

Order of Worship
June 26, 2022

God calls us to worship:

Responsive reading: Psalm 77:1-3, 11-20

Hymn: #313 "O worship the King"

We offer our prayers:

Prayer of Praise and Supplication (*please remain standing*):

Faithful, fruitful God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;
you created our minds to grow in wisdom.
you created our hearts to expand with love,
you created our voices to sing your praises forever.
We bring you our worship with joyful praise,
turning to Jesus for grace and guidance.
Fill us to overflowing with your Holy Spirit
so that the fruit of the Spirit will abound in our lives.
May we worship you in spirit and in truth,
and serve you in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Please be seated.

*If we say that we have no sin,
we deceive ourselves,
and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)
Yet we know that nothing is able to separate us
from the love of God in Jesus Christ.
Let us, therefore, be free to confess our sins
before the God who is faithful and just. (1 John 1:9)*

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

**God of mercy;
As we gather to celebrate your gift of love
we recall the times when we forget you
and are divided one from the other.
How often our thoughts, our words, and our actions
have betrayed the goodness you have shown to us.
Forgive us.
Mend what is broken.
Heal the wounded relationships
that separate us from you,
from one another,
and which leave us divided within ourselves;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

God offers the assurance of grace:

We offer our lives and resources:

Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you'd prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew's), or Howard McKellar (Knox)

God speaks to us:

Hymn: #497 "Word of God, across the ages"

Readings: 1st Kings 3:3-4; 8:22-30
1st Kings 11:1-13; 31-33
Proverbs 1:1-7

Fear of the Lord

1. King Solomon loved the Lord. He worshiped at the altars. Albeit at the high places, some of which were condemned as idolatrous because of the use made of them by the people who lived in the Promised Land before the Israelites arrived. However, at the beginning of his reign, there was no centralized sanctuary, no temple, and so Solomon was exonerated because the person of his worship was not the gods of the locals, but the Living God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob!

King Solomon loved the Lord. He worshiped extravagantly at the altars in the high places before the temple was built.

His prayer given at the dedication of the Temple while Solomon stood before the Divinely-sanctioned altar of the Lord in the house of God now built at the place which God had chosen, reveals that Solomon stood in awe of the Living God.

O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth beneath...

Even heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain you, much less this house that I have built!¹

Solomon loved the Lord. He worshiped Yahweh. He stood in awe of the transcendent majesty of the Living God.

The awe with which Solomon approached God, led him to understand his own place with humility, and inspired him to seek the wisdom from God which would enable him to rule God's people faithfully and himself live in a right relationship with the God of heaven and earth and with others.

The sense of awe led to learning, and the learning led to obedience.

2. An effective pedagogical device in helping young musicians is to have them attend concerts and watch videos of performances by other musicians on their instrument of choice. When the student finds a performer of whom they are in awe, they will study the performer's technique and artistry; they will try and emulate the performer's style, all the while learning, maturing, and developing their own skill and style.

¹ 1st Kings 8:23, 27, 28

Awe inspires learning. Learning inspires obedience.

Dacher Keltner is a professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkley who has studied the positive affects of awe on our well-being. He wrote that “awe is the feeling of being in the presence of something vast that transcends your understanding of the world.”² Or, saying the same thing in a slightly different way: “awe is the feeling one gets when in the presence of something larger than one’s self that challenges our usual way of seeing the world.”³

The author of the latter quote describes the feeling of awe as a broadening of one’s horizons “like a camera lens zooming out to reveal a more complex and inclusive picture.”⁴

Through careful studies, Keltner and other researchers have discovered that awe tends to increase our curiosity and wonder, thus stimulating our desire to learn and understand, and thus re-orient our worldview and patterns of behaviour accordingly.

Awe inspires curiosity. Curiosity inspires learning. Learning inspires modified worldviews and patterns of behaviour (i.e., obedience to the new learning) for the better.

Which King Solomon knew 1,000s of years ago!

*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge.*⁵

The fear of the Lord is obedience to the principles of God’s world in response to new learning of God, inspired by awe of God.

3. Underlying the whole wisdom tradition is the belief that *God* is at the heart of everything. He is the author of life and thus of the wisdom that will sustain life. God set up an order in the world and in society that, when we learn to accept and abide by it, will help us lead virtuous, moral, and successful lives.

God created life.

So, in order to live well in this life, one needs to live well in relation to the One who created it and seek *His* wisdom.

² https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_do_we_feel_awe

³ <https://www.mindful.org/four-practices-for-inspiring-awe/>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Proverbs 1:7

Solomon understood the *fear of the Lord*.

Solomon stood in awe of the Living God and shaped his life according to the principles of God's Word.

