

# Worship-at-home

January 30, 2022  
*Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany*

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## Six Points of Wisdom to Heal a Hurting World



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

God has created the world and called it good.  
In Christ, God has redeemed the world and defeated the powers of death.  
The Holy Spirit is at work in the world, calling us to follow Jesus.  
All praise and glory to God, Holy One and Holy Three!

### **Prayers of Praise, Confession, and Supplication:<sup>2</sup>**

God of life,  
we gather as your people, ready to do your will.  
We gather as your children, who have learned to love because you loved us first.  
We gather as disciples, prepared to imitate Christ's loving actions.  
In Jesus Christ, you have shown us compassion and boundless grace.  
You have shown us a new way to love one another.  
You are the Creator of heaven and earth,  
and we are creatures,  
yet you have called each one of us by name.  
You are the Holy One,  
yet you sent your Son to serve us.  
In awe and wonder, we listen for your word,  
we wait for your call,  
we prepare our hands and hearts  
to serve you in all the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Psalm 31 selected verses

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from worship resource for February 6, 2022 – PWS&D Sunday available at:  
<https://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/2022/01/28/pwsd-sunday-2022/>

Merciful God,  
you call us to fullness of life but we confess our shortcomings.  
We have wandered from your ways and wasted your gifts;  
we have ignored your grace at work among us,  
and focused on loss and complaint.  
We have been suspicious of the motives of others,  
too quick to judge and too slow to forgive.  
Give us the courage to see clearly who and what we are.  
With your forgiveness, cleanse us from all our faults and failings,  
and inspire us to walk a new way.

**Assurance of Pardon:**

God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.  
As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is God's love;  
as far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our sins.  
Thanks be to God whose love and forgiveness are steadfast.  
May we be steadfast in our forgiveness of one another.

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

**Hymn:** #592 "I, the Lord of sea and sky"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcXOkht8w7c>  
(Eric Tom)

**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.*

## Six Points of Wisdom to Heal a Hurting World

1. Through Luke's testimony, Jesus repeatedly draws our attention to the great need that exists throughout our societies: the hunger and thirst to hear a word of God's grace and to know his healing mercy; to experience a tangible expression of God's loving kindness.

So great was, and is, the need of the crowds, Jesus began to teach his disciples in order to equip them to minister to the crowds in his name.

*\*Slide (Jesus on mountain)*

READ LUKE 6:12-17.

*\*Slide (map)*

*\*Slide (Jesus on mountain)*

READ LUKE 6:18-49.

“This is the Word of the Lord”

“**Thanks be to God.**”

*\*End slides.*

Here we read of not only a great crowd of disciples – those men and women who have devoted their time and energy to learning the way of the Master – but also of a great multitude of people who came from as far south as Jerusalem, the worship center of Judaism and as far north as the province of Phoenicia and the cities of Tyre and Sidon – commercial hubs and centers of Ba'al worship! They came to hear his words, to be healed of their diseases, and to be exorcised of their demons. And Jesus healed them all: Jew, Gentile, Ba'al worshipper; merchant, philosopher, and peasant.

This great crowd of people came because they recognized that in the carpenter's son from Nazareth, their need would be satisfied. They came because they knew that in this particular man named Jesus, whose name means “the Lord is our salvation”, was the power of the one God who could truly heal the world.

Such was the need for God's salvation that Jesus formed a company of disciples and apostles to take his words of grace and acts of healing mercy off of the mountain to everyone everywhere who was suffering.

2.

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*By the mystery of the Holy Spirit who dwells within every believer, the church is the continuation of that company of disciples and apostles.*

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And, just as those early disciples and apostles worked to bring God's grace and healing mercies in Christ's name, his church today is working to try and meet the needs of the multitude.

**\*Slide (PWS&D 75 years)**

This year marks the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of PWS&D: Presbyterian World Service and Development.

