

Date- July 30, 2023

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement

As we gather for worship in Jesus 'name, we remember that we do so on the traditional and unceded territory of the lək'wəŋən and the WSÁNEĆ. We acknowledge their stewardship of this land throughout the ages. As we pray, reflect, and celebrate in this place, we do so as guests lamenting injustice and asking God to lead us along paths of reconciliation – inspiring new relationships of respect and solidarity.

O let the power fall on me

Call to Worship

Give thanks to God and call on God's holy name.

We will tell of God's wonderful works!

Let the hearts of those who seek God rejoice.

We will sing God's praises!

Give glory to God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer.

We will remember God's mercy in all our words and actions.

472 *We are God's people*

† Gathering Prayer / [Words of Hope](#)

Gracious and eternal God, we come together today as a community of your people. We come to worship you, to draw close to your presence, and we wait to hear your voice. Come Spirit of gentleness and sweep your wind among us in this place. Stir us, coax us, call us, guide us - goad us. Renew us in the depths of your holiness and teach us to love with an expanding heart. We praise you for your guiding hand upon our lives and your sustaining love and grace. Merciful God, we are a resurrection people, but too often we fail to remember it. We can lose sight of your living presence. Shine your light into the dark places and open our eyes to where you desire to touch us and make us whole. We bring you our faults and foibles, our weaknesses and our wounds. Forgive our grudges, or those times when we have settled for bitterness. Forgive our fears, when we have forgotten you are faithful in all things and that you are always present with us. Unclench our hands - that we may reach out to one another. Open our eyes that we may see Christ in friend and stranger. Come to us Jesus and renew us with your love. Shine in us and through us, that we may become beacons of truth and compassion, enlightening all creation with deeds of justice and mercy. For we ask these things in your holy name. Amen

God's love for us is tender and compassionate. It meets us in the dark places where we forget that there is still hope. Christ's grace and love is lavish and unending, surrounding and upholding us always ready to create something new. We are set free to begin again as redeemed people! Friends believe the good news! In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven people. Thanks be to God! Amen.

† Prayer for Understanding

Eternal God, in the reading of the scripture, may your Word be heard. In the meditations of our hearts, may your Word be known. In the faithfulness of our lives, may your Word be shown. Amen.

Scripture

Isaiah 58:6-9a

OT 688

Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God; they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God. "Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?" Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist. Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

Psalms 46

OT 517

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; he utters his voice, 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 he has brought on the earth. He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he 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.

1 Peter 2:4-10**NT 233**

Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: "See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious; and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame." To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe, "The stone that the builders rejected has become the very head of the corner," and "A stone that makes them stumble, and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Matthew 5: 13-20**NT 4**

You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled underfoot. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

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

Message: Salt and Light

Popcorn, French fries and eggs. These are things that I see as requiring salt. I know that sometimes we are told to cut back on our salt intake, but if possible these are items that have to be worked around in my opinion. Salt in our world brings to mind perhaps a salt shaker on the table or depending on the weather or where one lives, something to scatter on the ground if it's icy. But it wasn't always so. I want to explore the back story of salt and light today, and see what is behind these words that hold such significance and power in our faith. Long before Jesus was born, salt was a significant part of Hebrew life. Covenants and treaties required salt – a couple of scriptures from Old Testament – or Torah.

Leviticus 2:13 - You shall not omit from your grain offerings the salt of the covenant with your God; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

Numbers 18:19 - All the holy offerings that the Israelites present to the Lord I have given to you, together with your sons and daughters, as a perpetual due; it is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord for you and your descendants as well.

Sacred promises were always sealed with salt. It was a highly valued commodity. There were different kinds of sacrifices made in the Temple: Animal, grain, food, wine... incense. All had salt added to them. For the animal offerings it was the fat that was burned on the altar, but with salt. The meat itself was eaten. A lot of salt was used in the Jewish temple. All these sacrifices or offerings were a sign of a reliable and lasting promise; divine vows.

Salt was valuable and very precious. To eat salt together became a sign of loyal friendship and so when eating a meal together salt was shared too. It made it sacred. It consecrated what was offered, be it a meal, a promise between friends or nations or simply a friendship. To eat salt with someone signifies a bond of friendship and true loyalty. You will remember the famous painting of the Last Supper by Leonardo da Vinci. If you look closely on the left and look by Judas's hand there is a knocked over pot of salt, spilled on the table. A visible sign of something evil about to happen and that a bond is about to be broken. I can't begin to count the number of times I've looked at or studied that painting, but this was a new aspect of the painting I had never been aware of before.

Salt as a chemical compound can't change. – although there are different kinds of salt. Nevertheless - Sodium chloride, NaCl, is essential for life in general. It has inherent purity, which is worth noting when sacrifices are meant to come from a pure heart. So whether you feel like it or not, you are still salt. In Rabbinic custom, the Torah - was likened to salt, not only providing flavour but a reminder that you / the world could not live without it. The Dead Sea and the nearby salt pits were a huge source of salt. It was used to season food in cooking of course, as well as in sacrifices and meals together. And also in preserving food such as fish. It was a disinfectant - used to care for wounds too. Have you ever gargled with salt water? It's healing properties were important. Newborn babies were rubbed with salt - more of act to keep evil away, but also in hopes of good health. Salt has been used to ward off sickness and evil- by scattering it in buildings, churches, homes and children's pockets. Salt had great value. Roman soldiers were paid salt money so that they could purchase salt and thus stay healthy. You've heard the expression, that someone wasn't worth their weight in salt? That goes back to being paid in salt. It was called a Salarium- thus -salary. Salt was a unit of exchange. Many monasteries were built by salt mines for their revenue. Salt meant purity, precious value, sacred promises, loyalty and healing. Salt is never bland. Salt makes you thirsty. If we are indeed salt, do we make

others thirst for God? Jesus says WE ARE the Salt of the Earth. You are precious and bring healing to others because you are Salt.

