

## **Knox Presbyterian Church Service**

August 17 2025

Interim Minister: The Rev. Daniel Martinez

Minister: The Rev. Wes Denyer

Music: Carolyn Hoekstra

Elder: Lorraine Whiting

Reader: Marianne Mortimer

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### **Welcome/Announcements/Land Acknowledgement - Unison (Worship Elder)**

**As followers of Jesus, we are compelled to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with God. It is our love of God and neighbour that leads us to acknowledge that we gather with gratitude on the traditional and unceded Coast Salish Territory of Lkwungen people. We pray that past and present injustices can be reconciled as we commit ourselves again to just and respectful relationships.**

### **Come, now is the time for worship**

#### Call to Worship - Responsive

Let us worship the eternal God,

**the source of all love and life.**

Let us worship Jesus Christ,

**the risen one who dwells among us.**

### **626 - Lord of all power**

#### Gathering Prayer

God of majesty and mystery, You call us together in your presence, in order that we might praise you for your great love and mercy, revealed in Christ. In the power of your Spirit we seek to renew our faith and commitment to serve you in this world that you love. Yet we confess that, all too often, we fail to live up to your hopes for us. Instead of love and kindness, we produce anger and resentment. Instead of generosity, we produce greed and jealousy. Forgive us, O God, through the grace of Christ, our Lord. Amen.

#### Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news! Although we have not always been faithful to God, God remains faithful to us. In Jesus Christ, God offers us forgiveness. Thanks be to God! Amen!

#### The Lord's Prayer - Unison

**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**

## 648 - I'm gonna live so God can use me

### □ Prayer for Understanding - Unison (Worship Reader)

**Spirit of God, open our minds and hearts to receive God's wisdom in the Scriptures. Show us how to live out that wisdom today and tomorrow, as we follow Jesus, who is for us God's Living Word. Amen.**

#### Scripture

#### Genesis 1:26-27 (OT 1)

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make humans<sup>[a]</sup> in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth<sup>[b]</sup> and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."

<sup>27</sup> So God created humans<sup>[c]</sup> in his image, in the image of God he created them;<sup>[d]</sup> male and female he created them.

#### Psalm 8:1-9 (OT 492)

O LORD, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

<sup>2</sup> Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,  
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

<sup>3</sup> When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;

<sup>4</sup> what are humans that you are mindful of them,  
mortals<sup>[a]</sup> that you care for them?

<sup>5</sup> Yet you have made them a little lower than God<sup>[b]</sup>  
and crowned them with glory and honor.

<sup>6</sup> You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet,

<sup>7</sup> all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,

<sup>8</sup> the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

<sup>9</sup> O LORD, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

#### Matthew 5:33-37 (NT 5)

<sup>33</sup> "Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' <sup>34</sup> But I say to you: Do not swear at all,

either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, <sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one.<sup>[a]</sup>

**Response:**

This is the word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God!**

Sermon: God's Masterpiece

It's always good in life to have something to look forward to. I have made it a habit over the years, when I'm planning to visit someone who doesn't get out much – in a nursing home or in a retirement community, or just living at home but not able to get around very well anymore – I've made it my habit to plan those visits several days in advance.

I won't just drop by the nursing home. I won't just call in the morning and say, "Well, I'm thinking of dropping by this afternoon."

I'll usually call several days in advance to make an appointment to see the person. I do this because, then you see, the person whose life is rather confined and limited can look forward to my upcoming visit for a few days. And I think it multiplies the value of my visit. And it's possible there is time, the anticipation of my visit may be more enjoyable than the visit itself.

And also, it lets them know ... *I think they're important!*

I didn't just drop by because I had a spare moment with nothing else to do. I have planned and chosen to see them.

Because I have seen the opposite ...

I saw it when I was at my first church in Kirkland Lake. In the regional hospital there was a floor for those who had chronic illnesses. I visited with those people many times. It seemed like some of them had become "throw away" to their families.

I visited that particular hospital ward for four years.

Some had strokes, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, dementia. They were trying to learn to walk again or to learn how to cope with diseases that were progressively debilitating. Some of them were strapped into wheelchairs for hours at a time.

Now, a few of them had regular visitors, but many of them went for weeks and months with nobody coming to see them. Some had no visitors at all.