**\*Slide (Train station)**

In 1947 the Presbyterian Church in Canada asked each congregation to collect gifts to provide relief to Europe following WW2. Through the years that followed, the initiative grew as the PCC continued to respond to emergency needs around the world. We soon began to realize that, in addition to emergency response, more aid needed to be provided to help others *develop* what is necessary to be self-sustaining and healthy.

By 1980 the General Assembly accepted the name: Committee on Presbyterian World Service and Development.

**\*Slide (Canadian Foodgrains Bank)**

In 1993 PWS&D joined with Canadian Foodgrains Bank (a co-operative of 30 Canadian Christian denominations – the continuation of those 12 apostles and the crowd of disciples!) to address world food needs.

**\*Slide**

PWS&D is an agency of the Presbyterian Church in Canada.

The PCC is a continuation of that early company of disciples and apostles who gathered on that hillside to learn from the Messiah and who were then sent in his name to continue his ministry: to speak words of God's grace and to offer tangible expressions of His mercy by the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus.

**3.** As much as we are called by our God to use our talents and passions to work for the healing of the world in our own context, the power to heal – the ability to affect change whether in ourselves, our societies, or in the natural world – is not in our efforts.

After all, power is the ability to do work; strictly speaking, the amount of work that can be done in a given amount of time, it's not the work itself. The ability to do the work and the effectiveness thereof comes from Christ:

*Power came out from him and he healed them.*

The power to heal the crowd is Christ's.

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*Ministry is effective when we yield our talents and passions to the mastery of Jesus and **his** grace and mercy thereby diffuses into the hurting world.*

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So, as Jesus prepared his disciples to go out and minister to the hurting world in his name, he looked up at his disciples and began to speak.

4. In this sermon, Jesus offers his disciples 6 points of wisdom to help keep our hearts from being weighed down by the worries of this age and our minds free from frivolous distractions and focused on the work to which we've each been called. Six points of wisdom to shape disciples through whom the Messiah can continue spreading His words of grace and acts of mercy/kindness to ourselves, families, and neighbours.

\*Slide

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*Six points of wisdom to heal a hurting world.*

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(i) Verses 20-26.

The first point of wisdom is about *perspective*.

Luke tends to highlight the particular care the Saviour has for anyone who is vulnerable in the society of the day. The poor, the children, and widows. In this Jesus personifies the intention of the law and the prophets to look after refugees, those who had been widowed and orphaned. Luke's beatitudes and woes (cf. Matthew 5:3-12 for the more exhaustive list) do highlight this concern.

However, we must remember that Jesus was speaking directly to his disciples and apostles. By the comparison he made to the prophets and the false prophets, he insinuated that disciples have a prophetic role in society – to speak on God’s behalf to the world we inhabit.

This role does not necessarily translate to full bellies and popularity!

In fact, given that the Master calls us to serve in the context in which our great passion meets the world’s great need – and that such a context may not come with regular financial reimbursement, it is likely that disciples *will* know some level of hunger, grief, poverty, and animosity.

On that day, what gives us hope to carry on is the grace and mercy *we* know in Jesus Christ and the faith we hold that *his* grace and mercy can heal the wounds of others, despite our outward circumstances.

(ii) Verses 27-31

The second point of wisdom deals with *retributive justice*.

Love in Christ’s name is the guiding principle for understanding who we are as adopted children of the heavenly Father and how we are to relate and interact with others.

However, the expressions of love to which Jesus calls us are Christ’s own.

He alone can truly love his enemies.

When we yield our pride, ego, and desire for retribution to the One who faced sin, death, and the devil on our behalf, the Holy Spirit dwelling within can bring Christ’s love to bear on our thoughts, words, and actions.

*Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

(iii) Verses 32-36.

The third point of wisdom deals with *recipients of mercy*.

We reflected on this two weeks ago: Who are the recipients of mercy? Who are the people worthy of receiving God’s loving kindness. Mercy involves forgiveness, it also involves tangible acts of kindness – food, money, shelter, etc. So, who is worthy of receiving kindness from us in Christ’s name?