Those Temple sacrifices were called Korban which means they were a way to express love and gratitude to God and were a way to come closer to God. They were a connection to the Holy. God works in us and through us. You are the salt of the earth, connecting others to what is holy. Wars have been fought over salt. It's been taxed, kept in locked containers and used in trade. The tradition of the salt covenant found its way into the Christian Church. It's been used in the consecration of churches and is contained in Holy water. And did you know that the word salt is the root of the word salvation? Salt is incorporated into many rituals in many Christian denominations as a sign of God's protection; keeping evil away.

The salt by the Dead Sea was rock salt, and the outer layer had impurities and little flavour so it was thrown away. Dead Sea water would be evaporated in order to obtain the salt, but it would be contaminated with sand and other particles so what was left was thrown back onto the earth. This in turn served as a fertilizer to help things grow. Too much salt isn't usually good for crops, but in some cases it's helpful. There is actually a thing called a salt index to measure the amount of salt in fertilizer. Helping others grow and flourish can get messy, just like growing plants. When others are enabled to grow and flourish that is a sign of God's covenant and grace. It's about creating new life. It doesn't take much sometimes. A few words, a hug, a God sprinkles us where salt is needed. No matter where salt is spread or sprinkled it always transforms what it touches. It brings out the best in a flavour.

And not to be forgotten. You are the light of the world. In a world long before electricity, providing light in the darkness could be life saving. (flash light) (Candles) There are many biblical stories about light, but one that Jesus and his followers would have known and celebrated was the Festival of the Lights, or what we know as Hanukkah. Hanukkah means dedication and it remembered the time when the Hellenistic empire had been ruling. Antiochus IV had instituted a different religion and there was a huge rebellion. In the year 164 BCE they were able to return to the Temple in Jerusalem to rebuild and rededicate it. Usually in the temple the Lamp of the Eternal light would be always tended and always burning. But the lamp was gone. So the story went that there was just enough oil to light a lamp for one night while they waited for more oil. But the light lasted 8 nights and the celebration is marked every year with the lighting of a menorah and by much joy. Let there be light!

In Jesus' time, the Roman Empire saw themselves as a light to the world, so it was a concept that people knew. And a concept that Jesus turned on its head. **I am** the light of the world, he said. Light can expose things we might not want to see. Maybe discovering a need in the world around us might challenge us to act. There is so much darkness in our world. And light - It can show us the way. It can shed light on something we may have misread, misunderstood- and

redirect our path. You are the light of the world, Jesus tells us. Not by imperial domination but by being servants of God. There is a quote of Martin Luther King's where he says, "Returning hate for hate, multiplies hate, adding darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate. Only love can do that."

As Christians, we remember the light of a star that led the wise men to Jesus. Just a star – It was a light to guide. Remember that you are light too. Those wise ones would have sat around the light of a fire I imagine. The warmth of the light and the friendship around that light must have been strong. God's light shines in and through you. You are light that cannot be hidden. You are the salt of the earth, bringing out the best in others. Preserving, healing. Not you ought to be or could be or should be. This is who you are. You are all worth your weight in salt... Stay salty my friends.

671 *I heard the voice of Jesus say*

Offering and Prayer

There are some who have much, and some who have little. We are called to serve one another. In compassion we are called to share what we have, that others may know God's grace, discover new life, wholeness, and joy. Let us continue to worship God as we present our offerings.

306 *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

Living God, in Christ you make all things new. You transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace. Receive the gifts we lay before you. Transform them into instruments of your healing, of your generous grace and abundance, but most of all - of your love. Through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers and the Lord's Prayer

In Psalm 46, that we read earlier there is a line most of us are familiar with: "Be still and know that I am God." The Hebrew meaning of 'to be still,' means more accurately - to let it go. So let go of whatever is weighing you down, and let us be still, and let us pray.

Loving and eternal God, we thank you and praise you that you love us just as we are. And yet you long for us to grow and blossom into people who are whole. Set us free from our fears, our misdirected concerns for our rights and the burdens we need not carry. Help us to let go and trust you. In your love and in your power, bring healing; bring peace.... Jesus, our Saviour, your words and touch poured out the power of love on all who entered your presence. We bring to you those we know who need your healing touch now, - for those whose illness is painful and

difficult to cure, for those are fearful for what is in store, In your love and in your power, bring healing; bring peace. We bring to you those who are troubled in mind, those who feel trapped, or have lost hope. In your love and in your power, bring healing; bring peace. We pray for those who are burdened by grief and loss - be present with them and shine your light into their lives. In your love and in your power, bring healing; bring peace. We pray for those living in the midst of war, of terror and violence. For those facing hunger and famine, for those living in the midst of political turmoil, in your love and in your power, bring healing; bring peace. We pray for those fighting fires, for those who have lost their homes or have fled them. We pray for rain. We pray for your church in all places. Help your people to walk in the love of Christ in all they do, living as salt and light. In the silence hear the prayers that are so tightly attached to our hearts. God of hope and abundant life, remake us and renew us day by day, through the cross of Christ your Son, until we pray as continually as we breath and all our acts are prayer. Together let us pray as Jesus 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, for ever. Amen

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

Blessing

In the darkness may there be a blessing. In the shadows, may there be a welcome. In the night, may you be encompassed by the love that knows your name, for you are God's own people, called out of darkness into God's marvelous light. Dare to live fully your calling as servants of Christ. And now may the compassing of the angels be upon you. The blessing of God be upon you, the peace of the Holy Spirit be upon you, and the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ be upon you, this day and always. Amen.

406 ***Jump with joy 406***