

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.

Call to Worship

The God of Wisdom calls us to worship;

in humility, we gather to offer our thanks and praise.

The God of Peace calls us to let go of our cares and worries;

in faith, we turn to God for hope and guidance.

The God of Past, Present and Future welcomes us into this moment.

in joy, we celebrate life in God's presence!

Let us worship God together.

Hallelujah! Let us praise the Lord!

➤ ***Dance with the Spirit***

MV 156 (repeat)

† Prayer and the Lord's Prayer

Lord of Light and Life, we come before you in wonder and awe, eager to praise your name and enjoy in your presence. You are the source of all that is good and true, the essence of love. You bring gifts of peace and healing into troubled lives. You show us the way to love friend and enemy alike, to build a better world together. In this time of worship, inspire us to believe our work in Jesus' name makes a difference. So may we live to bring you glory, O God, now and always.

God of justice and mercy, you call us to take a part in our community, loving our neighbours and serving your purposes. We confess that this is easier said than done. We often sit in judgment on those who serve in public life, criticizing any who fall short of our expectations. Yet we confess we, too, fall short of your loving purpose for us. Forgive us when we have been too quick to criticize and too slow to join in what needs to be done. We pray for your forgiveness and transforming power in our lives.

Hear us now as we pray in the way that you taught us: ***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

Hear the good news! Along with all of God's people throughout the ages, we have this assurance: *That neither death nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, not anything else in all of creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.* There is nothing that we can do to separate us from God's powerful love. We are forgiven people. Thanks be to God. Amen

➤ *Teach me God to wonder*

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† Prayer for Understanding

Holy God, Word made flesh, let us come to this Word open to being surprised. Silence our agendas. Banish our assumptions. Cast out our casual detachment. Confound our expectations. Clear the cobwebs from our ears. Permeate the corners of our hearts with your Word, for we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen

Scripture **Hebrews 10: 11-25**

And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also testifies to us, for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds," he also adds, "I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Mark 13: 1-8

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!"

Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?"

Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs.

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

Message

There is a movie that many of you will likely remember from way back in 1979. It starred the comedian Steve Martin and was called *The Jerk*.

A very naive Navin (Nay' vin) Johnson sets out to see the world and becomes a millionaire by inventing **the Opti-Grab**, a device which keeps eyeglasses from slipping down one's nose. But unfortunately, it turns out that it also makes people cross-eyed.

Towards the end of the movie, he loses everything that is important to him. He's pushed everyone he loves away, including his wife, played by Bernadette Peters. In an emotional outburst he starts flailing about the room in an old bathrobe, shouting at her and the rest of the world.

And I don't need any of this. I don't need this stuff, and I don't need you. I don't need anything except this. [picks up an ashtray]

And that's it and that's the only thing I need, is this. I don't need this or this. Just this ashtray...And this paddle game, the ashtray and the paddle game and that's all I need...And this remote control. The ashtray, the paddle game, and the remote control, and that's all I need... And these matches. The ashtray, and these matches, and the remote control and the paddle ball... And this lamp. The ashtray, this paddle game and the remote control and the lamp and that's all I need. And that's all I need too. I don't need one other thing, not one...I need this. The paddle game, and the chair, and the remote control, and the matches, for sure. And this. And that's all I need. The ashtray, the remote control, the paddle game, this magazine and the chair. And then he leaves their mansion walking down the street with his arms filled with all these fairly useless things.

Navin has lost all hope. His world seems to have fallen apart. Navin becomes homeless. It seems as if it is the end of the world, or at least of his world. He thought he had it all.

We can all be easily mesmerized by greatness and grandeur, and the disciples were no different. Who hasn't gazed up in astonishment at some incredible building, or wondered what living in some form of splendour might be like?

The passage we heard today from Mark is actually an apocalyptic passage; meaning that it is a kind of unveiling; a revealing of what is really going on. Such an unveiling isn't usually filled with bright blinding light, but more like the dim light of a candle. Sometimes there are symbolic images, drama, numbers - it is scenes splashed on a cosmic canvas. It aims to help us understand something so critical that it is beyond our everyday images and speech.

We often think of the term apocalyptic as being about the end of the world, but that isn't really it. It is the kind of passage that says 'Do not despair!' Something marvellous beyond our imagining is being born. You think this is the end? But wait! There's more! I mean, - there is hope.

The disciples are in awe at the massive stones that make up the Temple buildings. This is a couple of chapters after Jesus has cleansed the temple and let the money changers know what he thought of it all. In this passage Jesus and his followers are sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple, and Jesus' words point to the end of the Temple system. Jesus is reminding them that this is all temporary, and not to put their hope in momentary grandeur.

So this isn't about the end of the world, but rather it's about a crisis. By the time the writer of Mark set these words down, it was well after the year 70, which was when the Temple actually was destroyed. Those massive stones would have already fallen. And the readers as well would have been aware of this event. In the year 70 the Romans destroyed the temple and the followers of Yahweh were scattered far and wide. God's people had become refugees. Homeless.

What this is about is transformation and hope.

Stones are always falling.

Afghanistan has fallen apart, there are bombings there and in myriads of places. There is what has been deemed a Refugee crisis- with so many throughout the world in danger, with no home. People put their lives on the line - acting out of fear but also out of hope.

There are homeless struggling all over, with lives that have fallen apart, perhaps it is due to family implosions, loss of work, addictions, and then there is the pandemic with the numerous crises that that has caused.

