

# Worship-at-home

February 20, 2022  
*Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany*

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## Call to worship:<sup>1</sup>

O Lord, our Sovereign,  
**how majestic is your name in all the earth!**

You have set your glory above the heavens.  
**Out of the mouths of babes and infants  
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,  
to silence the enemy and the avenger.**

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,  
the moon and the stars that you have established;  
**what are human beings that you are mindful of them,  
mortals that you care for them?**

Yet you have made them a little lower than the divine beings,  
and crowned them with glory and honour.  
**You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;  
you have put all things under their feet,  
all sheep and oxen,  
and also the beasts of the field,  
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,  
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.**

O Lord, our Sovereign,  
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

## Prayers of Praise, Confession, and Supplication:

Faithful God,  
You have gathered your people in faithfulness throughout many generations.  
You have offered your blessing to us through their examples,  
and led the Church through many changes and challenges by your Spirit.  
Draw near to us this day to guide us in these uncertain times.  
Root our faithfulness in the compassion and courage we meet in Jesus.  
Renew us through your steadfast love  
so that we may dare to trust our future to you.  
All praise and honour are yours, O God,  
Source, Saviour and Spirit of Life.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 8

<sup>2</sup> From worship resources for February 20, 2022 available at: <https://presbyterian.ca/worship>

God of mercy:  
You have called us to be thankful  
for your good gifts to us,  
but too often we have taken them for granted  
as if we deserved them.

You have called us to be hopeful  
through the gospel of Jesus Christ,  
but too often despair has come upon us,  
and the cares of the world  
have weighed us down.

You have called us to be joyful  
in the wonder of your presence among us,  
but too often we become mired in the mundane  
and lose the gift of reverence.

By your saving power, O God,  
enable us to celebrate your love for us  
with joy and thanksgiving.

**Assurance of Pardon:**

READ JOHN 1:1-5, 10-13  
JOHN 3:16.

Accept God's pardon,  
be at peace with God,  
at peace with one another,  
and at peace with yourself.

Give thanks to the Lord,  
for He is good,  
His love endures forever.  
Amen.

**Hymn:** #607 "Ye watchers and ye holy ones"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uHq1gbyYegw>  
(Holy Child Schola Cantorum; Stephen Schmall, conductor)

## **The Word of God:**

*God of wisdom, we long to hear your holy Word in new and fresh ways.*

*Open our ears to hear your call.*

*Open our minds to understand your truth.*

*Open our eyes to the work of your kingdom and equip us to take our part. Amen.*

### The balm's not only in Gilead

Throughout the season of Epiphany, we've been reflecting on what Jesus' life means for us today.

One of the most elemental, yet significant, implications is that because of Jesus, *we* live in the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God has been inaugurated on earth as it is in heaven through the incarnation, ministry, crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ.

If there is a goal to the life of faith, it must surely include becoming more fully aware of how that truth affects our inner and outer living, and helping others realize this for themselves.

We've now come to the penultimate sermon in the season of Epiphany. Next Sunday – one week from now – is the Sunday of the Transfiguration which provides a liturgical pivot point to move us from Christmas into Lent, Good Friday, and Easter.

In the way Luke has told the story of Jesus, eight days – just over a week – before Jesus' transfiguration on the mountain, he commissioned his twelve principal disciples and sent them out on a preaching tour.

The commission was simple: proclaim the kingdom of God and heal.

READ LUKE 9:1-6, 10-11.

JOHN 1:1-5, 10-13.

**1.** I want to begin by asking you to consider a lightbulb.

A lightbulb is nothing more than metal and glass. It is completely inert. Lifeless.

Until a switch closes. When the switch closes, the circuit is complete and electric current can flow. As the current leaves the battery – the source of power – and flows through the bulb, the bulb lights up.

The closed switch connects the lightbulb to the battery and causes the lightbulb to receive power to come alive. The previously lifeless pieces of material now emit light and warmth.

When the switch closes, the lightbulb receives power to be and do what it is meant to be and do.

**2.** By the simple reality of our coming into being through the divine Word, through the love and grace of God, Human beings are children of God. Full stop.

