

## Worship – August 1, 2021

### **Announcements**

Welcome to worship with McClure United Church.  
We do our best to be a church of welcome and mission.

It feels so good to have the office open again. It has been wonderful to have folks stop by to visit and to take care of business. We are open to you good people Tuesday – Wednesday and Thursday from 9:00 to 3:00.

I can be reached Monday through Friday at the church office however Wednesdays I am working from home to do worship prep.

Laura is on holiday till the end of August.

If you are confused please just phone the office or check the website or facebook page.

Details about most everything can be found on the website

I want to remind you about in person coffee time Friday mornings at 10am in the church parking lot.

I encourage you to get your craft on in August to keep our Kindness Rock Garden full of painted rocks. I have heard that the key to a good painted rock is not skill or perfection but primer. Apparently primer keeps the paint from soaking into the rock.

Eden has some information for us and so I will turn things over to her energetic spirit.

## **Opening words/ candle lighting**

God today we worship as one family – younger and older, single and those in relationship. We ask that God might help us to truly understand our connectedness and that we might learn to live into the justice, the peace and the radical love Jesus calls us to.

We **light this candle** to remind us of God's love for us and for God's promise to be a light for us as we travel as followers of the way.

## **Opening prayer**

God, raise our expectations as we worship today. Do not leave us content to settle for a feel-good moment, or a tidbit of usable wisdom, or a momentary easing of stress. Let us come seeking an encounter with you so that we may be transformed to become your living body in the world. We pray in the name of our teacher Jesus. Amen

## **Hymn: The Greatest of These – Sacred Sounds**

### **Scripture Reading: John 6:24-35** Elaine Tall

<sup>24</sup>So when the crowd saw that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they themselves got into the boats and went to Capernaum looking for Jesus. <sup>25</sup>When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" <sup>26</sup>Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup>Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."

<sup>28</sup>Then they said to him, "What must we do to perform the works of God?" <sup>29</sup>Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." <sup>30</sup>So they said to him, "What sign are you going to give us then, so that we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?" <sup>31</sup>Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup>Then Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but it

is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup>For the bread of God is that which comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup>They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” <sup>35</sup>Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

**Sermon** – Rev. Debra Berg

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you, O God, our strength and our redeemer. Amen

I admit it, I occasionally watch America’s God Talent. Or rather, I “eaves-watch” it. “Eaves-watching” is a combination of eavesdrop and watch. It refers to both overhearing and seeing a TV show someone else is watching while you are in the adjoining room loading or unloading the dishwasher.

If you haven’t seen it, America’s Got Talent is an old time talent show of steroids. The contestant who gets “voted through” to the final round, beating out his or her competition, win’s a bunch of money and a chance to headline in a show, in Las Vegas. Over the years that I have been eaves-watching it, the show seems to have gotten bigger, brighter and more dangerous. It used to be jugglers, singers and an acrobat or two. There are still troupes of manly make cloggers, teeny bopper dance teams and dogs that can slide backwards down a slide. But the act that get “voted through” seem increasingly to be those that involve a risk of injury to those performing them. Now it’s jugglers who simultaneously swallow fire, or men who get shot of out of a canon, or muscular acrobatic couples who hoist one another aloft at death defying heights.

During each performance the judges sit at their desks with control buttons. If at any time during the performance they become boarded they push an X button and a giant buzzer sounds, testing the resolve and

concentration of the hapless juggler, singer, ventriloquist or dog trainer on the stage. After each act the judges give feedback. The advice most often encourages the performer to “Up the ante. Make it bigger. Make it better. Make it more dangerous - Wow us with more or you won’t go through to the next round.

Our text for this week, found in the Gospel according to John, that Elaine read for us - is Jesus second appearance of the “biblical talent show”. His first appearance was just a bit earlier in John when he multiplied the five loaves and two fish to feed 5,000 people. I talked about that story last week and invited us to remember that our God is a God that feeds our hungers.

One wonders why the crowd – after being fed, didn’t put two and two together and recognize that Jesus was not putting on a show but rather showing them that they had a God who knows them, cares about them, feeds them and in feeding them calls them to live a life of abundance toward one another. It seems they do “ooh and “ahh over him as a “prophet come into the world”, but that recognition doesn’t do him full justice.

All I can figure is that the hungry crowd didn’t notice what he was doing because they were too busy focusing on what they wanted from him which was more stuff.

They continue to follow him and when they find him, he chastises them for seeking him out for the wrong reasons. They are seeking him because they wanted to receive another snazzy miracle. He tells them that while he filled their stomachs with food, it was all about helping them understand his connection to God and about what God is doing. It is about

how God wants them to live and about filling their hearts and minds with abundance. //In response, rather than apologize, the crowd insults him.

They say to him, in effect, “so prove it. Prove that you are the One so connected to God that what you say and do might save us.”

