

Welcome, Announcements, 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.

Celebrations / Joys and Concerns

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

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

Call to Worship

We come as guests invited to a table.

We come to celebrate with friends and neighbours.

Jesus Christ, our Friend and Saviour, invites us to gather.

We join together with his friends around the world.

Come and worship with hearts full of God's praise and promise.

We worship God in gladness, for God's faithfulness endures forever.

Gathering Prayer and Words of Hope

Great Creator God, you feed the world from what you have made. You feed our spirits from your abundant love. In this time together, we ask that you wipe away our tears so that we may eat and be nourished by what you provide. Help us to set aside our worries and fears so we may trust in you.

Gracious Giving Lord, you have created us in your image, a little less than angels. Yet there are times when we don't feel like we amount to much, and other times when we think we are better than others. When we do not keep things in perspective, O God, forgive us.

When we forget the gifts passed on from those who have gone before us; when we think that we do not have "enough" faith, even though Jesus tells us that the tiniest amount is all it takes, forgive us.

When we discourage others by suggesting that they do not have sufficient faith or make excuses not to do your will, O God, forgive us.

When we seek revenge rather than reconciliation and in all the times and places where we fail to be the people you call us to be, forgive us, Merciful God. Amen

Jesus tells us that even faith the size of a tiny seed can do great things – so may that smallest kernel of faith within assure us of God’s forgiveness – not earned through our works, but freely given by God’s grace. Thanks be to God!

➤ *Jesus calls us here to meet him*

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† Prayer for Understanding

God of Hope, amid all the concerns in the world around us, we turn to your Word. Send your Holy Spirit to still our thoughts and speak your wisdom to us. Fill us with the humble confidence we meet in in Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen

Scripture **Habakkuk 1: 1-4 and 2: 1-4** [OT 871]

The oracle that the prophet Habakkuk saw. *O LORD, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen? Or cry to you "Violence!" and you will not save? Why do you make me see wrongdoing and look at trouble? Destruction and violence are before me; strife and contention arise. So the law becomes slack and justice never prevails. The wicked surround the righteous – therefore judgment comes forth perverted.*

I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart; I will keep watch to see what he will say to me, and what he will answer concerning my complaint.

Then the LORD answered me and said: *Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith.*

Psalm 37: 1-9 responsive/displayed

Do not fret because of the wicked; do not be envious of wrongdoers,

for they will soon fade like the grass, and wither like the green herb.

Trust in the LORD, and do good; so you will live in the land, and enjoy security.

Take delight in the LORD, and God will give you the desires of your heart.

Commit your way to the LORD; trust in God who will act.

The Lord will make your vindication shine like the light, and the justice of your cause like the noonday.

Be still before the LORD, and wait patiently; do not fret over those who prosper in their way, over those who carry out evil devices.

Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath. Do not fret – it leads only to evil.

For the wicked shall be cut off, but those who wait for the LORD shall inherit the land.

2 Timothy 1: 1-14 [OT 211]

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, for the sake of the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my beloved child: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

I am grateful to God – whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did – when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. Do not be ashamed, then, of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God, who saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works but according to his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus before the ages began, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. For this gospel, I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher, and for this reason, I suffer as I do. But I am not ashamed, for I know the one in whom I have put my trust, and I am sure that he is able to guard until that day what I have entrusted to him. Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit living in us.

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

Message

Today I want to talk about Habakkuk. It is a short book of the Hebrew Bible – one of the minor prophets – only three chapters in length – yet it is one of the most poignant and painful books in the Bible. It tells about the people of Judah who have evidently been faced first with corruption and then with invasion. The prophet goes to God in prayer, searching for help or explanations. He wrestles with the question of how we can justify the goodness of God and the powerfulness of God with the presence of evil.

The heart of the book consists of a prayer dialogue between Habakkuk and God, concerning the theological meaning behind the atrocities that have befallen his country. From references in the text, it seems that he wrote when Babylonian armies were ravaging Judah, before the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BC, but the problem is universal. The prophet, like countless people through the centuries, asks why bad things happen to good people and (perhaps just as troubling) why bad people often prosper. People who oppress the poor, who lie and cheat, despots and dictators – they too often die peacefully in their beds. Where is the justice in that? Where, in fact, is God in that?

We could easily envision someone from Ukraine today making the same cries, or any one of several other countries that are going through political or economic or military ravages. For that matter, anyone whose body is being devastated by a grindingly debilitating disease can identify with the tears of Habakkuk when he saw the end coming and looked to God for an explanation. His pain is a universal – physical – emotional – spiritual pain.

In the opening verses Habakkuk seems mostly concerned about the suffering caused by rampant corruption and injustice in his country – something that also sounds eerily contemporary. While away last week I had the opportunity to go swimming and ended up in conversation with another person in the pool. We somehow got on to politics and the state of the world – increasing fuel and food prices – lack of confidence in government. She shook her head in disgust and I wondered how long – how long before things change for the better – how long?

We skip over the next section of the text when God responds – more with confrontations than explanations for the evil that abounds – and the prophet returns to a prayer of despair. However, at the beginning of chapter 2, Habakkuk shows his confidence that God will respond in due time – the prophet will watch and wait for a word from God. When the answer comes it is of such critical importance that it should be written plainly – large enough so that someone running by can read it – and on tablets – to ensure durability – a word that lasts. The message is that there is a vision for the end – what John Dominic Crossan calls “God’s great big clean up of the world.” It may come soon, or it may come later – there will be a time of waiting but have confidence – *live by faith*.

That sounds good – the righteous live by their faith. But what does it look like to *live by faith*?