But they would tell me about their children and their grandchildren.

I was visiting there one day, when an orderly said to one of the long-time residents – a man – he said, "I just saw your daughter downstairs visiting a friend. I'm sure she'll be up here in a few minutes."

Oh ... he was excited – *wanted me to stay and meet his daughter!*

We waited ... and we waited ... and we waited

She never came ... her own Dad ... a throw away – a sick old man – had a stroke – drooled a little at the corner of his mouth ... *she never came* – “**Throw him away!**”

Today, I want to talk to you about the value of a person's life. Probably you're already ahead of me, because you know as well as I do - the value of a person's life is never based on some of the things we think are so important.

Like education ...

Now, of course, education is important. My parents, raising us kids in the late 40's and 50's believed in education. We lived in a working class neighbourhood. Not too many people of my parent's generation in that community had a university education – my parents didn't - but they always assumed that their children would get one. It was drilled into our heads from childhood. Many of the other children in the neighbourhood never did much more than finish High School, but for my parents – all of their kids – me and my brothers and sisters – we all went on beyond High School.

Yes, I believe in getting a good education ... but that's not what gives a person value.

I remember when I was working my way through Knox College – working on my Master of Divinity degree. In order to have the money to go to school, during the summer I worked in a warehouse. On a lot of those hot summer days, I'd be inside a long tractor trailer loading heavy boxes.

One day I'd be loading up a truck to go out, and then another day I'd be unloading a truck that had just come in.

I worked beside a fellow – a new immigrant from some African country. He was hired at the same time as me. We did the same job – slogging boxes and cargo in and out of trucks. We were hired at the same time to cover off people who were going on summer vacation. We put in the same hours.

At the end of the second week, we received our first paycheques. We were both really pleased to get the money.

I was proud of mine, and he was proud of his. We looked at each other's cheques. His check was \$40.00 less than mine.

He looked at me kind of puzzled and in heavily accented English, he said, “Why did you get paid more than me?”

I said, “Well, it's probably just a clerical error. Let's go up to the office.”

Naively we went up to the office, and I spoke up saying, “Something's funny here. These cheques aren't the same, and we worked the same. I think he's been shorted on his check.”

Well, there was some growling around and going into the back room, and then they came out with a new check for him that was the same as mine.

Later on, our supervisor spoke privately to me. He said, “They didn’t think he could read English. He can’t speak too well. I think the owner thought he could get away with paying him less money.” *Hmphh* ... you mean they treated people on the basis of whether they thought someone was so stupid, or unsophisticated, or “so newly off the boat” they thought they could get away with it!

The smart white kid gets a full paycheque, but the newly arrived black immigrant with poor English skills gets less money. **That’s appalling!** The value of a person is not that ...

Nor is it based on your financial condition.

A person can be standing in line for a few groceries at the Foodbank, or as rich as Bill Gates or Elon Musk – that does not add to, or take away, from a person’s value. We are all infinitely treasured in the eyes of God.

It’s extremely important to think about the value of the other person *all the time*. But I think a very good beginning point is to hold a proper view of ourselves.

A good healthy attitude towards other people, I think, begins – or at least has, as an important ingredient – a healthy regard for oneself.

Now, I know, you are, just like I am, repulsed by the big ego – the swaggering and the strutting of the egotistical person. Nobody likes to be around someone like that.

But that doesn’t mean the rest of us have to crawl off in a corner and say, “Well, I’m just nobody” and call it *humility*. **That’s not it!**

Sometimes churches make us feel that way about ourselves. We want to be *humble* – **of course we do!**

We don’t want to be egotistical, arrogant and proud ... **of course not!**

But in the process there may be a loss of adequate self esteem, *and that’s a mistake* ...

Here’s a boy that gets an “A” in arithmetic. He goes down the street with his report card saying, “I made an A in arithmetic. I think that teacher doesn’t give many A’s but I made an “A.” Look at that! You want to see my Report Card? I made an “A!” She doesn’t give many A’s. I’ve probably got the only A in the school. That’s an A in arithmetic.”

Bragging about that A. That’s a very healthy thing.

