel John 2:13–22

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.

The scriptures readings take a journey to understand the ways in which we live in our faith. Moses received the Torah, the ten commandments, Paul wrote to the people of Corinth about the foolishness of Christ, and John shares his account of Jesus clearing the temple.

Walter Brueggemann wrote, "These commands might be taken not as a series of rules," he writes, "but as a proclamation in God's own mouth of who God is and how God shall be 'practiced' by this community of liberated slaves."

We understand the commandments are in the form of two neatly formed tables. One side has to do with how we are to live before God and the other defines how we are to live with one another. The two tables are different and they are inseparable. We are not to emphasize one or the other. We are to live in the balance of understanding the two together. In the gospel of Mark, Jesus responded to a request to define the most important commandment. He simplified the first four commandments "The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might". Jesus continued, "The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Barbara Brown Taylor reminds us that God chose Abram and Sarai long before God provided the ten teachings. She goes on to write that the teachings express the will of God.

The giving of Torah on Sinai, when Moses received the ten teachings, is celebrated during the Jewish festival of Shavuot [shuh · voo · owt]. Many religious Jews observe the first night of Shavuot in a meaningful way. They will stay up all night with others and study Torah, Talmud, and other sacred writings. The night gathering, called the tikkun [ti kn], is set aside to focus on the mending of the world.

John Calvin wrote of three reasons for the Ten Commandments. First, we are taught how to live before God and others. This allows us to recognize our self-deception. Secondly, the commandments provide an important structure for people to live within for the good of community. Thirdly, and Calvin noted this is the most important aspect, the commandments provide 'a lamp unto our feet' as they guide our journey in our life before God and neighbours.

The temple was located in Jerusalem in a place of many names. Mount Zion, Mount Moriah, The Mount of the House of the Lord, the Mountain of the House, and the Temple Mount. The exact location of the temple continues to be under debate. Some believe that it was in the location of the Dome of the Rock, a Muslim shrine. Some believe it is aligned with the Eastern Gate, which is a little north of the Dome of the Rock or slightly east of the Dome of the Rock.

The first Temple, built by King Solomon around 1,000 BCE, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BCE. When the Persians conquered the Babylonians the exiled Jewish leaders returned and rebuilt the temple. This Second Temple stood for hundreds of years until it was renovated and expanded by Herod the Great. The Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE.

When Herod renovated the Temple it expanded to cover 37 acres in area. The Temple complex had a series of courtyards surrounding the central room, the Holy of Holies, plus many storage and administrative rooms, and ritual baths for purification. The aqueduct that provided water from 10 kilometers away was protected by high walls and a series of gates. The primary purpose of the Temple was to offer sacrifices to God. It was open every day. Many of the sacrifices were animals that were slaughtered in the courtyard. The odours from the animal blood and the smell of sacrifices on the fire likely lingered over most of Jerusalem. The fragrant smoke was offered up to God.

Amy Jill Levine explores the rich history with deep understanding of the traditions rooted in the Jewish faith. She shares interesting perspectives and historical information about today's passage from John's gospel. You may be tempted to think that Jesus was being critical of the Jewish institutions and practices but there are much deeper issues here. In

this story of the cleansing of the temple, John points toward the replacement of the temple with the temple of the body of Jesus the Christ.

The religious leaders assumed that Jesus was referring to the physical temple built by Herod when they point to the ridiculous notion that he could rebuild the temple in three days ... the temple built by Herod had been a work in progress for over 40 years! Jesus was challenging aspects of their religious practices and traditions that literally tossed everything upside down. The temple was the center of their life, religiously and culturally. Their faith traditions gave shape to their lives.

We continue to witness the many ways in which people react when traditional teachings are questioned and understood in new ways. The disciples did not and perhaps they simply could not understand many of the teachings until after the resurrection. The gospels were written after the resurrection which helped the disciples to better understand the teachings. John's Gospel warns against being steeped in traditions that lead to misunderstanding. In part, this account helps us to recognize the importance of being curious and open to the movement of the Spirit. Is there more to the teachings of Jesus than we are hearing, more to his will than we comprehend.

Jesus went into the city and disrupted the activities at the temple. He was outraged by what he saw. Moving through the "market" he created havoc. The Synoptic gospels – Matthew, Mark, and Luke - remember it happening near the end of Jesus' life, during his last week in Jerusalem, just before his death. They place it between Palm Sunday and Easter. John experienced the event differently as he placed it at the beginning between the story of Nicodemus coming to Jesus at night and Jesus' meeting with the Samaritan woman at the well.

You may recall that Jesus responded to the Samaritan woman's question about the proper place of worship. The woman discovered that the practice of restricting worship to one physical place will be abandoned, for "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" The temple will be everywhere the spirit and truth of God are found. Scholar Amy-Jill Levine says, "recognizing Jesus within his Jewish context means recognizing his enormous concern for how people relate to each other on a day-to-day basis. The issue for him is not, "Here's what you need to believe in order to get into heaven." The issue is, "Here's what you need to do in order to have one foot in the kingdom of heaven. Here's what you need to do because here's what God wants you to

do, and here's what your tradition calls you to do." It is his Judaism that associates love of God with love of neighbor; his Judaism emphasizes what we call the golden rule, also found in a number of different religious traditions. That's why he talks to people about reconciliation and says that human interaction is more important than ritual."¹

During Lent we are reminded that the story of Jesus does not end at the cross. The ways of Christ urge us to connect more deeply through our love of God as we continue our journey of faith. We have the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which we are mindful of scripture teachings. Our omnipotent, ubiquitous God is evident all around us. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

Hymn Be thou my vision [v 1,2,5] #461

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.

Jesus grew angry at the money changers in the temple, reminding God's people that our offerings are not just financial transactions. What we give expresses our commitment to God's ways. As you present your offering, consider what commitment to God's purposes your gift expresses.

Blessing of Gifts

Lord Jesus, you challenge your followers to offer God commitment and gratitude. Receive our gifts as an expression of our commitment to you and your ministry. Use all that we can give to offer hope and healing in the world you love. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Loving God, we thank you for the world you created, its beauty and its life sustaining promise. The signs of spring have become evident as the sun shines longer each day and re-awakens our hope in your promise of new life. Ever-present God, thank you for walking with us through days of uncertainty and in times of joy and satisfaction. In times of stress

¹ from an interview in the October 2012 issue of US Catholic. Quoted by Mary Austin in Ashes at the coffee shop, resurrection at the bus stop: sermons for Lent and Easter

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and worry, you provide a still point of calm. In times of challenge, you inspire courage and confidence in us. Thank you for the wisdom and encouragement we receive from you.

Today we pray for those who are struggling with stressors in their lives; for those worrying about making ends meet, and for those concerned about the ways of the world.

O holy One, we seek your loving peace and patience. We pray for faith communities as they explore ways of worship that connect your people with you.

We pray for our nation and the nations of this world. Almighty God, we yearn for leaders with courage, wisdom, and compassion to confront the challenges of these times. Guide your people to discern between conspiracy theories and truth telling. Work through advocates for peace and justice to inspire change where it is needed.

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. Draw near to those who must confront illness, loss, and changing circumstances. 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. May their memories be a blessing. We ask you to linger with Lois and her extended family as they mourn the death of Don. God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Renee & Jim; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Valerie, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Courtney, Gayle & family; and, 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

Precious Lord Take My Hand

#675

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To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

May God's love strengthen you. May Christ's mercy refine your character. May the power of the Spirit enliven your hope this day and in every day to come.

Postlude Amen