

**July 26, 2020 – Eighth Sunday After Pentecost**

**A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our twenty-first online worship service.**

**My notes this week to you will be more brief than usual, as I am on leave (study leave followed by vacation) for four weeks from July 15 through August 12. During this time, emergency pastoral care is available for you by contacting the church office. Our emergency pastoral care clergy person is the very dear Pastor Claudine Carlson. Please do reach out if you need pastoral care, and the office will connect you directly with Pastor Claudine.**

**During my leave, I will not be responding to emails and phone calls. This allows me to focus on the study leave tasks of preparing a blog site to be connected to our church website, as well as preparing some reconvening worship-and-debrief modules for when we gather again, in small groups, and eventually for worship. Lorre, Gee or Bonnie may add notes to this missal week over week to keep you updated on church re-opening activities if there is any new news. If it is safe to do so, and all preparations are completed, we anticipate resuming worship sometime in September.**

**During the Sundays of my leave, you have the very special treat of hearing from many church voices: Bonnie Berg has agreed to prepare the message for Sunday July 19<sup>th</sup>, Lorre Calder for Sunday July 26<sup>th</sup>, Nicholas Stienberg for August 2<sup>nd</sup> and Lorre again for August 9<sup>th</sup>. We are blessed to have so many wonderful gifts in our family.**

**You remain in my heart and my prayers – every single one of you ☺ And, as things are opened up, the COVID-19 virus remains alive and well. For us to likewise remain alive and well, precautions are advised: safe distancing, avid handwashing and polite consideration of and respect for the fears of others are, at this time, acts of love.**

**Please exercise these acts of love generously. God be with you in every possible way ☺**

**- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.**

**You are all encouraged to keep Pastor Janaki in your prayers over the next several weeks. We pray that she will return rested, renewed, and recharged.**

**I want to offer a word of thanks for those of you who have allowed us to use your photos, or who have offered the use of your photos in the creation of our music videos. It truly adds to our worshipping community and makes worship more of a 'group effort'. If you have some photos you might like to send along, please be in touch with me by email, [lorre.calder@sympatico.ca](mailto:lorre.calder@sympatico.ca) . We can arrange how best to co-ordinate access to your photos. Full credit will of course be given.  
—Lorre Calder**

**Please take a few moments of silence, prepare your heart,  
centre yourself for worship.**

**Prelude: Land acknowledgement with Brad's creative composition ☺**

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9Zar8-GeUs>

**Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

***Prayer of the Day: Beloved and sovereign God, through the death and resurrection of your Son you bring us into your kingdom of justice and mercy. By your Spirit, give us your wisdom, that we may treasure the life that comes from Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.***

**The First Lesson: 1 Kings 3:5-12**

At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, I now do according to your word. Indeed I give you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you." (NRSV)

Word of God, word of life. C: *Thanks be to God.* \*

**Reading Homework: Psalm 119:129-136**

**The Second Lesson: Romans 8:26-39**

The Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn within a large family. And those whom he predestined he also called; and those whom he called he also justified; and those whom he justified he also glorified.

What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will

hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written,

“For your sake we are being killed all day long;  
we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered.”

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (NRSV)

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.** \*

### **Acclamation of the Word:**

**‘How Beautiful’, from Handel’s Messiah  
(with visuals from our own stained glass windows)**

**Click Here: <https://youtu.be/rm9bAUffHK4>**

Featuring Julianne Bintakies, soprano, Barbara Burden, alto, and Bradley Moggach, piano. The piece was recorded in 2009 for the 175th anniversary of our congregation. It was part of a CD created for the occasion entitled, ‘Remember, Rejoice, Renew’.

### **The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52**

**C: Glory to you O Lord.**

Jesus put before the crowds another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and caught fish of every kind; when it was full, they drew it ashore, sat down, and put the good into baskets but threw out the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

“Have you understood all this?” They answered, “Yes.” And he said to them, “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.” (NRSV)

The Gospel of our Lord. **C: Praise to you, O Christ.** \*

**Sermon (by Lorre Calder) Click here to access the audio of the sermon, <https://youtu.be/DiT3PqcLuHo> or imagine Lorre’s voice here:**

The kingdom of God or depending on the translation, the kingdom of heaven, is like...

Many of you may know that I am an avid researcher of my family tree. I have done this work since I was a teenager and my family tree, which now includes over 5,000 names, has taken several forms, papers in a binder, notes in folders, photos both in and out of albums. It was then all transferred to a computer programme once that type of thing became available and was reliable in its use. I have upgraded the computer programmes for my trees as more features were developed for better and more accurate record-keeping. And I say trees, plural, because I have done extensive research on both my mother's and my father's side of the family. And now, with compatible programmes, you can actually synchronize your family tree on your computer to a version of your tree kept online to be shared with other family members. There are times it feels as if the kingdom of God is like spending weeks trying to find the death date of a great uncle so I could look up his obituary, and once I have that precious piece of information, I can then see all the names of his children and hopefully the names of any grandchildren. You might laugh at my analogy, but trust me, there is great rejoicing in my house when I finally find some elusive, long searched-for piece of information.

