

## Moore Presbyterian Churches February 19, 2023



\*Indicates to please stand as you are able.

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

\*Call to worship (*responsive*):

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same  
My name is great among the nations,  
and in every place incense is offered in my name,  
says the Lord. (Malachi 1:11)

**Arise, shine; for your light has come,  
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.** (Isaiah 60:1)

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world.  
Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,  
but will have the light of life.' (John 8:12)

\*Hymn: #298 "Glory be to God the Father"

### **We respond in praise and confession:**

\*Prayer of praise and supplication:

God of grace and wonder,  
you reveal your presence in so many different ways.  
Your glory glistens on snowy mountain tops and sparkling streams.  
Your mercy moves in classroom conversations and bedside prayers.  
Your word of comfort frees us from fear;  
Your voice can transform our doubts.  
We come before you in worship  
to dwell in your goodness and seek your truth,  
as we offer all praise and honour to you,  
with Christ and the Holy Spirit, One God,  
mighty and merciful, now and always.

Prayer of confession (*Responsive. Psalm 51*):

Have mercy on me, O God,

**according to your steadfast love;**  
according to your abundant mercy

**blot out my transgressions.**

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,

**and cleanse me from my sin.**

You desire truth in the inward being;

**therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.**

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

**and put a new and right spirit within me.**

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,

**and sustain in me a willing spirit.**

We hear the gospel of God's grace:

\*Hymn: #176 "Songs of thankfulness and praise"

**God speaks to us:**

Scripture: Matthew 6:25-34

Matthew 17:1-9

### Strive for the Kingdom

A work horse can weigh 2,000 lbs. Or more. A teamster might weigh 175 lbs. Or less. If the horse-teamster partnership is to be at all fruitful, if they are to accomplish any of the work which they set out to do, the relationship must be built on trust. If the horse doesn't trust the teamster, that little bit of metal in the horse's mouth is not going to stop the animal from simply walking away, or kicking the teamster! In fact, if the horse doesn't trust the teamster, it's nothing for him/her to clamp the bit between it's teeth so it doesn't feel the bit at all!

Horses can become quite anxious. If the horse is going to have the confidence to do its work without anxiety, it must trust the teamster to keep it out of danger. The horse must trust that the teamster is behind it, is watching out for any hazards, and won't ask the horse to pull more than it is safely able.

So, the teamster talks to the horse. They don't need to shout. Horses have excellent hearing. They simply talk. Constantly. Calmly. Reassuringly. And, the horse *listens*. The horse knows its teamster's voice. As the teamster calmly talks through the various tasks, as the horse *listens, trusts, and responds*, the two work together in physical poetry to accomplish whatever job is before them.

Shortly before Jesus began his public ministry, He was baptized. As he came out of the water, the heavens were opened, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."<sup>1</sup>

Nearing the end of his earthly ministry, as he began to set his face toward Jerusalem and the cross, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John up a high mountain. There the disciples saw Jesus *transfigured*. His face shone as brightly as the sun; his clothes became dazzling white.

And, they saw him speaking with Moses and Elijah.

The significance of this is that Moses represents the Law. Moses represents the order of government, ethics, and morality which God gave to His people in the various covenants so that they would be His holy community. A community that lived in the world in a way that pointed the world to God, to God's justice, to God's mercy, to God's providence. Elijah represents the prophets. The prophets were God's spokespeople. They received a message from God to be passed on to His

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 3:17

people and His people's human leaders. And, often, the message had to do with awakening to their deviations from the Way and calling them back to God's Way in faith, repentance, and obedience.

The Law defines God's rule on earth, the prophets call for repentance and adherence to that law.

If you can remember back a few weeks ago when we started reading the Sermon on the Mount together with Isaiah's Servant Songs, you'll remember Jesus said that, consistent with the ministry of the Servant in Isaiah's Servant Songs,

*I have not come to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill.  
For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away,  
not one letter, not one stroke of a letter will pass from the law  
until all is accomplished.<sup>2</sup>*

Now, on this mountain, Peter, James, and John witnessed him talking with the representatives of the law and the prophets. And they heard the divine voice affirming, as he did at Jesus' baptism, that *Jesus* is the Son of God.

So, we have these bookends in which the divine Voice affirms, for the benefit of the disciples, that Jesus is not merely a carpenter's son from Nazareth, but is, in truth, the Son of God and the Messiah.

*This is my Son, the Beloved;  
with him I am well pleased.*

However, the bookends aren't identical. Now, near the end of his earthly ministry and the beginning of the church's ministry in his name, the divine Voice added a command: "Listen to him!"

Jesus is the one who teaches and also obeys the right interpretation and application of the law and the prophets.

He is the one who knows the lay of the land, knows where are the hazards, and knows of what we are capable.

He is the church's teamster.

