

ORDER OF WORSHIP – 4th Sunday in LENT

MUSIC for preparation and reflection is for QUIET meditation

ENTRY OF THE BIBLE

GOD CALLS US ...

WORDS OF GREETING:

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you -
and also with you.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND CONCERNS OF THE CHURCH:

- You are receiving this as written text this morning. On Wednesday the Elders & Board met and one item for discussion was the NKP response to the Covid 19 crisis. At that time the Provincial Gov't had set a limit on the size of group gatherings – at that time it was 50. We were quite confident that there would be less than 50 able and willing to gather at NKP on March 22nd so our decision was to go ahead and offer our regular worship opportunity. By Friday the Provincial Gov't had changed that # to 25 – and then the city of Regina announced that no more than 5 people should gather. At that point the elders cancelled our worship gathering for March 22. We will watch and listen to what may be announced in the coming week. I will communicate with the all via email or in some cases elders will phone some of the church members.
- You can call me anytime to ask what's happening. Feel free to call me at the church or at home.
- It is my plan to keep the church office open from Tuesday to Friday – but on the safe side call ahead before you drop by. I will check the mailbox daily for envelopes you may be dropping off.
- Other scheduled events for this coming week are all cancelled.
- We would like to get a newsletter ready for Easter so if you have anything to contribute send to the church please.
- As you read through today's service, please participate by reading out loud the response parts and even to pause to sing through the hymns (I linked to youtube for music – but for some you probably know the tunes so make a joyful noise to the Lord.)
- Offerings: we had intended to leave an offering plate at the back of the sanctuary –but now we must ask that if possible, please drop your offering at the church during business hours or mail it or bring it on subsequent Sundays as you are able.
- - Jinsil Park & Clara Lee will be married this afternoon in what will be a private ceremony with their witnesses present. They are sorry about not having

opportunity to meet and visit with you all, but they thank you for your support. They hope to come back in the summer.

- As you read through, participate in this written Sunday morning service, I pray you will be blessed and encouraged. I have chosen to email it at a time close to our regular Sunday morning worship hour – thinking that for most, this will be the hour that we read it. In some way it would make us aware that we are in fellowship with each other, even if we are not physically present with each other.
- Finally, I had planned a slight change in this Sunday's Order of Worship – the Praise Team were re-scheduled from their original time slot within the order, and were placed later in the service to assist with some songs after the sermon. I wanted us to reflect near the end of the service of how we can go out as people of hope. And you may think, I provided a 2nd sermon – well yes, kinda – but I was given an illustration which I included on the last page of the bulletin and the explanation of that was encouraging to me, so I hoped also it would be for you.
- Thanks for participating with me today in this format.

LET US WORSHIP GOD TOGETHER

CALL TO WORSHIP:

“The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Jacob”.

God has made a new covenant with us in Christ Jesus.

Yet we have turned away, hardened our hearts and spirits.

Lord, help us to change.

“I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people”.

But we have failed to be God's people. We have chosen our own way.

Turn again, says the Lord, through the prophets and through God's own Son.

Turn us again to you, O Lord, and awaken our spirits to your love and mercy. AMEN.

***GATHERING HYMN: #202 'We lay our broken world in sorrow at
your feet' (tune #481)**

(the tune we had selected for this hymn is Blest be the tie that binds. This is one of the Lenten hymns in our Book of Praise – at least read the words – it is so appropriate for today)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zbj24T6JmFQ>

We lay our broken world
In sorrow at your feet,
Haunted by hunger, war and fear,
Oppressed by power and hate.

Where human life seems less
Than profit, might and pride,
Though to unite us all in you
You lived and loved and died.

We bring our broken towns,
Our neighbours hurt and bruised;
You show us how old pain and wounds
For new life can be used.

We bring our broken hopes
For lives of dignity;
Workless and overworked you love
And call us to be free.

We bring our broken loves,
Friends parted, families torn;
Then in your life and death we see
That love must be reborn.

We bring our broken selves,
Confused and closed and tired;
Then through your gift of healing grace
New purpose is inspired.

O Spirit, on us breathe,
With life and strength anew;
Find in us love, and hope and trust,
And lift us up to you.

