

Worship at Home, August 29, 2021
The Fourteenth Sunday After Pentecost

INTRODUCTION

God's word, proclaimed and reflected upon, and the prayer it calls forth from those gathered, are the heart of this service, which is prepared especially for contemplative settings. The Holy Spirit, who knows our needs, prays with and through us, and when we have no words, for us. Silence makes room to breathe deeply, time to still the heart and quiet restless thoughts, and a place to listen and rest in the presence of God, "like a child upon its mother's breast" (Psalm 131:2). Some times of silence will last no longer than a deep breath; some will be more spacious.

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit gathers us into a community of prayer.

GREETING

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

OPENING PRAYER

O God of steadfast love, you are near to those who call, to all who cry out to you for help. Hear our cries and save us, grant to us your grace and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

SILENCE

GATHERING SONG

EvLW # 526 *God Is Here!*

1. God is here! As we your people meet to offer praise and prayer,
may we find in fuller measure what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world around us, all our varied skills and arts
wait the coming of the Spirit into open minds and hearts.
2. Here are symbols to remind us of our lifelong need of grace;
here are table, font, and pulpit; here the cross has central place.
Here in honesty of preaching, here in silence, as in speech,
here, in newness and renewal, God the Spirit comes to each.
3. Here our children find a welcome in the Shepherd's flock and fold;
here as bread and wine are taken, Christ sustains us as of old.
Here the servants of the Servant seek in worship to explore
what it means in daily living to believe and to adore.
4. Lord of all, of church and kingdom, in an age of change and doubt,
keep us faithful to the gospel; help us work your purpose out.
Here, in this day's dedication, all we have to give, receive;
we, who cannot live without you, we adore you! We believe!

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, silence, reflection, and song.

The word of God is proclaimed, and we reflect upon it, letting the word “dwell in us richly” (Colossians 3:16). Scripture reading is surrounded by silence, communal song, psalmody, and other readings, reflections, or actions that illumine the word. These may follow one after another or may be woven into a meditative whole.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God our strength, without you we are weak and wayward creatures. Protect us from all dangers that attack us from the outside, and cleanse us from all evil that arises from within ourselves, that we may be preserved through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Deuteronomy 4: 1-2, 6-9

The Israelites believed the law was a divine gift that provided guidelines for living out the covenant. Moses commands the people to obey the law and to neither add to nor subtract from it. The Israelites are also to teach the law to their children and their children’s children.

So now, Israel, give heed to the statutes and ordinances that I am teaching you to observe, so that you may live to enter and occupy the land that the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the Lord your God with which I am charging you.

You must observe them diligently, for this will show your wisdom and discernment to the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and discerning people!” For what other great nation has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is whenever we call to him? And what other great nation has statutes and ordinances as just as this entire law that I am setting before you today?

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SECOND READING

James 1:17-27

The letter of James was intended to provide first-century Christians with instruction in godly behaviour. Here Christians are encouraged to listen carefully and to act on what they hear, especially by caring for those least able to care for themselves.

Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. In fulfillment of his own purpose he gave us birth by the word of truth, so that we would become a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; for your anger does not produce God’s righteousness. Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.

But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves. For if any are hearers of the word and not doers, they are like those who look at themselves in a mirror; for they look at themselves and, on going away, immediately forget what they were like. But those who look into

the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere, being not hearers who forget but doers who act—they will be blessed in their doing.

If any think they are religious, and do not bridle their tongues but deceive their hearts, their religion is worthless. Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL

Mark 7: 1-8, 14-15, 21-23

The holy gospel according to Mark. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

Mark's gospel depicts Jesus as challenging traditional ways in which religious people determine what is pure or impure. For Jesus, the observance of religious practices cannot become a substitute for godly words or deeds that spring from a faithful heart.

Now when the Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around [Jesus], they noticed that some of his disciples were eating with defiled hands, that is, without washing them. (For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they thoroughly wash their hands, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and they do not eat anything from the market unless they wash it; and there are also many other traditions that they observe, the washing of cups, pots, and bronze kettles.) So the Pharisees and the scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live according to the tradition of the elders, but eat with defiled hands?” He said to them, “Isaiah prophesied rightly about you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honours me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching human precepts as doctrines.’ You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”

Then he called the crowd again and said to them, “Listen to me, all of you, and understand: there is nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile.”

For it is from within, from the human heart, that evil intentions come: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person.”

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

QUESTIONS FOR CONVERSATION

What church tradition no longer serves the sharing the Gospel in word and deed?

What church activity has encouraged your faith?

HYMN OF THE DAY

EvLW # 772 *Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways*

1. Oh, that the Lord would guide my ways to keep his statutes still!
Oh, that my God would grant me grace to know and do his will!
2. Order my footsteps by your word and make my heart sincere;
let sin have no dominion, Lord, but keep my conscience clear.
3. Assist my soul, too apt to stray, a stricter watch to keep;
and should I e'er forget your way, restore your wand'ring sheep.
4. Make me to walk in your commands, 'tis a delightful road;
nor let my head or heart or hands offend against my God.

PRAYER

The Holy Spirit prays with us and through us.

Trusting God's word and promises, we pray in the power of the Spirit and in the name of Christ Jesus, making our "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings" (1 Timothy 2:1) for the sake of all creation. In singing and silence, in stillness and sighing, when lifting our hands or lighting a candle, we pray.

INVITATION TO PRAYER

In Christ Jesus we meet the God who knows our weakness and bears the wounds of the world. Therefore, let us be bold as we pray, trusting that God draws near to those in any kind of need.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need. We pray for the church, that it is a safe haven for all who seek your presence. Fill it with pastors, deacons, the congregation and leaders who echo your expansive and generous welcome. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for the whole of creation, that plants and animals have the habitat and resources to thrive and flourish. Inspire us to protect threatened habitats and ensure a sustainable future for generations to come. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for individuals in positions of authority and for those you have called to serve as Members of Parliament across Canada. Raise up wise and discerning leaders and guide them to seek the benefit of every person. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who are in need. Support and encourage those who are unemployed, underemployed, or experiencing poverty. Bring food, shelter, clothes, and stability for daily life. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who are lonely and feeling abandoned and remind them of your abiding presence. Be with those who are in need of your comfort and healing, especially Beryl, Daryl, Elethia, Ferolyn, Jordon, Pat, and those we name quietly in our hearts. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

READINGS FOR THE WEEK

Mon	Aug 30	Deuteronomy 4:9-14 1	Timothy 4:6-16	Psalm 106:1-6, 13-23, 47-48
Tue	Aug 31	Deuteronomy 4:15-20	1 Peter 2:19-25	Psalm 106:1-6, 13-23, 47-48
Wed	Sept 1	Deuteronomy 4:21-40	Mark 7:9-23	Psalm 106:1-6, 13-23, 47-48
Thu	Sept 2	Isaiah 30:27-33	Romans 2:1-11	Psalm 146
Fri	Sept 3	Isaiah 32:1-8	Romans 2:12-16	Psalm 146
Sat	Sept 4	Isaiah 33:1-9	Matthew 15:21-31	Psalm 146
Sun	Sept 5	Isaiah 35:4-7a	James 2:1-10 [11-13] 14-17	Mark 7:24-37 Psalm 146 (2)

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