

Welcome, Announcements, and Land Acknowledgement

As we come to worship in Jesus' name we acknowledge with gratitude and respect the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – on whose traditional and unceded territory we gather. We commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.

➤ **Don't be afraid (repeat)**

Call to Worship

In the heat of summer, we turn to you, O God.

Wellspring source of life eternal, drench our dryness – make us whole.

In the barrenness of worldly life, we turn to you, O God.

Wellspring source of life eternal, drench our dryness – make us whole.

In the hunger and thirst of prayer and praise, we turn to you, O God.

Revive us with your steadfast love in this time of worship.

† Gathering Prayer / The Lord's Prayer / Words of Hope

Gracious and loving God, you are like a parent reaching out with tender love towards helpless and often wayward children. We have done nothing to deserve such love. We praise you for keeping your love flowing toward us even when we turn away from you and our faith is weak.

Holy One here among us, may this time of worship be a joyful response of praise and thanksgiving for all that you have done, are doing, and will continue to do by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Merciful God, we confess that there are times when we set our minds on unworthy and ultimately destructive pursuits. Pursuits in which the need to acquire and possess, threaten our life in Christ.

When our attitude towards others is hostile and aggressive, we strip off the compassion that life in Christ offers. When relationships are soured by bitterness and jealousy, we strip off the joy that life in Christ reveals. When we put others down through our prejudice and discrimination, we strip off the love that life in Christ imparts. When selfishness and greed contribute to our lifestyle, we strip off the generosity that life in Christ embraces.

Merciful God, reclothe us with the life of Christ. Renew in our lives the grace, humility and service which marked the life of Jesus, in whose name we pray together... ***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, forever. Amen***

Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old has passed away – everything has become new! All this is from God, to whom we have been reconciled through Christ. Rejoice! In Christ we are forgiven, healed and made new. Thanks be to God!

➤ *Christ be our light / Longing for light*

† Prayer for Understanding

Holy One may your Word enter and dwell richly within us, today and everyday. May we understand and live out the message we receive. Amen

Scripture **Psalm 107: 1-9, 43** **responsive / displayed**

O give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good;

God's steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so,

**those redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.**

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to an inhabited town;
hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them.

**Then in their trouble they cried to the Lord, who delivered them from their distress;
and led them by a straight way, until they reached an inhabited town.**

Let them give thanks for the Lord's steadfast love, for God's wonderful works to humankind.

For the Lord satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.

Let those who are wise give heed to these things and consider the steadfast love of the Lord.

Colossians 3: 1-11 **[NT 201]**

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life.

But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge

according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

Luke 12: 13-21 [NT 74]

Someone in the crowd said to him, *"Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me."*

But he said to him, *"Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?"*

And he said to them, *"Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions."*

Then he told them a parable: *"The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, 'What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?' Then he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God."*

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

Message: ***The Myth of Rich ~ Exploring the Meaning of Wealth***

What does it mean to be wealthy? What is luxury to you? Who is rich? What is your definition?

I read an article in Maclean's magazine several years ago that explored these questions. Some of the answers are still relevant and tell us a great deal about our society – about what is important to many of us. What it means to be rich definitely depends on whom you talk to. Here are some ideas from the article:

- being wealthy means never having to worry where the next penny comes from
- I'd feel rich if I could write a million-dollar cheque
- being rich means not being tied down by debts and monthly payments
- being rich also means the ability to travel to far-flung destinations
- if you have a lot of things, you become a slave to them
- the term rich is relative, a moving target
- if I had to choose, I'd rather have comfort in this life than be struggling
- people believe that if they won a million dollars, all their concerns would go away, it's not true, but money does provide a measure of security

The myth of rich is that an abundance of possessions is satisfying and eliminates all worries. The myth of rich is that one's identity is linked to one's accumulation of stuff. One person interviewed said, "I can't imagine anything more humiliating... than losing all my money." The myth of rich is that plenty of goods will relieve us of all our concerns – that nothing is as important as wealth. The myth of rich is that enough is ever really enough – the million-dollar benchmark keeps on shifting. The myth of rich is that comfort in this life is the most significant consideration of our lives. Jesus would call us fools for buying into the myth of rich.

In the story from Luke's gospel that Heather read for us this morning, there are two parts: a warning and a parable. The warning is directed at a person in the crowd who asks Jesus to act as mediator in a family dispute about inheritance. In the context of a society built around the patterns of security and social position related to one's economic status, a question about the distribution of an estate seems ordinary enough. According to custom, one heir could demand that an estate be divided among all the beneficiaries. Jesus refuses the request, refuses to be drawn into a dispute that he perceives as insignificant because it does not address the real problem. Solving the immediate issue between brothers would not focus on the underlying cause of covetousness and greed. Jesus warns against centering one's life on the accumulation of wealth, not because wealth in itself is evil, but our unnatural attachment to it is.

Jesus is the one who tells us that if someone asks for your sport coat, give your overcoat as well (Luke 6:29). Jesus is the mentor who tells his disciples not to worry about their next meal and not to be concerned about their clothes (Luke 12:22-34). Jesus is the good teacher who tells the rich ruler to give all his possessions to the poor and he will have treasure in heaven (Luke 18:22). Jesus is the one who looks beyond our problem with how property should be divided in an inheritance and sees a problem with the hold our property has on us – sees a problem with how our worth as a person is tied to our worth on the open market. Jesus is the one who warns us with the words, *be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one's life does not consist in the abundance of possessions*. He is challenging an accepted standard of values by denying that it is possible to achieve security by amassing property – by denying that comfort in this life is what is important – by denying the myth of rich.

