

Knox Presbyterian Church  
Rev. Emma Duncan  
FEBRUARY 18, 2024

First Sunday in Lent



Greetings

Call to Worship (PWS&D Lenten Liturgy)

**Leader: During Lent, we remember that God's plans for all creation are unfolding.**

People: God is with us; we need not fear.

**Leader: God has good plans for us; plans to bring us greater wholeness and peace.**

People: God is with us in our journey of becoming.

**Leader: Let us pray.**

All:

Creator God, we begin the Lenten journey trusting that you are intimately involved in our lives.

Whatever we face, we can rest in your steadfast love, and have the courage to follow you into the new life you have promised.

Help us to navigate each day by the power of your Spirit, and in all that we do, let us honour Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Music: Thou dist leave thy throne (#204, all verses)

Prayer of Lament

For the past 3 years, I have done something different for the opening prayer during the season of Lent which I will do again this year. Instead of writing a prayer of Adoration and Confession, I write a prayer of Lament each week based on a Psalm. The Bible teaches us that God is not afraid of our anger and grief. The ancient practice of lament provides a sacred space to have an honest conversation with God. In our lament, we give voice to our pain, sorrow, and what we have lost, and then to look to God for help. This week's lament is based on Psalm 51 which is often read during an Ash Wednesday service...

Hello God, it's me Emma Duncan. I'm here with your people, Lord, still gathering in person and online. It's that time of year again – the season of Lent. It's come so fast this year! Christmas Eve was just 8 weeks ago today when we say Joy to the World, the Lord is come – and here we are about to begin our journey with you to the cross.

I offer you this prayer of lament, O God, on behalf of your people. The Bible teaches us that it is okay for us to bring you our anger and frustrations. You can take it Lord because you are bigger than any of our pain. As we crawl our way to the 4<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the start of the pandemic in our part of the world – I'm not gonna lie to you...it's been a long and hard road. We thought that when the pandemic would be over that we would shout for joy, but this hasn't happened. With the effects of climate change, the rising cost of living, and the awful state of our world, there is little joy to be found. Our spirits are broken. Our bones are crushed.

Why haven't you fixed things for us? Have you forgotten about us? Do you even care anymore?

O Lord, do not hide your face from us. Do not cast us away from your presence or take your holy spirit from us. Deliver us from this mess. As King David pleaded with you so long ago, rebuild the walls around us. Restore to us the joy of your salvation. Sustain us in hope. Show us how to be joyful once again.

Renew our faith as we say the prayer that our Lord, Jesus Christ, taught us...

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.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Assurance of Pardon

King David wrote Psalm 51 after he was caught in adultery with Bathsheba and had her husband murdered. He prayed for God's mercy in this way...create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. According to your abundant mercy, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. (Psalm 51: 1, 2, 10) As God forgave David, so too does he forgive our sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Be joyful because we are indeed forgiven! Amen.

## Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us for a time of fellowship and conversation after worship. Coffee Fellowship will be held upstairs in Reception Rooms A & B.
3. Thank you to Kathryn Hudson and William Tennant for doing the readings today.
4. Family Day - The office will be closed on Monday February 19<sup>th</sup>.

### 5. Volunteers Needed

We are looking for volunteers to...

- + Serve refreshments after our worship services.
- + Read Scripture during worship services for April and May. Please contact Rev. Emma.
- + Take up the offerings during our worship services. Please contact Sharon White.

### 6. World Day of Prayer

This ecumenical service will take place on **Friday March 1st at 1:30 p.m. at Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church** (287 Plains Road East). The service was written by the Christian Women of Palestine.

### 7. Plants for Easter

During the season of Lent, we are collecting funds to decorate the church during Holy Week. If you would like to contribute a gift in memory of a loved one, please use the special offering in the pews. Contact Kathy in the office if you would like to make special arrangements.

### 8. Good Friday worship service

On Friday March 29<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m., we will be hosting the joint Good Friday service in partnership with Port Nelson United and Burlington Baptist churches. The Rev. Michael Coren will be our guest preacher. If you would be interested in singing in the joint choir, please speak with Peter Hanson or myself.

**Music: Will you come and follow me (#634, verses 1-3, 5)**

**Children's Time: Burying the Palms**

**Prayer of Illumination:**

Let us pray. Everlasting Father, in this season of Lent, we are challenged by the stories of Jesus. We struggle to accept his teachings because we don't want to let go of the things in our lives that give us a sense of control. By your Spirit, open our ears to hear your Word, even when we prefer not to. Mold us into new creations in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 138.**

Leader: I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart;  
before the gods I sing your praise;

**People: I bow down toward your holy temple  
and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and  
your faithfulness; for you have exalted your name and  
your word above everything.**

Leader: On the day I called, you answered me,  
you increased my strength of soul.

