

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
November 29th, 2020
Worship Leader: John Robertson

Welcome and Announcements

- Communion December 6th

Call to Worship (Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19)

Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock! You who are enthroned upon the cherubim, shine forth before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh. Stir up Your might and come to save us!

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

O LORD God of hosts, how long will you be angry with your people's prayers? You have fed them with the bread of tears and given them tears to drink in full measure.

You make us the scorn of our neighbors; our enemies laugh among themselves.

Restore us, O God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

But let your hand be upon the one at your right hand, the one whom you made strong for yourself.

Then we will never turn back from you; give us life, and we will call on your name.

Restore us, O LORD God of hosts; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

Prayer of Invocation

Almighty and eternal God, to you our hearts are open and our inmost desires known. We cannot hide our most intimate secrets from you. Be present at all times in our thoughts and hearts and purify them with your Holy Spirit, so that we may love you with the love of the Spirit and praise your name with humility and joy; through Christ our Lord. **Amen!**

Hymn #110:

“Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

(Click on the link below to view the video. The words will appear on the screen.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vRAFQCOKjgE>

Come, thou long expected Jesus
 Born to set thy people free
 From our fears and sins release us
 Let us find our rest in thee

Israel's strength and consolation
 Hope of all the earth thou art
 Dear desire of every nation
 Joy of every longing heart

Born thy people to deliver
 Born a child and yet a king
 Born to reign in us forever
 Now thy gracious kingdom bring

By thine own eternal spirit
 Rule in all our hearts alone
 By thine own sufficient merit
 Raise us to thy glorious throne

By thine own sufficient merit
 Raise us to thy glorious throne

Prayer of Confession

Holy God, Creator of all that is, Donor of Grace, and Giver of Life: Hear our prayer.

There are chasms in our lives, deep valleys that separate us from one another and from You. We confess that we have allowed those rifts to grow, for fear of admitting our part in the separation, for fear of being rejected when we reach out. You call us to a reconciled life, to healed relationships, to a wholeness with each other and with You. Mend us, we pray, and make us new creations through the power and love of Christ, in whose name we pray. **Amen**

Assurance of Pardon

The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor His anger forever; He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His love for those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us. [Psalm 103:8-12]

Hymn #119 (verse 1 only):

1. Hope is a star that shines in the night
 Leading us on till the morning is bright
 When God is a child there's joy in our song
 The last shall be first
 And the weak shall be strong
 And none shall be afraid

“Hope Is A Star” (no lyrics)

Lighting of the Advent Candle of Hope

People of hope, God desires us to remember his promise from ancient times and to hold fast to the vision of heaven and earth made new.

Make us those hopeful people.

Jesus longs for people who will not let discouragement be the last word; but who wait for God's Word.

Make us those hopeful people.

The Holy Spirit yearns for a people who will push back against the dark lie of Hopelessness. God's call to hope transforms the world.

Make us those hopeful people.

(Light the Advent candle of Hope – purple.)

Let us pray together:

Gracious God, as the Advent season begins, we cry out to you. We come to you looking for hope. When everything else we rely on fails us, our only hope is in you. When we do not understand what has happened, we hope in you. We can hope for better days because we trust you. We know you and we know you are here with us no matter what we are facing. Some of us see only darkness this time of year. Some of us find life overwhelming. Some of us are filled with Advent joy. Wherever we find ourselves today, Loving God, remind us that our hope is in you. Be with us on this journey. We ask this in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen**

Ministry of Music:

By Melissa Valliquette

Scripture Reading:

Isaiah 64: 1-9 *selected*

O that you would tear open the heavens and come down, so that the mountains would quake at your presence-- as when fire kindles brushwood and the fire causes water to boil-- to make your name known to your adversaries, so that the nations might tremble at your presence!

When you did awesome deeds that we did not expect, you came down, the mountains quaked at your presence. From ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for him.

You meet those who gladly do right, those who remember you in your ways.

Yet, O LORD, you are our Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Prayer for Illumination

Lord we would like to be in Your room, where we can shut the door and pray to our Father who is in secret. We do not heap up empty words like some do, as if we will be heard for our many words. We do not want to be like them, for you, our Father, know what we need before we ask You. Through Christ we pray.

Amen.

(Based on Matt 6)

“Yellow Light Living?”

Mark 13:24-37

As we start the first Sunday of Advent, I thought it might be timely to look at a theme that so often emerges during the Christmas season – lights!

Let’s be honest we all know the power of lights from the concerns of SAD, to nothing but red lights when we are in a hurry!

Think of the lights we all live under – house lights, daylight, traffic lights, dashboard lights to name a few.

