

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

Around the world this day, the universal church celebrates the *“The Reign of Christ.”*

We come to worship the King of Kings, Jesus the Christ, friend of the poor, the meek and the merciful whose love we can barely grasp, and who has been enthroned with all authority and power in this world and in the world to come.

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness. Come into his presence with singing!

God has placed everything under Christ’s wounded feet and appointed the one who wore a crown of thorns, as the supreme head of the church, his body. We come to worship our Good Shepherd, the True Vine, Wonderful Counsellor and Prince of Peace.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, come into his courts with praise. Give thanks and praise his loving name! Let us worship God.

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

God of eternity, we join with the chorus of all the saints who together continue to declare that Christ is our King. We remain secure in Christ whose reign is just, whose power is endless and whose love is unfathomable.

God of majesty and mercy, we give you thanks and praise for your commitment to your creation. In Christ, you have turned the world upside down, revealing your strength through weakness, and your power through compassion. In the cross of Christ you taught us that no hopeless situation or frightening possibility is beyond your reach. We praise you for your love at work around us and within us, always able to do more than we can ask or even imagine. Sovereign God, receive our love and our loyalty this day.

God of wisdom and warning, we confess that we often prefer our own plans to your purposes. We shrink from acts of service that seem too demanding. Forgive us when our commitment wavers and we think someone else will take up the challenges we face. Inspire us with the example of Jesus, and energize us with your Spirit to follow him as our Shepherd wherever he leads us. Hear us now as we pray in the words Jesus taught his friends... ***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

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

➤ *My shepherd is the King of love*

691

† Prayer for Understanding

God of truth and justice, send us your Holy Spirit as we hear the Scriptures read and interpreted. Through your Word, grant that we might see your truth and justice unfolding in the world you love. Amen

Scripture **Psalm 46** *responsive/displayed*

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; God's voice resounds, the earth melts.

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations God has brought on the earth.

The Lord makes wars cease to the end of the earth; breaks the bow, shatters the spear; burns the shields with fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Colossians 1: 11-20 *[NT 200]*

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers – all things have been created through him and for him.

He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything.

For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

Luke 23: 33-43 [NT 89]

When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.

Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing."

And they cast lots to divide his clothing. And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!"

The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine, and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!"

There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, "Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!"

But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

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

Message ***In the image of God***

Open our eyes, Lord. We want to see Jesus; to reach out and touch him, and say that we love him. Open our ears, Lord, and help us to listen. Open our eyes Lord; we want to see Jesus. Amen.

Every now and then the funniest thing happens to me. Whenever I introduce one of my daughters to someone the reaction is usually the same. "Wow! You can sure tell whose daughter she is!" – "My goodness she looks like you." - Like mother, like daughter, and so on. A number of times in the past I also met friends of my mother. Their reaction was usually something like: "My goodness- you must be Flo's daughter. I'd recognize that face anywhere." 'You are the spitting image of your mother.' There are plenty of strong family resemblances in my family, and I'm sure that many of you recognize the same things in your family. At the very least, most of us eventually look in the mirror or catch a glimpse of ourselves in a window and it suddenly dawns on us, that we look just like our moms ...or dads.

Although we didn't read it this morning, I suspect that you will remember that beautiful passage in the beginning of Genesis where it says, "The Lord God said, 'Let us create human beings in our image. Male and female, God created them.'" That passage was written at a time when the community of faith had a very negative self-image. They had been hauled away from their homeland to Babylon. They had suffered terribly; they had lost their sense of power and strength and identity. The writer of the book we call Genesis was a very great theological, spiritual writer. We do not know his or her name; we just call this writer, "The Priestly Writer." They wanted to remind people that they bore the image of God in their very being.

"And the Lord God created them, male and female." In a way, what the passage is saying is, "I'd know that face anywhere. You are the very image of the one who has birthed you, who has made you, who has nurtured you."

Consider, just briefly, what this would mean for our society, a society that is always trying to sell us on the image that we need in order to be acceptable -- the number of advertisements you get; the number of commercials on TV always telling you how you have to look; and what you have to achieve in order to be somebody.

What this passage says is that you are already someone very special. "Why I'd recognize that face anywhere. You are the very image of God."

The gospel reading in Luke that we read describes Jesus' last hours of suffering, and the passage in Colossians shows us that image again of a crucified man wearing a crown of thorns. King Jesus. The wounded healer. The bloodied reconciler. The one who lays down his life for others. Jesus, remember me, when you come into your kingdom.

Colossians shows us Jesus our king, the one who turns all other ideas of kingship inside out. The king is an apprentice of his earthly father, Joseph the carpenter. The king is a village man who becomes an itinerant preacher and healer. He is a misunderstood man who spends nights out on the hills. The saviour trusted by prostitutes and tax collectors. Friend of foreigners and fishermen. A servant washing the feet of guests. The wanted man slipping through city streets by night. A soul in agony, praying in an Olive grove. The young rabbi betrayed by a disciple. A host with wounded hands, cooking a fish breakfast for his friends on the shores of Galilee. This is the king. The anointed One. The ever living One, The Alpha and Omega, separated by a cloud from his disciples, so that he might be with them always, incognito.

Think of what it means to bear the image of God, if for some reason, you're worried that you aren't acceptable or good enough. You don't have to worry about that. You already are somebody of unique and wondrous value. You – each of you – are people who bear the image of God. "You are the very image of the one who made you."