**Now** ... *What happens to him?*

A few years later, he’s up in front of a Service Club receiving an award. He’s handed the award ... and he stands up there looking at his feet and says, “Well I don’t really deserve this award. I want to thank my grandparents who came across from Scotland by boat to Canada. I want to thank my Uncle Charles who was good to me when I was a boy. I want to thank the 93 members of my committee, and as I call off their names I want them all to stand because **they** really did the work ...”

*What’s going on with this guy?*

Why doesn't he just stand there and say, "***This plaque ought to be solid gold the way I worked on this project!***"

Somebody's told him "You have to be humble," and instead of being humble he is *self-effacing* – putting himself down!

There's no value in that!

Today we read from the Sermon on the Mount. It says there, "You don't need to swear by anything to affirm your word ... 'Let your yes be yes ... let your no be no ...'"

Now you may think that's a strange passage to be reading in connection with this subject ... *but think about it for a moment.*

When we swear by something, we're calling in something greater than ourselves to support our word. Why would we want to call in something else? - Heaven or earth, or this or that, to support our word ...

- "On my mother's grave!
- I'm telling the truth!"
- "As God is my witness!"

*Why would anybody talk that way?*

It seems we're operating on the assumption that we're liars! - *that you recognize I'm a liar*, and therefore I have to immediately begin to support my word.

What does that assume? It assumes that by saying something, or making a commitment, **I am not telling the truth.**

So ... I put all this "**scaffolding**" around it, called **swearing to the truth.**

Jesus says, "let your "yes" be "**yes.**" Let your "no" be "**no.**" That's all you need.

**Why?**

Because you ought to accept yourself as a centre of value, decision and power: "I am somebody, and my word is my bond. My word is of value. Ask anybody who knows me, "If he says it ... **that's it!**" If she promises it ... if you shake hands on it. **It's a done deal!**

The most valuable thing in the world - to be a person of character - to respect yourself ... and regard yourself *in that way.*

To move among our friends – to move around at work and within our families – with a low opinion of ourselves. almost invariably ends up with us having a low opinion of other people, because if I feel myself to be lacking in virtue or value ... **I want to cut the others down.**

And how do we do it? Well ... a lot of times ... we have this talk ... "*I'm only human.*" After all, "I'm only human."

**I hate that ... don't you?**

“I’m only human ...” *When do we say that?*

A woman bakes these fantastic cakes, decorates them beautifully, brings them to church dinners and family reunions, but for some reason ... *one of her cakes flops*. And what does she say, “I’m only human.”

Well, what was she when the cake came out perfectly and looked like the kind of cake made by a professional chef? When it came out perfectly. **Wasn’t she human then?**

**Of course she was!** *Why do we say it only after the failure?*

The shortstop makes the play – catches the ball, throws to second and then on to first – double play. They do that 50 times without a single error ... and then one day makes a mistake – misses the throw to second base, and says what? ... *“I’m only human ...”*

Why do we say that when we’ve made a mistake?

**What was he when he was doing it perfectly for the last 49 times?** ... *“He was human ...”*

And to be human is to be *God’s masterpiece*. When God looks out at the hills and the rivers and the mountains, and the sunset on the lake, and the beautiful coral reefs – God says, “That’s good.”

But then God says, “Let us make human beings in our own image – male and female God made them.

And when God made you, God says, *“This is the best I can do! This is in my own image!”*

I don’t think it’s really the thing to do, for you to look upon yourself then and say, when you make a mistake, “I’m only human ...”

*Here’s what I think ...*

When you sing before a group, people tell you, “That was wonderful !” Say, “Well, after all, I’m human!”

When you create a beautiful painting, or a beautiful quilt, or use your carpentry skills to construct a magnificent cabinet – when you pull off the best deal you’ve made this year, or see your son or daughter using the skills and abilities you taught them ... and somebody compliments you, then say, ***Well after all, I’m human.***

It could be ... *it could be* ... it will change the way people think about themselves and each other. *Just give it a try ...*

But sometimes you know, we have to be reminded, because it’s so popular to run ourselves down. We have to be reminded of who we are and what our value is.

