

## Worship at home

October 24, 2021

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

<https://pccweb.ca/moorepc/>



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

*As a father has compassion for his children  
so the LORD has compassion for those who fear him.*

*For he knows how we were made;  
he remembers that we are dust.*

*As for mortals, their days are like grass;  
they flourish like a flower of the field;  
for the wind passes over it, and it is gone,  
and its place knows it no more.*

*But the steadfast love of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting  
on those who fear him,  
and his righteousness to children's children,  
to those who keep his covenant  
and remember to do his commandments.*

*The LORD has established his throne in the heavens,  
and his kingdom rules over all.*

*When you send forth your spirit, they are created;  
and you renew the face of the ground.<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 103:13-19; 104:30

**We bring our praise and confessions:**

O Lord our God,  
you hear the voice of those who cry out to you  
and you respond with love.  
You reach out to us when others have turned away.  
You offer us compassion when others dismiss our worth.  
You heal us when we thought we were beyond repair.  
Your amazing love transforms our lives over and over again,  
and so, we offer you our humble praise  
in the name of Jesus, your love made flesh.  
Receive our gratitude in this time of worship,  
as we join with your whole creation  
to bring you honour and glory, now and always. Amen.

Lord of love and mercy,  
we worship you as the source of every good and perfect gift,  
but we confess our gifts to you are less than perfect.  
We honour you when it fits into our schedules,  
not so much when we have other things to do.  
We forget that your love should set our priorities,  
and pursue our own desires instead.  
In your loving-kindness, forgive our wavering hearts  
and reawaken our commitment to you.

**God assures us of his forgiveness:**

While it is true that we have sinned, it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God's love in Jesus Christ. To all who humbly seek the mercy of God I say, In Jesus Christ, our sin is forgiven. Be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another.

**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:** #654 "O God of Bethel, by whose hand"

## God speaks to us through his Word:

*Holy One, you are the Source of Wisdom for the ages. Prepare us to learn from your Word. Open our minds and hearts to the scriptures by the illumination of your Holy Spirit, that we may grow wiser as we listen, and serve you more willingly as we live.*

READ JOSHUA 13:1-7, 14:1-2  
ROMANS 8:14-27

### Change, Inheritance, Patience

1. Joshua tells the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan. In the story are themes such as: God's faithfulness, Israel's obedience, and the fulfillment of promise. There are also more difficult themes of which we have done little more than scratch the surface: military invasion, holy warfare, and devotional extermination.

There are also more subtle themes which make the story valuable to us. Themes such as change/transition. And grief.

The story began with the Lord God explicitly telling Joshua that Moses – his mentor, his teacher, his friend, his beacon of hope, his spiritual guide, the leader of the nation – had died:

*After the death of Moses the servant of the Lord, the Lord spoke to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' assistant saying, 'My servant Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan...'<sup>2</sup>*

In these two sentences are described the goals of grief.

1. Accept the loss – that what once was, is no longer.  
“Moses is dead. You've lost your friend, your mentor, the guy with the plan; any dreams you might have had of you and he entering the Promised Land side-by-side. Moses is dead.”

Accept the loss and all the other losses that come with it.

2. Figure out how to live with purpose, loving service, and faith in the new context created by the loss – when you lose something or someone, you need to figure out how to live well without it/them.  
“Moses is dead. Now proceed to cross the Jordan.”

The story began with a loss. And with change. And with grief.

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<sup>2</sup> Joshua 1:1-2a

That theme continues through to chapter 13.

In what we just read; the Lord God reminded Joshua that he was no longer the young, strong warrior he once was.

*Now Joshua was old and advanced in years; and the Lord said to him,  
**'You are old and advanced in years...'**<sup>3</sup>*

In this case the grief isn't for the death of someone, but for the loss of abilities. Joshua was experiencing the physical changes that come with advancing years. In case Joshua was having trouble accepting his own mortality, the Lord told him explicitly that his time as Israel's leader, and maybe even his life, was running out.

