

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.*

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

Call to Worship

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth!

**We will worship the LORD with gladness and come into God's presence with song.**

Know that it is the LORD God who made us, and we are God's people.

**We will enter God's gates with praise and thanksgiving.**

Let us give thanks to God this day and bless God's holy name.

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

Gracious and Loving God, we gather in this season of thanksgiving, struck by the colours of the leaves, the last warm breezes, birds flying south in formation. Such beauty speaks to us of your goodness, and your desire to provide what each of your creatures needs. As we gather, renew our sense of gratitude for every good gift you offer us. Especially we praise you for the gift of Christ Jesus who teaches us how to walk in the world you love and offers us grace and compassion to share with those we meet. Receive our love and gratitude in his name, and by your Spirit, empower us to live gratefully each and every day.

Living and loving God, we acknowledge we enjoy life with an abundance many nations cannot imagine. Yet we confess, we do not always recognize the blessings we share. We worry about our futures, and ignore the present needs of those around us. Forgive us our fears and narrow vision and our failure to care for creation as you intended. Hear us now as we join together in the prayer 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, forever. Amen***

The mercy of our God is from everlasting to everlasting. Hear and believe the good news of the Gospel: In Christ Jesus, we are forgiven and set free to begin again. At this time of Thanksgiving, let us give special thanks for God's most generous love.

➤ *Great is thy faithfulness*

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## † Prayer for Understanding

**Living God, you feed us not only with bread from the harvest but with your Word, which stands by us in every circumstance. Nourish us with your hope, and comfort us with your presence, as we listen for your voice speaking in the Scriptures today. Amen**

## Scripture

**Jeremiah 29: 1, 4-7** [OT 731]

These are the words of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the remaining elders among the exiles, and to the priests, the prophets, and all the people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had taken into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Thus, says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: *Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*

**Luke 17: 11-19** [NT 80]

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, *“Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!”*

When he saw them, he said to them, *“Go and show yourselves to the priests.”* And as they went, they were made clean.

Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

Then Jesus asked, *“Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?”* Then he said to him, *“Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well.”*

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

## Message

**Prayer:** *Gracious and Loving God, speak in this place, in the calming of our minds and in the longing of our hearts, by the words of my lips and in the thoughts that we form. Speak, Loving God, as we listen for your word. Amen*

On this Thanksgiving or Harvest Sunday it's interesting to note that it wasn't until 1957 that the Canadian Parliament declared the second Sunday of October as "a day of General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the bountiful harvest with which Canada has been blessed." The day's roots reach back, however, to rituals for a plentiful harvest among the First Nations; to a meal of gratitude for surviving the transatlantic voyage by Sir Martin Frobisher and crew in 1578; and to the "Feasts of Good Cheer" established by Samuel de Champlain at Port Royal after enduring scurvy in 1604.

We are reminded on this day that no matter what our experience is or where we find ourselves in the journey of life, we need to take time to pause and give thanks.

There is a time-honoured story about four brothers who left home for college. They became successful doctors and lawyers and prospered. Some years later, they chatted after having dinner together. They discussed the gifts they were able to give their elderly mother who lived far away in another city.

The first said, "I had a big house built for Mama."

The second said, "I had a hundred-thousand-dollar theatre built in the house."

The third said, "I had my Mercedes dealer deliver an SL600 to her."

The fourth said, "You know how Mamma loved reading the Bible and you know she can't read anymore because she can't see very well. I met this preacher who told me about a parrot that can recite the entire Bible. It took twenty preachers 12 years to teach him. I had to pledge to contribute \$100,000 a year for twenty years to the church, but it was worth it. Mamma just has to name the chapter and verse and the parrot will recite it."

The other brothers were impressed.

After the holidays Mom sent out her Thank You notes. She wrote: "Milton, the house you built is so huge I live in only one room, but I have to clean the whole house. Thanks anyway."

"Marvin, I am too old to travel. I stay home; I have my groceries delivered, so I never use the Mercedes. The thought was good. Thanks."