OPENING PRAYER: (unison)

Lord, as we continue in the Lenten journey, grant us a change of heart that we might turn away from sin and follow your Son's Gospel. We ask you to fill us with a hunger for what is just. By your grace, may our lives become more deeply rooted in prayer, self-sacrifice and a willingness to share, in order that your Reign of justice might more fully flourish in our hearts. We ask you this, through Christ our Lord. Amen.

GOD DESIRES TO RECONCILE US . . .

WE CONFESS OUR SINS AND LAMENT OUR BROKENNESS: (unison)

Compassionate Lord, forgive us when we falter on this Lenten pathway; when the road ahead seems too uncertain and we are afraid. We admit that following Jesus is not an easy task. Jesus requires us to be willing to make the ultimate commitment of our whole lives and we hesitate and hold back. Draw us back to you, Lord. Give us confidence and courage to face the future with hope. Let us place our trust in you that the message of peace and mercy you have given to us through Jesus Christ may be offered to others through our own witness to your healing mercy. In Jesus' Name, we pray. AMEN.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON:

Even though the future is clouded; God is with us, guiding, healing, comforting, restoring. Rejoice! In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven and healed. AMEN

SPECIAL MUSICAL OFFERING OF ASSURANCE: 'Psalm 23' (Judy Page)

(unfortunately, we don't have Judy recorded for this – but please sing along to the link or provide your own solo version of this familiar hymn...)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHQoRfFr1rE>

**1 The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
he makes me down to lie
in pastures green; he leadeth me
the quiet waters by.**

**2 My soul he doth restore again,
and me to walk doth make
within the paths of righteousness,
e'en for his own name's sake.**

3 Yea, though I walk through death's dark vale,
yet will I fear none ill,
for thou art with me; and thy rod
and staff me comfort still.

4 My table thou hast furnished
in presence of my foes;
my head thou dost with oil anoint,
and my cup overflows.

5 Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me;
and in God's house forevermore
my dwelling place shall be.

SILENT REFLECTION

GOD TEACHES US . . .

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION:

Saving Spirit,
as you gathered us in the wilderness
and led us to a land flowing with milk and honey,
gather us before your Word
and lead us into your wisdom
that we might be equipped to follow your Son
on this Lenten path. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Joshua 23:1-8; 24:14-27

(Pew Bible pg.230, 231) New International Version (NIV)

23 After a long time had passed and the LORD had given Israel rest from all their enemies around them, Joshua, by then a very old man, ²summoned all Israel—their elders, leaders, judges and officials—and said to them: “I am very old. ³You yourselves have seen everything the LORD your God has done to all these nations for your sake; it was the LORD your God who fought for you. ⁴Remember how I have allotted as an inheritance for your tribes all the land of the nations that remain—the nations I conquered—between the Jordan and the Mediterranean Sea in the west. ⁵The LORD your

God himself will push them out for your sake. He will drive them out before you, and you will take possession of their land, as the LORD your God promised you.

⁶ “Be very strong; be careful to obey all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, without turning aside to the right or to the left. ⁷ Do not associate with these nations that remain among you; do not invoke the names of their gods or swear by them. You must not serve them or bow down to them. ⁸ But you are to hold fast to the LORD your God, as you have until now.

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¹⁴ “Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your ancestors worshiped beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your ancestors served beyond the Euphrates, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD.”

¹⁶ Then the people answered, “Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! ¹⁷ It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our parents up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. ¹⁸ And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God.”

¹⁹ Joshua said to the people, “You are not able to serve the LORD. He is a holy God; he is a jealous God. He will not forgive your rebellion and your sins. ²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, he will turn and bring disaster on you and make an end of you, after he has been good to you.”

²¹ But the people said to Joshua, “No! We will serve the LORD.”

²² Then Joshua said, “You are witnesses against yourselves that you have chosen to serve the LORD.”

“Yes, we are witnesses,” they replied.

²³ “Now then,” said Joshua, “throw away the foreign gods that are among you and yield your hearts to the LORD, the God of Israel.”

²⁴ And the people said to Joshua, “We will serve the LORD our God and obey him.”