In the parable, we are told about a man who is successful in business and who operates within an economy where wealth and security are measured in the goods one has accumulated. The man has worked the land to advantage. He has planned well and built barns to store his produce. The man is looking forward to a worry-free life of ease.

We learn about the man by listening to him talk to himself. His focus is all on himself – my crops, my barns, my grain, my goods, my soul. His focus is all on his own efforts, his own success, his own ability to accomplish all he needs. His focus is all on his own power to provide security and safety against any threat.

Jesus does not call the man bad – does not berate him for wanting to relax – to eat and drink – to be merry. Jesus, through the voice of God in the parable, calls the man a fool because he thought he owned his own life. Jesus calls the man a fool for trusting in his own storehouses and not storing up riches in heaven. Jesus calls the man a fool for thinking that material wealth is the only important thing – for basing his life on what he possesses – for buying into the myth of rich.

Jesus suggests that we need a different kind of barn for a different sort of produce. He proposes a different posture toward wealth and possessions. He insists that we understand that our life is not made secure by things, but by triumph over things that comes from setting our minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. The true meaning of wealth for Jesus is being rich toward God, which comes from knowing the love of God.

Jesus does want us to be rich – to live a life of abundance – but not a life focused on material wealth. Joyous participation in the new life that comes to us in Christ, that is the gift of God's gracious love – this is the meaning of wealth that today's parable announces. It explodes the myth of rich by showing us that by participating in the steadfast love of God we are indeed rich toward God.

If you are like me, you have quite a bit of stuff – perhaps enough to fill a medium sized barn or two. You may even be attached to some of your stuff. If you have ever watched reality TV shows you have seen people who are being suffocated by their stuff – people drowning in things – people totally controlled by possessions. Gurus of organization and neatness intervene to help people in these shows let go of stuff. They help people break their bonds of slavery to collections and memorabilia and treasure and trash. My own attachment to possessions is far tidier, much better organized, but it exists, nonetheless.

If you have ever traveled, you know how difficult it is to choose what stuff to take with you and what to leave behind. Maybe you needed to get someone to collect or care for some of your possessions in your absence. Maybe you arrived home with more property than you had when you started out! If you have traveled outside of your neighbourhood or outside of your country, you have likely seen people with much more stuff than you and people with much less. You may have compared yourself to them – sometimes seeing yourself as rich and at other times seeing yourself as falling short of the desired acquisition goal.

We still live in a society and operate within a world economy where wealth and security are measured in the goods we have accumulated. We still accept the myth of rich. Too often we ask the wrong questions in life. We ask someone what they would salvage from their home if it were to be destroyed. We wonder what we would take if we were to be stranded on a desert island for any length of time. We speculate about what we have and what we don't have. We see losing our material goods as the worst possible scenario.

At one wedding I did this summer, the couple wrote their own vows. Part of what the bride said was this... *I feel so lucky to have been able to feel so fresh in love. I can recount each day of our lives together when we have laughed, walked along the roads at night holding hands and cooking in the kitchen. Because I can do these things with you over and over again and that is all the luxury I want in my life as long as you are in it.* It seems to me that she has defined what it means to be rich quite differently than those people in the magazine interview.

What does it mean to be wealthy? What is luxury to you? Who is rich? What is your definition?

Jesus says that we need to ask who we are – whose we are – how do we define abundance and luxury – how we are becoming rich toward God? If all our possessions are taken from us, do we have anything left? Have we thought about our treasure in terms of relationships – especially our relationship with the divine? Are we renewing ourselves in Christ? Are we trusting in the steadfast love of God? Are we truly rich – rich toward God – or weighed down by the myth of rich? **Amen**

➤ *Love divine, all loves excelling* 371

† Offering

God has blessed us with abundant love in Christ and in creation. Let us share this abundance in our offering today so that others may also rejoice in God's goodness.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow* 306

Abundant God, we bring you our gifts in gratitude for your generosity. Bless and multiply these offerings in Jesus' name, so that they can spread your goodness in the world and touch the lives of those in need, for Christ's sake. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers

O God in whom we live and move and have our being we come to you in prayer today, thankful for the occasions we have enjoyed in recent weeks to catch up with family and friends – to travel for recreation and restoration – to enjoy the beauty of nature in landscapes we love. Thank you for every moment of joy we treasure.

Today we remember those for whom this summer is difficult: for communities cleaning up after storms or worried about wildfire – thinking especially of the community of Lytton... for areas facing drought or the effects of flooding – for those worried about uncertainty in the economy and the impact of the climate crisis.

May each one find courage to face tomorrow in your company.
Lord Jesus Christ – bring healing, bring peace.

O God, in Jesus you walk the road of suffering with us, reaching out to those in pain and in grief. We remember those whose lives have faced crises this summer: through tragic death and unexpected loss – through critical illness or injury – through pain or problems that seem to have no end....

Surround them with your comfort and compassion.
Lord Jesus Christ – bring healing, bring peace.

O God, Jesus faced demanding crowds as he traveled, and the pressure of critics, whatever he did. We pray for all those who have not found rest this summer – those juggling more demands and fewer resources at work or at home – those whose work or plans for the future are uncertain – those fleeing conflict and seeking new homes in despair and hope.

May they know your strength and assurance day by day.
Lord Jesus Christ – bring healing, bring peace.

O God, we need the embrace of your presence, each in our own way. Bring healing and peace to our lives and to this world you love. Open our eyes and our hearts so that we may offer healing and peace to others in the name of Jesus we pray. Amen

➤ *Be thou my vision* 461

Blessing

Consider the persistent love of God and whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of Jesus, giving thanks to God through Christ. May the grace of the risen Christ, the love of God, and the nurturing community of the Holy Spirit, embrace us all.

➤ *May the God of hope go with us every day* 726