“What sign will you do for us so we may see it and believe you? What work are you performing?” Let’s see your act again, Jesus. If it hold our interest, we won’t’ buzz you and we will vote you through to the next round. They’re treating Jesus like a talent show contestant who has to prove himself to them so they’ll advance him in his career. What the crowd’s demand of Jesus is incredibly insulting. ///

Never once in all the times I have eaves-watched America’s Got Talent has a contestant said to the judges, “What are you going to do for me? This isn’t all a one way street. This isn’t just about you sitting here and being impressed and wowed and entertained by me. It’s not all on me. What are you going to bring to the table?”

Jesus will not be put in a category. Jesus demands that this audience do some work. To truly receive the food that will nourish each day, every day, they need to not **only** receive but they need to recognized the gift that being at the table is and in so doing understand that this calls forth a response.

But this is a relentlessly passive crowd. They don’t want to be transformed, to open themselves to the nourishment that is theirs. They just want to make demands for more: “Sir, give us this bread always.”

This text has no happy ending. The crowd doesn’t realized Jesus identity nor understand his invitation to step into the light with him. In fact, things go from bad to worse in just a few verses - his religious opponents

move through the crowd trying to make the crowd's familiarity with Jesus background, the proof that he could not possibly be who he says he is.

Nothing will change in this story until the crowd gets in on the act. We have to come up out of the audience and onto the stage. We have to vacate our judges' seat. And when we do, we don't have to juggle flaming knives or do graceful acrobatics or even be able to sing an aria. We just have to listen, learn and follow. We have to open our hearts to be transformed in love. God assures us that to do so means we will be fed with a bread beyond our imagination and this filling will spill out to transform the world.

Maybe this is why some people have chosen to live a life without God and church. Because stepping onto the stage is risky and hard and can make us uncomfortable. Perhaps some are looking for a gold buzzer God, a God that will entertain and put on a mesmerizing show. They are looking for a God that will impress and dazzle. They don't want a God that calls them up on stage and who asks them to follow the way – who asks them to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly; to love their neighbor and share what they have with others.

What about you, are you willing to step up on to the stage? Because if you do – my hunch is that you will never be hungry or thirsty again. This is the promise of your God.

Amen.

### **Pastoral Prayer**

God for this beautiful earth which dazzles and amazes us, we give you thanks and praise. So much of the earth's beauty speaks to us of your presence and creativity. The very trees whisper messages from you.

We give you thanks for places of silence, for morning sunrises and evening sun sets, for lakes so calm they appear glass covered, we give you

thanks, for holiday time, for times of reflection and renewal, of calm and rejuvenation.

We give you thanks for places of frenzied activity, for children playing. We pray for our children and their families. Help families through difficult decisions, and keep all safe. For the wonder and joy of children we give thanks.

We give you thanks for times of service and vitality, We pray for the helping agencies we have been privileged to partner with, we pray for those who manage and those who use The Saskatoon Food bank and learning center, OPG, the Light House and the Crisis Nursery. For the opportunity to share in care of our community with one another we give you thanks.

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God we are a prairie people, and we know that if we stand in a field long enough the warmth of the summer sun will turn to wind wiped rain but for this year the heat is relentless and our crops have turned to dust. We pray for farmers and their families. Teach us in this time, new respect for the fragility of creation and the role we play in damaging its gifts.

There is much in this world that puzzles and confuses us God. We ask for your strength in the storms of life and the gift of **companions** in the confusion. Create for us places of rest and healing and help each of us to be co-creators with you - that others might find an oasis of comfort in us.

We would pray particularly this morning for those of us who are ill in body mind or spirit. WE pray for all who are feeling alone or afraid, who have difficult decisions to make and who are grieving. We offer prayers of concern for ourselves and others in a time of silence.....

We pray also this morning for our sisters and brothers who live in parts of your creation that we have only visited or seen on TV. We pray for those living in the midst of war, those screaming to be heard, those yearning for the truth understood by those in power, we pray for those who do not have enough to eat or clean water to drink and who long for shipments of vaccine. We pray for our global brothers and sisters. We pray for justice with peace.

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As beautiful as a butterfly and as strong as a mountain is your love for us, Creator God. Fill us with your Holy Spirit now as we leave this worship time - grant us holy wisdom and courage to be your people of love and hope in the world. May your call to radical love burn forever in our hearts.

We pray these things in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray the words we now say together.

Our Father and Mother, 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, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen

**Hymn: Bread of Life** – Sacred Sounds

### **Benediction**

May the God who brings to birth and sustains all life, sustain you.  
May the Christ who fashions hope and strengthens faith, strengthen you  
May the Spirit who empowers and inspires action, inspire you.

Go into the world blessings all you meet.

Amen.

**Sung Blessing: Like a Rock** – Jim Gillis