

## Worship at home July 11, 2021



<https://www.ontbluecoast.com/listing/st-clair-river-trail/>

### **God calls us to worship:**

*As a deer longs for flowing streams,  
so my soul longs for you, O God.*

*My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.*

*When shall I come and behold the face of God?*

*By day the LORD commands his steadfast love,  
and at night his song is with me,  
a prayer to the God of my life.*

*Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?*

*Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God.<sup>1</sup>*

Let us worship God.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 42:1-2, 8, 11

**We bring our praise and confessions:**

Gracious God, source of life and love in all creation,  
in a world marked by bitterness, you are compassion.  
In a culture marked by confusion, you are light shining in the darkness.  
In a time of conspiracies and suspicion, you are the truth that sets us free.  
Your stillness is peace when we are frantic.  
Your strength is comfort when we are fearful.  
Your wisdom is guidance when we are lost.  
For all that you are and all that you give,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
ever three yet ever one,  
we offer you all honour, praise and worship, now and always. <sup>2</sup>

Merciful God,  
we confess that we have sinned against you  
in thought, word and deed.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart and mind and strength;  
we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves.  
In your mercy forgive what we have been,  
amend what we are,  
and direct what we shall be,  
so that we may delight in your will  
and walk in your ways,  
to the glory of your holy name.

**God assures us of his forgiveness:**

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

**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.*

**Hymn: #27 “As the deer pants for the water”**

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

**We seek the Holy Spirit’s help as we prepare to hear God’s Word:**

God of Word and Wisdom, as we hear the scriptures read and interpreted today,  
enlighten our minds, nurture our souls, embolden our hearts, and stir our minds, so that  
we may live out your Word in the world you love.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from worship resource for July 11, 2021 available at: <https://presbyterian.ca/worship>

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

## God speaks to us through his Word:

### What are you looking for?

This week we begin a new series of sermons which will take us through July and August.

My motivation for this series comes, in part, from my experience of this year's General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. As the four day meeting progressed, I began to reflect on the schisms which exist within this denomination. It occurred to me that while all sides were arguing their *opposing* cases everyone did so in the name of Jesus! Everyone was trying to honour Christ, yet we reached different – and indeed opposite – conclusions as to how to do so!

Which then begs the question:

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*Who is this Jesus whom we worship and try to follow?*

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That is the question John sought to address in his gospel. My hope is that, over the summer months, through the testimony of the Gospel of John, we will come to know Jesus a little more and thus think, make decisions, and act in ways that are more in line with the will of God.

To that end, let us now listen for the Word of God as it is preserved in the Gospel of John.

READ JOHN 1:35-46.

READ JOHN 14:1-6.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**1.** We've entered the story as Jesus was preparing to begin his public ministry and his disciples-to-be were gathering themselves around him.

A disciple is a student. They might have been students of a trade. Often, they would have been students of philosophers. A discipleship is more in line with an apprenticeship or mentorship than it is with our classroom model. The disciple would not only listen to their teacher's lessons, they would observe their life: what they eat, what they wear, how they pray, how they make decisions.

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*More than simply learning theory and technique, discipleship is a commitment to learn a particular way to live.*

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The disciple-teacher relationship depends on the disciple recognizing that something is missing from their way of living, and that the teacher can help them find it.

Andrew and the other unnamed person, recognized that in the ordinary way of living something was missing. And, like thirsty deer, were searching for the stream that would quench their thirst.

Initially they saw in John the Baptist a teacher who could point them to that stream.

As, indeed, he did.

When John saw Jesus approaching, he identified him as the Lamb of God.

And, his two disciples left to follow Jesus.

**2.** What happens next lays the foundation for this series of sermons.

*When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?'*

The very first words Jesus spoke in John's record of events were:

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*What are you looking for?*

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Remember: to be a disciple is to recognize that something in the ordinary way of living is missing, it is to recognize a thirst and to commit oneself to searching for the stream that will quench it.

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*What are you looking for?*

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Your own answer to that question may be as unique as you are. And, it might change according to your personal circumstances.

And, maybe you find it a difficult question to answer.

The disciples certainly did.

Sure, they responded with a very practical query: “Where are you staying?” however, often, in the gospel of John, there are multiple meanings to events. One meaning of this interchange is simply that they were wondering where Jesus was spending the night. It was after all, only 4:00 in the afternoon. The work-day was almost done and the evening was still young. There was plenty of time to visit and hear what this Jesus had to say.

However, another meaning is more profound.

They were looking for a Messiah.

I wonder if they knew what that meant.

I wonder if we know what that means.

They were looking for some fulfillment of Moses’ teachings and those of the prophets. They had some idea that one day life would be better. Governments would be less corrupt; goods would be more equitably shared, resources more sustainably managed, worship more invigorating, synagogue participation more enthusiastic, family life more peaceful, work life more purposeful. Surely that wouldn’t happen through the influence of a carpenter’s son from Nazareth!?!

I wonder how often we share Nathanael’s doubt. Can anything good for today’s context come out of a small town on the other side of the world 2,000 years ago? Can Jesus actually quench our 21<sup>st</sup> century thirst with all of the issues we face today?

