

Words of Welcome

There are so many uncertainties about this world. We like to think we are in control and then disaster strikes, whether it be health, politics, or nature. This is expected, always has been. It may be of interest to see where Jesus goes with these topics. We begin with a call to worship.

Call to Worship

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth;

We will lift up joyous song and sing our praises.

Let the sea roar, and all that fills it; the world and those who live in it rejoice.

Let the hills sing together for joy at the presence of the Lord,

For God will come to judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity.

Let us join with all creation to praise the Lord! Let us worship God.

Hymn

All my hope on God is founded

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| 1. All my hopes on God is founded who does still my trust renew; through all change and chance God guides me, only good and only true. Love unknown, God's alone, calls my heart to be God's own. | 2. Human pride and earthly glory, sword and crown, betray all trust; what our care and toil establish, tower and temple, fall to dust but God's power, hour by hour, is my temple and my tower. |
| 3. God's great goodness reigns eternal, deep in wisdom, passing thought; light and life are all God's splendor bringing beauty out of naught. Evermore from God's store newborn worlds rise and adore. | 4. Daily does Almighty Giver bounteous gifts on us bestow, God's desire our soul delighting, pleasure leading where we go. Love will stand at God's hand; joy will wait on God's command. |
| 5. Still from earth to God eternal sacrifice of praise be done, high above all praises praising for the gift of Christ, the Son. Hear Christ call one and all: you that follow shall not fall. | |

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Opening Prayer

Our loving and caring God,
we need this time together to be united with our siblings in the faith;
we need this time of worship to be comforted and strengthened in your presence.
We hear of wars and rumors of wars. We read of persecution and oppression.
Remind us again of your vision, that all might live in a world of peace and justice and love. May this time together imprint this vision and promise on our hearts,
that we may live into this beloved community.

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Elements: November 13, 2022](#)

God of promise and purpose,

You set before us a vision of your new heaven and earth, yet we confess we easily cling to the past. We hold on to grudges and resentment. We grumble about change even when we see the need for it. We resist making room for those who have faced discrimination in our community. Forgive these old ways of thinking and acting. Create in us hearts made new by your mercy and love.

Holy God, you speak words of challenge and words of comfort through the Scriptures. Send your Spirit to open our understanding to the word we need to hear this day, for the sake of Jesus Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

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Assurance of Forgiveness

Friends, hear the good news!
While the world judges in order to condemn,
God judges with justice, equity and mercy.
All things have been made new in Christ and our sin is forgiven.
Thanks be to God that we can all make a new start.

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Scripture Reading Luke 21:5-19

⁵ When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, he said, ⁶‘As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.’

⁷ They asked him, ‘Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?’ ⁸And he said, ‘Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, “I am he!” and, “The time is near!” Do not go after them.

⁹ ‘When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.’ ¹⁰Then he said to them, ‘Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹² ‘But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So

make up your minds not to prepare your defence in advance; ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls.

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

Message Open-Mouthed Tourists

“A building of shining white marble and gold, with bronze entrance doors, it was said that you could not look at the Temple in daylight as it would blind you.” Before work began on the Temple, Herod spent eight years stockpiling materials for its construction. Then, a workforce of over 10,000 men began its construction including a contingent of 1,500 specially trained priests who were the only ones permitted to work on the innermost and holiest parts of the Temple. Building continued for a further twenty years, though the Temple was in a sufficiently ready state within three and a half years of its commencement to be dedicated.”¹

Normally a city of 100-200 thousand, at times Jerusalem could swell to one million people during particular Jewish festivals. Herod the Great, the political person in charge at the time, had to find a way to deal with the logistics of this massive influx of people. The Temple and the surrounding area were his project. By all accounts of the day, the temple was impressive. It encompassed a large mass of land that was prepared to enable the flow and management of the great numbers of people.

I began this message with taking information as presented on the website *Jewish Virtual Library*. I continue to share from there...

Herod built a great plaza around the Temple...To construct this platform, Herod built a box around Mount Moriah and filled it in. The plaza covered this box and expanded the available land at the peak of the mountain. The plaza is about the size of six football fields. The retaining walls of this box were themselves cause for wonder...The walls are 5m thick and made up of enormous stones weighing between 2 and 100 tons (there is even one that weighs 400 tons) with an average stone being about 10 tons. There is no mortar between the stones and they sit so closely together that not even a piece of paper can fit between them. Such fine maneuvering of the stones is incomprehensible given that even today's modern machinery cannot move such heavy stones.