Even today we start by lighting another light, the Advent Candle wreath but how often do we soak in the light? You know that feeling that comes with the spring? When the darkness of the winter starts to break into the warmth and light or the new season.

The word “Advent” is derived from the Latin word *adventus*, meaning “coming,” which is a translation of the Greek word *parousia*. Most know Advent today as a time of anticipation and expectation of the birth of Christ. However, Advent began as early as the 4th and 5th centuries as a time of fasting and prayer for new Christians. The Advent season not only symbolizes the waiting for Christ's birth but also for his final return.

If there is a promise is that God has prepared something wonderful beyond our world and time;

- Is that more difficult to believe than the resurrection?
- Shouldn't we believe that God will set the world right side up?
- Shouldn't we be happy at the prospect of Christ coming again to set our world right once again?
- The **first candle** symbolizes **hope** and is called the "Prophet's Candle." The prophets of the Old Testament, especially Isaiah, waited in hope for the Messiah's arrival.

[The **second candle** represents **faith** and is called "Bethlehem's Candle." Micah had foretold that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem, which is also the birthplace of King David. The **third candle** symbolizes **joy** and is called the "Shepherd's Candle." To the shepherd's great joy, the angels announced that Jesus came for humble, unimportant people like them, too. In liturgy, the color rose signifies joy. The **fourth candle** represents **peace** and is called the "Angel's Candle." The angels announced that Jesus came to bring peace--He came to bring people close to God and to each other again. The (optional) **fifth candle** represents **light and purity** and is called "Christ's candle." It is placed in the middle and is lit on Christmas Day.]

It might only be me, but have you ever noticed how hard to it is to wait for something? I totally understand the old English translation of patience – **long-suffering**. Think about the impact of a long line up when you only went into the store for a simple and quick item. Then there are the times of a long line up and you have absolutely nothing else to do, or there is a list of things at home to do that getting slivers would be more enjoyable?

As an interesting piece of trivia. I remember reading years ago about the stress measurements for parachutists. They were trying to help them keep their heads in the game and focussed while managing the stressors. Through biometric measurements they discovered some findings that apply for you and I in this context.

The most stressful measurements were not in classroom, or right before the testing. The highest results were not packing a chute, on the plane or even during the jump. What they found was a specific time period when the jumper was waiting on the plane. There were three lights, one was a red which meant do not jump. The green meant go or jump. There was a yellow light that meant things could go either way. It was this yellow light time period that measured the highest stress levels!

I would propose that the same is true for traffic lights, depending on your wiring and approach to life. It is simple – red means stop, green means go, and yellow means go faster. Then watch what happens when the go faster driver comes behind the one that sees the red hand flashing stop and they start to slow down before it even turns yellow. I know as sometimes I am the one following them!

To simplify this, I will ask you to be thinking about the automotive dashboard lights, just using the vehicle lights are the dashboard of our lives

It is that soaking in the light that I would like to focus on for a little while this morning. One of the realities of any crisis, change, valley of chaos, is that every human will have a moment of *fight, flight, freeze, appease*.

Why does this matter? What is so important about this right now?

If living under the yellow light is stressful for a parachutist, if the season of Advent is about waiting, if this pandemic is nothing but waiting, then how can ***you and I have love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, goodness, or self-control when we live under these lights! I would suggest that it is not possible to have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives if we do not address these lights in our own lives!***

The information lights- ***green*** or ***blue lights***. These lights will let you know whether you're using your high beams, driving lights, turn signal, or cruise control. Typically, these lights are just as a FYI.

- There are the ***red lights*** which are the bad ones that basically say, "Oops, this is not good!" If these lights come on, it might be time to stop and reassess the situation quickly. To press on will mean even greater damage.
- Then there are the ***yellow lights***. These are the lights that serve as warning or caution lights. They are the ones that are saying we might want to adjust, because if we don't-- the lights might become red ones.

I know my greatest struggle in my faith journey are the seasons of wait. ***That living under the yellow light!***

Why does this matter? What is so important about the lighting? It is simple, and I will use a word that has been given such a bad rap - ***KRISIS***

The reality of these hot water moments is they always reveals what is inside a person or an organization. If you want a visual picture putting a tea bag in hot water, whether that be a car wreck, job loss, conflict with a neighbour, or God getting delayed in doing what we had asked.

Krisis has several defining characteristics, the first three characteristics are that the event is **unexpected** (i.e., a surprise), **creates uncertainty, seen as a threat to important goals**

BUT IT IS THE FOURTH THAT IS SO VITAL TO KNOW requires the need for change. "*crisis is a process of transformation where the old system can no longer be maintained.*" If change is not needed, the event could more accurately be described as a failure.