²⁵On that day Joshua made a covenant for the people, and there at Shechem he reaffirmed for them decrees and laws. ²⁶And Joshua recorded these things in the Book of the Law of God. Then he took a large stone and set it up there under the oak near the holy place of the LORD.

²⁷“See!” he said to all the people. “This stone will be a witness against us. It has heard all the words the LORD has said to us. It will be a witness against you if you are untrue to your God.”

This is the Word of the Lord

Thanks be to God

Sermon Series: The Journey Forward (from the book of Joshua)

Sermon Title: *‘Do or do not; there is no try’*

Only a few of you will recognize today’s sermon title as a quote from a wee little character called ‘Yoda’ of Star Wars fame. Maybe you are not, nor have been fans of



the Star Wars movies – but in our household as soon as the boys were old enough to watch, Arend had introduced them to the stories, the drama, the action of these his favourite movies.

So fan or not, the themes, the ideas, the music, the setting, the props, the

characters did change culture to some extent. They captured an intriguing fanciful story, with relatable and computer-generated characters, in a location far far way and one where excitement and adventure reigned supreme. The Star Wars impact on the movie industry, on dreams, on life was extensive. That impact may have been in names (Luke & Leila became popular names in the 90’s); the impact was in greater awareness of outer space, the impact was on dreams that could become reality; and the impact was also on language – phrases like ‘evil empire’ or ‘may the force be with you’, or ‘I am your father’ came into every day use. But one of the most famous lines is the one I took for today’s sermon title. **‘Do. Or do not. There is no try.’**

Wise sayings come to us in many mediums, in many sizes and shapes. In this past week, especially, I have found myself laughing with and agreeing to so many Face Book memes and other online quips about washing our hands and social distancing. Some take common every day sayings and turn them into something that communicates a message about the unprecedented time we are experiencing. Some help us improve or develop better habits, and thus take better care. There are more than a few reminders about hand washing. People are having fun as they make up new songs or catchy jingles to which we should wash our hands for a specific length of time. For us as Presbyterians the best practice in our hand washing may be to sing the doxology ('Praise God from whom all blessings flow') – maybe sing it through twice. Try it – you'll like it – because it not only ensures your hands are clean but it reminds you that God is always to be praised for all, in all, through all circumstances and events.

My sermon title 'do or do not, there is no try' can be applied to the absolute necessity of the things we must do in these days of seeking to stop a virus in its tracks. It's not a matter of trying to attend to the best practices it is a time of just do it!

Joshua felt the same way as he came near to the end of his life and left one final message to the children of Israel. These last few chapters in the book of Joshua are his farewell instructions. He is old, he will not be with them much longer. The land as promised has been captured and settled, the tribes who received their portion east of the Jordan are returning there, the other tribes are beginning to find and establish their places in the lands just captured. And in many of those captured places, the people remained although now under the authority of the capturing powers and peoples. Joshua's tone in his farewell address is stern and urgent. He gives a message of what they must do. No excuses, no hesitation, no trying, no blaming others or circumstances for failing – just do it. Just do what is necessary. Just do what is right.

And so what were they to do? In these last chapters of the book of Joshua we hear the instructions that will be for the best life possible in this best and promised land that God had given to his people.

"Be very steadfast to observe and do all that is written in the book of the law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right nor to the left." (23:6)

"Hold fast to the Lord your God." (23:8)

"Revere the Lord, and serve him in all faithfulness" (24:14)

"Choose this day whom you will serve" (24:15)

"Put away foreign gods...incline your hearts to the Lord" (24:23)

There is no try in Joshua's vocabulary. He is not saying "try". Try to be steadfast, try to hold fast, try to revere and serve the Lord, try to choose, try to put away foreign gods.

No try – just do. These are instructions.

They need to remember.

They need to revere.

They need to hold fast.

They need to serve.

They need to choose.

They need to put away.

They need to incline.

All these words are pleading words of how they need to think and live. When they fail to do these things, they will not have the blessings and the experiences of God's favour which will make their life and witness that a testimony to the God who choose them, called them, cared for them and now gave them a home and a future.

