

Worship for September 12, 2021

Opening responses:

Peace on each one who comes in need,
PEACE ON EACH ONE WHO COMES IN JOY.
Peace on each one who offers prayers,
PEACE ON EACH ONE WHO OFFERS SONG.
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,
PEACE OF THE SPIRIT, THE TRIUNE ONE.

Collect:

Almighty God, you call your Church to witness that in Christ we are reconciled to you. Help us so to proclaim the good news of your love, that all who hear it may turn to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen

Litany of confession:

If we have known aliens in our community,
and have not loved them as ourselves,
forgive us, God.
FORGIVE US, GOD.

Where we have colluded with unjust laws,
and been insensitive to suffering and fear,
forgive us, God.
FORGIVE US, GOD.

If we have left it to others to offer hospitality
and made excuses to ourselves for inaction,
forgive us, God.
FORGIVE US, GOD.

Where we have remained ignorant of different customs
and assumed that all should observe ours,
forgive us, God.
FORGIVE US, GOD.

God says: 'Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.'
BEFORE GOD, WITH THE PEOPLE OF GOD,
WE CONFESS TO OUR BROKENNESS:
TO THE WAYS WE WOUND OUR LIVES,
THE LIVES OF OTHERS,
AND THE LIFE OF THE WORLD.

MAY GOD FORGIVE US,
CHRIST RENEW US,
AND THE SPIRIT ENABLE US TO GROW IN LOVE. AMEN

Scripture:

Proverbs 1:20-33

1:20 Wisdom cries out in the street; in the squares she raises her voice.

1:21 At the busiest corner she cries out; at the entrance of the city gates she speaks:

1:22 "How long, O simple ones, will you love being simple? How long will scoffers delight in their scoffing and fools hate knowledge?"

1:23 Give heed to my reproof; I will pour out my thoughts to you; I will make my words known to you.

1:24 Because I have called and you refused, have stretched out my hand and no one heeded,

1:25 and because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof,

1:26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when panic strikes you,

1:27 when panic strikes you like a storm, and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you.

1:28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but will not find me.

1:29 Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD,

1:30 would have none of my counsel, and despised all my reproof,

1:31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and be sated with their own devices.

1:32 For waywardness kills the simple, and the complacency of fools destroys them;

1:33 but those who listen to me will be secure and will live at ease, without dread of disaster."

Psalm 19

19:1 The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

19:2 Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge.

19:3 There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard;

19:4 yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,

19:5 which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy.

19:6 Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hid from its heat.

19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the LORD are sure, making wise the simple;

19:8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is clear, enlightening the eyes;

19:9 the fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

19:10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb.

19:11 Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

19:12 But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults.

19:13 Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression.

19:14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

James 3:1-12

3:1 Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness.

3:2 For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle.

3:3 If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies.

3:4 Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs.

3:5 So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire!

3:6 And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell.

3:7 For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species,

3:8 but no one can tame the tongue--a restless evil, full of deadly poison.

3:9 With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God.

3:10 From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so.

3:11 Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water?

3:12 Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Mark 8:27-38

8:27 Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?"

8:28 And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

8:29 He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah."

8:30 And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

8:31 Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

8:32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

8:33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

8:34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

8:35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

8:36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

8:37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

8:38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

Sermon: Hearing the Voice of the Wisdom of God

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable in your sight,
O Lord our strength and our redeemer.*

Most preachers have a prayer that they consistently use before sharing their own reflections on the scripture. My prayer will sound familiar today because it is the final verse of Psalm 19. All our scripture appointed for today is pointing us to knowing God in an authentic way. When we listen to God and come to know God, our lives should be transformed no matter what the circumstances we experience in life. Even in the most challenging circumstances of our lives, the knowledge of God will offer meaning. My mother died when I was young and that experience made me realize that not everything in the world is alright. The one thing that gave me hope was knowing that God was with us and we were not left alone to sorrow in isolation. The knowledge of God is not for God's sake but rather for ours.

In the Book of Proverbs, Wisdom appears as a woman. She is described as being present from the beginning of creation as part of God's being. It should not be too surprising that some people speculated that the Messiah might actually come back as a woman. Instead we hear that Jesus is the Messiah; however, he is born of a woman. As a preacher, I work hard at not referring to God with a pronoun. The Hebrew language itself does not have pronouns. Pronouns are difficult to avoid in English translations. It is important to know God in the fullness God expects. As Herbert O'Driscoll says in his commentary, Wisdom reminds us that our human knowledge is impoverished. The deepest and richest knowledge of all is our relationship with God and that provides our human knowledge with meaning. Proverbs says that with the true knowledge of God, there is no dread in disaster. That does not mean there would not be disasters as humanity is fickle and human knowledge can produce good and evil. For people who strive to know God, that knowledge can ease our journey.

