

## 03 November 2024 – Communion/All Saints/Time Change

Welcome / Announcements / Land Acknowledgement      **Lilian**

**We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation. We also know we are here as guests on the traditional and unceded territory of the ləkʷəŋən and the WSÁNEĆ – Esquimalt and Songhees nations. May we continue asking God to forgive us for injustices we are directly or indirectly part of and may we be led along paths of reconciliation and solidarity.**

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

Praise the Lord, all you saints!

**Praise God, all you heavenly hosts!**

Let us praise the name of the Lord:

**For the name of God is above all names!**

Let us praise the Lord as long as we live;

**We will sing praises to God now and evermore.**

Gathering Prayer / Words of Hope

God of promise and purpose, in you we live and move and have our being. You are the Fountain of life, and you refresh us. You are the Light of the world, and you show us the way. You are the Spirit of life, and you move in us each new day. So we join our voices with the angels and archangels, with the saints and disciples of every time and place, to worship you as Creator, Healer, and Source of our hope and our joy.

God of goodness and mercy, we have heard your call to put our faith into action, but fear holds us back. We stay silent rather than speak up when things go wrong. There is work to be done in Jesus' name, but we often seek an easier way. Forgive us, O God, and give us courage and commitment to serve as your saints in this time and this place, whatever the challenges may be. Amen

The Word of God is active – going forth to free, forgive, comfort, and heal. Let that word be in you now – assuring you of a new beginning through Christ Jesus, our salvation.

➤ *Nothing can trouble*

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Prayer for Understanding     **Anne**

**Wise and patient God, in the midst of what distracts us, help us focus on your Word. In the face of competing desires, show us the path to follow for the sake of Jesus, who is your living Word. Amen**

Scripture     **Deuteronomy 34:1-12**     (OT 191)

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. The Lord said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.” Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord’s command. He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired, and his vigor had not abated. The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him, and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses.

Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

**Psalm 90**     (OT 547)

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn us back to dust and say, “Turn back, you mortals.” For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past or like a watch in the night.

You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning; in the morning it flourishes and is renewed; in the evening it fades and withers.

For we are consumed by your anger; by your wrath we are overwhelmed. You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your countenance.

For all our days pass away under your wrath; our years come to an end like a sigh. The days of our life are seventy years or perhaps eighty, if we are strong; even then their span is only toil and trouble; they are soon gone, and we fly away.

Who considers the power of your anger? Your wrath is as great as the fear that is due you. So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.

Turn, O Lord! How long? Have compassion on your servants! Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us and as many years as we have seen evil. Let your work be manifest to your servants and your glorious power to their children. Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us and prosper for us the work of our hands – O prosper the work of our hands!

### **Revelation 21:1-6a** (NT 259)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

*“See, the home of God is among mortals. God will dwell with them; they will be God’s peoples, and God will be with them and be their God wiping every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”*

And the one who was seated on the throne said, *“See, I am making all things new.”* Also he said, *“Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”* Then he said to me, *“It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End.*

***Listen to what the Spirit is saying to God’s people.***

### Message ***Gazing at the Promised Land***

Let’s pretend for a moment that we are standing with Moses at Pisgah. He has come to the end and looks out over the promised land to which he has been headed all his life – *over Gilead as far as Dan, all Naphtali, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar.* And as we stand there the Lord says to Moses, *This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and*

to Jacob, saying, "I will give it to your descendants"; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there. Moses will not go to the promised land. He embraces that painful reality – the reality that his life-pursuit of fidelity will stop short of fruition. He submits to God's will but that does not stop the yearning.

All of this is expressed in Psalm 90 which we read together this morning. It is attributed to Moses – called *A prayer of Moses, the man of God*. This title gives it an aura of supreme distinction but likely tells us nothing about who actually wrote it. The psalm is magisterial – a prayer for the whole congregation – a lament to cry out at funerals – a hymn to express our despair, our ache when we experience disruption and chaos.

The theme of the poem is the eternity of God in contrast to the transitory nature of human life. God is permanent. We are fragile and ephemeral. The shortness of life compels us to make wise use of our brief span of years. We are dependent on the compassion and steadfast love of God. The pivotal point of the text is the goal of a *heart of wisdom*. This is the point of the prayer – the essence of Moses' yearning and our lament – the aspiration of true prayer, piety, and spirituality is finally to have *a wise heart* – to discern the purposes of God – to participate fully in divine love.

*...teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart.* If we could count our days – truly appreciated our own mortality – would we be any the wiser? Would we simply wallow in loss and limits, failure and finitude – or would we acknowledge our own fleeting selves and the lost innocence of humanity when it engages in war, violence, domination and cruelty? I wonder if it is about knowing the number of our days or simply recognizing that they are limited and valuable.