What would happen if we treated this season like living under the yellow light? This Krisis has taught us that things are required to change, it does not matter what area of life we are talking about as so many things are leaking out during this time of hot water..

Would you like me to word this with more Bible wording?

...“Now learn a lesson from the fig tree. When its branches bud and its leaves begin to sprout, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ In the same way, when you see all these things taking place, you can know that his return is very near, right at the door... Heaven and earth will disappear, but my words will never disappear.

³² “However, no one knows the day or hour when these things will happen, not even the angels in heaven or the Son himself. Only the Father knows. ³³ And since you don’t know when that time will come, be on guard! Stay alert!

³⁴ “The coming of the Son of Man can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a long trip. When he left home, he gave each of his slaves instructions about the work they were to do, and he told the gatekeeper to watch for his return. ³⁵ You, too, must keep watch! For you don’t know when the master of the household will return—in the evening, at midnight, before dawn, or at daybreak. ³⁶ Don’t let him find you sleeping when he arrives without warning. ³⁷ I say to you what I say to everyone: Watch for him!”

Preparing for Advent, journeying through this pandemic, as organizations and workplaces need to find a new alignment and determine how they will grow, families determining what their comfortable level of risk of getting together is; What would happen if we changed the thinking of this season?

If God has given us a red light so that we stop doing what has been done for decades, and generations, but given us a yellow light to live under to think about what is really important, what is really of value so that when we have the green light we are ready to go and live?

The reality of living under a yellow light is we can get stuck. That sense of knowing there are so many things to be done, but there is neither the motivations/desire to do them but perhaps there might not even be the acceptance for them to be allowed. The result is that when we live under the yellow light we can fritter. We can fritter time away on things that do not really matter in the long run. I would suggest the **hot water test** – asking ourselves, when the Lord returns [not if] but when He returns, and I am busy doing these things – what will His first thought be? Am I essentially sleeping my time away so He will find me sleeping when He appears?

Additionally, there is a level of exhaustion that comes with this lifestyle. Part of it is that we cannot find the habit or ritual of routine. IE when we are at home and in familiar territory, we have a routine. We do not have to concentrate to put the coffee on, have something to eat. However the mind on holidays means that those things are not habit or routine, but require us to have some attention. This is why when people come back from holidays to a different location they are so tired. Whether it is someone working in a school, an office or at home there is the reality that the mind is always on duty. This gives a sense of exhaustion that is worse than physical. This type of exhaustion consists of emotional, psychological and

What about you and I trying to live under the yellow lights? That sense of straddling a fence and not deciding one way or the other. That period where our 'dashboard light' are giving us the yellow and things are going to go either way, so it might be best to decide! Busy doesn't qualify as important, in the same way that straddling a fence will lead to a thriving life.

BUSY can be seen as a badge of honour

Just as an FYI, my grandma's expression was Buried Under Satan's Yoke so when I am told about how BUSY people are, I internally remind myself that what I am talking about is not a great value for them. Proof that this is true? Try telling a child that you are busy doing something when they ask to talk or play. Then ask someone else to ask what they heard the adult say –

The adult is too busy to play with me as they are doing more important things than my play time!

This is the upside of crisis, it always reveals what is truly important. Whether it is the death of a loved one, loss of a job, divorce, kids leaving home – or in our case in this season the times we would get together with people and talk about things.

The six D's of Busy

- **Diversion:** *Shiny Object* or “*Squirrel*” [from animated comedy adventure film “UP”, produced by Pixar Animation Studios and distributed by Walt Disney Pictures]
- **Defeat:** one would rather be seen as lazy than incompetent
- **Delay:** cold feet living, know where this comes from?
- **Development:** trust the process, yet we want to have that life **NOW**
- **Doubt:** only sees problems, not opportunities
- **Differences:** when things don’t align

Unamuno, the Spanish philosopher, tells about the Roman aqueduct at Segovia, in his native Spain. It was built in 109 A.D. For eighteen hundred years, it carried cool water from the mountains to the hot and thirsty city. Nearly sixty generations drank from its flow. Then came another generation, a recent one, who said, "This aqueduct is so great a marvel that it ought to be preserved for our children, as a museum piece. We shall relieve it of its centuries-long labor."

They did; they laid modern iron pipes. They gave the ancient bricks and mortar a reverent rest. And the aqueduct began to fall apart. The sun beating on the dry mortar caused it to crumble. The bricks and stone sagged and threatened to fall. What ages of service could not destroy -- idleness disintegrated.

