

# Worship at home

## July 18, 2021

*Thanks to Hannah Marnoch and Doug White for providing music for this week*



<https://godtv.com/christ-alone-our-hope-joy-and-peace/>

### **God calls us to worship: Psalm 124:8**

#### **We bring our praise and confessions:**

God our Maker,  
in summer we easily marvel at the world you have made,  
the colours of sunrise and sunset filling the horizon,  
the intricate beauty of flower gardens and natural parks,  
the quiet dignity of a river in its course,  
and the steadfast presence of a rock face carved over time.  
You show us how each small piece of your creation  
depends in many ways on all the others.  
Summer growth depends on spring rains;  
health for each creature depends on the wise balance  
you have set between each species;  
the quality of life on the respect we show one another.  
Wise and patient God, we marvel at the world you love.  
Our worship joins the songs of all creation to bring you praise,  
honouring you and the relationships you have set between us all,  
through Christ, firstborn of all creation.<sup>1</sup>

And yet, 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.

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<sup>1</sup> From worship resources for July 18, 2021 available at: <https://presbyterian.ca/worship>

**God assures us of his forgiveness:**

In Christ, the fullness of God was pleased to dwell. God has made peace with us through the Cross of Jesus Christ. In Christ, all things hold together. Accept the peace of Christ and make peace with one another in his name.<sup>2</sup>

**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:** #505 "O Christ, the Word, incarnate"

**God speaks to us through his Word:**

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

## What are you looking for? Part 2

Last week we began a new series of sermons using the testimony of the Gospel of John to help us better understand the character and mission of Jesus of Nazareth. As we saw, in order to explore the questions: “Who is Jesus?” and, “Why is it worth our while to know him?” we also have to explore a more personal question: “What are you looking for?”

Inasmuch as last sermon and this sermon together form the introduction to this series, these questions are also foundational for today.

Starting next week, we’ll spend the rest of the series exploring what are known as Jesus’ “I am” statements which help us better hold in memory and imagination who Jesus is and how he does his ministry.

For now, let us listen for God’s Word to us as preserved in the text of Scripture. As we do so, let us pray:

*Move among us Holy Spirit, and prepare our hearts and minds to receive your Word. Silence in us any voice but your own, that hearing you, we may obey your will and follow your ways in the example of Jesus Christ, the Living Word. Amen.<sup>3</sup>*

READ GENESIS 1:1-3a.

READ JOHN 1:1-18.

READ JOHN 17:1-18.

### **1.** The Story opens with the memorable words:

*In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep ...*

Consider the images evoked by these words:

formless	– without shape, boundaries, purpose
void	- empty, vacuous
darkness	- absence of God, death
deep	- unknown, hence scary, depth of turbulent sea

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

These provide metaphors which describe a visionless, purposeless, anxious, fear-filled existence. An existence that is endured but not enjoyed. An existence that is not a life.

Until, over the visionless, purposeless, anxious, fear-filled existence, like a gentle wind blowing over the ocean, God swept.

Then God spoke.  
He uttered the timeless Word.  
And there was light.  
And there were boundaries and categories,  
beauty and security.

Earth and sea and sky.  
Birds and fish and land animals.  
And there were people.  
People with purpose.  
People to live in harmony with their Creator,  
to reflect the Creator's image,  
to create and to care for creation.  
God spoke the timeless Word;  
and there was life,  
and the life was the Light of all people,  
and it was very good.

When John wrote his Good News Story, he connected this thematic thread with the person and work of a man named Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee.

John recognized that an inherent longing of humankind is to experience life in a way that transcends our base needs of simply acquiring food and shelter. A way that is beautiful. A way that is peaceful. A way that is timeless. A way that has eternal qualities.

In his prayer to the Father, we learn from Jesus that this *eternal* life which is the light of all people, consists first of *knowing* God. Knowing the One who creates life itself.

You've likely realized that this isn't the same as knowing *about* God. Jesus was praying that we would know the Father in the close, relational way that he knows the Father *so that*, we then can share in the **joy** of the Son of God:

*I speak these things in the world so that they may have **my joy** made complete in themselves.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>4</sup> John 17:13

Eternal life. The Garden of Eden life. The Spirit-breathed, Father-spoken, Christ-given life. The life that enlightens all people is a life described by **joy**. The joy experienced by Jesus himself.

2. I don't know about you, but that's what I'm looking for.

I'm looking for the peace of mind and spirit that allows me to raise my kids so that they grow up knowing that God is a God who loves them. I'm looking for the assurance that reminds me that no matter what befalls my loved ones, even death doesn't get to control my thoughts. I'm looking for the type of life that is not constrained by the fears of this present age. I'm looking for the eternal life that enlightens the lives of all the people I meet. I'm looking for the **joy** of Christ made complete in me.

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*What we need to keep in mind that joy as described in God's Word, and as shown in Jesus' life, is not dictated by feelings.*

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We know that Jesus frequently *felt* overwhelmed, and sad, and angry, and frustrated. And yet, here, just hours before he was betrayed by one of his closest friends, arrested, and crucified, he prayed that his disciples would know the same joy he knew!

When we talk about joy in the context of the Christian life, in the context of eternal life, we need to qualify our thoughts.

At any given moment, when you're ill or injured, stressed or tired, worried or scared, you might not *feel* like clapping your hands and shouting "Hallelujah!" And we can get ourselves into danger, because when you don't *feel* these things that are often associated with joy in a more secular context, you might begin to think that maybe you're not the child of God you thought you were. Or, that maybe Jesus isn't the Son of God you thought he was. After all, isn't Jesus supposed to be the light that lightens the lives of his people? Aren't we supposed to be praising God and shouting Hallelujah!?