I think about my great grandparents who left poverty and in some cases imminent danger acting on hope and running towards something better. But one doesn't need to be a refugee or to be homeless to know what feeling broken is like. I'm sure we have all felt that things were falling apart at some time.

The passage in Mark and also in Hebrews pushes us, encourages us to hold on to hope.

The book of Hebrews was written to a group of people who were very familiar with the Jewish way of life and how the rules of the Temple had worked. This was not written to a Gentile community. Their world was falling apart too. They were tired and they were losing hope.

Being a Christian at that time meant putting your life on the line. It was dangerous, so some may have been considering returning to the Jewish faith. There are disagreements about whether it was written shortly before the destruction of the temple or soon after, but either way, it was a difficult and dangerous time.

It reminds its readers of how all the seemingly endless temple sacrifices are nothing compared to the sacrifice that Jesus made. There's no need for the numerous sacrifices - they only remind you that you have sinned.

It describes Jesus, God's son as the High Priest, and Christ's high priesthood means we have unprecedented access to God. Only the priest had access to the Holy of Holies. It was off limits to everyone else. But Jesus has access to our hearts - our own holy of holies. And all who love Jesus have access to him. We need to hold on to hope...

Where do we place our hope?

The disciples may have hoped for a restoration, more majesty and power, but that isn't the way of the cross. Does that mean that as a church and as God's people we need to settle for mediocrity? Absolutely not.

The Hebrews passage says: Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds. The word provoke usually has somewhat negative connotations - like to press your buttons. It is a strong word. But perhaps we can think of this as moving one another to love, inspiring one another, and helping us all become transformed into Christ's ambassadors of love. Giving that little push.

When we provoke one another to love, transformation happens. What is God creating in us? What are we being re-shaped into? We are called to be a light on the hill, and to work towards bringing wholeness - or shalom to the world. We are called to break down barriers of division, of hate and fear, and to live fully in God's love.

If I had suggested at the beginning of this meditation that you should all just laugh for a minute, you might not have felt so inclined, but a funny story was more apt to provoke you to at least a little snicker. And in case you wondered or don't remember the ending of *The Jerk*, Navin's family seek him out and find him on the street. Relationships are restored and transformed.

God says to us, do not despair - something new is being born beyond our imagining. I will put my law on their hearts and write them in their minds Hebrews says. We are being transformed from the inside out.

In her book *Ashes Transformed* writer, Tilda Norberg once wrote "God can turn our worst pain into the source of our giftedness." And the writer and poet John O'Donohue once wisely reflected, we are often surprised by change that seems to arrive out of nowhere. We find ourselves crossing some new threshold we had never anticipated. And so we have this hope, that we are being transformed and continually being changed into who we were created to be. Thanks be to God.

† Offering and Prayer

Jesus says - “you did not choose me. I chose you - to love one another as I have loved you.” We are called to love with an abundant love. May the gifts we offer transform lives and make God’s love flourish and bless those in need in our broken world.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

God of life and love, receive the gifts of our love that we in turn offer to you. These are difficult days. May what we bring to you answer the voices who cry out in need. May our gifts sustain your body the church. And may they bring healing and wholeness to feed the bodies, minds and souls of those who cry out for your help. Bless our money, our time, our talents that the world will know your renewing and transforming love through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

† Pastoral Prayers

The ultimate form of hope is prayer. Let us pray...

God of Our Past and Our Future, God of Healing and Hope, we come before you with grateful hearts, trusting that you walk with us through all the times of our lives. So, we pray today for those who face danger and despair in these times: We remember before you those living with hunger, communities struggling with the impact of drought, storms and earthquakes, and all those for whom the pandemic is unrelenting. We remember people caught up in unrest and violence and those whose lives are directed by forces beyond their control.

(Keep a time of silence)

We pray for all those working to relieve suffering in these lives and those who work to bring justice and peace:

God, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all those facing fear or frustration, wrestling with loneliness, sorrow or discouragement in any area of their lives: For those who live with illness or pain... For those bearing chronic conditions or disability... For those who know the grief and change of bereavement...

(Keep a time of silence)

And we pray for all those who work to bring healing and comfort and agencies which offer support and care to those who suffer:

God, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who feel helpless or hopeless in this present time: For those struggling to make ends meet or trying to find employment... For those caught up in the pain of misunderstanding or broken relationships... and for those working through situations of conflict at home or at work...

(Keep a time of silence)

We pray for all who offer guidance and support in the midst of such difficulties and for those who have skills in reconciliation or mediation:

God, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of Our Past and Our Future, God of Healing and Hope, Help our congregation and churches everywhere as we regroup after months of pandemic isolation to engage each day with faithfulness and creativity. Where we need correction, show us a new way; where we need love and encouragement, draw near. In the midst of all our challenges, stay with us on our way, and guide us in the way you would have us go. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen**

➤ *In the bulb there is a flower*

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Blessing

And all of us with unveiled faces, Seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, Are being transformed into the same image, from one degree of glory to another. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Go now in peace. Provoke one another to love and good deeds. And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all. Amen.

➤ *Go now in peace, never be afraid*

H O P E

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- PEACE
- LOVE
- OPTIMISM
- BELIEF
- TOGETHER
- STRENGTH
- ENDURANCE
- AMBITION
- HOPEFUL
- POSITIVITY
- JOY
- LIGHT
- SURVIVOR
- PATH
- POWER
- ASPIRATION
- GOAL
- DESIRE