

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation, and that the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – have lived on this land since before settlers of European descent claimed ownership and displaced those for whom it was home.

As we pursue our goals to dismantle racism and attend to growing diversity, we lament this injustice in our history and commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.

➤ *Dance with the spirit (repeat)*

MV 156

Call to Worship (from Psalm 55: 22)

Cast your cares on the divine Creator
(palms of hands facing down)

and God will sustain you
(palms of hands facing upwards)

God will never let the righteous be shaken.
(arms crossed over chest)

† Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Praise be to you, O God, for the wonders of your creation. You spin the shining stars and stretch out the seas to the furthest horizon. You lift the curtain of dawn so light can chase away the night. You give the earth its seasons and each creature its existence, breathing life and love into each precious soul. And so, we come to praise you.

In this time of worship, breathe your Spirit into us once more, to inspire us to serve you with creativity and commitment – with the honesty and humility we meet in Jesus.

You call us to walk your way in the world, to serve our neighbours and love our enemies. We confess these are not easy choices for us. We sometimes turn a blind eye to a neighbour in need. We like to follow the crowd rather than challenge popular opinions. Forgive us, Jesus, for seeking an easier way than your way. Continue to encourage us as we pray together in your name ***...Our Father, who art in heaven – hallowed 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 debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen***

Words of Hope

While it is true that we have sinned, it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God's love in Jesus Christ. Be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another.

† Prayer for Understanding

Eternal One, whose thoughts and ways are not ours, you alone are God – awesome, holy, and most high. School us in the ways of faith and wisdom, that we may learn to truly see and hear, and in humility find blessing. Amen

Scripture **Job 38: 1-7, 34-41**

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind:

Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up your loins like a man, I will question you, and you shall declare to me.

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Tell me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements—surely you know!

Or who stretched the line upon it? On what were its bases sunk, or who laid its cornerstone when the morning stars sang together, and all the heavenly beings shouted for joy?

Can you lift up your voice to the clouds, so that a flood of waters may cover you?

Can you send forth lightnings, so that they may go and say to you, “Here we are”?

Who has put wisdom in the inward parts, or given understanding to the mind?

Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Or who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens, when the dust runs into a mass and the clods cling together?

Can you hunt the prey for the lion, or satisfy the appetite of the young lions, when they crouch in their dens, or lie in wait in their covert? Who provides for the raven its prey, when its young ones cry to God, and wander about for lack of food?

Psalm 104: 1-9, 24, 35c

Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, you are very great. You are clothed with honour and majesty, wrapped in light as with a garment. You stretch out the heavens like a tent, you set the beams of your chambers on the waters, you make the clouds your chariot, you ride on the wings of the wind, you make the winds your messengers, fire and flame your ministers.

You set the earth on its foundations, so that it shall never be shaken. You cover it with the deep as with a garment; the waters stood above the mountains. At your rebuke they flee; at the sound of your thunder they take to flight. They rose up to the mountains, ran down to the valleys to the place that you appointed for them. You set a boundary that they may not pass, so that they might not again cover the earth.

O Lord, how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

Praise the Lord!

➤ **10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)**

Mark 10: 35-45

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, *"Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."*

And he said to them, *"What is it you want me to do for you?"*

And they said to him, *"Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."*

But Jesus said to them, *"You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"*

They replied, *"We are able."*

Then Jesus said to them, *"The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."*

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, *"You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."*

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

Message *Much of the inspiration for today's message comes from Debie Thomas' essay, The Unknowable*

Most of you know that Steve and I have a recent addition to our family – Enzo – our puppy who is five months old and approaching 40 pounds. If you have ever had a puppy you know that these early months are a fair bit of work. Puppies are constantly trying to figure out their place in the pack, challenging authority, learning the acceptable and unacceptable behaviours of the household. And Enzo is persistent! He is sure he is entitled to his food when he wants it – right now – rather than when I choose to give it to him. He will strain forward on the leash or refuse to return when off leash. Our job as puppy parents is to teach him his place, to say no and mean it, to keep him safe, to correct misbehaviour and redirect willfulness. As we do this we hopefully help Enzo develop a sense of his relationship to the world – security – his place in the pack, and thus become a pleasure to spend time with. We do it out of love.

