

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

As we gather in the name of Jesus we remember and acknowledge with gratitude the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – on whose traditional and unceded territory we gather. As we remember let us also recommit to reconciling relationships.

Celebrations / Joys and Concerns

*God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.
God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.*

➤ *Rise up, rise up (repeat)*

Call to Worship

God has invited us.

So we gather.

God has spoken.

So we listen.

God has given us glimpses of grace and mercy.

So we wait and watch – longing for healing – eager for hope.

God has been faithful to all generations.

So we trust – and we worship our creating, redeeming, and sustaining God.

† Prayer

O God, you have sent Jesus as the Word of Life for our eyes to see and our ears to hear. Help us to believe with joy what the scriptures proclaim and to worship you in spirit and in truth.

Continue to redeem your people, we pray. We are students in the school of life, sometimes succeeding, often failing, but by your grace, each day we seek to glorify you.

Confirm in us the true and beautiful things we have grasped from the gospel. Highlight and correct the errors which have found expression through us.

In your mercy, forgive us the evil and shame we have wilfully or unintentionally engaged in.

Remind us that in Christ, no error is indelible – no deed unforgivable. We are not failures.

Teach us to welcome and integrate the gift of saving grace – to share it freely with all. Let us be merciful even as you are merciful – living as siblings of Jesus – children of God. Amen

Words of Hope

Life is an open page before you, fill it with the stories of grace. We can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. Thanks be to God!

➤ *O Jesus, I have promised*

† Prayer for Understanding

O God, our strength, lift us up on wings as a mother eagle supporting her young. When we are weary, restore us to your purpose and fill us with your hope. Open your word today to our yearning hearts. We pray in Christ's name. Amen

Scripture

Isaiah 40: 21-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is he who sits above the circle of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers; who stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to live in; who brings princes to naught and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing. Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown, scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth, when he blows upon them, and they wither, and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

“To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal?” says the Holy One. “Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created these? He who brings out their host and numbers them, calling them all by name; because he is great in strength, mighty in power, not one is missing. Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, ‘My way is hidden from the LORD, and my right is disregarded by my God’?”

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.

Mark 1: 29-39

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.

Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

That evening, at sundown, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. And the whole city was gathered around the door. And he cured many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. And Simon and his companions hunted for him. When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.”

He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message

A week or so ago – I can’t remember exactly – I went to the grocery store to get just a few items. The most important thing on the list was frozen berries because I use them daily in my morning smoothie and I was very nearly out. That was, of course, the only item I forgot to purchase so I went back a day or two later with a new list. This time I remembered the berries and forgot the yogurt that Steve likes and the tonic water that he couldn’t remember to put on the list. Some days I worry that I am losing it entirely because I usually have a great memory for such details – or I did. Maybe it’s age – maybe it’s COVID – but I’m not really that old and eventually we won’t be able to blame everything on this crazy virus! Do you have experiences like this that you can recall? Or perhaps you’ve forgotten your memory mishaps...

Memory is a funny thing – tricky – sometimes it works, sometimes not so much – difficult to predict – subject to the influences of health and stress and fatigue and diet and age. Not something to rely on too fully even when you are blessed with a good one. I am pretty good at keeping track of appointments and can often recall names or locate a specific document but finding a scripture passage that I know is somewhere in Paul’s letters or wrapping my mind around the particular word that I need to remember to express exactly what I want to say or, as recent experience has taught me, remembering all the items on the grocery list even when it is right there in my hand – well that’s another matter.

However flawed, memories are important – in fact, they are key to understanding what Isaiah is driving at in today’s poetic text. The prophet builds on an assumption that lies at the core of Israel’s testimony – the assumption that faith begins with memory. Where memory fails, the faith of the community is threatened. Many things can endanger the faithful memory of the community: political and social pressure; enticements of ease and comfort; the lure of other, competing gods. In the situation of this passage in the ancient world of the prophet Isaiah, destruction and exile have generated despair and chaos in the people. They are filled with doubts about God’s attention to their needs – doubts about God’s interest in their future – doubts about God’s power. Their doubts cloud their memory.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? Has it not been told you from the beginning? Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

It is a call for the people to remember – a call for us to remember. I’ve read that we are amnesiacs – *theological amnesiacs*. Our memory, beyond its other imperfections, is selective.

