

WELCOME TO...

# The Presbyterian Church of Saint David



January 29, 2017

EARLY SERVICE – 9 AM

**Gathering:** *What does the Lord require of you? To do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with our God. What does*

*God command of us? To love God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, and all our strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves.*

Hymn: What does the Lord require?

709

**Prayers of Confession** *Lord help us to pray ourselves into your will.*

**Give us, o Lord, an eye for injustice.**

*For it is only when are able to recognize injustice and feel its awful sting that we will be moved to make things right.*

**Give us, o Lord, a tender heart.**

*Sometimes we are too hard-hearted to recognize when we have been uncaring, unfeeling, or unkind.*

**Grant us, o Lord the ability to view life from the dust.**

*All our lives we have been taught to make others proud, to be proud of ourselves, to hold our heads high -- all the while missing the virtues of being poor in spirit.*

**Teach us dear Lord, to do justice, love kindness, and to walk humbly with you. Amen.**

Hymn: Brother, sister, let me serve you (1-3)

635

**Micah 6:1-8** Hear what the LORD says Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the LORD has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. "O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the LORD." "With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O mortal, what is

good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

God provides a brief history of all that God has done for them through the years (6:4-5). Given this story, they should be more grateful than their complaining suggests. Those “saving acts of God” (verse 5) on Israel’s behalf include: the exodus from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 1-15); the leadership of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (a striking female reference, Exodus 15:20-21); the deliverance from the Moabite King Balak through the agency of Balaam as the people made their way through the wilderness (Numbers 22-24); and the climactic move into the promised land itself, using familiar shorthand: from Shittim, east of the Jordan, to Gilgal on the west (see Joshua 2:1; 3:1; 4:19; 5:19).

The purpose of listing the divine activity is stated clearly: “that you may know the saving acts of the Lord” (verse 5). Such divine actions are “saving,” for God has brought life, health, and well-being to individuals and community. The people are to “remember” so that they might “know,” that is, come to a fuller realization of what God has done. What *God has done* is a crucial centering matter that will both (1) ground and (2) give shape to understanding the human activity in the verses that follow (6:6-8). Terence E. Fretheim

**Hymn:** Brother, sister, let me serve you (4-6) **635**

**Invitation:** *When Jesus poured the wine, and the bread was broken; we heard him saying again, ‘follow me.’ Jesus invites us to walk the road of sacrifice and often suffering, to walk with hearts burning and eyes open to the needs of the world around us. The table became a foretaste of love made real and of a world made whole.*

**Hymn:** Be present at our table Lord **456**

**Forgotten Stories: Stories within stories within stories:  
Numbers 22:1-41**

“From Shittim to Gilgal.” It is one of those little phrases that every Hebrew understood. Shittim was the last encampment after 40 years in the wilderness. From there they crossed the Jordan River and made their first encampment in the Promised Land at Gilgal. From Shittim to Gilgal represents the fulfillment of God’s promise. It is like saying “the grave is empty” – you don’t have to explain whose grave, when and where; we know what this means. From Shittim to Gilgal. Israel had been led out from Egypt through the waters of the Red Sea. With the Egyptian army behind them and the sea in front of them it seemed as though their journey to freedom would fail. But the breath/wind of God blew through the night and at morning there was a path. They crossed on dry ground.

Forty years later, Israel is again at the edge of its promised future. King Balak of Moab, the kingdom east of the Jordan River, fearing this great host, hires the holy man/prophet Balaam to pronounce a curse on this people. Words are power; they create what they speak. It is a powerful weapon. But every time Balaam opens his mouth, out comes a blessing. God has chosen to bless.

But the Jordan is at flood stage. God tells the priests to lead the way and stand in the river holding the Ark of the Covenant, the sign of God’s promise and presence. God promises that, again, they shall cross on dry land. As the priests step into the river, the flow of water ceases – and the deliverance from Egypt is lived anew as the people enter in to the fulfillment of God’s ancient promise. Slaves are free. The homeless receive a home. The landless receive a land of milk and honey.

From Shittim to Gilgal. But there is a wound in this story. For at Shittim the Israelites were seduced into worshipping the god of Moab, the Ba’al of Peor. After all God had done, after the 40 years wandering due to their faithlessness, in sight of the fulfillment of God’s promise, they are led astray to bow to other gods. They are faithless – but God is faithful.

Good and gracious God,  
We give thanks for your constant presence in our lives.  
And, at the same time, we confess  
that we are not always as aware  
of your presence as we should be.  
Too frequently we live our lives  
as if we are the judge and jury of the world.  
Too frequently, we miss out on the opportunity  
to tap into your always present love  
and share it with others  
(even those we think of as enemies).  
Too frequently we have only  
anger and judgment for others.

Remind us of your omnipresence.  
Make us ever aware of our call  
to be a reflection of you, our Creator.  
Teach us to walk softly in our lives.  
Guide us to places of love and humility.  
Create in us a peace that passes understanding.  
And inspire us to seek out justice  
for those who find far too little of it  
in this world that we have created...  
a world that too frequently  
values money over children -  
who die every day to a lack of food;  
a world that values power over people -  
who are forced to abandon their homes,  
because of greed, sectarian violence,  
or overreaching governments;  
a world whose preferential treatment  
bends heavily toward the wealthiest among us,  
rather than towards those in need.

Teach us, O God.  
Teach us to do justice,  
to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly in this life.  
More importantly teach us

to see more clearly  
when we are falling short of those goals  
and plant in us a desire  
to humbly bend the arc of history  
toward your love and justice.

We give thanks for the knowledge  
that even though we do not always  
manage to walk in the teachings of Jesus  
you love us, you encourage us,  
and you forgive us.

Amen.



**Do Justice  
Love Kindness  
Walk Humbly**

The orientation toward *both* neighbor and God is clear. In effect, give yourself on behalf of others, particularly those who are needy, by doing justice and loving kindness (“steadfast love”). At the same time, walk humbly (or attentively) with your God. The “walk” with God (4:2; see Deuteronomy 26:17; 28:9) has to do with life’s journey and the shape thereof. That God’s call for action on behalf of the less fortunate is joined with the call to journey with God is important; the one will deeply affect the other

Prayer of Thanksgiving: *The Lord is here. **God's spirit is with us. Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. It is right to give thanks and praise.** Oh God, how do we thank you? How do we show our gratitude? **Do you want signs and sacrifices? Do you want gold and cattle? Can we turn over our children to you?** Would that repay our debt, make*

*everything right? Tell us, what do you require in return for all your goodness? You have shown us what is good, and call us to remember that what you require is not repayment of debt but love and obedience. Show us, God when to do justice, how to love kindness, and where to walk, humbly, with you. (Continue in prayer) By your Spirit, make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to the world, until Christ comes in final glory, and we feast at the heavenly banquet. Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church, all honour and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever more. (Our Father...)*

**Hymn:** Here is bread, here is wine **546**

### **Communion**

**Prayer following communion:** *We have heard what the Lord requires of us. Leave empty talk and pride behind. We must walk the walk. We prepare to step out in faith, even into troubled waters. Only God knows where we might need to go. Don't be afraid. Jesus will guide our steps along the way, Teaching us to walk humbly, to love boldly, to serve God with body, soul, mind, and strength. Let us pray for the humility and courage to follow where the Spirit leads.*

**Hymn:** I have decided to follow Jesus (vs. 1 and 4) **570**

*Go now to serve God with gladness. Practice peace, establish justice, live with kindness, and walk humbly with your God each day.*