Two Parables here

“But of that day or that hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 33 Watch, keep alert, and pray; for you don’t know when the time (Greek: kairos—crucial time, decisive moment) is. 34 “It is like a man, traveling to another country, having left his house, and given authority to his servants, and to each one his work, and also commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. 35 Watch therefore, for you don’t know when the lord of the house is coming, whether at evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning; 36 lest coming suddenly he might find you sleeping. 37 What I tell you, I tell all: Watch”

“Watch, keep alert, and pray; for you don’t know when the time is” (v. 33). In the Roman system if I was a guard on guard duty, I could be executed for falling asleep. Interesting considering everyone agreed at the resurrection story that the guard was asleep, but he would be okay! It might sound harsh but imagine if the enemy might get through the defences and kills the ones the guards were supposed to protect!

Soldiers who have served in combat know this requirement—especially those who have served on guard duty. There is nothing more difficult than keeping one’s

eyes open and attention focused hour after hour after hour—night after night after night. But soldiers on guard duty know that their faithfulness can be a matter of life and death, both for them and their colleagues.

Wouldn't you say though that Spiritual alertness is as important as physical security? We live in a world full of soul-killing temptations and distractions.

TV and movies - We are regularly subjected to advertising that trivializes life, that glamorize violence, drugs, wealth, looks, and sex and to a thousand tempters. Even kids' sports, who talk about so many values like team, rules, giving your best, will schedule practices on Sunday mornings? The forced choice between sports and faith. The list of tempters is endless. When we succumb to them, we (and our family and friends) suffer the consequences.

Can this season have been God's gift to use by living under the yellow light? It has been that time to refocus, re-align and do a reset. Are we keeping watch, would the other soldiers and members of the family of Christ [Christian community] feel safe because of our faithfulness?

2 words for time

“for you don't know when the time (*kairos*) is” (v. 33).

- **Chronos** has to do with chronological time – the clock, watch or phone. When we say that we will do something at a particular time, we are using *chronos* time.
- **Kairos** has to do with crucial time or a decisive moment—a pivotal point in history. When we talk about “missing the boat,” (by which we mean missing the opportunity of a lifetime), we are talking about *Kairos* time. When we say, “Now is the time to act!” we are talking about a decisive moment—*Kairos* time.

Perhaps I would allowed to use this Kairos time in the sentence with a crisis? That decision moment of time, where the old system can not longer be maintained. A crisis can be a Kairos.

It is bad to be late for *chronos* time (to miss an appointment), but it is far worse to be late for *kairos* time (to miss the opportunity of a lifetime). To be late for *chronos* time might require re-shuffling our schedule. To be late for *Kairos* time is to miss our boat—and there might never be another boat!

So when Jesus says, **“for you don't know when the kairos is,”** he is talking about the pivotal moment that will define our fate for all of eternity.

Peter warns, “Be watchful (*gregore*). Your adversary, the devil, walks around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8).

But what qualifies as spiritual watchfulness? What constitutes readiness? What do we need to be doing when the Master comes so that he will be pleased with us?

Think about the things that Jesus has references [even included in this Gospel]

- “For whoever does the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother” (Mark 3:35)—so we would do well to try to do God’s will.
- which one was greatest, Jesus said: “If any man wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all” (Mark 9:35b)—so we would do well to adopt the posture of a servant.
- “Whoever receives one such little child in my name, receives me, and whoever receives me, doesn’t receive me, but him who sent me” (Mark 9:37)—so we would do well to welcome children (and others who are in need of care and supervision).
- “For whoever will give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because you are Christ’s, most certainly I tell you, he will in no way lose his reward” (Mark 9:41)—so we would do well to help those in need—and to do so in Christ’s name (see also Matthew 25:31-46).
- “Allow the little children to come to me! Don’t forbid them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Most certainly I tell you, whoever will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child, he will in no way enter into it” (Mark 10:14b-15)—so we would do well to recover some of the readiness to believe and the sense of wonder that we enjoyed as children.
- “Most certainly I tell you, this poor widow gave more than all those who are giving into the treasury, for they all gave out of their abundance, but she, out of her poverty, gave all that she had to live on” (Mark 12:43-44)—so we would do well to give recklessly to God.
- “Go into all the world, and preach the Good News to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who disbelieves will be condemned” (Mark 16:15-16)—so we would do well to believe and be baptized.

A take away idea for you and I? what would happen if we looked internally, and rather than looking at all the lights the world is showing us – the red, green or yellow – take these very same lighting and applying them on ourselves?

Imagine that instead of looking at everything external we looked at the core of our lives like a spiritual battery. That sense of what will give a red, green, or yellow

warning on our own spiritual charge and therefore keeping a charge in our own battery. Obviously if there is no charge in our battery, then it will be impossible to go anywhere, do anything or even be able to jump start another person's journey and watchfulness.