We read here that they get it – for now they get the message and they make their commitments. Vs. 24 says "the people said to Joshua, the Lord our God we will serve, and him we will obey."

To visually make this promise / this covenant real – they choose to place a large stone near the sanctuary, the tent of meeting. This would be a prominent place and would tie their promise to their worship life. They speak of this stone as if it had ears to hear the commitments they just made. (Scripture gives us another example of inanimate objects being considered as hearing – recall Jesus speaking about the Pharisees during his triumphal procession to Jerusalem – "If they remain silent, the very stones will cry out.")

We can see how serious they were not to just 'try' to do all that God commanded but to actually be held accountable and to be reminded of their commitment by the use of a large stone – comparable to in our day to boundary markers, or cairns or corner stones or inukshuks.

On this note, with this commitment, the book of Joshua ends. As the page turns to the book of Judges, we will find that such a stone promise means very little. They do not do what they promised to do. But over and over again, despite forgetting the covenant promises, God continues to respond to their crises and delivers them.

You see God is not a 'let's try this' type of God. He is a 'do it' God, a promise-keeping God. In Genesis, from the beginning, God loved his creation and had a plan for all humanity. Everything that follows in this story of God, from Adam to Abraham, to Moses and Joshua affirms God's ultimate intent that all the families of the earth would be blessed. The ups and downs, the obedience then disobedient \ faithful then unfaithful cycles, the strengths and courage of good leaders like Joshua to be followed by stumbling, blundering, fickle judges, all in ways beyond our comprehension, becomes the large unfolding of God's story which is a redemption, hopeful, salvation story. It is an ongoing story even to today.

And we need to hear and be reminded of God's story.

We need to turn our fearful hearts back to the God who has been with us in the past, who has led us through difficult times, who has revealed his presence, who provided us strength and comfort and help and healing when we called out to Him.

We need God, we need to renew our commitment, our faith, our love.

We need to know a God who is 'doing something'.

And He is.

Trust him.

Thanks be to God. Amen

SILENT REFLECTION

Response: Prayers and Songs of Hope and Encouragement:

Words of Encouragement:

On the last page of the March 22, 2020 Bulletin there is, what probably appears to you to be just a simple sketch of a man with a book. If you look closely at this sketch though – and especially if you look at the lower left corner you will see where the drawing begins. A careful follow of the pencil line and you should soon realize that the 'artist' never lifts the pencil from the page until the end of the line on the right-hand side of the page. The person doing this sketch never lifted the pencil – even as the lines had to overlap each other.

Such a drawing can help us think about the confusing events around us – and the one at this time which has us all in virtual lockdown. Sometimes even the Bible leaves us wondering how can these times be explained, why is it that various messages from the Bible don't all seem to fit together. But maybe we should look at the end point – like we can do in the drawing. The end point is the climax of the big story of God. In Revelation 11:15 we read “the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.” The vision created by this drawing connects the past, the present and the future in the idea of all things coming together in a new heaven and earth. Jewish scholars point out that the 1st letter in the Hebrew Bible is the same first letter as in the word for home. It was God's intent from the beginning to make his home/be at home with His people. So, consider again the drawing – it is as if the pencil never leaves the page from Genesis to Revelation. Following that line takes us through wilderness, flood, fire, bloody battles, crucifixion and through resurrection to end up in the throne room of God. The line is hard to follow from time to time– does it double back, take wide detours, disappear behind another part of the line, is it always straight and easy, or wobbly and messy? Does it take us high with anticipation and low with despair? Yet the line is always there designed and guided by the Almighty, your Lord and King. He knows precisely where the line is going and that the pencil is in his all-knowing hand. You can better imagine this put ‘your hand in the hand’ idea, if you've ever taken a child's hand to guide them to write their name or draw a picture. Well that's what we need to do now in this time of the Covid 19 crisis. What a relief to know that in God's hand, the pencil never leaves the page and the One holding that pencil never lets go of us.

