

Welcome, Announcements, and Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation. We also know that this is the unceded territory of the Lkwungen and WSÁNEĆ people. As we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting the injustice in our history. We ask that the God of love and justice lead us along the path of reconciliation, bringing accountability and healing. May we be inspired to forge new relationships of respect and solidarity.

➤ *O let the power fall on me*

Call to Worship

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;

We will lift up joyous song and sing our praises.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it rejoice.

Let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord,

For God will come to judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Let us join with all creation to praise the Lord! Let us worship God.

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

God of creation and compassion, you hear the cries of your people. You know our fear and despair. In your great love, you assure us that you walk with us in Christ Jesus. In this time of worship, we long to see your new heaven and new earth break through, making your justice known and life fruitful for all your children. We praise you for the hope you offer us in Christ Jesus. We trust that you are at work in your church and in creation so all that is broken will be made new.

God of promise and purpose, you set before us a vision of your new heaven and earth, yet we confess we easily cling to the past. We hold on to grudges and resentment. We grumble about change even when we see the need for it. We resist making room for those who have faced discrimination in our community. Forgive these old ways of thinking and acting. Create in us hearts made new by your mercy and love.

Through our prayers and our praise, strengthen our trust in your promised future, O God, Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of all life, and hear us as 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.***

Friends, hear the good news! While the world judges in order to condemn, God judges with justice, equity and mercy. All things have been made new in Christ and our sin is forgiven. Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start.

➤ *Stand up and bless the Lord*

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† Prayer for Understanding

Holy God, you speak words of challenge and words of comfort through the Scriptures. Send your Spirit to open our understanding to the word we need to hear this day, for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen

Scripture **Psalm 98** *responsive/displayed*

O sing to the LORD a new song, for the Lord has done marvelous things. God's right hand and holy arm have won the victory.

The LORD has made known the victory and has revealed vindication in the sight of the nations.

The LORD has remembered steadfast love and faithfulness to the house of Israel. All the ends of the earth have seen the victory of our God.

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth; break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre; with the lyre and the sound of melody. With trumpets and the sound of the horn make a joyful noise before the LORD.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it. Let the floods clap their hands; let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the LORD, who is coming to judge the earth.

The LORD will judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Isaiah 65: 17-25 *[OT 696]*

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.

I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the LORD – and their descendants as well.

Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.

The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent – its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the LORD.

Luke 21: 5-19 [NT 85]

When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, "As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down."

They asked him, "Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?"

And he said, "Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, '*I am he!*' and, '*The time is near!*' Do not go after them. When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately."

Then he said to them, "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven. But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls."

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

Message

It was probably about late spring, and I was up in the night, outside with my dog Johann. The sky was so clear, and I was gazing up at the stars scattered across the heavens when lo - an unusual trail of lights began to process across the sky. They were so bright, and evenly spaced. I had never seen anything like it. But of course, I wondered what in heaven's name (haha) it was.

Were we about to be overtaken by aliens? Was it the end of the world?

Fortunately, there is Google and I soon was able to discover that it was Space Ex, a trail of satellites. Phew!

On another day as I was preparing for a worship service, I logged in to the Presbyterian Church website to look at the liturgical calendar to see what the assigned readings were for a worship service in January 2023. The calendar ended on December 31, 2022. There was nothing that I could download beyond that. So - either I had a technical glitch or the higher ups at Church offices knew that the end of the world was coming on January 1st. I hadn't been informed of this, so I trusted that it was a glitch.

I do like to be prepared. While it is true that I have an emergency kit in my car and one in my home I don't really think that they would suffice at the end of the world. Mind you I do jokingly call them my apocalypse kits.

Our world is filled with fear and discontent. The Russian violence and war crimes in Ukraine. The sabre rattling of nuclear war, the missiles deployed between North and South Korea, protests in Iran, closer to home: mass shootings, homelessness, hunger and unsafe drugs. The global economic fears and political unrest... we could all go on with this list. And so when we hear the words of the gospel reading in Luke, we may wonder what we are being asked to grasp here.