*All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being.... He came to what was his own...<sup>3</sup>*

We are beloved by the heavenly Father and created to reflect the Triune God's likeness into our daily contexts. However, like the lifeless lightbulb that is unaware of the battery, until the switch closes, we remain unaware of God's love, and in our blindness, we remain less than who God created us to be.

*He was in the world, and the world came into being through him; **yet the world did not know him.** He came to what was his own, and **his own did not accept him.**<sup>4</sup>*

**3.** Human beings are beloved children of the Triune God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. Yet so often we remain unaware of that love. And in that blindness, we remain less than who and what our Creator means for us to be.

But, when the switch does close and we have the epiphany wherein we realize that we are loved by the Almighty and Holy Trinity, we are given the power to come alive; the ability and the freedom to become children of God, to be who our Creator made us to be.

*But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God...<sup>5</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> John 1, select verses.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

The proclamation of the kingdom of God is about proclaiming that the God who is revealed in Jesus of Nazareth is real, that He is just, that His way of life is the good way, and that He is able to effect change.

This proclamation is good news because when we realize that this God also loves us and calls us “son” and “daughter”; that this God calls us forgiven and redeemed in Christ; that this God made us just a little lower than the angels, when we receive and believe that Jesus came to us to restore our place in this relationship and the healing and peace that comes with it, we can then live the life that transcends our present struggles. When we have the epiphany that Jesus came to help us receive and experience the love of God – the light that is life in its fullness, we can then become the people God intends us to be: image bearers of the divine who radiate his light and warmth because of and in the name of Jesus Christ.

To help others realize this for themselves, Jesus calls us together just as he did with the Twelve. He calls his church into being and gives us power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases and sends us out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. He gives us the ability and the right to speak a word of God’s grace and to bring a tangible expression of God’s mercy in the name of Jesus the Christ.

The church exists today, in all its varied expressions in all places of the world, because over the centuries, generations of women and men have heard and heeded his call. The patriarchs and prophets, the holy twelve and martyrs, the saints in all generations whose souls are now in endless rest, have realized for themselves that not only is God sovereign and holy, but He loves them and wants to love others. They realized this for themselves, and sought to help others realize it too.

Because of the willingness of generations of men and women to heed Christ’s call to proclaim the kingdom and allow the Holy Spirit to minister through them to whomever needed healing, Christ’s name, power, and authority has spread around the world. And we have inherited this legacy:

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*The balm is not only in Gilead!*

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4. It is probable that no one listening to this sermon will drop everything, leave their families and homes, and become a mendicant preacher or global evangelist! And I don't know that Jesus necessarily needs us to do that. He chose 12 out of the multitude of disciples to go on this preaching tour.

As we explored a few weeks ago, we each have our own boats – our own contexts in which the Lord calls us to use our particular gifts to minister in his name. And not everyone is called to be a travelling preacher!

Nevertheless, in the words of the spiritual:

*If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul, you can tell the love of Jesus, who died to save us all.<sup>6</sup>*

We can help others receive Jesus so that the Holy Spirit can close the switch in their hearts and they receive power to become children of God – to enjoy the life that transcends our momentary struggles.

We can help others open themselves to the presence of the Kingdom and to the grace and mercy of the Messiah. As successors to those twelve apostles, Jesus by the Spirit gives to all who are baptized in the name of the Trinity, power (ability) and authority (right) over all demons and to cure diseases in his name, and to help others awoken to the reality and the presence of the kingdom of God.

I've been reading recently about the monastic community that was established in the year 635 on an island off the north-east coast of what is now England: the Holy Island of Lindisfarne. Lindisfarne was to England what Iona was to Scotland. The monastic community became a beacon, a lighthouse, amongst the kingdoms of the indigenous Britons and the invading Saxons and other various tribes and kingdoms that inhabited what is now England. From Lindisfarne, monks set out. They founded churches and schools. They are largely responsible for people becoming literate and becoming Christian. What's worth noting is that before any of the monks could set out on their missions, they spent considerable time at the monastery learning the balance between prayer and work, they studied, they had to know the gospels inside and out, they had to know the psalms by memory. Above all, they had to know Jesus. Not just