I think we all like knowing where we fit in – our role – our place in the pack or in the world. It's something that comes up in a couple of ways in our scripture texts this week.

In Mark, two of the disciples, the sons of Zebedee – James and John – want their place to be positions of perceived privilege on either side of Jesus when he comes to glory. They feel entitled to a certain status and need to be corrected by Jesus – to be helped to understand that things aren't going to be as they might expect. They are straining toward power and need to be taught that their greatness comes in servanthood.

They approach Jesus boldly, and make their request with hearts full of confidence. It sounds arrogant – borne of ignorance and immaturity and selfishness. But they do ask – they engage in real relationship with Jesus, and express an authentic desire to remain close to him. So it is perhaps not all as bad as it first seems even if they get a key thing wrong. “Teacher,” they say, “We want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” In other words: “We're entitled to something here, Lord. We're willing to wait patiently, but you'll need to give us our due in the end. After all, we've sacrificed a lot to be your disciples. What's in it for us?”

In return, Jesus asks the question he always asks: “What is it you want me to do for you?” Not, “Here's what I want,” or “Here's what I'm entitled to,” but rather, “I am here to serve. How can I serve you?”

What James and John fail to understand is that service is the point. Service is abundance. Service is power. Service is glory. The only path to success in Jesus's kingdom economy is through the surrendering of our most cherished forms of entitlement. Glory by Jesus's definition is not an accumulation of privilege. It's not upward mobility. It's not permission to guard, hoard, and multiply our own. Glory in God's kingdom is an exercise in subtraction. It's a movement downwards. It's the generous and perpetual expending of one's self in love.

What James and John learn – what we can learn – through this exchange is that our place in the scheme of things is not sitting on top of the heap but serving and loving at the margins.

The story of Job continues today with Job's ongoing demands to have God explain the whys and wherefores of the suffering Job is enduring and finally God responds. Job is persistent – he never gives up on God. Job keeps yelling into the silence, demanding that God speak, challenging God for justice. Job feels entitled to an explanation – some reason – but when God speaks it is to put Job in his place. God redirects Job to see the bigger picture – his position within the pack and his relationship to all creation.

The reading opens just as God appears in a whirlwind and confronts his *faithful and upright* servant, Job. For thirty-seven chapters, we have waited for this climactic moment. In rapid, horrible succession, we've watched Job lose nearly everything he cherishes in this world. We've witnessed his sorrow, his bewilderment, his anger, his despair. We've sat with him in the ashes and contemplated the injustices that scar our own lives. We've listened to the unhelpful blather of Job's friends, and recognized in their pious speeches some of the harmful things we ourselves

believe about suffering. We've longed, like Job, for clarity. For answers. For vindication. For so long, we've pleaded with God just as Job has, daring God to break God's silence, and show up.

But the God who shows up in our text today does not answer even one of Job's questions. Instead he puts Job in his place – flattening him with another set of questions...

Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Who has the wisdom to number the clouds? Can you send forth lightning? Who can tilt the waterskins of the heavens? Who provides for the raven its prey? Have you entered into the springs of the sea, or walked in the recesses of the deep? Have the gates of death been revealed to you? From whose womb did the ice come forth, and who has given birth to the hoarfrost of heaven?

On and on and on God goes in this gorgeously poetic text, describing a cosmos so vast, so complex, and so intricate in its workings that even our modern, scientifically-oriented minds cave. And why is this God's response to Job?

Perhaps the divine intention is two-fold. On the one hand, God honors and elevates Job by showing up and engaging him in dialogue. All Job has asked for since his good life has fallen apart is God's presence – God's voice – God's nearness. So God respects this, extending a high view of humankind and its relationship with the divine. According to the author of Job, human beings are creatures with whom God interacts and argues. Human beings are free to question God – challenge God – doubt God. Human beings matter enough in the cosmic scheme of things to be confronted with hard truths by their creator.