The consequence was that Israel flourished as a kingdom. These were golden days for the nation of Israel:

*Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea; they ate and drank and were happy. ...For he had dominion over all the region west of the Euphrates from Tiphseh to Gaza, over all the kings west of the Euphrates; and **he had peace on all sides.***⁶

1st Kings 4 also records the extravagant luxury that marked Solomon's reign:

*Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of choice flour [195 bushels], and sixty cors of meal [390 bushels], ten fat oxen, and twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl.*⁷

While he feared the Lord, he built the temple and dedicated it to the Lord and worshiped at the altar. The kingdom thrived, religion thrived, and he ruled with justice.

But, as the story unfolds, his awe of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob waned.

With his waning awe, his obedience waned.

He began to worship other gods and sacrifice at their altars.

And his kingdom crumbled.

Solomon learned through bitter personal experience that the *fear of the Lord* – obedience to the principles of God's Word inspired by awe of the Living God – is the foundation of everything good, holy, and lasting.

He knew this in the positive sense during his younger days when the kingdom was flourishing.

He learned it again in the negative sense during his more senior days as he lost his grasp of the kingdom.

4. Last Sunday I mentioned that in this series on the book of Proverbs I hope to lay some foundation on which we can build an engagement with the wisdom tradition, and in particular the Proverbs, into our own discipleship. I also mentioned that the pursuit of Godly wisdom is a mark of the Spirit-led life. To that end, I encouraged us to believe

⁶ 1st Kings 4:20

⁷ 1st Kings 4:22-23

that these proverbs are not merely wisdom from a by-gone age, but that through them, in the mystery of the Holy Spirit, the heavenly Father passes on to us His wisdom for living in communion with Him in the name of Jesus – who is the Messiah.

That's the first building block:

Belief that the Proverbs are the Father's advice to us and that when we sit with the Father, the Holy Spirit will guide our eyes to the proverb the Lord needs us to hear today.

The second building block is the:

*Belief that because God is the author of life and thus of the wisdom that sustains life, the **fear of the Lord** underlies everything that is good, holy, and lasting.*

The first 6 verses of Proverbs chapter 1 outline the usefulness of the wisdom contained therein. The proverbs are useful for teaching wise dealing, righteousness, justice, and equity; discernment, discretion, and sound practical judgement. They're useful not only for teaching the young, but for encouraging the wise to also continue in their quest of seeking the wisdom that leads to God, and the skill in discerning between Godly advice and vain propaganda.

In order to prevent our quest from leading us away from the Living God at the one extreme; and to prevent the *fear of the Lord* from becoming a narrow, legalistic, terror-induced approach to scripture at the other extreme, it behooves us to cultivate awe.

*In the day of my trouble I seek the LORD...
I will call to mind the deeds of the LORD;
I will remember your works of old.
I will meditate on all your work,
and muse on your mighty deeds.⁸*

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

⁸ Psalm 77:1, 11, 12

We respond with prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

God of mystery and mercy,
God of our past and our future,
We come before you today carrying all the hopes and dreams,
and the burdens and blessings of our lives.
We bring all that is on our hearts and minds to you today,
grateful for the goodness,
seeking your comfort and strength,
listening for your guidance.
God of purpose and promise,
Receive our prayers.

God of life and love,
You engage us in the midst of our lives when we need you.
We pray today for all those who feel fearful about their future,
and for all who wrestle with challenges at work or at home.
We remember before you those weighed down by illness or worry,
and all who provide care for those in need of support.

Keep silence for 15 seconds.

Help each one of us face our fears and our challenges supported by your love.
God of purpose and promise,
Receive our prayers.

God of courage and comfort,
whenever we wrestle with any burden,
your Spirit prays within us with sighs too deep for words.
Today we pray for all those whose burdens seem too heavy to bear:
For the victims of violence or disaster, and for their friends and families...

(pause)

For refugees at risk in so many places in the world,
remembering especially those who have fled Ukraine and Afghanistan... *(pause)*
We pray those caught in despair and poverty in our own community
and in the forgotten corners of your world... *(pause)*
Renew the strength of all those challenged by realities beyond their control
and equip our leaders to support those in the deepest need.
God of purpose and promise,
Receive our prayers.

God of the world and all its peoples,
we pray for our country and our leaders as we prepare to mark Canada Day.
Equip Canada to be a force for justice and well-being in your world.
Give our leaders wisdom and integrity to make decisions
that provide for a good future for all who call this nation home.
Open our eyes and our hearts to the opportunities we have
to serve you in serving one another.
Make us alert to cries for justice in our midst
and guide us in repairing relationships strained by differences between us.

God of purpose and promise,
Receive our prayers.

Receive all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, as together we pray the words Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with God's blessing:

Hymn:

#174 "Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness"

Blessing: