



Camrose United Church
Sunday October 18, 2020
God's Goodness and Mercy
Rev. Helen Reed, Diaconal Minister

Prelude
Welcome & Announcements

Candle Lighting

We light the Christ Candle, aware of God around, among, & within us. In a moment of silence, we prepare ourselves to celebrate God's presence in our community.

Coming into Worship

Behold, Loving God,

At your calling,

we gather separately and together

by your leading,

we arrive to know you.

As you have promised,

your presence is with us

and we seek your renewal and rest.

Be with us as we worship.

We long to see you.

We long to feel you near.

We long to be confident of your presence and accompaniment.

We bring our whole selves to this time of discernment and prayer.

See in our faces your creative genius,

and hear in our prayers and songs

your melodies of life.

Guide and nurture us, we pray.

Amen.

Hymn: ♪ God is Here Today

Moses Sees God

Based on Exodus 33:12–23

Moses sometimes got very mixed up.

Moses wanted to understand God.

He also wanted to understand the people of Israel.

Sometimes he would hold his head with his hands and feel very sad. “There are so many things I don’t understand.”

So Moses went to talk with God. “Please help me, God,” said Moses. “I want to understand you.”

“What would you like me to explain?” asked God.

“Well, I’ve seen the wonderful things you’ve done. I’ve seen how you got the people of Israel out of Egypt. I’ve seen how you brought us food when we were hungry. I’ve seen how you got water from a rock when we were thirsty. But...” Moses just stood there and shook his head.

“But what?” God’s voice was soft and kind.

“I haven’t seen you. I want to know what you look like. I want to see your face.”

“That’s a hard thing, Moses,” said God. “It’s hard for people to see me. You can see what I do. You can feel my love in your heart. I am all around you, just like the air is all around you. But you can’t see me.”

“But I want to see you,” Moses was crying a little. “I want to see you, so I know who you are.”

“Moses,” said God. “You have worked very hard to help me. You have worked hard to help the people of Israel. So I am going to do something special for you.

“I can’t let you see my face because, you see, I am not a human like you are. I don’t have a head or legs or arms as you have. I’m not a man or a woman. I’m not old or young. I’m different than anything you know. But maybe I can show you something that will help you understand.

“Go to the big rock that you can see right in front of

you. There's a crack right through the centre of it. Look through that crack. I'll show you something of who I am." So Moses went to the big rock. He looked through the crack. For a while, it felt as if a kind, warm hand was covering his eyes. Then the hand went away, and Moses saw... He wasn't sure what he saw.

Moses tried to tell his sister, Miriam, about it. "It was like a flash of lightning, except it wasn't loud. It wasn't hard. It was as if my whole body was filled with light. It was as if I was filled with something good and strong." "But what you saw was a light?" asked Miriam.

"What I saw was bright and beautiful. But that was only a small part of it, Miriam. Now I feel as if I really know God. And I know for sure that God will always be with me, and with all the people of Israel."

Wondering:

Moses was a faithful man but even he felt a need to see God. Even though he knew God was with him, he wanted more. Yet God was always there.

Why do we trust our heads more than our hearts?

Prayer for Awareness and God's grace.

Loving God,
we look for you in the wrong places,
**and have missed your presence
when it has been right here.**

We have looked for you in power and principalities;
we have bowed before wealth and privilege;
**and we have admired the appeal of a life
with excess and easy access.**

We have missed your presence
in meekness and diversity;
**we have walked right past your essence
in mutual need and interdependence;**
we have missed your spirit in the
beauty of internal grace and shared love.

Forgive us God.

**help us to see you all around
among all things, in all things.**

Teach us to let go of fear and greed
so that we can be your goodness and mercy
shared with a worried world

**Teach us to see, hear, feel, and know
your presence today and always. Amen.**

Words of Assurance

The Divine is present in
every breath we take,
every kindness we share,
every glory we witness,
and every beauty we embrace.

God is always with us.

We are not alone.

Thanks be to God.

♫ **Hymn: MV#89 Love is the Touch** (tune Slane)

Matthew 22:15-22

Easy-to-Read Version

The Jewish Leaders Try to Trick Jesus

15 Then the Pharisees left the place where Jesus was teaching. They made plans to catch him saying something wrong.

16 They sent some men to Jesus. They were some of their own followers and some from the group called Herodians. They said, "Teacher, we know you are an honest man. We

know you teach the truth about God's way. You are not afraid of what others think about you. All people are the same to you. 17 So tell us what you think. Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"

18 But Jesus knew that these men were trying to trick him. So he said, "You hypocrites! Why are you trying to catch me saying something wrong? 19 Show me a coin used for paying the tax." They showed Jesus a silver coin. 20 Then he asked, "Whose picture is on the coin? And whose name is written on the coin?"

21 They answered, "It is Caesar's picture and Caesar's name."

Then Jesus said to them, "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God."

22 When they heard what Jesus said, they were amazed. They left him and went away.

Scripture Reading(s):

Scripture is our song for the journey,
the living word passed on from generation to generation
to guide and inspire.

**God calls us to be
doers of the word
and not hearers only.**

Reflection: Trusting in God, Choosing God.

On the day that I wrote this reflection, Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Chief Medical Officer of Health for Alberta, shared with us that, in research that her team had done about why some people chose not to wear masks, or space themselves from others, or stay away from large gatherings, they discovered that the most prevalent reason was that COVID wasn't something people had experienced, no-one they knew had had it.

Because they couldn't see it, they didn't believe that it was as bad as others said it was. Because they didn't see it, they wouldn't trust that others were telling the truth.