"Michael, you gave me an expensive theatre with Dolby sound; it could hold 50 people, but all of my friends are dead, I've lost my hearing and I'm nearly blind. I'll never use it. Thank you for the gesture just the same."

"Dearest Melvin, you were the only son to have the good sense to give a little thought to your gift. The chicken was delicious. Thank you."

So often in life our gifts may lose something in the interpretation from the giver to the receiver.

The prophet Jeremiah in today's reading is speaking to people who were exiled from their homes, their sacred places, and their country. Back in Jerusalem there were predictions of a

short-term captivity. That's the kind of news that the exiles wanted to hear but Jeremiah's letter was not what anyone expected.

Jeremiah tells them freedom is a long way away. There is no light at the end of the tunnel right now. They are to settle in for the long haul. They are to get married, have children, plant fields and start businesses. Most of all, they are to pray which will be challenging since they are away from their Temple. Even more surprising were for whom and for what they were to pray. They were to pray for themselves and their new land. The people discover that God is with them not just in the Temple but wherever they are. They can pray to God just as easily in Babylon as they did in Jerusalem and God will hear them. Most startling of all, God is not just their God but a universal God who rules over all people, even their enemies.

What startling news! It is an entirely new way of viewing God and the world around them. Jeremiah's message is a message for us especially for those who may be living through something that you did not expect. This type of news is difficult to hear and difficult to give thanks for but we are reminded that God is with us and we need to pray for ourselves and this new land that we find ourselves navigating.

In our New Testament reading we find 10 people who were thrown into the unexpected with the diagnosis of leprosy. We don't know anything about these lepers before their diagnosis, what they did for a living or anything about their family, but we do know that this diagnosis would have turned their world upside down. Everything would have changed for them.

Leprosy was a dreadful disease. It brought discolouration and deterioration of the skin. Parts of human flesh were eaten away and this "rotting away" continued until death would come to them. There were three types of leprosy, and some of these brought more suffering than others. But all were bad and dreaded by the people who lived in Jesus' time.

In addition to the physical pain and suffering, the leper received humiliating treatment from the people. He or she were banished from society and made to live outside the camp. In Leviticus we read, "He shall remain unclean as long as he has the disease; he is unclean; he shall dwell alone in a habitation outside the camp." The leper was cast out to roam in the wilderness. His or her clothing must be torn, hair disheveled and upper lip covered. One was not allowed to greet a leper even in an open place, and if a leper placed any part of his or her body inside a home, everything in that house was made unclean, even the beams of the roof.

A leper was allowed to enter a village and go to a synagogue, but the diseased person had to be the first one in and the last one out of the building. While inside, the leper was confined and isolated to a small chamber which was only ten feet high and six feet wide. The leper was not allowed in any walled cities, including Jerusalem or in the temple.

Sometimes lepers were abused. If they were discovered inside a walled city where they were not allowed to visit, their already diseased and painful bodies were given forty stripes. The lepers were both feared and despised by the people around them.

In the Middle Ages things changed very little. Lepers were not allowed to enter the church buildings for worship, but they were allowed to watch from the outside. For this purpose, a hole was cut in the wall of the church building so the lepers could gather on the outside and see into the Lord's table. These openings were called "leper squints," and through these the lepers were able to watch and to worship. There is evidence of these leper squints in some of the old churches remaining today.

As callous as it was, in the Middle Ages, when a person was diagnosed as a leper, the priest would take the sick person into the sanctuary and read the burial service over him or her and the person was considered dead.

Leprosy is never referred to in the Bible as a sin. The leper was ceremonially unclean and banished from the people, but this diseased person was not seen as a sinner or as a victim of sin. The presence of leprosy was regarded as an act of God and therefore, whenever a leper was healed it was interpreted as a miracle of God. It had come from God and could be taken away only by God.

The ten lepers in Luke's story were obedient to the law and kept their distance. No one was allowed to stand closer to a leper than four cubits or six feet and these lepers kept their distance. They did not feel a need to get close to Christ or to kneel before him because they believed that all he had to do was to speak the word. He did not have to hand them any secret symbol or anoint their wounds with any kind of special ointment. All he had to do was to say the word and they would be healed. They believed they could be healed from a distance. Jesus proclaimed their great faith.