Just like Moses before him, Joshua would not likely see the completion of his ministry.

**2.** Any change or transition in one's life, no matter how big or how small, is accompanied by loss. For example:

- Get old and advanced in years → lose strength and stamina of youth; lose the ability to complete projects and dreams.
- Change houses → lose features of the old.
- Change jobs → lose the rhythms and the contacts of the old.
- Get married → lose identity as 'single'; parents lose child.
- Have children → lose identity as 'couple'.
- Child changes their eating habits → lose the predictability of knowing what they'll eat and that they'll eat.
- Have to stop working on your projects → lose sense of accomplishment and self-worth that comes from a job well-done.
- COVID throws a curveball → lose opportunity to gather with friends, lose hope of returning to the way it once was.
- Committees/teams within the church structure run their course → lose sense of purpose, of history, of connections

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<sup>3</sup> Joshua 13:1

You've heard the expression: "People fear change."

I've heard it said that's not strictly true. It's not the change we fear, it's the loss. It's the prospect of living without what is known.

Every change is accompanied by a loss.

Because life involves change, one could say that the very context of living is loss.

The process whereby we learn to live well with loss; whereby we learn to live with purpose, with service grown out of love, and with faith in the context created by the loss, is grief. One might even say that given the context of living is loss, a strategy for living well is being able to grieve well; to be able to accept the changes and continue living purposefully, lovingly, and faithfully in the altered context.

Joshua was faced with the changes which come with advancing years. He had to accept that his ministry would end. And it would end while it remained unfinished.

*You are old and advanced in years, **and very much of the land still remains to be possessed.***

One can imagine that, faced with this realization, Joshua could either become overwhelmed with frustration, sadness, and regret, or, he could grieve. He could accept the changes and continue living purposefully, lovingly, and faithfully in his altered context.

**3.** We all have a service to do in the name of Jesus: parenting, grandparenting, teaching, cleaning, building, manufacturing, farming, etc. We all have a ministry. And our congregation has a ministry in the community. We have a service in the name of Jesus to those who live in the neighbourhood. The various committees and groups within our congregation have a ministry in the name of Jesus to their members and to the congregation. Our ministry might end. Our committees might change. We will die. And maybe with business left unfinished.

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*Part of the acceptance is the realization that while our ministry might end, we are **but a part** of God's unfolding plan which **He** will carry forward toward its end of perfect redemption.*

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The Lord said to Joshua:

*You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land remains to be possessed.... **I will myself drive them out from before the Israelites.** ...*

What God has begun; He will see it through to its completion.

In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul wrote:

*I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>*

Each of us have important ministries within that unfolding plan of redemption, but the fulfillment of God's will on earth as it is in heaven is God's doing.

Just as Moses never set foot in the Promised Land, Joshua would never see Israel take complete possession. However, he had the assurance that Israel had begun to receive its inheritance and the LORD God would ensure that such inheritance would be completed.

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*The LORD has established his throne in the heavens, His kingdom is come on earth as it is in heaven, and it will one day rule over all.*

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The Holy Spirit dwelling within disciples of Jesus gives to us the assurance that we will share the resurrection glory with Jesus Christ when he returns and heaven and earth are finally and perfectly wed.

Once more in the words of the apostle Paul:

*For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. ... It is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then **heirs**, **heirs** of God and joint **heirs** with Christ – if, in fact, we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.<sup>5</sup>*

By the Holy Spirit we share the inheritance of Jesus Christ: communion with our heavenly Father.

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<sup>4</sup> Philippians 1:6

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:14-17

This was a big part of the significance of the land of Canaan: there Yahweh reclaimed a portion of His land, and there Yahweh's children could live in uninterrupted communion with Him.

Through the sacrifice of Jesus the Christ, and by the bond of the Holy Spirit within, disciples are adopted children of God. We share the inheritance: the sure and certain hope of the resurrection of the dead, the renewal of the face of the earth, and the redemption of the body.