This chapter of Luke is defined as the "Little Apocalypse." Apocalyptic writing is simply a writing style used in many forms of archaic writing. It is scattered throughout the scriptures. The book of Revelation probably comes to mind first, but other scriptures such as Daniel, Ezekiel and parts of Isaiah fall into this category as do many other writings that aren't in our scriptures.

Apocalyptic writing isn't defined necessarily as proclaiming the end of the world - far from it! If I started a story with 'Once upon a time there was....' You would know that what was coming wasn't really true and that it was an imaginary tale. It might involve a princess or an elf. So let's look at the passage in Luke. If we back up a few verses, there is the story of the widow who gives all she really has back to God in the form of two tiny coins sometimes translated as mites. It's like putting in a penny. Out of her poverty she offers all she has. This is kind of a set up for what is to come in the rest of the passage.

Jesus is walking in the temple grounds with his disciples. They are in awe at the spectacular beauty and size of it all. This is where Jesus was teaching during the day, teaching both Jews as well as Gentiles. Gentiles were allowed in the outer court. The Temple was massive and in the outer court alone it could hold 400,000 people. This spectacular structure was created to glorify God.

But by the time Luke had written this passage, this apocalyptic story, the Temple had been a smouldering ruin for about 15 years. It had been built up and beautified by Herod for what he thought was his own aggrandizement and then was destroyed by the Roman army. Luke's words are more of a reflection. They aren't a prediction.

Nation will rise against nation. There will be earthquakes, famines, plagues (so far this sounds about correct) There will be signs in the heavens (yeah, got that) and the end of the world will come. My calendar checked with that too.

But that isn't how this kind of story really goes or how it is to be understood. The style may seem strange to us, but what it really is, is a dramatic witness to the tenacity of faith and hope among God's people, and in this case, God's people in the early church - those who would have read this text first.

In Jesus' time it was customary for fathers who knew they were going to die, to call their sons and offer a kind of last will and testament. The father would forecast future events, sum up their lives and give blessings. So in effect, this is what Jesus is doing here. He says, there will be calamities, false teachings, everything will pass away, and all kinds of bad things will happen, but don't be afraid.

Yes - don't be afraid. The temple is just the most Jewish of all places and it is about to be destroyed, but buildings and wealth are fleeting. In an apocalyptic writing the good news, the point, comes at the end. This little apocalypse is followed by Jesus' Passion, his death and his resurrection. The beginning is about a woman who gives her all and ends with Jesus giving his all.

I am about to do a new thing! Psalm 98 tells us. Isaiah holds its own apocalyptic writings. Yes, there is judgement, but there is good news: God says I am about to do a new thing! All of creation will be transformed. The wolf and the lamb will even eat together.

As I said, in this kind of writing the most important thing comes last. Are Jesus' listeners too focused on this building? On things, rather than caring for the poor? There are worries and concerns among all who read Luke's words too. It was certainly a time of worries and fears. This passage isn't as much about judgment as it is offering words of comfort and encouragement.

We are being told not to fixate on temporary human institutions but to focus on caring for the poor and suffering. There is hope even when it feels like things are falling apart, as they were about to do with Jesus being crucified, and how they fell apart for the Temple that seemed so important and permanent. The Temple and all its grandeur was destroyed, but not God's people. Jesus was crucified but rose again and is alive and prays for us.

Apocalyptic writing in the Bible is ultimately about God's future breaking into the present and transforming all of creation, all of us. (N.T. Wright) We live in a wonderful and amazing world but it is filled as well with violence, sorrow and radical evil. God will never abandon us. Jesus' love, presence and compassion is greater than all of that. Christ's Passion shows us the resurrection and redemption that is ours. None of us are exempt from suffering, but there is hope and new life that is in store.