In the Psalm God revives the soul and rejoices the heart; what a beautiful and immeasurable gift. When we hear God's voice we have access to grace, light and wisdom. That kind of knowledge is richer than any gold, says the Psalmist. And no matter what our human experience, God can take us beyond. Some people think that people of faith are weak and maybe even deluding ourselves. Authentic faith offers a pathway, in our deepest sorrow, through darkness and evil; faith is not deluded but rather gives light to the way ahead. No wonder scripture says that the knowledge of God is the beginning of wisdom. However, James does suggest a warning to people of faith. He warns against a piety that can actually result in a voice that is a restless evil and a deadly poison. Our voices need to reflect the fullness of the graciousness of God. We always have a choice between blessing and curse;

choose blessing, that our voices reflect a gracious God. Treat others as we are treated by God.

There is an harshness to the voice of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark but with good reason. Caesarea Philippi had a large number of Roman soldier encampments. Any word of the Messiah would suggest that Jesus and the disciples were planning an insurrection. Even the Hebrew people thought the Messiah would come as a powerful soldier to lead an army against the Romans. However, Jesus has a much different vision in mind. His voice tells the disciples that this Messiah must suffer and die. Are they; are we; prepared to take up the cross and follow? What does it mean to gain the whole world but forfeit our life? I think we can join with Peter in hearing Jesus' voice as a difficult challenge. It is one of the hardest things to hear and do. The world knows suffering and death as failure. I had a friend when I was a nurse that told me she stopped believing in God when her Grandfather died. I totally understood her feelings. As humanity, we can be so limited in our view of what is true light and freedom.

When we hear the voice of the Wisdom of God, we are being asked to deny ourselves and find a pathway of light and life. Contrary to what the world thinks people of faith are seeking; it is not a placebo for pain or an opting out of struggle. Dear people of God, we are asked to do a hard thing. Carrying the cross and following Jesus will never be an easy road but it will be a way that leads to the real meaning of life. We too have blessing and curse set before us; life and death; light and darkness. In hearing God's voice of Wisdom, I pray that we might all find a path to choose blessing, life and light!

Thanks be to God. Amen

Offering Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ,
in your earthly life you failed to live up to people's expectations.
Faced with testing situations, you were outrageously inventive.

In human relationships you were outrageously imaginative,
compassionate and straight-speaking.
Your love for the poor showed you to be
outrageously committed to justice.

You lacked balance, perhaps were short of diplomatic skills;
yet you are the way, the truth, the life.

It is human expectations that need to be changed.

So make us unbalanced, we pray –
not saying on the one hand, on the other to excuse inaction;
not pandering to social prejudices;

willing to jettison advancement, prestige
in favour of truthful living;

prepared to spend our lives sacrificially
to share in the building of God's kingdom
and the doing of God's will on earth,
for we want to follow in your footsteps.

Living God, may the mind of Christ be ours;
clothe us with your grace and grittiness,
help us to embody the vision and values of your kingdom
and be ready to face whatever may come
as we seek to do your will.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen

Prayer:

We bring to God
someone whom we have met or remembered today
and for whom we want to pray;

- For those facing the challenges of chronic illness: Carla and Renate
- Those who continue to mourn the death of a spouse
- Those who are living through instability and facing challenges
- For someone who is hurting and needs our prayer

We bring to God
a troubled situation in our world

- Victims of Residential Schools and actions of reconciliation and healing
- The Hungry and Homeless and actions for a living income and secure housing
- For communities devastated by fires and hurricanes
- For the continuing challenges presented by Covid 19 and the Variants
 - For Afghanistan, for peace and reconciliation and especially women and Canadians trying to return home.

We bring to God,
someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God,
that we might grow in generosity of spirit,
clarity of mind,
and the warmth of affection.

Closing responses:

O Trinity of Love,
You have been with us at the world's beginning,
BE WITH US TILL THE WORLD'S END.
You have been with us at our life's shaping,
BE WITH US AT OUR LIFE'S END.

You have been with us at the sun's rising,
BE WITH US TILL THE DAY'S END.
AMEN.

Blessing:

This is the day that God has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.
We will not offer to God offerings that cost us nothing.
Go in peace to love and to serve; we will seek peace and pursue it.
In the name of the Trinity of Love,
God in Community, Holy and One.
Amen