Sometimes that is a helpful and adaptive thing – like forgetting just how painful childbirth is as soon as you hold your newborn – or falling in love again after your heart has been broken. But what if we are naïve and delusional – recalling only the good? Alternatively, what if we are so self-critical that we only remember our failures – our misdeeds and shortcomings?

Theological amnesia is the kind of problem that causes us to fall apart every time a crisis comes. It is what happens when you hear a diagnosis of cancer or get a late-night call from the police or experience devastating financial loss. Some of us cry out in despair – others worry in silence – like the exiles of Isaiah’s message, we wonder whether God notices us at all.

We have forgotten who we are – whose we are. We have forgotten what we believe – forgotten grace and hope and comforting presence. We have forgotten our confidence – forgotten how to talk with the world in words of faith.

Theological amnesia is especially troubling when life goes well. How easily we forget God when everything is on track in our lives! We forget that God loves us – we forget to praise and thank God. We forget where our trust lies.

I remember someone was telling me about health problems that her husband was experiencing. They had recurred several times over the years but each time he had recovered, and she had given thanks to God. She said that in telling her story to others she affirmed that God is good. But she worried about saying this – worried that others who had spouses that had died or loved ones in poor health would not appreciate hearing that God is good.

I think now that she had a kind of theological amnesia. When her husband is well – God is good. Did she forget that God is good – loving, attentive, interested, nurturing – even when things are going against her? Did she forget that God is always with her – in crisis and in joy? Did she forget the magnitude of God’s power and her own relative insignificance?

In the absorption of our own suffering or success, we can forget who God is. We might mistake our current captor – poverty, ill health, pandemic fatigue – as sovereign. We might perceive our earthly achievement and worldly wellbeing as more important than anything. We might forget who God is.

The text from Isaiah invites us to remember – to remember God as creator, sustainer, redeemer, and friend. The prophet proclaims God’s magnificence and power – God’s awesomeness in creation and over the affairs of nations. We are reminded that we are like grasshoppers – mere insects in comparison to the consequence of God. And yet we are also reminded that God calls each one by name – forgets nothing and no one in all creation. We are prompted to bear in mind that God is in charge – that especially when we feel weak and helpless – then we are vulnerable enough to fully depend on God and thus experience divine power – divine grace.

We are told to wait – to consider. Wait, as used in this text, is the same Hebrew word for twisting – like making a rope – not a passive state, but one of tension as you are being worked on. Think of that image – remember what God **has done** and wait in anticipatory tension for what God **will do**.

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. God does not faint or grow weary...

Our creator God not only gave life at the beginning but gives new life in the present – in the midst of our questions and doubts we are reassured by the prophet that God will never forget – never fail.

The crisis of the Babylonian exile has caused the people of Isaiah's time to forget their own story – the story of God's attentiveness and dependability – the story of God's love. We too suffer forgetfulness – anxiety or complacency-induced amnesia. Their memory lapse – our memory lapse – raises within us questions about the presence and power of God. But those who remember and believe in the God who fulfills promises will receive new strength – new life – from that relationship with God. Those who are most vulnerable – the faint, the powerless – the weary and those of us who have difficulty sustaining their hope – all will be lifted up as they – as we – remember God – remember to depend on God – to wait and to trust. **Amen**

➤ *Those who wait on the Lord*

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† Offering and Prayer

Jesus' ministry brought healing and hope to so many people who reached out to him. Our offering supports ministries of healing and hope here and around the world. Know that your gift matters. Thank you for giving as God has blessed you.

Generous and loving God, we bring our offering, trusting that you will bless our gifts and use them in ways we cannot even imagine. Jesus touched many lives in many different ways. We ask that these gifts will also touch many lives, with your healing and hope. Amen

The Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

Gathering at the Lord's Table

Laura We have heard about God, who loved confusion into order and gave each creature a divine image, making the world.