I read a debut novel this spring called The Measure by Nikki Erlick. I am recommending it to our book club for our 2025 list. The story begins with each adult person in the entire world receiving a box on the same morning. The box is inscribed with the phrase, *the measure of your life lies within*. Inside each box is a string – everyone's a different length – representing the exact number of years each person will live. Some people open their box to learn their fate and others choose not to. The collective frenzy – the anxiety – the question of knowing or not knowing how long they will live – all this becomes the story of several characters in the novel. And the story unfolds as everyone, whether they open their box or not, confronts more intimately their own mortality...

*You sweep them away; they are like a dream, like grass that is renewed in the morning...in the evening it fades and withers.* The psalm is talking about us. And though these thoughts may seem gloomy, they are also honest. Relevant and real. Think back to Moses as we imagined him gazing out over the land to which he has been led – his time is past

even though his task feels incomplete. Think back to the “war to end all wars” and the seeming folly of that statement today – world wars that we honour with a day of Remembrance later this month. Think back to the peace promises of post war times – see them fade? – see them wither? Think back to the hopes and dreams of youth and wonder where the years have gone.

Time flies. Life is short. We are grass that flourishes in the morning, but by the evening it shrivels up. Our days pass, beneath the eyes of God, like a sigh.

Something about us wants enduring places, lasting memories, eternal events – yet things change, we all get older, years slip away. Fewer and fewer people recall the things we recall or enjoy shared memories of better times and bitter times. Like all human experience is the honouring of those who died, something too soon a faded, dream-like blur.

We are finite and terminal. None of this, including us, goes on forever. Life is fragile. Get used to it. In fact, the very fragility of life, the fleeting quality of the moment, makes each moment all the more precious.

*“Time, like an ever-rolling stream, bears all who breathe away.”* And what do you do with that? The Buddha advised having a little bird upon our shoulder that periodically whispered in our ear, *“Is this the day? Is this the last day of your days?”*

The psalmist urges, *“Number your days so that you might get a wise heart.”* By facing that which our culture urges us to deny, namely our finitude, our God-ordained human limits, we get wise – we have the possibility of walking through a door into a place called wisdom.

Wisdom is a result of honestly looking at a life, particularly life’s limits, taking stock, and living in light of that reality. You learn to savour the momentary – a spring dawn, a barely repressed giggle, an evening filled with starlight, an encounter with another individual that changes you forever.

Only God knows what all these moments, assembled in our collective subconscious, mean. Only God knows the ultimate significance of what we do and say in this life. So the psalmist ends with a prayer: *Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and prosper for us the work of our hands — O prosper the work of our hands!*

It’s finally up to God to gather up all our efforts, and moments, and make them mean what we ourselves can never, by ourselves, mean. Most of us, most of the time, don’t think much about it, and probably that’s just as well. Occasionally however, we step back, take stock, and wonder if things might have been different – could have been less tragic if we had remembered our frailty and God’s permanence a little sooner. There is sadness and pain and despair in our remembered past – regret. There is joy in our memory too.

Don't waste much time in second guessing or remorse because ultimately Psalm 90 is not a meditation on futility and death, but a reflection on the power of God even in the face of human reality.

Being confident in the power of God does not lead us to passive acceptance but to insistence on transformation that only God can shape. The heart of wisdom that we seek leads us to a new way of living and being in the world – to a view of reality that delights in the gifts that God gives and calls on our divine Creator to look lovingly upon us and make something good out of the work that we do.

For me this Psalm is a voice speaking truthfully about our situation and concluding that we are not ultimately defined by dust and grass but by the one who has *been our dwelling place in all generations*. The assurance that God endures, that God values the human creature, that God takes an active interest in the work of our hands, brings out our prayer of hopeful insistence that life can be new again. As we contemplate our past, in the midst of today's reality, our Gracious God invites us to move forward in hope – embracing the full measure of our lives. **Amen**

➤ *The Lord bless you / Aaronic Blessing*

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#### Offering and Prayer

The Scriptures call us to commit ourselves as loyal servants of God's great love. Our offering is one way we express our love and loyalty to God. Consider what you are saying to God as you make your offering today.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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**God of all generations, we offer our gifts in gratitude for the inheritance of faithfulness we have received as followers of Jesus. Bless these gifts so that today's ministries may flourish and provide an inheritance for those who come after us, as you guide us all into a future only you can see. Amen**

#### The Apostles' Creed

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**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**

➤ *Give thanks for life, the measure of our days (verses 1 and 2)* **613**

Remembering the Saints **Fiona**

Today we direct our attention to the richness of Christian history and the varied experiences of the grace of God by lifting up the lives of the saints.