The disciples seem to think that faith is quantifiable, something that can be measured. “*Increase our faith,*” they demand of Jesus. And Jesus responds by confounding their expectations – faith is not something one stockpiles. In fact, faith the size of a mustard seed is sufficient. Paul reminds Timothy that faith is often learned in community – in his case, the community of his mother and grandmother. For their part, the psalmist and the prophet both emphasize the fact that faith involves waiting.

Our reading from Psalm 37 is all about not getting so worked up over the wickedness of others and the injustice of the world that it paralyzes and overwhelms you. Be still and trust in God. Be patient and wait for the Lord. *Commit your way to the LORD; trust in God who will act.* It may be that God will act through you or through causes you support. I don’t read these verses as a message of complacency but of hope and reassurance that it is not my fretting but my faith that will make the difference.

Habakkuk initially advises the people of God to be faithfully bold in wrestling with God in the face of historical situations that do not match with divine integrity and justice. Ask the tough questions – don’t settle. Then he counsels that troubles do not constitute grounds for despair since in the end God’s design will be made manifest. Keep alive and burning your faith in God’s ultimate triumph no matter what odds may be stacked against the pursuit of God’s justice. *Living*

by faith means something like... don't give in, give up, or give out – endure/survive/live until the end. That's God's promise. Not an easy one – not always a satisfying one – but it is a holy one. As you are faithful God will be with you always as you wait.

What do you wait for? What do you long for?

What is the role of faith in such times of waiting? Faith, as the writer of Hebrews says, *is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*. Faith is what sustains us when we do not yet see the fulfillment of our longing. It is our touchstone as we wait, especially in those times when the evidence on the ground would seem to contradict our hope. Such faith does not answer all the questions and dispel all the suffering, but it does give us light on the way.

The book of the prophet Habakkuk ends with one of the most beautiful statements of faith in all of scripture. After God responds to Habakkuk's questions, essentially telling him to wait for God's promises to be fulfilled, the prophet remembers God's saving power in the past and then, seemingly without any outward change in his circumstances, says this:

*Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines;
though the produce of the olive fails, and the fields yield no food;
though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation.
God, the Lord, is my strength; the Lord makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
and makes me tread upon the heights. (Habakkuk 3:17-19)*

Though there is nothing in his outward situation that would seem to warrant praise – though the evidence on the ground contradicts the promises of God, the prophet still praises God. He will not allow his present circumstances to determine his future hope. He will not allow his present circumstances to cloud his vision. He knows that God is faithful, and he continues to trust God – to praise God for all that God has done and will continue to do in his life and in the world. Such is the power of faith.

➤ *Living God, your joyful Spirit (tune: Beach Spring 262) 666*

† Offering Invitation

Around this table we celebrate God's generosity to us in Christ and in creation. We present our offering in gratitude for all God has given. Your offering will now be received.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow 306*

† Offering Prayer

Holy God, you are the giver of every good and perfect gift. Our gifts may not be perfect but we ask you to bless them with your Holy Spirit spreading goodness in the world, for the sake of Christ, our living Lord. Amen

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

The table that is set, is set for all – around it there are no divisions. Just as one loaf is made from many grains, and one cup is filled from the fruit of many grapes, so, we, though many, are made one in Christ, nourished by him to nourish the world. Jesus calls us to this table, and all are welcome here. Taste and see that God is good.

➤ *Let us break bread together*

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The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise.

Gracious and loving God, we praise and thank you, for you are the creator of all goodness and the source of abundance. In the beginning, your Spirit danced on the waters and brought us life. In your generosity, you created a garden of delights and nourishment – you called us to live with respect in creation and to care for one another.

You brought your people out of slavery into a land of milk and honey – flowing with streams of living water and planted with groves of olive trees.

When we turned away from you – living in greed and violence – you sent us prophets to call us back and remind us to live for a day when no one would be hungry, and we would live together in justice and peace. Therefore, with all your faithful people from every time and place we join with the whole creation to lift our hearts in joyful praise...

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!

Generous God, we give you thanks for Jesus, who came to live with us. We remember how he called his disciples to follow him and become fishers of all people. He told stories and taught us to pray. We thank you that he loved eating and drinking around tables where strangers became friends and where outcasts were included.

Jesus was crucified, died, and was buried, but you raised him from the dead – and like his disciples we meet him again in the breaking of bread as we gather around his table. We remember and give you thanks, O God, that as he sat at the table with friends – sharing the fruit of the vine and the harvest of the fields – he took bread, blessed it, broke it and shared it, saying: *“Take – eat – this is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me.”*

When supper was over, 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 celebrate with great joy the resurrection of Jesus, his presence with us in this feast, and his promise of a new creation as we affirm the mystery of faith:

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

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 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. We pray for the Holy Spirit to come upon us and upon these gifts of bread and wine. Fill them and fill us with the abundance of Jesus.

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

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

Sharing Bread and Wine

The one whom the universe could not contain, is now present for us in this bread.

The one who redeemed us and called us by name now reaches out 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.

Those in person have received a pre-sealed communion package. Everyone consumes the elements together in their own space...

† Prayer after Communion

Generous and loving God, you have nourished us, body and soul, in this meal. We have heard your love – now send us out to speak it. We have seen your love – now send us out to show it. We have been fed by your love – now send us out to share it. And let all things be done for your glory. We bring our prayers in the name of Jesus who encourages us to sing in prayer...

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

Blessing

Go from here to serve God – your strength renewed and your faith reassured – for you are part of Christ's body embracing the world in Jesus' name. And may the God of promise fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ embracing us all. Amen

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