Peter We have heard about Jesus, a poor man whose banquet feeds the world, a healer whose wounds give life, a teacher whose wisdom traces love's order in the world, finding the divine in each of us.

Laura We have heard how Jesus died, and how, for those who loved him, he rose again.

Peter We have heard about the Holy Spirit, who breaks the bonds of race and class, of gender and creed, to show God's love for everyone.

Laura And we have heard that love makes all things new. We come to this table asking for the bread of such blessings.

Peter These miracles begin with simple human gestures, bits of bread in a basket, tongues that talk, souls that yearn. And so we bring bread and wine, prayers and our own yearning, that the miraculous may begin in us today.

➤ ***One bread, one body***

540 (*refrain, verses 1+2, refrain, verses 3+4, refrain*)

Laura The Lord be with you.

ALL **And also with you.**

Laura Lift up your hearts.

ALL **We lift them to the Lord.**

Laura Let us give thanks to our Creator God.

ALL **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Peter Gracious God, we praise your holy name, giving thanks with our lips and our lives. For the power and mystery of your Word by which you created us and called us to yourself, we give you thanks. For the power and mystery of your Word by which you took flesh and lived among us through your Son, Jesus Christ, we give you thanks. Therefore, with all the company of heaven and all who will come after us, we lift our voices in joyful praise...

ALL ***O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space. All earth and sea and sky above bear witness to your grace. Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise. And blessed is the one who comes and bears your name always!***

Laura Faithful God, we offer you our praise and thanks as we return to you these holy gifts of bread and wine. Remembering that on the night of his arrest Jesus sat down to eat with friends. During the meal, he took the bread, said a prayer, broke the bread and shared it with everyone at the table, saying: **“This is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me.”**

At the end of the meal, he took a cup of wine and raised it, saying: **“This is God’s new covenant, made possible because of my death. Drink this all of you, to remember me.”**

We ponder, O God, the mystery of his promise that in this meal we are joined to him and to one another as a holy people. We offer you our praise and thanks for Jesus, who took flesh and lived among us, was baptized for our sins, taught us your way of truth, loved us in our lovelessness and died that we may have life.

We celebrate with great joy the resurrection of our Lord, his presence with us in this feast, and his promise of a new creation as we affirm the mystery of faith...

ALL ***Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again! Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!***

Laura God of grace and power, you invite us to share in mysteries that are beyond our understanding. In simple trust we seek the transforming power of your Spirit upon us and upon this bread and wine. By the miracle of your grace may they be for us your body – vibrant with your life, renewing and making us whole.

ALL **In Christ, with Christ, through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit – all glory is yours, now and forever and so we sing...**

ALL ***Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen! Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!***

Sharing Bread and Wine

The one who was first held by Mary, is held for us in this bread.

The one whose body was laid in a manger, is cradled in this cup.

The bread of life – the cup of grace – we remember and share with thanksgiving these gifts in which God comes to us so that we may come to God.

Everyone consumes the elements in their own space...

† Prayer

Holy One, we praise, worship and adore you for the food received at your table. We thank you we are not alone – that you are with us. Help us to proclaim your presence in our lives and in

the world to all around us. Help us all to know and recall the difference walking with you makes – and to share that with others out of the depths of our own being – so that they may know too where hope and help is to be found – so that they may know where to find the food that we have found.

Trusting in you, we offer all our quiet thoughts and prayers into your care. We pray for this congregation as we seek to live out our faith and struggle to be authentic. May we go from here, strengthened, refreshed, and empowered by your Spirit to be true and joyful witnesses to Jesus Christ – living to your glory in all we do. We sing our prayer together...

➤ ***Our Father in heaven*** (*The Lord's Prayer – no repeats*) **469**

Blessing

God has called each of us to be bearers of the good news of divine healing love through Jesus Christ. Go into the world in joy, proclaiming the love and grace that Jesus offers. Be at peace living each day uplifted by the love of God – nourished by the life of Jesus – inspired by the enthusiasm of the Holy Spirit.

➤ ***We will go out with joy***