

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: Let us give thanks to God with our whole hearts

All: We give thanks for God's steadfast love and faithfulness

One: Call upon God to increase our strength of soul

All: In the midst of troubling times, God reaches out to us

One: So we gather to worship God, trusting in God's goodness and guidance

All: We come to offer our prayers and praise, seeking God's renewing love day by day

Prayer of Adoration and Confession [responsive]

God of all creation, we marvel at all the grandeur you call into being. You tend the fragile beauty and balance in the world, receiving praise from the depths of the sea to the tops of the mountains. You have seen your Church grow from tiny beginnings into a worldwide community, full of diversity in voice and vocation. Open our eyes to your purposes for each of us and all of us, and for the Church in every location. Awaken us with insight from your Holy Spirit. **God of purpose and possibility, you give us work to do and the skills we need to do it. Yet we prefer to follow our own ways. We think we know better. Forgive our stubborn natures. By the power of your Holy Spirit, create in us a teachable spirit so we can learn new ways to serve you.**

Assurance of Pardon

The prophet Micah reminds us that God requires three things of us: to do justice, to love kindness, and walk humbly with our God. God offers forgiveness and peace to all who turn away from self-interest and seek reconciliation with God and neighbour in kindness and humility. May the peace of Jesus the Christ, which surpasses all understanding, be with you. **And also with you.**

Hymn Tell me the old old story #499

To Hear The Word Of God Prayer For Illumination and Scripture

God of truth and wisdom, Jesus confronted those who stood against him as your Truth. Send us your Holy Spirit to hear your truth again in his story. Inspire us with his courage and conviction so that we may love you more fully and serve you with wisdom. Amen.

Scripture

Tanakh*	1 Samuel 8:4–20	[B#251/W#278]
Psalm	Psalm 138	[B#577/W#639]
Epistle	2Corinthians 4:13–5:1	[B#180/W#190]
Gospel	Mark 3:13–35	[B#37 /W#38]

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 readings this morning have disturbing elements. Samuel, the young prophet from last week has become an elderly judge of nation that struggles to trust in God. In the gospel reading, the religious leaders accuse Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebub, while his family claims he is out of his mind and seeks to restrain him. The stories point to the difficulties encountered when we are called to shift perspectives, to see our lives and our actions in a different way.

Blasphemy is an interesting word. It is defined as switching right for wrong and wrong for right. What God disapproves of becomes acceptable by stating the truth of God is a lie. This concept of blasphemy can destabilize the structure of how we live out our lives. The accounts identify the ways in which people act against God when they are fearful.

How do we live out the will of God when barriers like this exist? The apostle Paul writes that we can find comfort in knowing that Christ lives within us. He wrote, "Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day". When people are asked to describe their spirituality and experience of God, they often begin by trying to describe moments they cannot fully explain. Moments in which they sense a spiritual dimension. Celtic Christianity describes such moments as "thin places." In his book *The Sense of Being Stared At*, Rupert Sheldrake observes the ways in which animals have a sixth sense. For example, sharks and birds respond to the earth's magnetic field. Sheldrake goes on to suggest human beings may not have this sixth sense, but may have what he calls a seventh sense. This seventh sense is a spiritual awareness that connects us to each other, to the world, and to the spiritual. He has

observed that many sense when they are being observed, even when their backs were turned to

the observer. Have you ever thought of someone right before the phone rang, and then heard that person's voice? This sixth sense can help us to become alert to the barriers that distract us from what is good and purposeful.

Samuel lived in a time when Israel was a theocracy, a community guided and protected by God. They were set apart, distinctive from other nations. They did not have a king. Israel was led by leaders whom God raised up in times of need. These leaders included Moses, Miriam, Aaron, Deborah, Samson, Gideon, and Samuel. Each served not as a king or a queen or as an elected official. They settled disputes, sought justice, and led them through conflicts with other nations. The young Samuel from last week has grown into an elderly prophet and judge after years of faithful service. It seems that history repeats itself as we discover Samuel's sons did not follow his good example. He seemed to be blind to their actions as they took bribes and perverted justice. The people of Israel believed it would be better to be like other nations. They were constantly under threat of attack from other nations, in part because of their geographical location along the trade routes. They hoped a monarchy would allow them a better defense with negotiating power. Their fear led them to turn away from God. They were no longer content with God providing prophets and judges in time of need.

Samuel, disturbed by their demands, turned to God for guidance and was told to allow the nation to suffer the consequences of their choices. Although he would choose a king, he warned of the abuse of power that would occur with a monarchy. The people were certain that an earthly king, a visible King would be honored and respected by Israel and, perhaps more importantly, by the neighbouring nations.

We continue to struggle in our efforts to trust God. Life presents many challenging situations. It can be particularly difficult when we are afraid. When fear takes hold during illness, financial stress, physical challenges, and major life transitions. H. R. Niebuhr explored the challenges of the church as it is called to be in but not of the world. He explored the question of being in society yet apart. It may seem easier to create rigid guidelines. Yes to this, no to that. Yet life is not experienced and lived out in such a way. Perhaps this is how the Israelites came to demand a king to lead them. They were weary of living in the precarious position of trusting that God always would raise up a judge to lead them.