This time of brokenness in our world lays a challenge before us, as the people of God in this place - this city. We are Jesus' followers, and he asks us how we will respond. Jesus said to his friends that they will be arrested and given an opportunity to testify, to bear witness. He will give them the words and the wisdom to know what to say and do. And he gives us the words and wisdom to know how to respond to the challenges around and before us.

What is our vision, as the people of God?

When we come to worship, we follow what we call the liturgy. Our liturgical format, as we understand it, is a call to worship, prayer, confession, assurance of forgiveness and so forth. The word liturgy comes from *leitourgia*, which is Greek for ritual or public service, public works. We use it as well to refer to our ritual of communion remembering Christ's sacrifice.

Originally the word *leitourgia* referred mainly to the civic duties of the rich to contribute and make a sacrifice to the work of the state, helping to provide infrastructures, build bridges and bake bread for the troops. Early Christians adopted the word to describe their worship and defining communion as a sacrifice and duty, but also saw *leitourgia* as a duty and sacrifice as Christians, by their baptism into Christ, to participate in his ministry. Christ calls us to serve, to participate in his ministry and sacrifice. How is God fashioning us to be a public works project?

Henri Nouwen once wrote a book entitled *All Things New*. Referring to the worries and concerns that surround us he said, 'What is new is that we no longer experience the many things, people and events as endless causes for worry, but begin to see them as the rich variety of ways in which God's presence is made known to us.'

Imagine a tiny bird, tentatively sitting on the edge of a nest. The mother bird is behind it, gently nudging it to fly, to spread its wings. God is the mother; the bird is us. What does it mean for us to fly? How is God transforming us? God says, I am about to do a new thing!

➤ *To show by touch and word*

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† Offering Invitation

Each week we pray for the coming of God's Kingdom. Though we do not know exactly what this will look like, we offer our gifts to God for the work of the Kingdom here and now.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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† Offering Prayer

Steadfast God, we enjoy your loving kindness day by day. We offer our gifts in gratitude for what we have received from your love. Bless our gifts and our lives so that your goodness will touch many lives in the name of Jesus Christ, our friend and saviour. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers

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. We give you thanks for all the benefits we share in a nation with many resources and many opportunities. Yet we remember before you the many who do not have enough and cannot see their way forward.

We remember before you those living with hunger and communities struggling with the impact of fire and storm, earthquake and famine. We pray for all those working to relieve suffering in so many precious lives here and around the world.

God of these present times, we give you thanks that we live in a country of relative peace and good order, a place where injustices past and present can become subjects of investigation. We pray for the work of healing and reconciliation engaging indigenous communities with other citizens in this land. Open hearts in mutual understanding and provide opportunities for common enterprise.

We pray for those who have come to Canada, fleeing violence and deprivation in their homelands. Provide comfort and support through the generosity of neighbours and protect newcomers from misunderstanding and discrimination. Guide us to create a sense of home that all can share. Holy God, show us how to be your hands and feet.

God of time beyond our imagining, we give you thanks for all we learn through scientific investigation that stretches us to reimagine your creation in its vast mystery and beauty. Thank you for increasing insight in medical science and the possibilities it adds to your gifts of hope and healing.

We pray for all those who work in health care in this stressful time, for patients waiting for treatment and for those whose conditions find no relief. Bless them with your Spirit of courage and comfort.

Thank you for increasing insight in climate science and the awareness it gives about the impact of our lives on the wellbeing of the earth. Create better agreement and cooperation in our communities to protect the earth for future generations by the ways we adapt our lifestyles now. Bless us all with your Spirit of courage and commitment.

God of all life and each life, in these moments of silence we hold before you those on our hearts this day and who need to know you are near, and that we care for them too...

...enfold each one with your comfort and profound presence. Guide us as we go and help us to sing the new song that you would have us sing. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

➤ **Lord of light, whose name and splendour** **769**

Blessing

And now may the compassing of the angels be upon you. The blessing of God be upon you. The guarding of the Holy Spirit be upon you. The joy and the peace of the loving Christ be upon you, To aide you and enfold you, each day and each night of your life. Amen

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