Our gospel this week gives us ways to imagine what finding the kingdom of heaven would be like. A comparison or parallel, if you will. And what does Jesus use in order for us to be able to understand what he's trying to tell us? A mustard seed. Yeast. A treasure. A fine pearl. A bursting net of fish. These were things to which the disciples, his listeners, and followers could readily relate.

I don't think I have ever even seen a mustard seed, and I can't say I have ever seen a mustard shrub, or a mustard tree. I know the purpose of yeast in baking bread, but I have never actually baked bread. Truth be told, though, I have eaten more than my fair share of bread. I have plowed a field, but never found anything more than rocks that damaged the blades. Certainly nothing even close to resembling a treasure. I am not a collector of fine jewels, but I do possess a pearl necklace although they are most likely synthetic. I have fished once or twice, but never with a net. And, I'm pretty sure that on those few occasions when I did go fishing, I was hoping to NOT catch anything so I didn't have to take the fish off the hook or be responsible for cleaning it. So, to me, the comparisons that Jesus used to illustrate what the kingdom of heaven is like, are not things to which I can easily relate.

In our Old Testament lesson for this week, Solomon was given the offer of a lifetime. The Lord said to Solomon, "Ask what I should give you." Solomon could have asked for stacks of gold, buckets of jewels, a huge mansion to live in, an endless parade of servants to cater to his every whim, the gift of years that would take him deep into old age, endless kingdoms over which he could rule, the finest clothing any king could ever hope to wear, or victory over all potential enemies. But what did Solomon ask for? He asked for wisdom. He asked for discernment. The ability and the understanding to know good from evil. So if we make a parallel between this story about Solomon, wisdom was the precious thing he was willing to give up the promise of everything else for. What would you or I have asked for in that same situation?

Canadian author, blogger, and modern theologian, Sarah Bessey, put it this way in her book *'Jesus Feminist: An invitation to Revisit the Bible's View of Women'*, "It's the treasure in the empty field; it's worth selling everything to own--your entertainment, your 401(k) or your registered retirement savings plan, your home, your comfort, the sand where you stick your head, your last word, your right answers, your safe and predictable nice little life centered on avoiding heartbreak or inconvenience to your schedule."

Right now, some of us might say that the kingdom of heaven is like being able to gather in groups together, to worship, to sing, to pray, to stand shoulder-to-shoulder, to share God's peace with a handshake or a hug. And when we are able to do that again, we will treasure each moment that we offer pure, genuine, heartfelt praise to God.

So, what is the kingdom of heaven really like? I think it depends who you ask. Just as it was different for each of the people in the gospel reading, the answer is different depending who the question is being asked of. Your vision of what the kingdom of God is like is bound to be different than mine.

For the Indigenous person, the kingdom of heaven might be like a never-ending supply of clean, safe, readily-available drinking water where every drop is treasured for the precious life-giving gift that it is.

For the homeless person, the kingdom of God might be like a clean, dry, permanent, safe place in which to live, that once acquired brings dignity and security to whoever dwells under that roof.

For the hungry person, the kingdom of heaven might be like a refrigerator or a cupboard that when opened always has safe, nutritious, healthy, plentiful food to eat, with enough to last beyond the next meal.

For the poor, the kingdom might be like not having to work two or three jobs to buy food, pay rent, buy decent clothing or provide for a family. The dignity of not having to rely on food banks, used clothing stores, or subsidized housing would bring a dignity and self-worth that would only enhance the lives of those now caught in poverty.

For people of colour, the kingdom of God might be like a community where opportunity is available in equal measure to everyone regardless of economic status or the colour of their skin, where everyone has as much of a chance, and the encouragement, to succeed as anyone else. And that with that opportunity and equity, all might reach their full potential.

If you were to ask women what the kingdom of heaven might be like, you might get an answer like, a world where women and men are paid equally for equal work, where women aren't penalized for wanting to have a family and stay home with those children during their formative years. Or, where a woman can choose to have a career and to not have a family and not be criticised or thought less of for making that choice.

For people who identify as LGBTQ, the kingdom of heaven might be like a world where they aren't afraid to be their true selves; where their church tells them that God loves them exactly the way they are, where they are affirmed and loved without condition. A world where there is no fear of losing a job, their housing, their family, their friends, or their church.

Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God is worth searching for, in fact, he is encouraging that search. And with the examples from treasure and pearls to yeast and fish, everyone is encouraged to seek the kingdom of heaven. Jesus didn't just tell the poor to search, nor did he say that the kingdom was only for the rich. From any starting point, from any station in life, the kingdom of heaven is there for everyone!