Also worthy of comment was the overall appearance of the walls which were about the height of a 20 storey building...The precision with which stones weighing over 100 tons were placed 2000 years ago is astounding and mystifying.

¹ [The Second Temple at the Time of Jesus \(jewishvirtuallibrary.org\)](http://jewishvirtuallibrary.org). Accessed November 10, 2022.

Furthermore, these stones were merely part of the retaining walls that supported the plaza on which the Temple stood and thus only a prelude to the even more incredible sight of the Temple itself.²

This is the structure that had some of the people talking like open-mouthed tourists. You know the ones with phone or camera in hand ready to take a photo and in the moment just have to stare open-mouthed at the wonder of it all, trying to take in all the sights, the shapes, the sounds. In this scripture, this was the posture of those with Jesus in the Temple as they talked about “how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God.” (v5) Jesus’ unfathomable response was, “As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.” (v6) For those with Jesus, that would have seemed an incredulous claim, yet this did happen in 70AD when the Romans destroyed the temple.

In our own time we have seen many edifices that have had us looking like open-mouthed tourists. We have also stood open-mouthed as those structures were taken down by human hands, in acts of war, or by nature’s power. Think of the fire at Notre Dame Cathedral in France, the Berlin Wall, or the Twin Towers.

When asked “when will this be and what will be the sign that this is about to take place” (v7) Jesus goes into a triple threat situation where the people will experience false prophets, wars and insurrections, and nature itself seemingly rebelling.

All of these things the people of ancient times faced. We continue to face them now. It is still hard to believe what we are seeing in politics around the globe with false narratives and spinning of stories. We hear of interference of one nation against another nation. Many of us are still in shock that the Ukraine has become a battle field. Less so are we surprised to hear of Putin’s interference in U.S. elections. We have come to expect that politics and power are corrupting forces. When we vote in elections we hope and pray that those running and elected will care more about people then procedures and towing party lines, but sadly we are often disappointed.

In terms of nature, one need only follow the Weather Network to see how flooding, hurricanes, tornadoes, freezing rain, earthquakes, and mudslides, to mention a few ways that the forces of nature have taken a toll on human life and property.

What we rarely have to think about from our North American homes is that as Christians we will be persecuted for our faith and beliefs. Still, more and more in Canada, the church is being sidelined as insignificant in public discourse and influence. We often find ourselves choosing not to share that we go to church or believe in God for fear of being ridiculed or left out of conversations and invitations. We don’t want to be “betrayed by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends” (v16) or be hated by all because of Jesus’ name.

² Ibid.

We are pretty sure, in fact confident, that the statement, “But not a hair of your head will perish.” (v18) does not mean to say that we will be spared any recourse or suffering in this life time and none of us wants anymore suffering than is necessary.

Yet here we have it, Jesus is saying to those at that time and to us now, be aware, there are things that distract us, from people of influence whether social, political, or powerful, to news of war and insurrections, and natural disasters. And Jesus says, “do not be terrified” (v9). That is quite the call on us. Do not be terrified. Could Jesus really be asking that of us? Who of us would not be terrified as our homes collapse around us or our nations under threat and involved in acts of war? We have seen what it means to have a pandemic threaten and alter our very lives and many are still afraid to leave the safety of their homes for fear of getting sick.

There is nothing in all that Jesus had spoken about happening that we have not witnessed or experienced in some way in our life time. So, what is the hope, the Good News that is ours when reading a scripture such as this?

The thing is, our hope remains in Jesus, in God. We will fear, we will suffer, but in our faith, in our trust that God’s ultimately got this, we can be transformed.

Let me share with you some words written by Rev. Dr. Derek Weber that have helped shape this message today as we sit here to worship, an activity that we choose to do as people of faith and this is important.

... the object of worship is giving praise to God and lifting up the name of Jesus. At the same time, we redeclare our commitment to walk the path of discipleship and live as though we were a part of the kin-dom of God, because we are. It is a moment of perspective, or of realignment. Not that we come and realize that nothing else matters, that the wars and conflicts and deprivations and divisions don’t matter, because all that matters is giving praise to God. To the contrary, we discover that what is happening in the world matters all that much more because of our commitment to Christ and to loving the world that he gave his life for. But we hold on to hope.³

We are Christians called to be a witness to the transforming experience of grace, life, hope, and love that is our faith. We believe in a living God, in the Holy Spirit that gives breath to our very being, and in Jesus, whose life, death, resurrection and ascension gives us life today and always. This transformation is about the value of each person, their dignity, and their vulnerability. It is about transforming the world into one in which God’s will is done on earth as in heaven. God’s will being, that all are given abundant life, hope and the experience that people care, and through us the knowledge that God cares.