We celebrate saints as those who aspire to the sanctity of God whom they serve. Because the Holy Spirit dwells within them, they too are made holy. A saint, therefore, is one who reflects the blessedness of the God they serve: to be a saint in this sense is a sign not of perfection, but of fidelity.

We think of all the people of God, living and dead, who together form the mystical body of Christ, and we name in our hearts those known to us who have died since our last remembrance of the saints. We remember them in our prayers – we give thanks for their lives – we find strength in their faith and the faith of all the saints both known to us and known only to God. **Doug Pender – January 2024 / Bruce McCallum – April 2024 / Earl Setter – May 2024 / Esther Mitchell – October 2024**

Unison Prayer (based on Hebrews 12)

**Give us faith, O Lord, to look beyond touch and sight, and seeing that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, enable us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith. Bring us at last to your eternal peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen**

➤ *Give thanks for life, the measure of our days (verses 3 and 4)* **613**

Invitation to the Lord's Table

The celebration of communion is always a festival of friends – where we gather around the table with all our hopes and dreams, longing for a glimpse of the holy.

It is here, where bread is broken and the cup is shared, that we can be most truly ourselves – seeing ourselves and others as children of the living God. Here, that which is earthly becomes divine and that which is human becomes more than has ever been dreamed.

Come to the table – all are welcome. Christ invites us to meet him here.

➤ *Here, O my Lord, I see thee (verses 1-3)* **543**

## † Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Holy One be with you

### **And also with you**

Open your hearts to the One who is Love

### **We open our hearts to you, O God**

Let us give thanks to God, who gathers us together

### **To the One who welcomes us to the table, we give thanks and praise**

Generous God, your invitation to come and feast in your presence is but a taste of the love you extend to us every day. *By your very nature, you are always seeking us out – searching for ways to connect us and connect with us. You meet us in the most ordinary of places and you make them sacred. By your grace, we come to recognize the holiness that dwells in the world around us, in our neighbors, in ourselves.* Therefore, with all the company of heaven and all who will come after us, we lift our voices in joyful praise...

- **829**      *Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest, hosanna in the highest.*

Blessed are you and blessed is your eternal table. You welcome all who thirst for justice and hunger to grow in love. *You ask us to extend this same welcome to all our neighbors, but since our beginning, we have struggled. And so in your love for us, you took on flesh in Jesus. Through his life, you pointed to your presence on the margins. You revealed the sacredness in all life. You showed us how to live together, even among forces of destruction.*

*Believing it could transform the world, Jesus proclaimed the Good News. He called for the captives to be set free. He spoke of the lowly being lifted up. He talked of redistributing wealth and eradicating the causes of poverty. His commitment to practicing love knew no bounds – not even the bounds of death.*

*On the night of his arrest, Jesus shared a meal with his companions. He took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to his disciples saying: "This is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me."*

*After the meal, he took the cup, blessed it, and shared it saying: "This cup that is poured out is the new covenant. Drink this all of you, to remember me."*

As we gather for this meal prepared for us, we ponder and affirm the mystery of faith:

- **523**      *Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again. Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.*



Pour out your Spirit on these gifts, O God. Make these ordinary elements into the Sacred gift of your presence with us once again. May they awaken us anew to your everlasting invitation into a life of resurrection. Enliven us in our pursuit of a world where all needs are met, power is balanced, and the worth of every creature and creation is celebrated. In Christ, with Christ, through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit – all glory is yours, now and forever. Amen

### Sharing Bread and Cup

*Please come forward to receive Holy Communion – everyone is welcome at this table.  
If you are unable to come to the front, please signal an elder who will come and serve you.  
We use gluten and dairy-free bread. You may choose either juice, wine.*

*The one who grieved for the death of a friend, shares solidarity through this bread. The one who is surrounded by the saints in high heaven, offers consolation 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.*

### Prayer

Holy One, by the bread of heaven and the cup of life, you make us one body. Bind us together by your spirit that we might live into your hopes for us, a community centered in Christ and rich in compassion, commitment, courage, and care. We are bold to pray as Jesus taught, singing...

- ***Our Father in heaven*** (*The Lord's Prayer – no repeats*)      **469**
- ***Here, O my Lord, I see thee*** (*verses 4-7*)      **543**

### Blessing (adapted from *A Black Rock Prayer Book*)

The world now is too dangerous and too beautiful for anything but love.

**May our eyes be so blessed we see God in everyone. Our ears, so we hear the cry of the poor.**

May our hands be so blessed that everything we touch is a sacrament. Our lips, so we speak nothing but the truth with love.

**May our feet be so blessed we run to those who need us. And may our hearts be so opened, so set on fire, that our love, our love, changes everything.**

May the blessing of the God who created you, loves you, and sustains you, be with you now and always.

- ***Sing amen / Asithi***      **264**