For example, many of us will have left a dome light on in our vehicle over the years. Many are missing the joy of this experience as the newer vehicles have a battery-saver, so this shuts things off. However, there is a definite 'joy' that would come into our lives in the morning [usually the coldest day of the year] when we turned the key and got that click-click-click. Not very often did we turn the key and just get nothing.

It is possible to live under a delusion. To think you are kind, considerate and gracious when we are really not. To think you are building positive stuff into your children when in reality, if we could check with them twenty years later, we really didn't. What if we could read your own obituary? How do people really see you? Here is the story of a man who did.

One morning in 1888 Alfred Nobel, inventor of dynamite, awoke to read his own obituary. The obituary was printed as a result of a simple journalistic error. You see, it was Alfred's brother that had died, and the reporter carelessly reported the death of the wrong brother. Any man would be disturbed under the circumstances, but to Alfred the shock was overwhelming because he saw himself as the world saw him. The "Dynamite King," the great industrialist who had made an immense fortune from explosives. This, as far as the general public was concerned, was the entire purpose of Alfred's life. None of his true intentions to break down the barriers that separated men and ideas for peace were recognized or given serious consideration. He was simply a merchant of death. And for that alone he would be remembered. As he read the obituary with horror, he resolved to make clear to the world the true meaning and purpose of his life. This could be done through the final disposition of his fortune. His last will and testament--an endowment of five annual prizes for outstanding contributions in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, literature, and peace (the sixth category of economics was added later)--would be the expression of his life's ideals and ultimately would be why we would remember him. The result was the most valuable of prizes given to those who had done the most for the cause of world peace. It is called today, the "Nobel Peace Prize."

- Maybe God is allowing you and I this time to learn new things to be spiritually watchful
- Look at things [by not being allowed to do anything] to focus on what we need to be doing?

- What are we doing to keep a charge in our battery so that we can be watchful; and boost one another?
- Being intentional about our relationships – some will drain and distract us while others will encourage and charge us
- Who will you ask for some support and assistance to keep watch? And keep a charge in your battery?

Hymn :

“Lord Reign In Me” [with lyrics]

(Click on the link below to view the video. The words will appear on the screen.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ro9U3fJDrQQ>

Over all the earth you reign on high
 Every mountain stream, every sunset sky
 But my one request, Lord my only aim
 Is that you'd reign in me again
 Lord reign in me, reign in your power
 Over all my dreams, in my darkest hour
 You are the Lord of all I am
 So won't you reign in me again
 Over every thought, over every word
 May my life reflect the beauty of my Lord
 Cause you mean more to me than any earthly thing
 So won't you reign in me again
 Lord, reign in me, reign in Your power
 Over all my dreams, in my darkest hour
 'Cause You are the Lord of all I am
 So won't You reign in me again
 Lord, reign in me, reign in Your power
 Over all my dreams, in my darkest hour
 'Cause You are the Lord of all I am
 So won't You reign in me again
 In me again
 Come reign in me again
 Come reign
 Come reign
 Beautiful
 Come reign

Offering

No offering will be taken up, but plates are available at the back of the church for people to deposit their offerings in.

Invitation to Offering [*I discovered some great words from www.saltproject.org*]

Here's what I believe: I believe night always gives way to the dawn. I believe war always gives way to peace. I believe death is always shattered by life I believe God is doing a new thing every minute of every day, God is at work, around us and within us.

For the homeless, a place to live; for the hungry, a feast; for the thirsty, a cup of cold clean water that runneth over; for the weary, rest; for the lonely, a friend; for the sick, healing and wholeness

Every minute of every day, God is making all things new, giving, and giving and giving again. And we are called, we are called to be a part of God's work of generosity.

You & I are called to give, to surrender your time, talent, and treasure to this God-work of making all things new. We are called to give
The morning offering will now be given and received!

Offertory Prayer

Loving God, with this money, make a whole new world. With these gifts, help make real what your prophets declare, that mourning and crying, and pain will be no more. With these people, help make a world where everyone is loved, a world where justice and compassion roll down like a mighty stream, a world where everyone has warm food, cool water, healthcare, and friends - a world where death is no more, where mourning and crying and pain are no more! Do it now, God, in the name of your son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. And the people of God said, "Amen.". **Amen.**

Pastoral Prayer

Closing Hymn #114:

"Emmanuel, Emmanuel"

(Click on the link below to view the video. The words will appear on the screen.)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K4V9rgxwclU>

Emmanuel, Emmanuel,
his name is called Emmanuel.
God with us, revealed in us,
his name is called Emmanuel.

Benediction