At the same time, though, God's cosmic nature lesson reorients Job, handing him a lower rung on the ladder – a more modest position in God's economy. Like most of us, Job organizes his theology around his own experience. He uses his own story – his own pain – as the foundation for his beliefs about God. Sometimes getting a big picture perspective is difficult.

Job thinks he lives in an "if-then" universe that centers around his own tragedy. "If I do A, then B will happen. If I live righteously, then God will reward me." Job is not alone in this way of viewing the world but God's response to Job challenges this spiritual shortsightedness. Humanity's place in creation is honorable but not exclusive – significant but not central.

Certainly God cares for Job, but God also cares for the creatures of the forest – the movements of the planets – the patterns of the weather – the currents of the sea. God's concerns are much wider, broader, deeper, and higher than Job's puny mind can fathom, and the way that causality might or might not work in God's universe has nothing to do with Job's wholly human-centered way of thinking.

God asks questions – of Job – of us – questions intended to show us how little we’re capable of knowing about God, the universe, and ourselves. Questions that put us in our place because whatever the answer to Job’s question about suffering might be, this ancient text insists that we can’t approach, grasp, or comprehend it. It is beyond us. In this sense, God’s response to Job is a tender one. A loving one. It is the answer of a wise and careful parent who reminds her child – or her puppy – that there are limits he must respect, whether he likes them or not.

Coming to grips with our place in creation leads us to the third reading for today – Psalm 104. Perhaps knowing we come to glory as we serve in Jesus’ name and that we can never fully know all that God knows, leads us to humility and praise. Maybe recognizing our place can open us to wonder and a greater attentiveness to God and all that God has made. *Bless the Lord, O my soul. ... how manifold are your works! In wisdom you have made them all. Praise the Lord!*

➤ *Many and great, O God, are your works* 301

† Offering and Prayer

The scriptures remind us how much we depend on God’s goodness. Jesus invites us to put others’ needs before our own – to serve in the world as he did. Our offering is one way we offer God our thanks for all we have received – one way we can serve the world in God’s name.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow* 306

Great and gracious God, we offer you these gifts – small tokens of our love for you. Bless them with the power of your Holy Spirit so they may accomplish more than we can even imagine, in the name of Jesus Christ, our saviour and our friend. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers

God of each and every life, you open our eyes on the world you love to show us your presence and your purpose in all creation. We thank you for the wonders of the seasons as they change, and for gifts of love and compassion you offer us through friend and stranger. We pray for the earth as it struggles to support your many creatures. Make us better stewards in creation, and kinder neighbours to both friend and stranger.

God, in your deep mercy, hear our prayer.

God of justice, you open our eyes on the world to show us struggle and conflict. We see the burdens many are carrying, and the way differences create division. We pray for all those still struggling with the economic impact of the pandemic and for those feeling the stress of these days in deeply personal ways. Show us how to support those in difficulty and mend relationships in our community.

God, in your deep mercy, hear our prayer.

God of compassion, you open our eyes on the world to show us suffering and despair. We see challenges for health care all around us and know many still face the effects of COVID-19 or other illnesses and complications that make life hard to cope with. We pray for those who suffer here and in so many places in the world you love. ***We remember especially...***

Give strength and compassion to all who offer treatment – give courage and hope to all who wait for healing.

God, in your deep mercy, hear our prayer.

God of wisdom, you open our eyes on the world to show us its complexities. We see countries locked in old animosities and communities overwhelmed by fresh upheaval. We pray for the millions displaced in current conflicts and by natural disasters – for leaders here and around the world. Open their eyes to the suffering of the earth and those in their jurisdictions – open all our eyes to ways we can participate in solutions to situations which break your heart and ours.

God, in your deep mercy, hear our prayer. Amen

➤ ***Brother, sister, let me serve you***

635

Blessing

God knows your name and calls you to serve others in the name of the divine. Go then, to love and serve the Lord, by loving and serving all of those with whom you share this earthly life. The blessing of our Creator God, the peace of Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of the Spirit embrace you now and always. **Amen**

➤ ***Go now in peace, never be afraid***