So, in the cacophony of other voices calling for our attention, enticing us to distraction, from within the cloud, the divine Voice said:

***This**, Jesus, is my Son, the Beloved;  
with him I am well pleased;  
**listen to him!**<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 5:17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 17:5

And the one whom the Sovereign of Creation has affirmed is the Son of God, the Messiah, whose words are trustworthy words of life calmly says to his church:

*... do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?<sup>4</sup>*

A well cared-for horse doesn't worry about its next meal. It trusts that the teamster will get its hay, oats, and water to it in due course of time. And it doesn't worry about the myriad of hazards it encounters on the job. It trusts that the teamster will look for it. And so, freed from that worry, it can do its work trusting the teamster will look after it.

*Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.<sup>5</sup>*

I don't think Jesus was calling his church to laziness. The birds weren't falling through the social media tunnel! The lilies of the field weren't binge watching Netflix!

There is a lot of work to do.

There are many people who don't know the Triune God and His grace, mercy, and peace.

There are many people who do, and yet for whom that promised peace evades them.

There are many people who are hungry.

The *Mission Moment* for this week talks about:

Climate change, conflict and COVID-19 have combined to create a global food crisis where 50 million people in 45 countries suffer from acute hunger. *Presbyterian World Service and Development* with Canadian Foodgrains Bank and ACT Alliance, is responding in South Sudan, Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia – countries where hunger needs are worsening daily.

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<sup>4</sup> Matthew 6:25

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 6:26-29

There is much to be done to bring healing, hope, and justice to the world God loves. In teaching, that worry is unnecessary because God will provide, Jesus is not calling the church to inaction.

Instead, he's evoking the non-anxious labours of Adam and Eve before the fall. The non-anxious tending of creation and caring for one another trusting that the Creator will supply what is necessary.

I don't think Jesus is teaching us to sit back and do nothing, to rest our feet on the footstool and say to ourselves: "Oh, don't worry, God will take care of it!"

What he's saying, is that in everything we do, strive first to allow God, His will and His Word to rule over the entirety of our being: our emotions, thoughts, actions, and reactions.

In whatever situation the Lord has placed you now, trust that He's involved, and strive to listen to His Voice, obey His will and glorify His name.

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*Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.*

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What Jesus is teaching, is that if we allow God complete authority over our emotions, thoughts, actions, reactions, and interactions, He will look after what we need, so that we can look after what He needs.

**We respond by affirming our faith, offering our tithes, and prayer:**

\*The Apostle's Creed (*unison*):

\*Offering:

*(Offering plates are presented at the Communion Table while congregation sings:)*

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;**

**praise him all creatures here below;**

**praise him above, ye heavenly host;**

**praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost**

Prayer of dedication

Prayers of thanksgiving, intercession, and the Lord's Prayer:

God of life, God of love,

You created us and set us in relationship with each other

In families and neighbourhoods,

in communities and countries,

In cultures and nations.

Thank you for the inheritance offered by previous generations  
which helped establish our families and our common life.

We are grateful for the meaning and encouragement we can draw from our  
heritage.

Help us stand open to the wisdom in other cultures and insight from a new  
generation

so we can all contribute something to the well-being of wherever we home:

God of the human family

**Hear our prayers for your world.**

God of our faith and our future,

there are many pressures on families today.

Draw near to those struggling in economic difficulty,

and those burdened by challenges to their health and happiness.

Work with families where members are in conflict with each other  
to create solutions that express mutual respect.

Make us a congregation that supports families, whatever their size or  
situation,

as well as people living on their own.

Help us find joy and support together as part of the family of your people.

God of the human family

**Hear our prayers for your world.**

God of mercy and forgiveness,

You call us to live together in peace and unity.

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,

call out leaders to work for justice that will bring peace.

Help us build a world where children can grow up to enjoy their future  
in good health and happiness

God of the human family

**Hear our prayers for your world.**

God who is our hope and our help,  
Thank you for the inheritance we share as church members,  
for the gifts of so many generations handed along to teach us your wisdom  
and inspire us with a vision of the new things you make possible.  
Teach us how to learn from tradition  
but also to recognize the work of the Spirit to keep reforming us in the faith.  
Build up the family of this church.  
Help each one find a place and a purpose in our mission and ministry ,  
using use their talents and sharing their vision for our future with you.  
And now as a part of your family called together over the centuries,  
we pray the words Jesus gave us:

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **God sends us with God's blessing:**

\*Hymn: #574 "With the Lord as my guide"

#### **Benediction:**

We have witnessed Christ, God's Beloved, on the mountain in glory.  
Now, go into the world to shine the light of his glory with grace and compassion.  
May God's beauty inspire you;  
May Christ's brilliance restore you;  
And may the joy of the Holy Spirit empower you to shine in every place you go.  
Amen.

Congregational Amen