Another time, another community, I was asked by a friend – he knew I was a minister and did these sort of things – he asked me if I would go and visit with a woman – Mrs. Anderson. My friend used to be a neighbour of Mrs. Anderson, but when she had grown a little feeble, her family had taken her out of her house – sold the home – and moved her to one of these

beautiful new retirement homes.

I went to see Mrs. Anderson. She was living in this amazing place. It looked like an expensive hotel. There were areas on the grounds with little gazebos. There was a fountain. There were perfectly manicured gardens with hundreds of blossoming flowers.

When I walked in there was a large open lobby. It was well lit – lots of windows, a beautiful library off to one side with comfortable looking wing chairs.

Outside there was a large visitor's parking lot. Beautiful white slanted lines – room for fifty or sixty cars. A big sign said, "Parking for Visitors."

And as I looked back out at the parking lot from the well appointed lobby ... I could see my lonely car sitting in that spacious parking lot – mine was the only car there ...

I went down the hall. Found Mrs. Anderson's room ... "Well, Mrs. Anderson," I joked, "what are you in for?"

She said, "I'm in here for ***talking*** to myself ..."

Now, you have to know, I discovered Mrs. Anderson had belonged to a large church – two or three ministers on staff. Over the course of 40 years in this church, she'd attended the Women's group, she'd cooked meals for breakfasts and anniversary dinners and for the homeless. She'd been a Sunday School teacher, and watched the babies and toddlers in the nursery. She had done ***everything*** around the church!

But now *out of sight* – this nursing home was about 30 miles away from her old neighbourhood – out of sight ... out of mind.

Now, can I just pause and say something to you, "If you think just now – if you think of somebody – in your family or in this church, an old friend or neighbour – out of sight ... out of mind – living shut away from the rest of the world – in a nursing home, not very mobile, lonely. If you can think of somebody like that, drop whatever you were planning on doing this afternoon – watching some television, cleaning the house, taking a nap, going to a concert – just forget about that, and take a little time ... go – go see them.

Go visit with that *precious child of God* ... for as the Psalm from today reminds us, "what are human beings, O God, that you are mindful of them ... mortals that you care for them?"

"You have made us only a little lower than you ... and crowned us with glory and honour."

*God's masterpiece ...you and I ... all of us ... we're God's masterpiece ...*

### ***706 - Come let us sing***

#### Invitation to the Offering

Thankful for the good gifts God gives us in Christ and in creation, let us present to God the fruit of our labour for God's work in the church and the world.

### ***306 - Praise God from whom all blessings flow***

□ **Prayer of Dedication - Unison**

**Faithful God, bless the gifts we offer to you today. Use them to plant seeds of faith, hope and love in the world, so that your goodness will grow among your people, and your name be honoured for Christ's sake. Amen.**

□ **Pastoral Prayers**

God in whom we live and move and have our being: As we gather in your presence today, we give you thanks for your faithfulness to your people across many generations and in so many situations. Thank you for the faithfulness we experience in the world around us, In friendships that endure, In communities that pitch in when someone is in trouble, In workers who go that extra mile, In countries who offer safety or sustenance when disaster strikes and strangers are in desperate need.

Compassionate God, we are aware of many challenges in our own lives, in the lives of those we care about, and in the world around us. Show us how our care and concern can respond to the prayers of those we love. We pray, also, for those who have been in the headlines lately, whose situations concern us deeply, whose lives cry out to you for help.

We pray for those who are suffering behind the scenes in our community: those who are ill or waiting on treatment; those who are bereaved; those struggling to make ends meet or find the right job; those who are lonely, those who are moving this summer & will need new friends...

We pray for those looking forward to a new beginning this coming Fall: those starting at a new school or in a new college or university program; those beginning new work or new activities; those settling into a new home and neighbourhood; those welcoming new members into the family through birth, adoption or marriage...

We pray for our congregation. Gather us into new and renewed friendships. Show us how to reach out with your love and generosity. Equip us to meet every challenge we face with faithfulness and commitment, through Christ our Lord. Amen

***635 - Brother, sister, let me serve you***

**Blessing**

May we go into the world with courage and insight so that in the power of the Risen Christ, we may nurture and foster our communities to become places of justice for all. And now may the love and peace of God, Creator, Redeemer and Friend, be with you all, this day and always. Amen.

**622 - Go now in peace**