

**Faith**  
*news*  
From Your Pastor



"We remember God best when we allow trust to take over our worry."



Bring us close to you.  
Comfort us. Remind us that  
we are not lost and alone.

In Jesus' name, **Amen.**

**Words of Assurance**

Hear God speak these words  
to you:

"You are my child, my  
beloved.  
with you I am well pleased."

In the name of Jesus Christ,  
we are forgiven! **Thanks be  
to God.**

**Scripture Reading: Isaiah  
40:21-31**

**Sermon: "Amnesia: Who  
Are We and Whose Are  
We?"**

The exiles in Babylon are  
yearning to come home to  
Jerusalem. They are  
exhausted. Their faith is  
faint. They feel powerless  
and weary.

**Amnesia: Who Are We &  
Whose Are We?**

**Call to Worship** Psalm  
147:1

Praise the Lord! How good  
it is to sing praises to our  
God; for he is gracious, and  
a song of praise is fitting.

**Opening Prayer &  
Confession**

Almighty God, by grace  
alone you call us and accept  
us in your service.  
Strengthen us by your Spirit  
and make us worthy of your  
call. **Amen.**

Trusting in God's grace, let  
us confess our sin.

Merciful God, we know that  
you are our Creator and  
Sustainer, our Redeemer  
and Friend. We know that  
in the best of times. We try  
to remember when life  
becomes difficult. Forgive  
us when we forget you.  
Forgive us when we forget  
that you love us. Forgive us  
when we forget to praise  
you and thank you for the  
blessings of each day,  
especially when we're  
struggling and yearning.

Most don't remember Jerusalem. What they know has been passed down to them from the elders. Those memories tell of a once great nation of Israel and the great city of Jerusalem: the seat of power and throne of YHWH.

Isaiah sends word to them that begins rather strangely: "Have you not known? Have you not heard?" Is it strange that he has to tell them who YHWH is? Haven't the stories been passed down through the generations?

Perhaps it's not so strange. How clear is our thinking when we're worn out? How well do we respond to good news when we feel powerless? What happens to faith when we yearn for that good news too long?

What happens is, we worry. Worry gets in the way of trust. We worry when we've lost our trust in God. We worry because we feel as if God has forgotten us. When we believe that God has forgotten us, we feel vulnerable. Being vulnerable isn't

comfortable. We're supposed to be self-reliant and self-sufficient. And that brings us back full circle to God. We can't be self-reliant and self-sufficient without trusting and believing that God is with us forever.

If it isn't working out for us, then we can be sure that it's not going well for exiles in a strange land. We walk that journey with them all too often. We understand their weariness and their yearning for home. We get it that they want to feel empowered and refreshed.

Isaiah encourages them and us to look to YHWH again. "Let's go back to the very beginning," the prophet says. The beginning when there was nothing and God called creation into being: heavens and earth; night with the moon and star-studded sky; day with the great light; dry land and waters separated; vegetation and animals so abundant that we can hardly number them. Then God created humanity God's greatest achievement.

Isaiah continues. This God knows us and is present with us. This God provides for us. Those powerful rulers and leaders? They're no match for God. This God is everlasting. This God is present with us. This God is stronger than any human could ever be.

One day a man approached the King and Queen and called them on their bad behavior. He challenged their gods and pitted those gods with YHWH. Eventually he went too far and had to flee for his life. He found himself in the desert, hiding in a cave. He was alone and tired. He felt as if he was the only person in the world who cared about YHWH's mission.

YHWH showed up. They talked for a while. Or rather, he talked, and YHWH listened. Eventually, YHWH smiled and said, "Stand outside and wait for me." The man complied. Soon there was a great wind. It was strong enough to split rocks. The man looked around. No God. Then there was the greatest earthquake ever. Then there was a fire like has never been seen before or since. No God.

Finally, the sound of nothing at all. The sound of silence. That's when Elijah knew that God was present. They talked a bit longer and this time God did most of the talking. Then God sent Elijah back home to continue serving.

God was stronger than King Ahab and Queen Jezebel. God was stronger than Pharaoh of Egypt or Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon or King Cyrus who would soon invade Babylon and make it part of the Persian Kingdom.

Elijah had forgotten God's power and needed a reminder. The exiles in Babylon had forgotten God's power so Isaiah reminded them. We also get lost in the daily doses of bad news and tragedy. We also need that reminder that God is greater than all of this.

Most important, we need the reminder that God is still at work in God's own way and God's own time. We remember best when we open our eyes and look around. The evidence is everywhere. Even when we're tired and yearning and powerless and worried.

God hasn't forgotten us. We remember God best when we allow trust to take over our worry.

All glory and honor be to God. **Amen.**

### **Prayers of the People**

Holy One, as you are well pleased with Christ, help us to accept that you are well pleased with us. As you call us to listen to Christ, help us to always heed his word and seek his will.

Gracious One, give us courage to turn away from anxiety and dread. Remind us to see in you the God who is greater than any of our fears and worries.

We pray for your peace filled presence in the halls of government. While we struggle with issues of racism, we pray for a renewed Spirit of inclusiveness. While the pandemic rages, we pray for your healing and wholeness.

Be with those who are sick, worn out, dying, grieving. Allow them to feel your presence and your healing power. Be present in our medical community, exhausted and

demoralized. Be present with those who stock our shelves, deliver our goods, and keep the supply chain moving.

We pray for those suffering the winter storms. We pray for those fighting COVID. We pray for those who have lost heart.

We pray these and all things through the One who taught us to prayer: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. **Amen.**

### **Charge & Benediction**

The Lord bless and keep you in your going out and your coming in from this time on and forevermore.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
The love of God the Father,  
The fellowship of the Holy Spirit find a place in your heart. Alleluia! Amen!