



Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge of the United Church
Sunday October 25, 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

Opening Call

We are people on a journey -

A journey of faith and hope in God's love.

We are invited to follow God's call, wherever the Spirit leads us -

Into service, into contemplation, into worship, into communion with God, God's people, and God's created world.

Come, people of God, let us journey together toward justice and peace.

Prayer

O God, we have images and dreams that we long to see made manifest, but for now, sustain us on the journey. Help us to cast our visions into the realm of possibility. Guide us ever closer to the hope for healing and wholeness in the world. Help us to see that every step we take toward that vision is part of your glory. May our time together this day inspire us and strengthen us for the way. **Amen.**

Musical Interlude MV 115 Behold, Behold

Time with Children

Readings for today

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

In this reading, Moses once again, goes to a mountaintop with God. He sees the land of promise, and knows he will not get there with the people he has led to this point. This is the end of Moses' journey, and a new beginning for his people.

Then Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho, and the Lord showed him the whole land: Gilead as far as Dan, ²all Naphtali, the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, all the land of Judah as far as the Western Sea, ³the Negeb, and the Plain—that is, the

valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees—as far as Zoar. ⁴The Lord said to him, “This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants’; I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not cross over there.”

⁵Then Moses, the servant of the Lord, died there in the land of Moab, at the Lord’s command. ⁶He was buried in a valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor, but no one knows his burial place to this day. ⁷Moses was one hundred twenty years old when he died; his sight was unimpaired and his vigor had not abated. ⁸The Israelites wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days; then the period of mourning for Moses was ended.

⁹Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, because Moses had laid his hands on him; and the Israelites obeyed him, doing as the Lord had commanded Moses. ¹⁰Never since has there arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. ¹¹He was unequalled for all the signs and wonders that the Lord sent him to perform in the land of Egypt, against Pharaoh and all his servants and his entire land, ¹²and for all the mighty deeds and all the terrifying displays of power that Moses performed in the sight of all Israel.

Matthew 22:34-46

In this reading, Jesus is tested by the Pharisees. He responds to their question, and then asks questions himself, turning the tables on the Pharisees’ efforts.

³⁴When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

³⁶“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷He said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.”

⁴¹Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴²“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, “The son of David.” ⁴³He said to them, “How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying, ⁴⁴‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I put your enemies under your feet”’? ⁴⁵If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?” ⁴⁶No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

A Message for Today

We find ourselves in busy times in the church. Lots of things happening this week...I found myself spending time in more meetings than usual, especially the usual that has been the last 7 or 8 months. As I began to prepare for today early in the week – I knew time for sermon prep would be squeezed by those extra

meetings. Those meetings – they are in some respects metaphor for the long journey Moses and his people had travelled. They walked. We meet. They sought a land of milk and honey, with God’s guidance; we seek to be a church relevant to the times we are living, with God’s guidance.

Monday was preparation for, and then participating in a gathering of the people that are part of the Chinook Winds Region’s Mission Discernment Cluster – the highway 2/2A/21 Corridors. We are regularly meetings to do some discernment and discovery work around the needs in our communities, and how we as churches, might share resources to better equip us for ministry and meeting some of those needs.

Thursday was a rather long board meeting... we had lots to consider as we live into our new shared arrangements with our most recent renters – The Redemption Church Community, as we reflect on the amazing work of the Olds United Futures Team and how to proceed with sharing that and making some decisions related to their report.

Saturday was a General Council Meeting – via ZOOM for 4 hours. There was a fair bit of reading and review of documents online for that.

Add in some pastoral care visits and two afternoons of Remembrance Day rock painting, plus some extra family responsibilities, and it made for a full week of being on the journey of following God’s guidance.

Knowing that – as I began to prepare early this week – I found myself really appreciating this week’s offerings from The Season’s of the Spirit worship resource. The title the curriculum gives the theme for this week is “A Prophetic Vision’s Power.”

They refer to this week’s reading from Deuteronomy, with this statement: “If ever there was a time for Moses to experience heartbreaking disappointment, the events in this week’s reading is such a time.”

The writers go on to remind us of how much of Moses’ life has been invested in leading the people through the wilderness – 40 years of struggles with lost faith, broken covenants, even to the point of thinking that life under oppression in Egypt might be better to go back to than the seemingly never-ending journey of wandering through the wilderness.

Until finally, the promised land is in sight. What joy. Yet Moses, once again on a mountain top, learns from God that he will never set foot on that promised land. God gives him a view from the mountain top of that land that he will never reach. His people, those who followed him all those years – they will make it to that promised place, without their leader and guide.

Yet – that vision – that hope – is enough for Moses. His people will be home, free from oppression at long last. After great hardship, trial and tribulation, the vision was becoming reality, and Moses' work was done.