The Kingdom of God is not yet completed on earth as it is in heaven. We still suffer loss and change. Creation itself continues to groan in pain. But it groans in labour pains. It groans with the hope of what is yet to be – although still unseen. In Jesus Christ the kingdom will be completed and has already begun, by the grace of God!

4. While we wait for this glorious eventuality, we wait for it with patience.

Recall from a previous sermon (summertime?), that to be patient comes from a word meaning to have a long nose. The idea being that someone who is patient, because of the length of their nose, is able to remain distant enough from a situation so as not to react emotionally nor get caught up in the drama.

To be patient is to calmly go about your daily ministries trusting that, whether in this age or the next, the Lord's kingdom will rule over all and he will renew the face of the earth.

Joshua had to accept his own mortality, to accept that he would not see the completion of his ministry, and to trust that the Lord would see it through.

Nevertheless, he still had work to do:

*You are old and advanced in years, and very much of the land still remains to be possessed. ... I will myself drive them out from before the Israelites; **only allot to Israel for an inheritance, as I have commanded you.**<sup>6</sup>*

Joshua's ministry changed. He would not be leading the people in their future military commands. Yet his remaining work was no less important. He was to oversee the dividing up of Canaan amongst the Israelite tribes by lot.

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<sup>6</sup> Joshua 13:1, 6, 7

The context of living is loss. Grief allows us to live with purpose, loving service, and faith in this changing context. As disciples of Jesus we can face change with hope and patience, trusting that the Lord is working all things toward the goal of His resurrection kingdom on earth.

With that as our assurance, we can calmly move into the as-yet-unknown context and continue ministering in the name of Jesus.

For the health of our souls, the good of the nation, and the glory of God,

Lead on, O King eternal: we follow, not with fears,  
for gladness breaks like morning where'er thy face appears:  
thy cross is lifted o'er us; we journey in its light;  
the crown awaits the conquest; lead on, O God of might.

Amen.

**Hymn** #742 "Lead on, O King eternal"



**We respond with faith and prayers:**

God of life,

You open our eyes on the world you love  
and show us your presence and purpose all around us.

We see the beauty and wonder of your creation in autumn changes,  
and in gifts of love and compassion offered through friend and stranger.

For these many gifts, we give you thanks.

We pray for those who cannot recognize these gifts in their lives  
and find themselves lost and alone.

*(Keep a brief silence)*

Open their eyes to your presence through our companionship  
and our eyes for opportunities to reach out with understanding.

God, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

God of justice,

You open our eyes on the world and show us struggle and conflict.

We see the stressful times in which we live and the burdens many are carrying;

Today, we pray for those whose businesses are still struggling as the pandemic stretches  
on;

For producers unsure their harvests will be sufficient this season;

For workers uncertain about their jobs or looking for new work;

And for families carrying the stress of economic uncertainty.

*(Keep a brief silence)*

Open their eyes to new possibilities

and open our eyes to ways we can support them.

God, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

God of compassion,

You open our eyes on the world and show us suffering and despair.

We see the challenges for health care across our country and around the world.

We pray for nurses, doctors, hospital staff and home-care workers, so weary and  
worried,

for those facing acute or chronic illness, and delays in needed treatments,

and for communities struggling with COVID-19, overdose deaths and mental health  
challenges.

*(Keep a brief silence)*

Give strength and compassion to all who offer treatment

and courage and hope to all who wait for healing.

Open their eyes to your mercy and open our eyes to needs we can meet.

God, in your mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

God of wisdom,  
You open our eyes on the world and show us its complexities.  
We see countries locked in old animosities  
and communities overwhelmed by anger and upheaval.  
We pray for the millions displaced by current conflicts and natural disasters  
and for leaders everywhere, trying to find solutions to complex problems.  
*(Keep a brief silence)*

Open the eyes of those who lead to recognize the suffering among their peoples,  
and open our eyes to ways we can participate in solutions.  
God, in your mercy,  
Hear our prayer.

God of hope, we offer you our prayers, longing for your peace and promise to break into  
the lives we care about, for the sake of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together:

### **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.