The gospel reading is an intercalation, which means there are two stories that merge into one. The one begins with the calling of the disciples, then the leaders and the family of Jesus speak against him. The leaders accused him of being controlled by Beelzebuh, the King of the Dung Heap, claiming his power is demonic. Satan does not refer to a creature with horns and a tail.

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Jesus names Satan as the power that actively works against the compassionate and reconciling love of God. The forces that act against God in an attempt to snare us. This can cause us to hurt ourselves, to hurt others, and to hurt God. The oppressive power of racism, which falsely causes one group to feel superior to another. There is the power of materialism, which tempts us to believe that security is found in power and wealth. There is a disruption in the connection between people when divisiveness takes hold. Structures that are based on difference rather than inclusiveness. Lori Wagner shared, "in scripture we discover that Jesus practiced compassion, standing up for what is right, erring on the side of love, living justly rather than imposing justice. Living justly rather than imposing justice. Perhaps it feels easier to exclude than to include, much easier to fear than to love. Loving can be challenging and difficult. It is one thing to reject a concept or position. It is vastly different than choosing to "demonize" those who differ ... Once you "demonize" someone, you remove their humanity. Once you demonize someone, **you** remove their humanity... in your eyes, in the eyes of others –and even in the eyes of those you seek to hurt with that categorization. You know the old saying about sticks and stones. It's not entirely true. Words do hurt. They hurt a lot. Words can be damaging to you, to those around you, and to those who are the object of the harmful words. When people are demonized with words, actions, or implications, they become objectified. And no one wants to be treated as an object. We all want to be treated with respect as children of God.'

Jesus reinforced the need to seek God's will and to set aside distractions while living into our faith. Archbishop Desmond Tutu wrote, "Goodness is stronger than hate." It is in our connections that we most clearly witness the love of God. In Mark's gospel we are reminded that the ministry of Jesus is open to everybody. It seems the people who provoke intolerance are those who are unable or unwilling to embrace the openhearted love of God and God's love of our humanity. We are all siblings in the eyes of God. The answer to Jesus' question, "Who are my mother and my brothers?" is found in "whoever does the will of God". We discover this vision of Christ's extended family within the context of accusations of demon possession against Jesus. Christ draws us into solidarity with all of humanity. We are asked to live into the joy and suffering of humanity. To do so there needs to be a willingness to join together as the family of God. The passage reinforces the need to recognize God's desire for humanity to share in the divine abundance of creation. Praise be to God for visions and the movement of the Spirit among us.

HYMN

O for a world where everyone

#730

THE OFFERING OF OUR LIFE AND LABOUR TO THE LORD

Quote Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1Thess 5:16-18 The growth around us in field and garden speak of God's abundant love. What we offer to God this day spreads that abundance to those in need, for Christ's sake.

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 growing gardens and growing hope, receive our gifts and our gratitude this day. Bless what we bring and what we do, so that we become expressions of your abundant love, in Jesus' name.

Prayers of the People

God of grace and compassion, we lift up the nations and neighbourhoods who face ongoing conflict and violence, those who crowd together in refugee compounds and homeless encampments, and those who face the impact of nature's unpredictable forces. We join our prayers with the desperate wherever find themselves: grant us courage and resilience to meet the steepest challenges and inspire our hope.

As summer approaches, we give you thanks for beauty throughout your creation, and for the refreshment and recreation it provides. Yet we feel your passion rising when we overlook the cost of our lifestyle on creation's fragile balance. Show us how to act for justice with compassion so that nothing precious, no one precious is overlooked.

We celebrate the life of this church community whose worship and witness nurture our faith in Jesus Christ and challenge us to live what we believe. Awaken us to opportunities to serve you in the friendship and fellowship we share. Grant us courage to reach out in Jesus' name into the midst of crisis and deep human need.

Holy One, we offer you our thanks for the communities in which we share, for our friends and families, our neighbours and fellow citizens, and we pray for the widening circles of our lives. We lift up those nearest and dearest to us, naming them before you with affection and gratitude, knowing that your love touches the depths of their needs and celebrates the joys of their journeys.

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.

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God of compassion, we lift up families who travel the long journey of grief and your Spirit to linger with Jim, Jane and family as they mourn Valerie; with Brenda, Faye and family as they mourn John; and with friends and family as they mourn the loss of Marjorie. May their shared memories be a blessing. God of hope, we ask you to linger with all who are dealing with challenges: Renee & Jim; Judith & Gerry; Rob, Jim & Jane; Carl; Betty Lou; Ruth; Audrey & Grace; Courtney, Gayle & family; John, Brian, and family; David and family. O holy One, guide the caregivers and medical staff in their efforts to bring healing. 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 I'm gonna live so God can use me #648

To Go Forth In God's Name Commissioning and Benediction

Keep your eyes open as you walk in God's world. Be alert for opportunities to share God's love. May the God who made us, the Christ who mends us, and the Spirit who gives us life walk with you each day. Amen

Postlude Amen