

Worship at home

“Praying along the way Jesus sends us”

August 30, 2020

**Call to worship:**

Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name.  
Seek the LORD and his strength.  
Remember the wonderful works he has done.  
Let us worship God.

**Opening prayers<sup>1</sup>:**

Eternal and ever-loving God,  
Deep is our desire for what is true and enduring.  
Deep is our need to see clearly.  
Deep is our longing for you, O God.  
In you we live and move and have our being.  
You are the root of love,  
the fountain of knowledge,  
the source of wisdom,  
the path of right living.  
You are the beginning and end of all things.  
Our thoughts cannot comprehend your mystery  
And so we worship you in humble praise,  
Holy God, ever three and ever one.

Although you satisfy our deepest desires, O God,  
we confess together that we have often turned away from you:

We have sought meaning in shallow places.  
We have clung to old hurts and familiar habits.  
We have nursed anger and envy.  
We have been self-absorbed and lacked compassion.  
We have turned our backs on those in need.  
Forgive what we have been, amend who we are,  
and guide us toward what we may become according to your grace.

**Assurance:**

The Lord is mindful of his covenant forever.  
In the fullness of time he sent the Son whom he appointed heir of all things.  
When he had made purification for sins,  
he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.  
There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.  
In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Accept God’s pardon. And be at peace.

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<sup>1</sup> worship resource for August 30, 2020 from [Presbyterian.ca/worship](http://Presbyterian.ca/worship)

**Hymn #442** “Speak, Lord, in the stillness”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EDOfNd6NWH4>

**Scripture and sermon:**

Our final psalm in the series “Praying along the way Jesus sends us” is Psalm 105. This is a hymn of thanksgiving and praise. After calling the community to worship and proclaiming the faithfulness of the living God, the psalm recounts in 6 stanzas God’s saving actions in Israel’s history.

READ PSALM 105.

The opening call to worship teaches us in 7 verbs what type of activities constitute proper devotion to our Lord: *Give thanks* to the Lord. *Call* on his name. *Make known* his deeds. *Sing*. *Glory* in his holy name. *Seek* the Lord. *Remember* the wonderful works he has done.

Verse 6 then identifies to whom these directions apply; namely, the community formed by God’s covenant of which Christians are adopted members by the grace and ministry of Jesus Christ.

Verses 7-11 describe the characteristics of the God who is the object of Israel’s and our devotion.

And then verses 12 - 45 recount God’s saving actions in Israel’s history:

Abraham in Canaan.

Joseph in Egypt.

Israel in Egypt.

Moses and the Exodus.

Israel in the wilderness.

And, finally, Israel’s return to Canaan.

That God led them back to Canaan after their sojourn in Egypt is of profound importance to the story of not just Israel’s faith, but of the Christian faith as well. It reminds us of God’s faithfulness to the covenant and to his people. It provides a type upon which the early church understood Jesus’ ministry on the cross and in his resurrection.

The Old Testament book of Joshua tells the story of how the Conquest of Canaan. And while we ought to remember that the ancient historians would often employ hyperbole in telling their stories, the message is clear: The God who created heaven and earth entered a covenant with Israel, part of which being that God would settle Israel on its own land. Israel, in turn,

would shape their laws, politics and religious observances according to the will of God set forth in Torah and thus become the physical manifestation of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

As Psalm 105 retells, God was faithful to the covenant.

After centuries of slavery and decades of wandering around the desert, they've now been given a land complete with houses, vineyards, orchards, wells, and markets. God remembered his holy promise and Abraham, his servant. Let all the offspring of Abraham and the children of Jacob praise the Lord!

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Timothy Keller has described the psalms as the God-ordained way to learn devotion. Praying the psalms teaches us how to pray along the way Jesus sends us.

Sometimes to do so requires that we wrestle with things we don't understand. Sometimes with things we don't like. Sometimes it requires that we accept that the ways we wish God to be and act are not always true to the ways God actually reveals himself to be in his Word.

As I was praying with Psalm 105 this week, I became stuck on verse 44: "He gave them the lands of the nations, and they took possession of the wealth of the peoples." This verse summarizes the so-called Conquest of Canaan and proclaims the fulfillment of God's faithfulness to the covenant.

It behooves us to be cognizant of the fact that for every story told within a community, there are other perspectives left unrecognized. While the settlers tell a story of victory, prosperity, and divine blessing, what is the story told by the people who were already living in that territory? Those same houses, vineyards, orchards, wells, and markets were the ones that the Canaanite nations had spent generations building, cultivating, and protecting.

As I prayed this verse, I couldn't help but think of our own Canadian story and the effect of European colonization. Fueled by a mixture of church-supported empire building (after all, the spread of a Christian empire must indicate the spread of the Christian gospel), and empire-backed Christian mission (after all, if the church can convert the indigenous population, it will be easier to enforce the policies of the empire), Europeans settled in the land that came to be known as Canada. We took possession of the wealth of the forests and the oceans and the minerals underground. We tried to either convert or obliterate those who were already living here. Monumental harm has been done to generations of people and, nearly irreparable destruction inflicted on the indigenous natural resources.