Jesus used ordinary, everyday examples to teach something we cannot fully grasp. As wonderful as I imagine the kingdom of heaven being, my faith tells me its way, way better

than that. However, I can understand the comparison of the kingdom of heaven as something I can relate to: treasure, pearls, bread, and fish. But, the kingdom of heaven isn't something far in the future, or some distant destination. Jesus tells us in Matthew 3 and Mark 4 that the kingdom is at hand. It's right in front of us if we just see it and recognize it. In fact, in Luke 17, Jesus says the kingdom is within us!

So, what are we willing to do to bring about the kingdom of heaven, for ourselves and for our brothers and sisters, for our neighbours, for our community, for people we might not know and might not even like? We already have the power to make sure Indigenous communities have the clean, safe drinking water they deserve. We can make it possible for people who are homeless to have safe places to live. Making sure that hungry people have food is certainly doable. We can all see and recognize that the poor just need a chance to make a better life and be willing to make that happen. We can demand equal and fair treatment for people of colour and for women. For the LGBTQ folks among us, understanding and affirmation of who they are as God created them is the only loving thing to do.

Making the kingdom of heaven a bit more real will take some effort on our part; it might take some money, it will certainly take some humility and some stepping back to let others walk ahead of us. We might have to make some noise and badger our elected representatives to get the ball rolling and make things right for people. It will take love, prayer, persistence, and faith. It is most certainly worth doing. God's kingdom, the kingdom of heaven is for everyone, not just a privileged few.

The late writer and theologian Rachel Held Evans said, "This is what God's kingdom is like: a bunch of outcasts and oddballs gathered at a table, not because they are rich or worthy or good, but because they are hungry, because they said yes. And there's always room for more."

Let us make it so. Let it be so. Amen

### **Hymn of the Day – The Lord's My Shepherd (Crimond)**

**Click here:** <https://youtu.be/8k3YyC8pV2s>

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*Our prayers of the people come from Heidi VanSchaik, our youth minister. They give focus to the things that have affected our younger brothers and sisters during these unprecedented times.*

### **A Prayer In The Time Of COVID-19**

God of love, you help us turn our worries into prayers. You hear the confusion, anxiety, uncertainty, and fear in our minds right now. We lift our burdens to you so that we can let them go, knowing you are here to listen. We pray for every young person who has lost their job & now faces financial struggles, for every university student who had to return home unexpectedly, for youth whose home is not a safe place, for everyone struggling with the transition to online school or lack of routine, for the graduating class who might not get to walk across the stage, and for all people who are missing their friends. Together we grieve all the lost joy and happy memories quarantine has taken from us.

Thank you, Lord, for the person on the other side of the screen (or page) right now. For their courage, strength, and kindness despite everything weighing on their hearts. Help them to know your boundless grace and endless love is still here even when they can't see

it. We pray for doctors, nurses, janitors, cashiers, politicians, and everyone working at this time. We ask you to help us see Your face in all the brave people keeping our families and country together. Although buildings may be empty, we pray you keep our hearts full of compassion for others and love for our neighbours. We thank you for FaceTime, TikTok, Instagram challenges, and all the other things that remind us we are not alone in this.

Knowing God, you understand even the messiest of our prayers. Despite physical distance, we are still Your church. We pray for CLAY and the hundreds of young people disappointed that we can't come together this summer. We look forward to next summer.... We call you to be our lighthouse in the wavy seas and our guide in the wilderness. God, you've got some crazy plot with this whole Corona thing, but we trust you. The unknowns of Your plan have no end, but neither does your grace.

Amen.

### **Lord's Prayer:**

**Click here for our familiar sung version, with Brad on organ, and Helga singing:**

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

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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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

**While you listen to the offertory hymn, continue your prayers and consider how you may be an offering in the coming week.**

**Offertory – Swing Low, Sweet Chariot, This Far By Faith # 171**

**Click here: <https://youtu.be/lzL1a3yvX9M>**

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### **Offering Prayer**

God of all abundance, receive our brokenness and the offering of our lives.  
Take us, who return to you in thanksgiving: form us and shape us into a love like Jesus, so that we may be love for this broken world. **Amen.**

**Sending Hymn: For the Beauty of the Earth, ELW #879**

**Click here: <https://youtu.be/AFPhyp7fvJI>**

Music: Conrad Kocher; Words: Public Domain, Music: Public Domain  
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### **Blessing:**

May God bless us and keep us.  
May the face of God shine upon us with grace and mercy.  
May God look upon us with favor  
and give us ☩ peace.  
Amen.

**Dismissal:** Go in Peace, Go in Hope. ***Thanks be to God.***