



Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church
Sunday October 18, 2020
Olds 9:30 am Sundre 1:30 pm



Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan

As we worship we gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3.

May we cherish and care for these lands and the people, just as those who came before us did.

Prelude Variety of recorded music

Opening Call

From the stories of our faith, we hear that when we call on God, God answers.

God will be with us in times of trouble and challenge.

God will heal us. God is the one in whom we can find refuge, strength, and courage for the road ahead.

Let us open our hearts to welcome God among us, around us, and within us.

Let us worship this day with joy!

Prayer

Gracious God, these moments of worship can change lives, can bind us together as a community of compassion, and can give us purpose and direction. We thank you for the opportunities before us. We thank you for the blessings that are ours. We thank you that we can be together, as people of faith, to worship you. We hold in prayer those in our communities who worship with us in Spirit, in their homes this day.

Amen.

Musical Interlude VU 374 Come and Find the Quiet Centre

Time with Children

Reading for today Exodus 33:12-23

Moses seeks assurance that God is with him and the people as he continues to lead them. God promises ever-abiding presence. Moses wants more than words. He asks to see God's glory. God responds by allowing Moses to see God's back, as the Divine One passed by him.

¹²Moses said to the Lord, "See, you have said to me, 'Bring up this people'; but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. Yet you have said, 'I know you by name, and you have also found favor in my sight.' ¹³Now if I have

found favor in your sight, show me your ways, so that I may know you and find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people.”¹⁴He said, “My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.”¹⁵And he said to him, “If your presence will not go, do not carry us up from here.”¹⁶For how shall it be known that I have found favor in your sight, I and your people, unless you go with us? In this way, we shall be distinct, I and your people, from every people on the face of the earth.”¹⁷The Lord said to Moses, “I will do the very thing that you have asked; for you have found favor in my sight, and I know you by name.”¹⁸Moses said, “Show me your glory, I pray.”¹⁹And he said, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, ‘The Lord’; and I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy.”²⁰But,” he said, “you cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live.”²¹And the Lord continued, “See, there is a place by me where you shall stand on the rock;²²and while my glory passes by I will put you in a cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand until I have passed by;²³then I will take away my hand, and you shall see my back; but my face shall not be seen.”

A Message for Today

We’ve been following the journey of the ancient Hebrew people from captivity as slaves in Egypt for generations to the long wilderness journey to the promised land.

With Thanksgiving Sunday – we missed a piece of the story. Our American brothers and sisters in faith would have heard this piece if they follow the lectionary, and we could have too – if I had chosen not to follow the Thanksgiving readings – those that our neighbours will hear in November.

The piece we missed is that story of the creation of the golden calf – where, in the absence of Moses, the people of Israel go against the commandments and make an idol to worship and revere. God is angered, and tells Moses that he will bring his wrath upon the people. Moses, however, challenges God, and reminds God of the covenant with the people, that their descendants would be multiplied like the stars of heaven. And God listens, and has mercy upon the people.

There’s a section of the story that our lectionary skips – where we read of some not too loving actions – the people suffering death at the hands of Levi and his people, after the golden calf betrayal, and a plague – all as a result of creating the golden idol, and God’s anger at the people. Moses keeps up the conversations with God, imploring God to have mercy. And again, God listens, but tells Moses that instead of God being with the people on the last part of their journey, that God will send an angel in God’s stead.

Not good enough for Moses. He knows that the people (and himself) need to know God’s presence among them – even on this last piece of the journey. Moses helps God see how important this is, and God changes plans.

Throughout this journey, we see how Moses' leadership is about relationship with God and with the people. And part of that relationship is in being able to engage with God in a way that God listens and responds, just as Moses listens and responds to God. It's a 2 way street. And when God says angel, not God, Moses says no – we need you, God.

God listens. God's mercy prevails.

Yet Is Moses satisfied with God's response? No. He wants to **see** the glory of God. No different than many of us, isn't he? He wants to see to believe.

But what would he see?

Think about the times that you have experienced the **results** of God's presence. I can name a few. Each time I held my children for the first time...when they were tiny little babes in my arms. I saw love, and I saw God, in those little, wee babes in my arms.

At the bedside of someone close to moving from this earthly life to the life beyond – and in the faces of those who sit with that person, I see love. I see God. One of those sacred moment privileges that come with this vocation God called me into. One of those life passage moments that has changed as a result of COVID restrictions...I've seen God in the compassion of medical staff, in care givers, all trying to make the best of an ever-changing set of rules and restrictions.

In the beauty of the created world, in sunrises, and sunsets, this year in the beautiful fall season we actually had, in the health of the crops growing around our communities...in all of that, I see wonder and mystery, and I see God.

I know that each of you could create your own lists of the places you 'see' God...where you see the results of God's presence among us. And I know that for all of us, we experience those times where we have trouble seeing God...where we wonder where God is.

Perhaps that's the place that Moses was in. He was tired, it had been a long journey, with the responsibility of the world on his shoulders, as he led his people to this new land. I am hearing those stories from colleagues, from friends in other social service work...being in leadership, be it paid or volunteer, during these past several months has not been easy. As a friend shared with me just the other day – part of practicing good leadership has meant setting a high bar for modelling precautions and safety measures – like mask wearing, practicing social isolation and careful sanitization and hygiene.