(Pastor Ronda with ideas and picture supplied by Desi Maxwell)

Song: Faithful One

Faithful one, so unchanging
Ageless one, you're my rock of peace
Lord of all I depend on you
I call out to you, again and again
I call out to you, again and again

You are my rock in times of trouble
You lift me up when I fall down
All through the storm
Your love is, the anchor
My hope is in You alone

Songwriters: Brian Doerksen

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7PjSO5IhI0M>

Song: Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus

(Refrain)

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace*

Oh soul are you weary and troubled?
No light in the darkness you see?
There's light for a look at the Savior
And life more abundant and free *(Refrain)*

Through death into life everlasting
He passed and we follow Him there
O'er us sin no more hath dominion
For more than conquerors we are *(Refrain)*

Oh, turn your eyes upon Jesus
Look full in His wonderful face
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of His glory and grace *(Refrain)*

His word shall not fail you, He promised
Believe Him and all will be well
Then go to a world that is dying
His perfect salvation to tell. *(Refrain)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j5qc0EcNgqw>

PRAYERS of the People and the Lord's Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we turn our eyes to you this day, asking to see You more clearly and to trust you more completely, and to love you more dearly in these strange and difficult days. May it be that this day we will be doers of the Word and not hearers (readers) only.

You are a faithful God – faithful to all generations, faithful in all time, faithful to be true, loving and present even when we are in times of isolation, worry and fear. At this time, there is so much uncertainty and it weighs on our hearts and minds – information comes at us from so many sources – we doubt some of it, we get frightened, we even ignore some of it. Heavenly Father, we need your help. Help us to be calm. Help us to discern. Help us when fear makes it hard to breathe and anxiety seems to be the order of the day. Slow us down O God. We are living indoors these days, we have less responsibilities in work or in volunteering, we are beginning to feel distant – but it is our hearts and minds that need to slow and breathe in that You are with us, that you know the beginning from the end, that whatever path this virus takes – you have never lifted the pencil in the drawing of our lives and in the purposes and plans you have for the world. You hold us and keep us safe. Thank you for such a promise. In these days, we pray for ourselves and for others. We can't touch with our hands, but we can with our hearts – may we be moved with compassion and with prayers for healing of those who now have the Covid 19 virus – we pray for their healing and recovery. We pray for health care workers who fulfill their jobs despite the threats to themselves – we pray for their protection. We pray for researchers, scientists, those in labs all over the world who commit their expertise and insight into the solutions and the vaccines that are needed immediately – may a successful solution soon be found. We pray for governments, for the health care officials of each province and country – we pray for wisdom, for policy based on solid information, for true and accurate reports, and for all the decisions and plans to produce the desired results.

We pray today for our church family – we pray for those who are vulnerable to this threat due to their own health – keep them safe. We pray for those who are worried for themselves and their loved ones, give them an extra measure of trust that You are in control. We pray for those who are seeing the benefits of extra rest in these days, extra time with family, extra opportunity to enjoy hobbies and even get tasks accomplished that they have been waiting to get at – may we all be thankful for small mercies. We pray for the small wedding ceremony this afternoon of Jinsil & Clara – and may they be blessed in their commitment vows and in their life together – trusting You to guide them from this day forward. We thank you for love – your love for us all; you love which casts out fear – may we in turn become more loving, more aware of the needs of others, more willing to help even in small ways. Increase our confidence and our hope in you alone. We pray all these things in the strong name of Jesus our Lord and Saviour, who taught us to pray these words:

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 debts,
as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen.**

THE PARTING HYMN: O God our Help in Ages Past

O God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home:

Under the shadow of thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defense is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,
Or earth received her frame,
From everlasting thou art God,
To endless years the same.

A thousand ages in thy sight
Are like an evening gone;
Short as the watch that ends the night
Before the rising sun.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all its sons away;
They fly, forgotten, as a dream
Dies at the opening day.

O God, our help in ages past,

Our hope for years to come,
Be thou our guide while troubles last,
And our eternal home!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N-hN740J6qA>

GOD SENDS US . . .

*BENEDICTION: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

*GOING OUT SONG: #358 *'There is a Redeemer (vs.2) (projected)*

***Jesus, my Redeemer, name above all names,
Precious Lamb of God, Messiah, hope for sinners slain,
Thank you, O my Father, for giving us your Son,
and leaving Your Spirit till the work on earth is done***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldRcFz7rK7w>

