



Kensington Presbyterian Church
Growing in faith and sharing God's love
 since 1786

Stories of reigning

January 21, 2024

WELCOME, to worship. We are offering a variety of ways for people to gather. We are welcoming people to worship in person (with singing), as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this printable PDF.¹ If this is how you are worshipping, know that you are not alone... and if you like, you can invite those who live with you to join you, or connect with others through the phone or outside.

If you have any prayer requests, ideas, or just want to talk, please reach out to your elder or Rev. Peter (Peter@Kensingtonchurch.ca).



Rombeek

Contacts

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¹ note: that the footnotes are not as thorough as an academic paper.

Announcements

Clicking on or tapping blue text will take you to a web-site

Birthdays: We would like to wish you a happy birthday, but don't know when. Please consider sharing your birthday with us (you can leave off the year, or celebrate it).

Pancake Tuesday: Feb 13th More details to come.

Zoom Prayer Group: Thursday at 6:30 a.m.
[us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09)
[pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/773730107?pwd=eUo2M09YMEw5dkZvdm9uQmpHNIUrUT09)

Jesus & Java: Join us as we share the joys and questions of faith.
 Thursday, 3:30 pm at Beetz, 5914 Sherbrooke @ Clifton

Friday's Food & Film Festival:
 Pizza at 6:30, Film around 7. (RSVP with Peter appreciated)
 January 26 - Feb 16 The Chosen: season 1

Wisdom Unveiled: Tuesdays, January 30 - March 4 7 to 8:30pm
 Presbyterian College and the Rev. Dr. Greg Davidson (now at Blessings Church in Hamilton (a non-denominational congregation) will lead through the history, content, and gifts of this the wisdom parts of the Bible. It will be a combination of lectures, conversation and questions. \$55
www.presbyteriancollege.ca/2023/11/26/wisdom-literature

Café Rencontre Drop-in: Mondays 10-1 at 5964 av. NDG
 Enjoy some food and conversation. You can also get help with tech questions. A Community Council community worker will be there as well. shadysafar@ndg.ca 514-484-1471

Drop Box: Food donations are welcome for the local Food Pantry, diapers for young mothers through Head & Hands, and cloths & accessories for the New Hope Boutique.



Approaching God



Lighting of the Christ Candle

Jésus Christ est la lumière du monde.

Jesus Christ is the light of the world.



Call to worship (Psalm 150:1-2, 6)

Hallelujah!

Praise! Praise God in the temple, in the highest heavens!

Praise! Praise God's mighty deeds and noble majesty.

All that is alive, praise!

Praise the Lord.

Hallelujah!



♪ Hymn: Halle, Halle, Halle.....pg 10
www.youtube.com/watch?v=xif6bYQRbtU



Prayer of Approach

Creator God,

You are our sun, rain

and the nutrients in our soil.

You are all we need.

You are our world.

Today, help us to grow closer to you
so that we can see the world as you do,
so that we can live your way.

Sometimes we just try to take it easy,
and sometimes we get distracted,
and sometimes we just don't pay attention.
Please forgive us for not doing what you like. . .

Jesus, you are the best teacher.
Please help us to listen to you,
one our own, and as a community.

As we try to learn from you,
and us to live out the prayer you give us.
Let us sing the Lord's prayer:



The Lord's Prayer (please use a version you are comfortable with)

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
Amen.**

✦ Assurance of Pardon

Hear the good news:

Everyone who turns from sin in sorrow,
everyone who turn to God in hope,
this is God's Word of grace:

We are accepted, we are forgiven, we are loved.

This gift we have from God.

Amen.²



Listening to God

♪ Hymn Sing

This is a time when we sing several hymn requests.

You can join in on YouTube:

www.youtube.com/channel/UC_EPsf2FuWoeen7j1iGcz_w

✦ Sermon: Stories of Reigning

*Dear Lord, please bless these words
and the meditations of our hearts. Amen.*

Normally, at this point, I give an introduction to the text - providing some context or ways to listen. Today the introduction, text, and sermon are all going to be combined in a way that I

think will flow nicely, and be easier for younger people to follow. All the passages will be from [Mark 4](#): 1-34.³

Previous in Mark:

John the Baptizer was preparing the way by telling people to recognize how they were bad or selfish (sins) and turn back to God - and then Jesus showed up and started being amazing. Jesus amazed people with how confident his teaching was, but we hear more about how he is always on the move and healing people. He heals them of physical, mental and social problems - anything that gets in the way of them living together, and especially things that make it hard for them to focus on God.