These lepers not only had faith in Jesus, but they also had faith in the treatment that was available to them. Jesus said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." (Luke 17:14) They were obedient and on the way to the priests, they were made clean.

In Leviticus 14, there is a detailed explanation of the ritual through which one must go to be declared clean after having been declared unclean. In other words, if healing took place from any skin disease which had appeared like leprosy, there was a process through which one was able to go and be declared clean. It all centered around the priests who examined the leper. It was a long and involved process.

So, ten lepers were healed, but only one of them returned to give thanks to Christ. It must have been an amazing feeling to realize they were cured and would now be free to go back to their life but only one of them returned to give thanks. Jesus mentioned the other nine but didn't dwell on them. The positive side of the picture is the one who did return to give thanks, and he stands as a symbol for each of us. All our lives are to be lived in joyful thanksgiving to God for health, strength and life.

On this Thanksgiving and Harvest Sunday let us remember to give thanks to God for our many blessings. It is good for us to have a special day set aside to remember to give thanks, but it is also a reminder to come with thanksgiving to God every day.

**Let us pray:** Gracious and loving God, we thank you for always being with us in times when we feel very blessed but also in times when our world seems to be thrown upside down. Walk with us in the midst of our fears and difficult diagnoses. Wherever we find ourselves in life help us to find a spirit of gratitude in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

➤ ***We plough the fields and scatter*** **807**

† Offering Invitation

On Harvest Sunday, we celebrate the gifts of God's good earth which sustain us, as well as the labour of those who grow, harvest and prepare these gifts so we can thrive. Today let us share our own gifts, offered so that the ministry and mission of Christ's church can thrive.

➤ ***Praise God from whom all blessings flow*** **306**

† Offering Prayer

**Gracious and generous God, we offer our gifts in gratitude for all we receive from your hand. Bless and multiply them, just as Jesus multiplied a few loaves and fishes to bless others. Use them so others can taste your love in our community and in your world, through the grace of Christ our Lord. Amen**

† Pastoral Prayers

Generous God, on this Harvest weekend, we thank you for all things great and small, for moments of wonder and for ordinary exchanges which fill our lives with meaning and offer us a sense of wellbeing. May our friends see in us the signs of a grateful heart.

Generous God, as we give thanks for the harvests of the earth and all the goodness that sustains us, we pray that you will show us how to live respectfully in creation and protect all that is precious to you. Wherever harvests have been disappointing, show us how to share what has been produced so that no one goes hungry.

Generous God, we pray for the good of your world and the common good in our community. Where there is strife and hostility between peoples and nations, inspire leaders to show wisdom and courage in their decision making. We pray for people and places hard hit by flood or fire, tornado or hurricane, epidemic or earthquake... May neighbours with resources maintain generosity and compassion for the long work of reconstructing lives and livelihoods.

Generous God, we pray for our neighbours and those of our number who are facing health challenges or difficult times for any reason... And we pray for family and friends under stress or in sorrow whom we name in silence before you...

Make us generous in compassion and understanding for each one.

Generous God, in Jesus Christ we have met your generous love and mercy. Through our lives and by our prayers, reveal his love and mercy to this generation, in whose name we pray. Amen

➤ *For the healing of the nations*

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**Blessing**

Let us go on our way rejoicing this day, and let your gentleness be known to others. Keep on doing the things you have learned from Christ Jesus our Lord and be grateful.

So may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds in the coming days through the grace of Jesus Christ and the company of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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

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# Thanksgiving



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BOUNTY  
CRANBERRIES  
DRESSING  
FAMILY  
GATHER  
GRATITUDE  
GRAVY

GREEN BEANS  
HAM  
HARVEST  
NOVEMBER  
PARADE  
PIE  
PUMPKIN

SHARING  
STUFFING  
THANKSGIVING  
THURSDAY  
TURKEY