If you are somebody who is growing old, very old perhaps, and you have lost the strength you once had -- maybe your hands are gnarled with arthritis, maybe you don't have the energy you once had -- you think back to when you were a youth. You see how this society loves youth as though that is the only way to be. This passage says, "You bear the very image of God. You are as valuable and as precious now as you were the day you were born."

To bear the image of God is to see ourselves differently, but not just ourselves. It is to see everyone else differently as well. Sometimes this is very difficult for us. We see someone who is really different from us and we think of them as the stranger, the alien, and we become very frightened by them. Maybe it is their religious differences; maybe it is their ethnic or their cultural differences, but they bear this image of God just as unmistakably as we do.

It is not always because someone is just different. We may even fail to see how even those we love are the very image of the God who made them. Christ moves incognito among all of us.

Some of you will know that I kind of enjoy dressing up and that Halloween gives me the chance to do that. One Halloween, while I was serving as Chaplain at the Broadmead long term care home, I dressed up as a Queen. I had a great big crown, a robe, and a sceptre. While I wore these things, I did my usual rounds through the building enjoying some funny conversations, some bows and a few curtsies. (The Royal wave) But when I happened to enter one room where there was a sing a long going on, they suddenly stopped, and they burst into a hearty rendition of God Save the Queen. It was certainly a funny moment that was not soon forgotten.

Now I had some fun pretending to be royalty, but I am not a sovereign of any kind. Recently Queen Elizabeth died. It was a significant loss, touching people in many different ways. We now have a king, King Charles III, and that is change that has sparked all kinds of debate about royalty.

We have leaders, elected officials, human rulers, kings and queens. And there are always people who think they are rulers, forcing their domination upon people. I won't mention any names.

While we bear a resemblance to the One true Sovereign, it is Jesus who is ruler over all. The followers of Jesus in Colossae were being reminded by Paul who and whose they were. The Colossians had some heretical stuff going on and this hymn-like passage sings of who Christ is. Jesus is the image of the invisible God. Jesus was there before creation. He is the cosmic Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. And all things were created in him.

Where do you see the reflection of Christ's image? Where do you see that dazzling beauty? Sometimes it's easier in some situations than in others. Jesus reminded his friends though, "Whatever you do to the least of these, you do it to me." We all bear his image.

Back in the '80's -way back in the last century, there was a group of musicians called the Medical Mission Sisters. Miriam Therese Winter wrote many of their songs and this one immediately comes to mind whenever I read this passage in Colossians. Some of the words say, *He is the image of God unseen, a visible sign of what life can mean. Through Him and for Him all the world was made, finding peace in the price that He paid. Absolute fullness in Him resides. Through Him reconciling what sin divides. We shall continue all that he began, making peace through this peace-making man.*

A number of years ago when I was working as chaplain at the Children's hospital in Ottawa, I had an encounter with a young boy at the hospital. I had asked him what he thought God was like. He said with a firmness in his voice, "God is very powerful... God is kind... and God is handsome." How wonderful, especially since God's imprint is on him, and he is in the image of the God that he described to me.

Imagine a world where all of us looked at everyone and said, "Why, I'd know that face anywhere. It is the very image of the God who made us all; the spitting image.

➤ ***Christ is the King (verses 1, 4, 5 and 7)*** **612**

† Offering Invitation

The story of Jesus offering forgiveness out from the Cross reminds us of the mercy and compassion we have received from God. We offer our gifts in gratitude for this love, so that the world will be continue to be touched by such mercy and compassion.

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

† Offering Prayer

Merciful God, you envision a world where the hungry are fed and strangers are welcomed. We bring you our gifts to share in that vision. With your blessing, may our gifts bear fruit in Christ's name, and offer his blessing to those we serve for his sake. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers

Be still and know that I am God... And so, we sit in the presence of the dazzling beauty of our God and of Jesus, who reigns over us all. Let us pray:

Lord Jesus Christ, we give you thanks that you reign through love as the power that embraces the world with mercy and hope. Thank you for revealing that to trust is wisdom, to forgive is the best way to deal with enemies, and to serve is the best way to lead. We pray that, through the grace of your kingdom, each beloved creature and citizen will know safety and satisfaction in their homes. Let the vision of your peaceable kingdom take root in our hearts, bringing healing to families and communities, and in every place wounded by violence or destruction.

Lord Jesus Christ, we give you thanks for reaching out to those on the margins and those others shunned, so that each one knew they belonged in your kingdom. We pray for those who face discrimination or insecurity in our communities, longing for respect and a change to thrive. For those who live in fear. Teach us how to live differently as neighbours, to acknowledge and work with others we've never worked with before. Lead us by your Spirit to share in your work of mending the world.

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for enduring the pain of the cross and the darkness of the tomb to show us there is life beyond death through your resurrecting love. We pray for those who are grieving a loss this day, the loss of someone beloved, the loss of love or hope or trust, the loss of opportunity or security or future plans... *(Keep silence for 15-20 seconds.)* Be present with all who suffer the sadness and disruption of a loss, and bring each one comfort and courage.

Lord Jesus Christ, this day we pray for your church at work in the world, confronting the challenges and changes of these times. Unite us in witness and service, and encourage us when difficulties arise, for we are your people, committed to the unfolding of your reign among us. Hear our prayers in the name of Jesus who is our King. Amen

➤ *Rejoice the Lord is King*

267

Blessing

You are the hands and the feet of Jesus. Go now to serve The Lord with all your heart, soul and mind. The guarding of the God of life be on you, the guarding of the loving Christ be on you, the guarding of the Holy Spirit be on you, to aid you and enfold you, each day and night of your lives.

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

726