Its hard to imagine what the people must have felt knowing that Moses would not cross the river Jordan into that promised land with them, never mind the mix of emotions Moses would have had, himself.

Season's of the Spirit raises another reality with their commentary on this passage. As it says,

“...something the Israelites, including the author of Deuteronomy would forget; as the Deuteronomist goes on to recount a story of genocide and the same imperial, brutal practices toward the Canaanites as had been experienced by the Israelites of Egypt. Yet, in spite of the never-ending allure that systems of dominations can provide, neither the Israelites nor the Deuteronomist could forget the prophetic power of the vision by which Moses guided the people.”

Seasons of the Spirit SeasonsFUSION Season of Creation, Pentecost 2 2020,
Copyright Wood Lake Publishing Inc. 2019, page 112.

Moses, all along the journey, held before the people that vision of freedom from oppression and injustice. That story of injustice would repeat itself...not just with the Canaanites – but throughout history we have stories of one nation exerting oppressive powers over another. Even our own Canadian history does not escape that – if you look at our own history of colonization of Canada's first peoples.

What can we learn from this story? If nothing else, persistent faith. Moses had that – he trusted God, even in the darkest, most challenging times. The Israelites, they too had that persistent faith. Sure, there's wavered a few times – when they were really tired, and hungry...but they stuck with the journey. They trusted Moses, and found faith in his example.

As we look at what lies ahead for us - do we have what Moses and his people had? Do we have a faith that is deep and persistent? Are we trusting that God will carry us to new and life giving ways of being in the world? If so, are we willing to take the journey to get there – knowing that it's not always going to be an easy path to walk.

We might be called upon to face difficult challenges - this time of struggle that has come with the pandemic, no exception to that.

Where will we find our strength for the journey we are on? I personally find it in the work of the people – of the community seeking common good – those who are reaching out in love, and staying connected with others, keeping COVID isolation to a minimum. I find it in the work of our church leadership

teams...facing budget shortfalls, yet determined to be the face of welcome, inclusion, and love, here in this corner of our world. I see it in sitting painting rocks in community – remembering why we honour veterans and soldiers, and others who have given of themselves that we too might have freedom from oppression and injustice.

I see it in the combined more than 2 centuries of ministry of Olds and Sundre United Churches...126 years and 96 years respectively. Decades of living those great commandments from the gospel - “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ ...³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And ...‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Talk about persistent faith. God has been, and continues to be, with us on the journey of love and justice.

Our psalm today is the only one that historians attribute to Moses. I didn’t include it in our readings but I offer it to you now – in it’s hymn form – Patsy found a beautiful version of it online for Olds folks to listen to...and Sundre folks can listen as it’s played, and reflect on the words. Like our journey through Moses’ leadership through the Exodus – this psalm reminds us of the ever present nature of God...with Moses and his people, with God’s people throughout the ages, indeed, with us, as we live our own persistent faith.

The Psalm, in hymn form VU 806 O God Our Help in Ages Past

Musical Interlude VU 670 Precious Lord, Take My Hand

This Week’s Minute for Mission

Offertory Music VU 542 We Give You But Your Own

Offertory Prayer

O God, we dedicate our journey to you, this day. In thanksgiving for all the beauty and potential we can see from this vantage point, we give our worship and our resources. Bless them and transform them into fulfilment of hope and justice. Amen.

Prayers for This Day

O God of grace, you set before us visions of a future filled with love and justice. We are grateful for that vision, and for the many prophetic voices in our lives that help us to bring that vision to a reality. Inspire us to join our voices and our actions with theirs, we pray.

As we endeavour to follow the path of Jesus, give us a persistent faith in your presence with us, guiding us and granting us strength for the journey. Help us to live from a place of love – as Jesus’s great commandments call us.

We pray for our church – The United Church of Canada, and our Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge. May we, as a community of faith, find hope in the mission and ministry that we share.

We pray for our political leaders – that they too, may be guided by wisdom, truth and integrity.

Hold in your love, O God, all those who struggle with isolation, health concerns, or loss. May they know your healing love.

As we go about our daily lives, help us to be agents of that love, with those we encounter on the way.

We take a moment of silence, Holy God, to lift to you the prayers of our hearts....

In gratitude for your grace and mercy, we share the words that Jesus taught us 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 knowing that God accompanies us on the journey. Let us go, loving each neighbour we meet, as we love ourselves. And may we find peace and joy as we go.

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.
We had fun on the first days! See the Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge Facebook Group for photos!

Who: all who want to join.
When: In Sundre: Wed. Oct. 28 at 10:00
In Olds: Thurs. Oct. 29 at 10:00
Rocks, paints and brushes supplied.