Even the most scientific amongst us, the ones who have trusted that this disease is real and followed all the rules, are getting a bit frustrated. In areas that have escaped the worst of COVID, it doesn't feel real. We can't see it, so we don't need to acknowledge it, why can't we go back to normal.

When did we become so distrustful of people with the knowledge and wisdom that we don't have? Is it just that we are so very tired on a journey towards something that we also can't see, held back by something we can't see? Is it because we can't see what they can see?

I wonder what those leaders sharing wisdom with us feel? How do they feel when they ask us to join in, for the good of community, to be partners in caring for people we don't know, and we don't accept their invitation?

Moses could probably understand that. He kept asking the people he was leading to trust in his knowledge of God, to trust that the journey that they were on would bring them to a better, safer place. But because they couldn't see the plan, they balked. They kept looking for more, for something more substantial. Even Moses lost a bit of faith.

In our reading today we see God and Moses having a bit of a pep talk. Moses appears to share with God his frustrations. He acknowledges that God has done some marvellous things—all tangible, visible, touchable. Moses tells God that he needs support, that he is feeling alone, that he needs a real, visible connection to lift up his courage. Even Moses needed to see something to believe it.

And God gives him a bit. Just a little bit. Not the whole picture, but just enough to help him back into leading his community, into knowing that what he was doing was the right thing to do, into courage to move forward. Just enough to trust God.

Our Jesus story today tells of the temptation to forget what is important... and often times it happens because we can't see it.

Those who should be leading set traps for Jesus, trying so hard to get him to let go of the unseeable God. He, of course, doesn't fall for it. He says, you must make the choice. But choose between the right things.

There are times when the systems that we live in are onerous. We feel as though they are weighing us down, asking us for things we don't want to give. Yet, Jesus tells us, there is a time for us to be part of the systems. It is part of the world that we choose to live in.

Yet, as the Pharisees identified, he also taught that it was right to follow God's way, to be honest, to treat others equally. There is no coin to hang on to do this, no visible way to measure that we have done this, we are to simply trust that God wants us to.

Moses teaches us that everyone gets weary, but that God will give us what we need to keep loving forward. Jesus teaches us that systems will challenge our faith, but that we know what we are supposed to do to be faithful people.

Sometimes we can't see what is right before us, but we, as people of faith, know that the impossible is possible because God is, invisibly, standing with us.

We know that, if we will just listen to our heart, the Holy guides us. We know that God hears our frustrations and gives us just enough to get us going again. God wants us to move into the world being the presence of God's goodness and love so that all may be well.

We know that just because we may not have experienced poverty, or homelessness, or disease does not mean that it doesn't exist or that we shouldn't do something to support others who have.

What is it that God is calling us to be aware of in the world we share?

What is God asking us to do for others – even when we don't experience what they experience?

Where do you feel God pushing you into an unknown, asking you to trust that God will be there with you?

Where are those places where the coinage stands between us and doing the right thing?

Life is a complicated thing.
Moses shows us that. Jesus shows us that.
But God moves us through it.

When we trust in our invisible God, when we make our decisions based on the love of God and the need for goodness in the world, we catch a glimpse of the Holy.

Let us hear God's invitation to believe without seeing, to love without reason, to care simply because we can, to trust that God is with us, inviting us in to be the glimpse of the Holy that the world needs, right here, right now.

Offering Invitation

What does your heart remind you that you can do for God?
Can you choose to support God with your actions?
How can we choose to be
God's presence and love in this world?
Supporting God's church is a good place to start.
What can you offer today?

Minute for Mission:

Prayer of Dedication:

Generous God, out of our privilege we give.
Out of our longing, we seek your face.
Bless the coins, bills/notes, and promises we offer
knowing we give them to you
happy to release their hold on us.
Use them toward enlivening your
mercy, goodness, and glory in the world. Amen.

☪ Hymn: ♪ God, We Give Humble Thanks

Prayers from God's People, For God's People

Holy One, even though we have not always been aware,
We know you have been with us
along the journeys of our lives.

**We have not always recognized your presence,
but we thank you for your love.**

Your glory is all around us.

Your mercy has seen us through.

Your goodness is our strength and our renewal.

**And we thank you for the abundance in
which we live and move and have our being.**

We pray today for leaders
For those who find themselves
drawn to power at the cost of others.

For those who try so hard to lead
a reluctant people to places of safety and love.
**May humility, caring and compassion become
their guide and their strength.**

We pray for those who reach for you
in times of sickness and sorrow
in times of suffering from violence and discrimination
in times of hunger and homelessness
in times of feeling that they are treated as
acceptable collateral damage
to feed someone else's power.
**May your presence give them
the strength and courage that is needed
to journey with hope.**

We pray for our planet –
Help us not only to see you clearly in all of its wonder,
but to remember our commitment
as stewards of your lands, your seas,
your air, and your creatures.
**May we be more than words.
May we be loving action for the world.**

We pray for ourselves
that you will help us to see
your face beaming at us
in every face of humanity we meet.
May we recognize
your anguish as well as your delight;
your struggles as well as your strengths;
your discouragement as well as your resolve;
your sadness as well as your love.
**May we offer your goodness and mercy
to the world as we partner with you in love.
Amen**

☩ Sending Forth and Blessing

As we go emerge from this time of worship
knowing that the grace, goodness
and love of God surrounds us and holds us.
May we see God's face in the world,
May we be God's face in the world.
Let us trust that God will guide us
As God always has
As God always will.
Amen.

Changing the Christ Candle:

The light of Christ, shining into all the corners of the earth,
showing us where we are and where we are meant to be.
The Spirit of God. Breathe it in...and know that God is with
us wherever we go.

☩ Sending Song: 🎵 Go in Peace, Go in Love

Acknowledgements

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