

Worship at home June 13, 2021



<https://journeycommunitychurch.com/series-2012-eat-this-book/>

God calls us to worship:

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.¹

Let us worship God.

We bring our praise and confessions:

Holy and Triune God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
Your Word goes out from your mouth,
guided by your Spirit,
and nurtures tiny seeds of faith, and purpose.
In the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus,
you surprise us with new life.
By the grace of the heavenly Father,
you adopt us and give us new family, new community.
So today we bring our prayers and praise,
trusting that as we seek to live your Word,
in reliance on you, Holy Spirit,
you will bring us the gifts we need
to serve you in faithfulness.

¹ Isaiah 55:10-11.

Merciful God,
Although Christ is among us as our peace,
we are a people divided against ourselves
as we cling to the values of a broken world.

The profit and pleasures we pursue
lay waste the land and pollute the seas.
The fears and jealousies that we harbour
set neighbour against neighbour
and nation against nation.

We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom,
intellect and reason.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Heal us, forgive us, and set us free
to serve you in the world
as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Hymn: #495 “The heavens declare your glory, Lord”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-ip19gFPrE>
(Metropolitan Tabernacle, London)

God assures us of his forgiveness:

Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn us? Only Christ—and Christ died for us; Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven and set free by God’s generous grace! Rejoice in God’s good gift.

**In response to the gospel,
we confess our faith and offer our lives and resources:**

Please remember to prayerfully make your offerings to the congregation of which you are most associated. If you’re a member/adherent of Knox-Moore or St. Andrew’s, Mooretown, please send your offering to Howard McKellar or Judy Armstrong.

God speaks to us through his Word:

No Empty Words: Meditating

The theme for this series of sermons is: Living the Word of God in Reliance on the Holy Spirit. Our focusing text is what we read for our Call to Worship, Isaiah 55:10-11. Through the prophet Isaiah, the LORD God promised that, just as the rain doesn't evaporate until it's had time to penetrate the earth and water the seeds, His words will fulfill that which He purposes. Which is salvation in the full vastness of that term. God's Words will penetrate, nourish, and transform our souls for our good, the good of the nations, and the glory of God.

Last week we considered *hearing* the Word of God. Approaching the act of reading the Bible, or of listening to it being read, as a Sacred Moment in which God reveals himself in the text and we receive His revelation with Holy Curiosity through Attentive Listening.

In this sermon, we'll explore what happens next.

READ REVELATION 10:1-11.

READ PSALM 119:97-103.

1. John – not necessarily the same John who wrote the Gospel or the letters – was living on the island of Patmos in the Aegean Sea off the coast of what we now call Turkey. The widely held tradition is that John had been exiled to Patmos by the Roman government as a penalty for his testimony to the resurrected Son of God named Jesus. While on the island, John was in worship on the Lord's Day when he heard a voice commanding him to write down the vision he was about to receive. The book of Revelation is the account of that vision.

In the vision he saw an angel. This angel had one foot in the sea and another on the land. His voice was such that the very forces of the cosmos thundered in response. The angel was the messenger of the One who alone has authority over all of creation. The messenger of the Creator who spoke the land, sea, and air into being. The messenger of Jesus who is the crucified, resurrected, and ascended Christ.

In the angel's hand was a scroll.

Scrolls appear several times in John's vision. The scroll is the medium for the transmission of God's plan of judgment and redemption. On the scroll is written the Eternal Creator's plan for salvation.

John heard the voice from heaven telling him to take the scroll out of the angel's hand and eat it.

Not to merely peruse the chapter headings. Not to merely glance at the words and forget them.

Take it, and eat.

Take it in hand, chew it, swallow it, digest it.

John was instructed to allow the text written on the scroll to come alive within him and become part of his soul the way food becomes part of us.

2. What do you do when you hear something important on the news?

You commit it to memory. You re-read it, re-listen to it. You remember the highlights. Throughout the day, you think about it. You talk to people about it. You digest it and work out in your mind what are the implications for you and others.

This is *meditation*.

Meditation is the process by which we commit the Word of God to memory and puzzle over it until it becomes part of our very beings. Until we think, speak, and act in ways consistent with the Word.

“Meditation” is often used in very different ways. When the word ‘meditation’ is spoken, perhaps you think of candles and soft music, sitting cross-legged on a rock looking out over a lake, or humming a mantra, or practicing deep breathing. I don't intend to minimize those practices; they are very beneficial for our hearts and souls. And, they can be used together with what we're talking about now. But they are not *meditation* according to our rule of faith and life, the Bible.

Meditation is the process of slowly and quietly reading the Bible out loud to yourself, committing the words to memory, talking about it

with others, and making the connections that help you discover what it means.

In fact, there are a couple of Hebrew words which get translated “meditation” when a more direct translation would be to mumble, or mutter, or repeat over and over again in low tones.

When I was in seminary, we never had to memorize Psalms or prayers. I once had a conversation with a fellow student in which they assured me that we didn’t have to use up mental energy in such pursuits because everything we needed was easily accessible. We just had to know where to look!

The ancients would have none of that!

What we have in Scripture is too important to keep outside of ourselves.

This is news that is important enough to remember and to live and change accordingly.

The way the ancients learned and lived God’s Word was through meditation.

3. God teaches us how to read and thus live God’s word. And, He promises that in following the example of the ancient faithful, we too will discover profound joy.

*Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all day long. On it I **mumble** throughout my daily busyness.²*

I stand to be corrected, but I have yet to come across any part of Scripture in which God said: “I want you to read the entirety of my revelation once every year.” Nor, “You must read all 150 psalms every month.” If you do, wonderful! And, if you do, I’m sure you will be richly rewarded. I’m sure that over time you will learn a great deal and your faith will be greatly enriched. However, what God does say, is that God has given us His revelation. Treat it with care. Come back to it every day, but not necessarily with

² Psalm 119:97 with Rev. Ian’s addition.

the goal of getting through a set number of verses. That would be akin to sitting down at every meal, every day, and eating until you're stuffed! It doesn't help anyone!

Instead, God teaches us to *receive* His Word, bite off what we can reasonably manage, and chew on it. Memorize, think about, talk about. Every day bite off a morsel. Maybe it's an entire book or letter, maybe it's one verse.

Every day for the rest of your life, bite off a manageably morsel, and chew on it. Meditate on it. Memorize it. Think on it. Talk about it.

Just before we end this sermon, there is a word of warning.

You see, Living the Word of God in Reliance on the Holy Spirit is not all about one's self. It's not about getting the best life for me now – although, in so doing, God does richly bless our present lives if we have the eyes of faith to see the blessings. It's about God and God's plan to set the world right. A plan he's executing through Jesus of Nazareth and the church that lives his Word in reliance on the Holy Spirit.

This means, that, after encountering the Holy Other in the Sacred Moment of receiving His Word, we will find comfort and encouragement. But it might not always be a warm and fuzzy feeling:

I took the little scroll from the hand of the angel and ate it; it was sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach was made bitter.³

I love honey. But, several years ago, I discovered after eating certain kinds of honey, my stomach would cramp up. It took me awhile, but eventually I learned that even though I loved the sweetness in my mouth, it was not good for the rest of my digestive system! It was sweet in my mouth, but oh so bitter in my stomach! I had to change my eating habits accordingly.

We are not God.

We did not create heaven nor earth, nor what is therein.

We do not live forever and ever.

³ Revelation 10:10.

We are not the way to the truth that is life.

Nevertheless, the One who *is* has given to us his revelation which has been passed on in story, written down, translated, studied, preserved, and is now available in the western world in any packaging imaginable.

When we are willing to sit and hear God's Word, he will reveal to us things about ourselves, our societies, our lives that we don't want to hear. He will reveal to us things that we need to change in order to fully live the salvation life. The Holy Spirit-infused life.

4. Living the Word of God in Reliance on the Holy Spirit involves receiving God's Word, and meditating thereon. Reading (or listening to it being read) slowly. Carefully. Committing it to memory. Talking about it with friends. Accepting the comfort and encouragement He offers as well as the calls for change, for repentance, for obedience with gratitude acknowledging that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who we encounter as the one creating, redeeming, and sustaining God is working to fulfill the mystery of salvation of his good earth and his good people in his good time, and for his glory.

And, because our relationship with the Triune God is personal, Living the Word of God is a dialogue. Receiving and meditating on His Word invites response from us. So, we respond in prayer and service. And that is where we'll go in two weeks when I return.

Amen.

Hymn: #651 "Guide me, O thou great Redeemer"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5j48TLIRb4Q>

(Chet Valley Churches)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rq4q2N1pCoI>

(Mennonite Hour Singers)

We respond with prayer, faith, and service:⁴

Gracious God, you hold all things in your hands.

We may plant seeds, but it is your mysterious power that brings forth the plant. We do our small parts, but you bring growth and new life.

Thank you for our place in your purposes.

Guide our plans for ministry in the days ahead.

(Hold pause)

Come in your wisdom and plant seeds of your kingdom.

Watch over tender new life unfolding and bring it to maturity.

We pray for the troubled places of our world,
especially those countries and communities still struggling with COVID-19
and those marked by violence and injustice...

(Here, you can insert names of places in the world in the news this week before holding a pause)

We pray for the Muslim communities in London,
for the friends and families of those who were murdered this past week
and for the boy who was left orphaned.

(Silence)

Stir our hearts to do more than pray.

Transform our perspectives so that we, in our seemingly insignificant corners cease to contribute to the hatred unawares.

We pray for the Presbyterian Church in Canada as we begin to process the outcomes of this year's General Assembly.

We pray for all of those who have been and continue to be hurt by our policies – whether explicit or implicit. Whether in regards to sexuality, gender, or ethnicity.

We pray that we would have patience to wait and see what you will do in our midst and for the courage to trust in what we cannot see.

We pray for our community and province
as we rebuild common life and recover from the pandemic.

We pray for those seeking work or rebuilding businesses,
for those exhausted by months of service,
and those still suffering the effects of COVID-19.

(Hold pause)

We pray for those who feel empty or lonely,
who fear the future or mourn the past.

We pray for those who suffer pain or grief,
and for all whose lives have been on hold during these months of pandemic.

(Hold pause)

⁴ From worship resource for June 13, 2021 available at <https://presbyterian.ca/worship/>

Gracious God, you hold all things in your hand, including us.
Keep us open to your Spirit's leading.
In all that we do, help us embody the love of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who taught us to pray, saying:

The Lord's Prayer.

God sends us with His blessing:

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.

Amen.