³ [Discipleship Ministries | Twenty-Third Sunday after Pentecost, Year C... \(umcdiscipleship.org\)](https://umcdiscipleship.org/)

Accessed November 10, 2022.

God, not desiring to have puppets give him praise, chooses to work through each of us. It is not straight forward or fully comprehensible as we cannot know the mind of God, but the experience of those whose stories we read in the Bible and our own stories of faith throughout the generations, witness to God's power in the world through human beings, who came to a profound understanding of God at work in the world and of God's grace.

The last line of the scripture is "By your endurance you will gain your souls". Only recently have we come to understand the word soul to mean our hearts, it more aptly refers to our whole inner life, our whole being. Living this human life takes endurance, but it is worth the experience of knowing that God is present with us, has not forsaken us or the world, but is working through each of us to transform the world. We are open-mouthed, not because of structures but because of love and grace experienced in Christ, with God, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of our past and our future, God of healing and hope,
We come before you with grateful hearts
trusting that you walk with us through all the times of our lives.
We give you thanks for all the benefits we share
in a nation with many resources and many opportunities.
Yet we remember before you the many who do not have enough
and cannot see their way forward.
We remember before you those living with hunger
and communities struggling with the impact of fire and storm, earthquake and famine.

We pray for all those working to relieve suffering in so many precious lives
here and around the world.

God of these present times,
We give you thanks that we live in a country of relative peace and good order,
a place where injustices past and present become subjects of investigation.
We pray for the work of healing and reconciliation
engaging indigenous communities with other citizens in this land.
Open hearts in mutual understanding
and provide opportunities for common enterprise.
We pray for those who have come to Canada,
fleeing violence and deprivation in their homelands.
Provide comfort and support through the generosity of neighbours
and protect newcomers from misunderstanding and discrimination.
Guide us to create a sense of home that all can share.

God of time beyond our imagining,
We give you thanks for all we learn through scientific investigation
that stretches us to reimagine your creation in its vast mystery and beauty.
Thank you for increasing insight in medical science

and the possibilities it adds to your gifts of hope and healing.
We pray for all those who work in health care in this stressful time,
for patients waiting for treatment and for those whose conditions find no relief.
Bless them with your Spirit of courage and comfort.
Thank you for increasing insight in climate science and the awareness it gives
about the impact of our lives on the wellbeing of the earth.
Create better agreement and cooperation in our communities
to protect the earth for future generations
by the ways we adapt our lifestyles now.
Bless us all with your Spirit of courage and commitment.

God of all life and each life,
In these moments of silence we hold before you those on our hearts this day
who need to know you are near and that we care for them too:

Make us signs of hope and healing for every life we touch
for we are the followers of Jesus who dare to pray together the words he taught us:

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today 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.

Invitation to the offering

Each week we pray for the coming of God's Kingdom. Though we do not know exactly what this will look like, we offer our gifts to God for the work of the Kingdom here and now.

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Hymn

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty

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1. Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, who rules all creation.
my soul, praise God who alone is your health and salvation.
Come, all who hear, sisters and brothers draw near,
joining in glad adoration.

2. Praise to the Lord, who in all things so wondrously reigning
hides you with sheltering wings, ever gently sustaining.
Have you not seen how your heart's wishes have been
granted through God's kind ordaining?
3. Praise to the Lord, who will prosper your work, who defends you;
surely God's merciful goodness here daily attends you;
ponder anew what almighty can do,
when in great love God befriends you.
4. Praise to the Lord, and with all that is in me adoring,
all who have life and breath, come with glad
praises outpouring! Let the Amen sound from God's people again:
now and forever adoring!

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Benediction

Go forth into a world that needs new visions.
Bring the message of hope and love,
of justice and peace, to all you meet.
Live the dream. Make it reality.
Celebrate endings and new beginnings,
challenges and promises.
Live the new creation. Amen.

Joanne Carlson Brown, *Ministry Matters*, <https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/4387/worship-elements-november-17-2019>.