It's interesting how our minds work. I read this passage several times this week as I worked on today's sermon. And I kept coming back to the last line in the paragraph: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." And that's a great, pithy saying. It's easy to memorize. It's a little nugget you can carry around and call to mind when needed. There's a lot packed in that little sentence. But in my obsession with this line, I nearly missed the few words that come immediately before it. "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." What does that mean? Look back a few words, what do we read?

*He is kind to the **ungrateful** and the **wicked**.*

Be merciful as your Father is merciful. He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

When Jesus died on the cross, he did so to forgive sin. Full stop. That means that God's mercy; God's kindness, and by extension our acts of kindness are for ourselves, our family members, our neighbours; people who might rub us the wrong way, people who have wronged us, people who might not be that nice to be around; God's kindness is for the vaxxers and the anti-vaxxers, the protesters and the compliants; it's also for the thieves and the murders. God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked.

*Be merciful, as your Father is merciful.*

(iv) Verses 37-42.

Related to the third point of wisdom is the fourth dealing with *forgiveness and empathy*. Learning to pass the Father's mercy on to others, especially those who are ungrateful and wicked, can only happen if we can learn to see others as Christ sees them. Whether we like someone or not is irrelevant, all of creation is beloved in the sight of the Creator and all people are beloved. They might have a speck in their eye; yet they are forgiven, icons of God. So, says Jesus, to speak a word of God's grace and offer a tangible expression of His mercy, requires that we learn to see with His vision and see others as he does: beloved, forgiven icons of God.

*First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.*

(v) and (vi) Verses 43-45; 46-49

Jesus closed his sermon by addressing *inner character* and *obedience*.

*It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.*

The need for God's grace and mercy is great. Let us turn our eyes upon Jesus, yield to His mastery our abilities and passions; our emotions and thoughts, embrace Christ's perspective, forgiveness, kindness, empathy, and heart, and go out in His name and by His power to heal His hurting world.

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

Amen.

**Hymn:** "Turn your eyes upon Jesus"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eg4emf9xc2c>  
(The Calvary Quartet; SE Samonte)



**Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving:<sup>3</sup>**

God of mercy and justice,  
you love your creation.  
You revealed your love in Jesus Christ,  
as he walked in our shoes,  
as he suffered and died.

Jesus, you redefined love forever.  
To love one another is to give of ourselves.  
To love one another is to suffer on behalf of others.  
When we love one another in grace and generosity  
we demonstrate our gratitude and love for you.  
We ask for the courage and wisdom to serve others  
in humility and with neither counting the cost nor judging their worthiness.  
When we cross boundaries, when we encounter other cultures,  
help us to listen well and be willing partners.  
Kindle in us a vivid imagination,  
so that we can serve even those whom we cannot see or hear.

On this Sunday, we give you thanks  
for the work of Presbyterian World Service and Development.  
And, we ask that you give to its staff a strong sense of your presence and purpose.  
Open the eyes, ears, and hearts of all those who serve in partnership with PWS&D  
around the world  
so that they may discover creative solutions for their many challenges:  
the scarcity of food,  
the abuse of human rights,  
the challenging forces of nature, unemployment and poverty.

May those who are most vulnerable be blessed with a sense  
not only of your presence,  
but of our willingness to serve in your name and by your strength.  
Help us to hold their feet in our hands,  
to love them concretely,  
so that lives will be transformed.  
In gratitude for your grace in our lives,  
we respond by serving your creation.  
In Jesus' name.  
Amen.

**Hymn:** #587 "Called as partners in Christ's service"  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yRsQnmEgaVc>  
(St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Owen Sound)

**Benediction:**

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<sup>3</sup> From worship resources for February 6, 2022 PWS&D Sunday available at:  
<https://presbyterian.ca/pwsd/2022/01/28/pwsd-sunday-2022/>