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<sup>6</sup> "There is a balm in Gilead"

know about Jesus, but know Jesus personally. They had to not only know Jesus but love him and love God. From David Adam's book on the early saints who led the Lindisfarne community, namely, St. Aidan:

*Their primary task was to give themselves to God. Mission has often failed because people have sought to talk about God when they have not yet talked enough to him. It must be seen that they enjoy the presence and the love of God. They must show God is real, to be met, and to be enjoyed.<sup>7</sup>*

The monks had to have a demonstrated relationship with Jesus that revealed that it is actually a joy to know God and to be possessed by God. If we are to proclaim that the kingdom of God is good news, we have to know for ourselves that it is good news.

You cannot share with others what you do not know yourself.

Then they would set out on their mission. They would proclaim the kingdom of God. In amongst all the other pagan kingdoms they would proclaim the presence, reality, and joy of the living God revealed in Jesus of Nazareth. Their proclamations would be confirmed by miracles and acts of healing – emotional, spiritual, and healing.

Proclamation confirmed with signs that prove the reality of the words.

Knowing and loving God, they would meet people and offer a word of God's grace and tangible acts of God's mercy and kindness.

But they couldn't share what they didn't know.

We're not all called to go out on heroic evangelistic preaching tours. We are, however, called to help others in our own contexts realize for themselves the light of the kingdom of God. We cannot do that if we don't know it ourselves. We cannot emit light and warmth in the name of the Triune God if we are not connected to the source of such power.

*Why, in **your** experience, is the kingdom of God good news?*

*Why has it been worth **your** while to get to know Jesus?*

*Why, for **you**, is God's word trustworthy?*

*How has learning to live by and in the presence of the Holy Spirit helped **you**?*

Answering these questions for one's self is a good step towards learning how we can help others realize the light and joy of the Kingdom of God for themselves and receive the

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<sup>7</sup> David Adam, *Aidan, Bede, Cuthbert: Three Inspirational Saints*, 33.

healing that comes from that awareness, in the name of the King of kings and Lord of lords Jesus, of Nazareth.

Amen.

**Hymn:** #747 “There is a balm in Gilead”  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IqKz8mKymao>  
(Shirley Cogen)

**Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving:<sup>8</sup>**

God of all life and each life:

You created us and set us in relationship with each other  
in families and neighbourhoods,  
in communities and countries,  
in cultures and nations.

Today we give you thanks for all the gifts of home life and community celebration  
which bring meaning and encouragement to our lives.

Thank you for the blessings we know  
through the contributions of those who have gone before us.

Help us offer what we can  
to sustain the wellbeing of our community and country,  
so that all who make it their home will find security and dignity:

God of the whole human family,

**Hear our prayers for your world.**

God of our faith and our future,  
there are so many pressures we face today,  
so many problems without simple solutions.

Draw near to anyone who is struggling in economic difficulty,  
and all those burdened by challenges to their health and happiness.

Guide us all through the changing face of the pandemic,  
and support all those who are finding the stress overwhelming.

Ease any conflict in homes and workplaces  
and inspire solutions that express mutual respect and deeper understanding.

Help us share with others the hope we find in your presence.

God of the whole human family,

**Hear our prayers for your world.**

God of mercy and forgiveness,

You call us to live together in peace and unity.

We pray for our neighbourhoods and the nations of this world.

Where people are divided and bitterness turns into resentment,  
show us how to work for reconciliation.

Where violence and fear turn neighbour against neighbour, or nation against nation.

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<sup>8</sup> From worship resources for February 20, 2022 available at: <https://presbyterian.ca/worship>



equip leaders to work for justice that will bring peace.  
Help us build a world where children enjoy a future  
filled with good health and happiness.

God of the whole human family,

**Hear our prayers for your world.**

God, our hope and our help,

send your Spirit to equip our congregation with skill and resilience  
to weather the challenges the pandemic has brought for our life together.

Strengthen friendships, new and old,

and make us a source of encouragement and connection to each other.

Help each one find a place and a purpose in our mission and ministry

for it is as your children that we pray together in the words Jesus taught us:

**Lord's Prayer**