

Worship at Home for July 12 2020

You may choose to read right through this document, stopping for your own reflection at any time, or only read the prayers or the scripture or reflection. You might read with family or friends, or alone. Links will take you to music that may enhance your experience as you move through the worship, but you might choose to visit them later, or not at all. Feel free to share this with anyone who might be interested.

If you'd like to comment or have a question, please call or email me directly:
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In the Spirit

Rev. Joanne

Centering Prayer

God of our thoughts and words,
may what we read today
draw us deeply into your word,
break open your word for us,
and remind us that your Word accompanies us.
Amen

Opening Music: "God, Whose Almighty Word"

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

God, whose almighty word
Chaos and darkness heard
And took their flight:
Hear us, we humble pray,
And where the Gospel day
Sheds not its glorious ray,
Let there be light!

Jesus, who came to bring,
On your redeeming wing,
Healing and sight,
Health to the sick in mind,
Sight to the Spirit-blind:
Oh, now to humankind
Let there be light!

Spirit of truth and love,
Life giving, holy dove,

Speed forth your flight;
Move on the water's face,
Bearing the lamp of grace,
And in earth's darkest place
Let there be light!

Holy and blessed three,
Glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, love, might!
Boundless as ocean's tide,
Rolling in fullest pride,
Through the world, far and wide,
Let there be light!

Opening Prayer

Holy God, as we enter into a personal time for worship,
remind us that we are still part of a large family of faith.
Remind us, too, that although distancing continues,
we are still held close to you even as we
hold each other in our thoughts and prayers.
Give us the courage and foresight we need
to continue to be your physically 'ungathered' people
as we still live out your call to be church in the world
and in our community.
Amen

Scripture Psalm 119:105-112

If you'd like to hear this scripture set to music, you can listen [here](#).

Your word is a lamp to my feet
and a light to my path.
I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to observe your righteous ordinances.
I am severely afflicted;
give me life, O Lord, according to your word.
Accept my offerings of praise, O Lord,
and teach me your ordinances.
I hold my life in my hand continually,
but I do not forget your law.
The wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I do not stray from your precepts.
Your decrees are my heritage for ever;
they are the joy of my heart.
I incline my heart to perform your statutes
for ever, to the end.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:1-9 and 18 – 23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!'

The Parable of the Sower Explained

'Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty.'

For a reflection on the gospel passage, you might listen to our podcast for this Sunday, "A Bite From the Apple."

Let me know if you would like a copy of our podcasts on a CD that you can play.

Reflection

In some churches, the two opening lines of the scripture passage - "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" - are repeated every Sunday, often to introduce the readings.

Today's short passage is part of the longest psalm in the bible, containing 176 verses. Psalm 119 is an acrostic poem, containing 22 stanzas, one for each of the 22 characters that make up the Hebrew alphabet. It is also the longest chapter found in the bible. While these are interesting facts, ultimately this entire psalm is a prayer, the author not stated, but one that speaks to that person's delight in God and in God's laws – the Torah.

During the last few weeks, I have started to take an evening stroll though my neighbourhood – often just as the sun is setting and the heat of the day is fading. I keep to paths and sidewalks that have some illumination, although there are often short sections that are darker. That is when I need to step carefully over sidewalk cracks, watch for running sprinklers and avoid the occasional rabbit or skunk who have sought out the shadowy patches that likely seem safer to them. I need some light to safely find my way - we all need light to find our way.

For me, God's light is found both in God's inspired word – the scriptures that have been handed down to us – and in God's Living Word, Jesus Christ. Some short verses from the bible are like the street lights that illuminate my walks and give me both direction and comfort:

"Be still and know that I am God" Psalm 46:10

“If God is for us, who is against us?” *Romans 8:31*

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid.” *John 14:27*

Stories of Jesus provide another kind of brightness for me as I contemplate his teachings in favourite parables like the Good Samaritan *Luke 10:30-37*, or his engagement with those on the margins like Zacchaeus *Luke 19:1-10*. Light like new dawn always accompanies me when I read the Easter passages in any of the four gospels.

Do you have a special passage from scripture, or a favourite story or teaching from Jesus' life that helps you find your way in life? I know my 'special' scriptures have changed with time and circumstance, and sometimes I will be surprised to find a different brilliance or meaning in a passage I may have read many times. We all need light to find our way.

I also find that light in the inspired writings of scholars, colleagues, and in the lives and stories of the many folk who seek to follow God's way of love, justice and compassion. In a way, they *are* the continuation of the words that were written so long ago, a living interpretation of scripture and a vibrant example of Christ's persistent presence. My path is lit when I think of a friend who has tirelessly advocated for Indigenous people living in the city, standing with them through illnesses and challenges and protests. My way forward is brightened when I bring to mind the creative and courageous work of black female preachers in the USA or Trans ministers in Canada who break boundaries and stereotypes with their words. My journey to live more respectfully in creation is made clearer by the work of our own Applewood UC Mindful Steps folks and what they share.

Perhaps you have some of those beacons in your life – you could offer your thanks to God for them. We all need light to find our way.

The light of God though the word of God as we know it through scripture, or the Word known as Jesus, or the word as it is lived out around us is so necessary, because we can have times of darkness in our lives. They might be short, like those I can encounter on my walks when I can be sure there is light ahead; they might be far longer, like a months-long pandemic without a clear end in sight. Our dark times can be physical or mental as we fight a variety of illnesses, or grief, or worry and they can be spiritual when questions or doubts assail us. However those moments of dark come, we all need light to find our way.

We can hold the light of God for one another as we pray, as we check in on each other, as we share our own stories of darkness and light and the places where we have found illumination. I believe we are meant to be children of the light of God, each of us with our own unique glow, each of us deserving of a bright path to God's love.

May God's light shine for you, on you, through you and around you today. Amen

Music: Purcell: Thy word is a lantern

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kCQDtEN50s4>

Prayers of the People *These prayers are based on the gospel reading included in our
Worship at Home for this week*

Nurturing God, your creation can seem miraculous to us – life bursting from beneath the soil, all the information needed to grow the tallest tree contained in a tiny seed.

We thank you for the diversity we see in your creation, for colours and textures, for sounds and smells, for the taste of ripe summer fruits and vegetables.

We thank you for all those who work to preserve seeds, and who teach us to live with respect in creation – for biodiversity experts and environmental engineers, for farmers and gardeners, for those who continue to work in our community like Greening Sacred Spaces or the Credit Valley Conservation Authority.

We know, God, that your people, like your creation, can have strong roots but still be fragile and need the care of others. And so pray offer our prayers for others today – for those who struggle to flourish in these pandemic times because of illness of body, mind or spirit, or those who still carry stress and worry and insecurity. We offer our prayers for any who have ever felt that church was not a safe, welcoming and just place to grow and to be nourished, and we remember especially our siblings in the LGBTQ+ community, our human family members who are Indigenous peoples, or from the black community.

We remember and pray for children and youth who are experiencing a very different summer holiday this year, we remember and pray for those who will work through the summer this year, or not have any work to which they can return. We remember elder folk who still have limited contact with their families.

Remind us, God, that you trust us to both plant seeds of faith and create fertile soil for others. Give us the courage to act boldly in your name. Amen.

Closing music: Amy Grant - Thy Word

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a6LC8cu03lg>

Blessing

May the God of light and love bless you,
may the grace and radiance of Jesus keep you,
may the shining Spirit surround you today and all days.
Amen

Taizé: The lord is my light

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r64gcGMNhDE>