The disciples know what they were looking for. They just knew they were looking for something.

They had a longing. A thirst.

And, if *their* teacher, whose ministry was to prepare people for the Messiah, if he saw in Jesus of Nazareth the fulfillment of the hopes and dreams of the nation, then maybe this Jesus was the rabbi who could tell them what they were looking for.?

So, not knowing how to truly answer his question, but also not wanting to miss an opportunity, they invited themselves over to Jesus' boarding room for coffee and more conversation.

**3.** When we encounter Jesus, we don't encounter a philosopher who's interested solely in academic conversations with eager and idealistic students. (As common as they were when Jesus was about. And as common as they are today – just look at the plethora of books and blogs promising to enlighten you on the way to parent, the way to save the planet, the way to eat, the way to make love, the way to exercise, and more!)

That's not who Jesus is.

When we encounter Jesus, we don't encounter theories or philosophies, or systems, or strategies, we encounter a man on The Way.

On the way to humanity. On the way to healing. On the way to the cross. On the way to the empty tomb. On the way to salvation.

Jesus wasn't about to give the disciples a quick answer. No GPS coordinates nor a link to a Google map.

He wasn't going to invite them to come and see how his motel room was furnished.

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*He was inviting them to come with him and encounter the source of life, the flowing stream that would quench their thirst, the house in which they could experience abundant life regardless of circumstances.*

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He invited them to join him on a journey.

“What are you looking for?”

“Where are you staying?”

“Come with me, and see for yourself.”

A 'way' is both a path and a method of walking on that path.

Jesus described the place in which he was staying and the place to which he was going as the many-roomed house of his Father. This image is often mistakenly interpreted as a description of the place to which we go when we die. That interpretation is understandable given that Jesus used this metaphor in the context of preparing his disciples for his own death. However, although the many-roomed house is, in some sense a metaphor for heaven, heaven is not a place to which we go when we die. Heaven is the reality of the presence of God which has come into our present reality in the localized person of Jesus and which will become the norm on this good, physical earth which God created and loves when Christ returns at the resurrection wedding feast of heaven and earth.

No, where Jesus was staying is the place to which he went after his resurrection, and the place from which he came. It is the place from which we too have our origin. And the place in which we can find true rest for our souls in this here-and-now life. It is in communion with the God who gives life in its fullest.

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*To say that Jesus is the Way, is to say that he is both the means of communion with the Father and the method of communion.*

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By Jesus' sacrificial life, ministry, and death on the cross, we have communion with our Father by our faith in his grace. And, in obedience to the way Jesus walked we have communion with our Father in the here-and-now.

4. This man named Jesus of Nazareth invites you to join him on a journey to the Father.

Belief involves acknowledgment, it means a living trust, and it also means obedience. It means Living the Word of God in reliance on the Holy Spirit. Discerning the mind of Christ by listening for His direction in the Scriptures.

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*So, let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in Jesus. He is the Way to the True Life. His is the Way of the Life that lightens the world.*

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So, come and see what this man Jesus is all about. Amen.

**Hymn: “Teach me thy way, oh Lord”**

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

**We respond with prayer, faith, and service:**

*Post Script:* In the announcements that were emailed on Thursday, I included verses of Scripture for each day of this week, beginning on Monday. Each of these passages guides the reader’s thoughts and prayers in identifying and expressing our longing to know God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I invite you to spend a few minutes each day, read the verses (or listen to someone reading them or a recording), commit all or part to memory, keep them in mind as you go about your daily business, pray your thoughts to God, and listen for how to live the Word in your daily realities. If you’re not on the announcement email list and would like to receive them, please contact Rev. Ian ([ian.moorepastoralcharge@gmail.com](mailto:ian.moorepastoralcharge@gmail.com) or 519-328-5905)



Let us pray:

Blessed are you, O God, for all your goodness to us.

In Christ, we meet your love and wisdom, face to face.

Through the Holy Spirit, we recognize the abilities and opportunities you create in us and for us, to reach out to the world you love.

We thank you for all the ways friends and families, neighbours and strangers, reach out to us and to others, offering support and kindness, speaking up when we must confront wrongdoing, celebrating when achievements bless us all with healing and happiness.

In the stillness of the moment, hear the silent prayers of each one of us as we pray for:

leaders in cities, countries and congregations,

for those who struggle to create justice where it has been compromised, and to build reconciliation and understanding in divided communities.

for church members and community volunteers, who work diligently towards long-term goals that will improve our life together.

for the troubled in mind or spirit,  
for the angry and unhappy,  
and for those who feel that every day is a struggle.

the sick and the dying,  
and the bereaved who must try to put their lives back together again.  
Draw close to all these who suffer,  
offering your comfort and courage to face whatever comes next.

Receive our prayers, both spoken and unspoken,  
and embrace us all in your love.  
Give us hearts to understand not only what you do on our behalf,  
but also what you call us to do on your behalf,  
for we are friends and followers of Jesus, who taught us to pray:

### **The Lord's Prayer<sup>4</sup>**

#### **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.

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<sup>4</sup> From worship resource for July 11, 2021 available at <https://presbyterian.ca/worship/>