**People: All the rulers of the earth shall praise you, O LORD,  
for they have heard the words of your mouth.  
They shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.**

Leader: For though the LORD is high, God regards the lowly;  
but perceives the haughty from far away.

**People: Though I walk in the midst of trouble,  
you preserve me against the wrath of my enemies;**

Leader: you stretch out your hand, and your right hand delivers me.

**People: O LORD, fulfill your purpose for me;  
your steadfast love, O LORD, endures forever.  
Do not forsake the work of your hands. Amen.**

**Our 1<sup>st</sup> New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke and we will be reading chapter 5, verses 1-11.**

Once while Jesus was standing beside the Lake of Gennesaret and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore.

Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to burst.

So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus's knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For he and all who were with him were astounded at the catch of fish that they had taken, and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

**Our 2<sup>nd</sup> New Testament reading is taken from the Gospel of Luke and we will be reading chapter 6, verses 12-16.**

Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, and James, and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Simon, who was called the Zealot, and Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

**This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

## Reflection: Jesus and the Outsiders, Outcasts, and Outlaws – The dirty business of cleaning nets



*Sea of Galilee*

I do not know how to fish. My parents are worshipping with us today and the last time that I remember holding a fishing pole was at a friend's cottage when I was a kid. And if my memories of

that time are correct, I wasn't exactly a willing participant. I didn't want to hurt the poor worm by stabbing it with a hook. When one of us caught something, I always wanted to put the fish back in the water. And when it was time to clean up, I vanished.

Thank goodness my livelihood – and the survival of my family – is NOT dependent on my fishing skills!

But for some of Jesus' disciples – two sets of brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John – it was the exact opposite. Their lives depended on their ability to harvest the bounty found in the Sea of Galilee which is also known as the Lake of Gennesaret. Night and day, day and night, they were out in their boats casting their nets.

Imagine, if you will for a moment, how exhausted these men would have been after a night out in their boats. Sitting in a small fishing boat was not exactly comfortable. It was hard on your back and knees. It was boring, tedious work, but you had to stay awake...because what if your nets started to fill with precious fish? You had to be ready – in an instant – to spring into action.

But on that particular night, the fishermen caught nothing. They made their way back to the shore feeling weary and dejected. But their work was not yet done - they had to clean their dirty nets and store them for the next trip.

And then this man comes up to Simon Peter, surrounded by a crowd of people, and he asks him to take his boat out again. He looks important, so he obliges. But he's not interested in the fishing business – he is there to teach the Word of God. What he says impresses Simon Peter and then he asks you to cast his nets one more time. Simon Peter questions him because last night was exactly a successful trip. But something tells him to trust this man, so he put his nets out again.

What happens next is the first miracle that Simon Peter and his friends experienced according to Luke. Simon Peter's nets were so full that he had to call his friends to help. Simon Peter realized that Jesus was no ordinary man and he fell to his knees – *Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!* (Luke 5:8)

And what was Jesus' response? *Don't be afraid. From now on, you will be catching people.* (Luke 5:10)

Together these 4 fishermen would join 8 other men to become Christ's apostles. They would leave their jobs and families to follow Jesus on his many travels before his final trip to Jerusalem and ultimately, the suffering of the cross. Unfortunately, we don't know a whole lot about the background of many of the disciples. Matthew was a tax collector. Simon, who was called the Zealot, was likely a revolutionary who sought to overthrow the Roman government. Judas Iscariot was the treasurer of the group, so he may have been involved in banking or business in some way. But the New Testament provides no information about the professions of Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Judas, son of James or James, the son of Alphaeus.

Even though we don't have many details about their lives, one thing is for certain – none of these men came from the halls of power and influence. The closest one would have been Matthew.

When we think about people who walk in our halls of power – the Prime Minister, the Governor of the Bank of Canada, the CEOs of big corporations, even the King – these people do not surround themselves with lowly fishermen, a tax collector, and people with no credentials to speak of. Instead, they surround themselves with advisors, experts, and people who have connections and influence.

**But Jesus is not like them.**

In the season of Lent, we are going to be meeting some of the people who Jesus surrounded himself with according to the Gospel of Luke. Like a woman who lost her son. Like a woman who poured perfume on Jesus' feet and a religious leader who chastised her. Like someone who was crippled by an unclean spirit. Like a group of lepers. During Holy Week, you will hear Luke's telling of the last week of Jesus' life, including his betrayal by one of his beloved disciples. Even on the cross, Jesus forgave a criminal. These people were outsiders, outcasts, and outlaws to the world, but not to Jesus. He loved and forgave them. He had compassion for them. He offered them healing that no one else could. He intentionally chose to be with the poor and marginalized, the unclean and the unwelcome, and all those who felt unseen or alone. As we heard in Psalm 138 earlier in the service, God cares for the lowly.