So, old Moses longed to see the glory of the God who knew him by name, he longed to see God's face. He and his people had been on such a journey. The people too, were tired. Hence their time of transgression, and creating that

golden image. They weren't quite trusting in God's presence, and with Moses up on the mountain, they had time without leadership, without guidance or correction. Moses, when he comes back down the mountain, knows the people need more assurance. They need to trust that as they settle in to that promised land, and all the changes that new life would bring, that God will be with them.

Perhaps, too, old Moses knew he was not long of the earth, and perhaps, before his life came to a close, he wanted some assurance, some promise that God would always be there for him, and for his people.

God, in God's way, does what Moses most needs...and assures Moses of his presence, giving him the opportunity to see God – well, the back of God as the Creator passed by, anyway. For in ancient Hebrew times, it was believed that if one were to see God's face, one would perish.

Perhaps that image of seeing the back of God is enough, in that it may serve as a reminder that God is the one we are called to follow, God is the one we are called to serve – God, who is indeed, always with us.

So, how does the story speak to us? When are the times that we lose trust in God's presence among us? As we seek our own proverbial land of milk and honey, what ways are we losing site of God along the way?

I can't help but think of the recently announced changes and cuts in spending in health care in our province. Sure, we need to move toward balancing the budget – but at whose cost? Why is it that our elders will bear many costs in this recent announcement? Why are not large corporations feeling some of the pinch a little more?

In the American electoral process, we've seen so much animosity and vitriol, the term "healthy debate" has become an oxymoron. And in all the election promising – again, those on the margins, those with the least, stand to lose the most, while those with the most stand to gain even more.

But closer to home...we find ourselves, as aging congregations, lamenting in these days, the loss of members, the missing generations, the resistance of some to be involved in mission. And so our Leadership Teams have supported our involvement in a process of Mission Discernment with other United Church congregations in the area. As we move through that process, can we trust that God is with us?

I personally have found excitement and energy as we share...and that's only a few meetings in. Already ideas for mission are bubbling to the surface. Is that not a sign of God's presence?

In Olds – we also have the work of the United Futures Team, generating ideas, and possibilities for future direction. The fact that a pandemic has not put a halt

to that work says volumes about the commitment of that team, and God's Spirit guiding them and their work.

We do live in challenging times. Yet, with God leading the way – we will find a way.

At its most basic, these times challenge us to remember and live out of a place of acknowledgement that everything we have, everything we are, comes from God. We are, as people of faith, called to live our thanks for God's abundant grace.

As we make our way into the week ahead, let us hold fast to the truth that Moses found on his journey – that God is with us, always, wherever we go, loving us into being each day. And let us hold even faster to our commitment to live in ways that extend that love, as we discern direction for mission and ministry that will enable us to truly live as a people created to be agents of God's love. Amen.

Musical Interlude VU 506 Take My Life and Let it Be

This Week's Minute for Mission

Offertory Music VU 542 We Give You But Your Own

Offertory Prayer

Generous and loving God, out of our abundance we give. Bless our offerings. Use them toward your mercy, goodness and glory, we pray. Amen.

Prayers for This Day from worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com by Carolyn Brown

God, you are the Alpha and Omega. You were here before anything else existed and you will be here when everything and everyone has come to an end.

Creating God, you spoke and the entire universe came into existence. You know the secrets of stars and dark holes and far flung galaxies.

Lord of the Whole Creation, you are aware of each tiny creature on each planet. You pay attention to insects and birds and even us.

God of History, you call us to be your people. You appointed us to take care of this planet Earth. You gave us rules for living well together. You call us to great things.

Loving God you created each one of us. You know us by name and watch over us. You are with us when everything is wonderful. And, you walk with us through our worst days.

God of Mercy, You know everything we do, the good and the bad. And, still you do not give up on us. When we mess up, you call us back to yourself and you forgive us when we don't deserve it.

You are greater than we can understand, vaster than we can imagine, more amazing than we can put into words. So with awe and deep gratitude we pray...

For those in our circle living with loss – of employment, of relationship, of health. We pray for those mourning the death of a beloved friend or family member. We pray for our political leaders, that they may practise justice and integrity in all that they do.

We pray for peace in places in our world where oppression, violence, and discrimination abound.

God of love, we take a moment of silence to bring the prayers of our hearts.... In gratitude and love, we offer the words Jesus taught his disciples to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.

A Blessing for Today

Let us go from this place with thankful hearts and joyful senses, and let us continue to share earth's gifts—abundantly!

Amen.

Choral Blessing Go Now in Peace, Never Be Afraid

And the good news...we are back to in person worship, with careful COVID precautions!

The bulletin and sermon will continue to be posted to the websites, for those who are unable to join us. If you have any questions, please call or email.

Please note that Olds worship is now at 9:30, to accommodate Redemption Church's worship at 11:00
Sundre will worship at the usual time of 1:30.



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Painting dates: The idea: to paint stones with images of poppies, and place them at the Centetaph and/or Field of Honour, commemorating Remembrance Day.

Who: all who want to join.

When: In Sundre: Wed. Oct. 21 at 1:30 and Wed. Oct. 28 at 10:00

In Olds: Thurs. Oct. 22 at 10:00 and Thurs. Oct. 29 at 1:30

Rocks, paints and brushes supplied.