Feelings are the consequences of our circumstances. We can be exuberant one moment, and crushingly devastated the next depending on what comes our way.

Joy doesn't bend at the behest of the changing wind of circumstance.

**3.** Joy is the relief of knowing that neither sin, death, nor the devil; that neither our inner turmoil, illnesses, nor outer circumstances get to control our thoughts, speech, and action – no matter how much they try.

Because, by nature of his pre-existent unity with the Father, his coming to us in his incarnation, his confronting sin, death, and the devil for us and in our place on the cross, his forgiveness and defeat of the same on our behalf in his resurrection, his giving the Holy Spirit, and his promised return when heaven and earth are forever wed,

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*Jesus of Nazareth is the mediator who reconciles us with our Father  
whom to know is life eternal.*

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Joy is the relief of knowing that, despite how much our thoughts, circumstances, or world events try to convince us otherwise, the formless, vacuous, dark abyss does not get to control how we live; how we think or speak or do!

*The light shines in the darkness, **and the darkness did not overcome it.***

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*Joy is not dictated by feelings, nor is it dependent on  
circumstances. It's dependent on faith.*

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**4.** The daily task of the disciple, before we pursue any of our physical labours, is therefore to *receive* Jesus.

Joy is not something we can create. It's a gift given by the Father through the Son to all who receive him and believe in his name.

Our task is thus to *believe* that this man named Jesus of Nazareth has been united with the invisible yet Living God from the beginning, that he comes from God, and that he is the Messiah.

Our task is to *believe* that Jesus of Nazareth is able to mediate this joy that is the light of all people.

And, in believing that he is the Way to the True Life, in fellowship with our Maker, our task is then to *trust* the ways by which he is the Way.

This means *trusting* that when we give ourselves to worshipfully and prayerfully hearing, understanding, and obeying his Word, the Holy Spirit softens our hearts to receive more and more completely Christ's joy.

Thus sanctified, we can then engage with the world – regardless of what that looks like in our unique contexts – with gratitude, being assured that we belong to the One God who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Body, mind, and emotions. In life or in death.

*Because, this is eternal life, that you may know God and thus receive the joy of Christ, made complete in you.*

For the good of our souls, the health of the nations, and the glory of God. Amen.

**Hymn #652** “Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go”

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

*Post Script:* If you're not on the announcement email list and would like to receive the daily verses of Scripture for further reflection on this week's readings and sermon please contact Rev. Ian ([ian.moorepastoralcharge@gmail.com](mailto:ian.moorepastoralcharge@gmail.com) or 519-328-5905)

Let us give thanks to the Lord, for He is good;  
his steadfast love endures forever.

Let us pray.

Good and generous God,  
in Jesus Christ you came to us, promising life in abundance.  
We give you thanks today for the abundant gifts we receive in him—  
the assurance of your love day by day;  
the relief of your mercy when we recognize our own failings;  
the hope to sustain us when things seem bleak;  
and the peace that comes when we trust ourselves to your eternal keeping.  
These are the gifts that matter, O God,  
so, for all these gifts  
we give you thanks in these moments of silence:  
*(Keep silence for 15 seconds)*

Today we pray for all whose lives seem empty of joy—  
because the going is tough, and friends still seem far away...  
because their hearts are filled with disappointment...  
because their sorrow and grief are keen this day...  
*(Keep silence for 15 seconds)*

We remember before you those who lives are empty of peace and hope—  
because they are struggling with illness or disability...  
because they are powerless in the face of violence  
or other forces beyond their control...  
Especially today we pray for all those facing discrimination  
because of their culture or their religion,  
and those still struggling to live in joy with the effects of the pandemic...  
*(Keep silence for 15 seconds)*

We remember before you those for whom life is frustrating—  
because they are without work...  
because they cannot find a way forward...



because what comes next does not seem clear...  
*(Keep silence for 15 seconds)*

Good and generous God,  
fill us with energy & compassion to reach out to those in need.  
May we become the gift we have received in Jesus,  
for it is in his name we pray, saying the words he taught us:

**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.

## **O Christ, the Word, incarnate**

O Christ, the Word incarnate, O Wisdom from on high,  
O Truth unchanged, unchanging, O Light of our dark sky:  
we praise you for the radiance that from the hallowed page,  
a lantern for our footsteps, shines on from age to age.

Your people hold this treasure from you, its source divine,  
a light that to all ages throughout the earth will shine;  
it is the chart and compass that all life's voyage through,  
'mid mists and rocks and tempest, still guides, O Christ, to you.

Oh make your church, dear Saviour, a lamp of purest gold,  
to bear before the nations your true light as of old;  
oh teach your wandering pilgrims by this their path to trace,  
till, cloud and darkness ended, they see you face to face.

## **Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go**

Forth in thy name, O Lord, I go my daily labour to pursue;  
thee, only thee, resolved to know, in all I think, or speak, or do.

The task thy wisdom hath assigned oh let me cheerfully fulfill'  
in all my works thy presence find, and prove thy good and perfect  
will.

Thee may I set at my right hand, whose eyes my inmost substance  
see,  
and labour on at thy command, and offer all my works to thee.

Give me to bear thy easy yoke, and every moment watch and pray,  
and still to things eternal look, and hasten to thy glorious day.