For those of you who are reading the Gospel of Luke during Lent, from the very beginning of his writings, Luke draws our attention to groups of people who were on the margins...like an elderly couple (Elizabeth and Zechariah) who struggled with infertility. Or how about a young couple (Mary and Joseph) who dealt with an unexpected pregnancy. Or shepherds in a field keeping watch over their flocks by night.



In the Gospel of Luke, we come to know Jesus as a friend to all. At its core, this is a story about the divine Son of God who loves us so much that he welcomes us all into his family. He invites us – just like he did with the disciples – to be his followers. And he doesn't care about how much money you have in the bank or the friends you keep or how much power you have. Christ cares about your heart, your soul. He cares that you get yourself right with God – that you repent of your sins, leave your old life behind, and follow him.

As we enter into the season Lent – which is a time for Christians around the world to pray and fast, to reflect and repent – the Gospel of Luke reminds us in a profound way that we ALL have what it takes to be follower of Jesus.

If you are an older adult, wondering if you have anything left to give...God is not done with you yet.

If you are a young adult, struggling to find your way in these challenging times...God has a plan for your life.

If you struggle with health issues, are crippled by grief, or are afraid of what tomorrow will bring...God can use you for his kingdom work.

If you have no power or influence or feel like an outsider or outcast...God has a role for you to play.

If you – like me - don't know anything about the art of fishing...don't be afraid, because Christ will teach us how to invite others to become his followers. Through prayer, the reading God's Word, in the fellowship of the Church, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, Christ will teach us to proclaim the Good News to the outsiders, the outcasts, and the outlaws of our world and say – welcome home. You belong here. Amen.

## Time of Offering

We will now sing our song of thanks - Holy, holy, holy (#303, verse 1)

Holy, holy, holy.

My heart, my heart adores you!

My heart is glad to say the words:

You are holy, Lord

On behalf of the leadership of Knox, we are grateful for your ongoing generosity to the life of this congregation. Without you, there would be no Knox.

**Prayer of Dedication** (not written in advance of the service)

## Prayers of the People

God of grace, we offer you our worship and praise today for you are Lord and friend of all. Even as we remember the many challenges of this world, we give you thanks for the blessings we know, for moments of joy, for laughter shared, for conversations that brighten a day. Thank you for your steadfast love and the comfort we draw from your presence. In this season of Lent, unite us with all people of faith in the global Church so that your kingdom will come and your will shall be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Hear our prayers for your beloved children, the Church, and the world.

In a world full of so much evil, O Lord, we pray for your people. We lift up to you the people of Ukraine, Israel, and Palestine. We pray for communities where bombs reign terror night and day, for families torn apart by this conflict, for people who grieve the loss of loved ones. Give them comfort and peace. We pray for people in the halls of power that they may have wisdom and courage to work for peace and reconciliation. Be with community and church leaders, health care professionals, emergency services and military personnel who are struggling under the heavy burden of war. And as Jesus commanded us, we also pray for our enemies. May their hearts be softened so that a way out of this war can be found. O Lord, your kingdom is so complicated! Be with your beloved children. Let your justice flow.

God of love, we pray for the outsiders, outcasts, and outlaws of this world. May they see Jesus as their friend and feel welcome into the family of God. In these challenging times, revive and strengthen the Church so that we can be a beacon of Christ's saving grace and redeeming love. Where there is division in the Church, send your unifying Spirit. Where there is tiredness and fatigue, bring renewal and energy. Where there is persecution, send your healing power.

God of compassion, we pray for ourselves and the people we care for. Where there is conflict in families, schools, and workplaces, send your Spirit of peace and understanding. Where friendships have been wounded by misunderstanding or neglect, send your reconciling and restoring mercy. Where people continue to feel alone and isolated, surround them with your holy presence. Where there is the pain of loss and grief, wrap them in your loving arms.

Today we remember your children by name...

Margaret    Maddie    Alexis    Jada

Be with all of your beloved children, O God. Heal them. Comfort them. Remind us that we are not alone. As we watch and wait for the coming Messiah, teach us how to be your disciples who proclaim the Good News of the Gospel. To Jesus Christ be all honour and glory. Amen.

Music: I'm gonna live so God can use me (#648, all verses)

Blessing (John 13:34–35)

Sung Amen