By the same token, I give thanks to the Lord that many centuries ago he raised up missionaries to go to the non-Christian lands that became known as Scotland, England, and Ireland and tell of all the wonderful works our God has done in creating this world, providing daily bread, and redeeming us in Jesus who is the Messiah. Consequent to their efforts, much of the population became followers of Jesus (largely, we ought to note, at the expense of the indigenous beliefs), and eventually a type of Christianity emerged known as Presbyterianism. I was raised in this tradition and I sometimes wonder if I would be so blessed to know and follow Jesus were it not for the efforts of those missionaries.

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It might be a struggle to reconcile your image of God with a God who overthrows nations and gives their possessions to another. What we need to remember is that by retelling the stories of God's dealing with humanity, the psalms remind us that we pray to a particular God. When we pray the psalms, we pray to a God who is himself holy and desires his creation to share in that holiness. A God who intervenes in specific ways to save his people. We also need to remember that the stories of conquest which verse 44 summarizes deal with specific people groups in specific periods of history. The cultures of Canaan, while sophisticated in art, music, language, and commerce, were morally corrupt. Leviticus 18 is a response to some of those practices. Furthermore, there were multiple religious traditions. Deuteronomy 12 describes some of the rituals their gods required. Some went so far as to include child sacrifice. These are not the customs Yahweh wants for his creation.

So, into the midst of Canaan, God settled Israel who, if they continued to live in obedience to his will revealed in Torah, would manifest and reveal for others a better way and a better God.

Perhaps that "if" is a key to unlocking the resolution of this struggle.

We know that Israel's story continued beyond the Conquest of Canaan. As they grew comfortable in their new home, they became lax in regards the Lord's statutes and laws. The day came when they no longer revealed the ways of the holy and living God and they too lost their land in the Exile.

So, into the midst of a world tarnished by sin God sent his son. Jesus lived in perfect obedience to the Father and consequently manifested, and revealed for whoever would accept and see it with the eyes of faith, the way of the kingdom of heaven on earth.

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Jesus calls his church to carry out his work in our present age. Jesus sends us in the power of the Holy Spirit, in obedience to the Word of God, to make the presence of God and the ways of the Kingdom of Heaven known to family, friends, co-workers, and people in the grocery store.

The challenge to doing so is that we are living in the age in which, though the kingdom of God has been realized in Jesus, it has yet to be fully realized throughout the earth. Pride, greed, lust, bitterness, and all the various expressions of sin too eagerly vie for control of our thoughts and distort our subsequent actions.

Our task must begin in the privacy of our own hearts and minds. When our souls are grounded in God-ordained devotion, when we are whole-heartedly resting on his holy name, when we are seeking the Lord's presence every step of the way, then the actions we take are much more likely to reveal the presence and kingdom of the Living God as we walk along our way.

The psalms can help so center us.

Praying the psalms shapes how we understand God: as we wrestle with who God reveals himself to be, not as we wish him to be.

Praying the psalms shapes how we relate to God: with thanksgiving and praise; with laments and song; with remembrances and obedience.

Praying the psalms shapes how we tell others about the wonderful works God has done in creation, in redemption, and in providing for us in our daily living.

May God – the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – be always glorified in our prayers and in our actions. Amen.

**Prayers of thanksgiving and intercession:**

O God in whom we live and move and have our being  
We come to you in prayer as the summer season draws nearer to its close  
And we prepare for an autumn filled with many changes:

We give you thanks for the occasions we have enjoyed this summer.  
savouring the beauty of your creation right outside our doors,  
Thank you for the chances we've had catch up with family and friends,  
and whatever opportunities for travel, recreation & restoration have been possible. We  
recognize how blessed we are to live in Canada  
and so we are grateful for each moment in which we found rest and relaxation in the  
summer season.

Today we remember those for whom this summer has been difficult:  
Those still isolated by the restrictions because of COVID-19;  
Those who go hungry or face violence in forgotten corners of our own community and  
around the world;  
Those whose businesses are struggling, who have to figure out how to be inviting and  
safe at the same time;  
And those who are uncertain how to engage with friends and neighbours and still be wise  
and careful in this strange time of pandemic  
*(Keep silence for 10 seconds)*

May each one find courage to face tomorrow in your company

O God, Jesus walked the road of suffering with so many in pain and grief  
We remember those whose lives have faced crises this summer—  
Through tragic death and unexpected loss,  
Through critical illness or injury,  
Through pain or problems that seem to have no end...  
*(Keep silence for 10 seconds)*

Surround them with your comfort and compassion

O God, Jesus often faced many demands and the pressure from his critics,  
So we pray for all those who have not found rest this summer:  
For leaders trying to figure out ways forward to care for their communities when there  
are no examples to follow;  
For those whose jobs and responsibilities have changed, and every day presents a new  
challenge;  
And we also remember those all who seek work in these uncertain economic times  
*(Keep silence for 10 seconds)*

May they know your strength and assurance day by day

O God, we need the embrace of your presence, each in our own way.

Bring healing and peace to our lives and to this world you love.  
Open our eyes and our hearts so that we may offer healing and peace  
to those we encounter, in the name of Christ Jesus who taught us to pray together...

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**Hymn #777** "Send me, Lord"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eik2HK7u9xA>

### **Benediction:**

The LORD bless you and keep you;  
the LORD make his face to shine upon you, and be gracious to you;  
the LORD lift up his countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.  
Amen.