We're skipping chapter 3. In it:

- Jesus heals more people of what separates them,
- he appoints twelve people to be students who stay with him,
- and he shows that the most important relationships are those about God... by saying that the people who have come to him to learn more about God are more his family than his mother and brothers.

Now there's a shift. After telling about Jesus healing and forgiving sins, we are given examples of something else Jesus does. Verse 33a tells us, "*With many parables like these, he shared his message with them,*" Jesus tells parables.

What is a parable?

³ Please look up the passages in your own Bible, or click on the name to be taken to an online version. If you'd like a new Bible with helpful notes, I recommend the 'Life with God Bible' NRSV from Renovaré. ISBN 0061834963 or for the more academically inclined, The New Oxford Study Bible NRSV

² Worship Sourcebook 2.4.39

Some of you will know a definition, others have an idea. Going back to the origins of the word, in Greek a parable is to put something beside something else - to make a comparison (usually with something familiar). In Hebrew and Aramaic, which is what Jesus would have been speaking, there was also the implication of a riddle. So, a parable is a comparison with something familiar that also puzzles or challenges us into seeing/understanding in a fresh way. Karl Barth says that Jesus' parables are to push our thinking in the right direction - to be more in line with the Reign of God.

Why does Jesus tell parables?

Why not just say what he means?

If you've asked that, you're not the first. ¹⁰*When he was alone, those who were around him along with the twelve asked him about the parables.* ¹¹*And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything comes in parables,* ¹²*in order that*

'they may indeed look but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; so that they may not turn again and be forgiven.' ”

Is Jesus trying to be confusing?

Have any of you ever been confused when somebody has tried to teach you something? Personally I might find it a fun puzzle at first, but then it gets frustrating and annoying. Imagine a teacher trying to be confusing? Is that what Jesus is doing? trying to be confusing?

He answers that question with a parable - and it helps.

²¹*He said to them, 'Is a lamp brought into the room to be put under a bucket or underneath the bed? Surely its place is on the lamp-stand!*

²²*There is nothing hidden which is not meant to be shared; nor is anything secret which is not meant to be seen by the light.'* ”

Lamps in Jesus day were simple oil lamps - more like candles



than our lamps. You could easily pick them up and move them around. If it was dark and you wanted to see clearly, you'd like a candle. Would you then put it under a bucket? No. That would be silly. It wouldn't help at all. (Jesus often uses something silly or ridiculous to get our attention.) The comparison here is between a lamp and a parable. Both are meant to help us see the world better. Does knowing that Jesus wants you to get something from parables help?

Now, I didn't read all of verse 33 earlier. The whole verse is, ³³*With many stories like these, he shared his message with them, fitting the stories to their experience so they could take them in.*”

So... Jesus uses parables so that people can take in the message, not to confuse them... but they often confuse people (especially the disciples). Why does Jesus use them, and not just tell people the point?

The reason is that with a parable we need to, or at least should, wrestle with it to figure it out. We need to engage with it. We need to puzzle through how the comparison works... and how this is different from how we see the world. In this process of


trying to understand our way of thinking shifts - as Karl Barth pointed out. We practice seeing the world God's way.

In this chapter Jesus also offers some advice on listening to parables.

The first is very direct. Twice he says, “^{9 & 23}If you have ears to hear, use them!” It's a bit odd. Almost everybody has ears - but I think he's telling us to use them - to pay attention.

He also tells a longer parable. It goes like this.

^{4:1}Jesus went back to teaching by the sea. Such a huge crowd gathered around him that he got into a boat on the sea and sat there, while the whole crowd covered the ground right up to the water's edge. ²He

 began to teach them many things in parables.

In his teaching he said to them: ³“Listen! A farmer went out to sow the seeds – scattering them over the ground. ⁴And as he sowed, some seed fell on a path and the birds came and gobbled it up. ⁵Other seed fell among the rocks where there was not much soil. It sprang up quickly since it had no depth of soil - ⁶And when the sun rose, it was scorched, and since it had no root it withered away. ⁷Other seed fell among thorn-bushes, and the thorns grew up and choked the life out of it. It grew no grain. ⁸Other seed fell into good soil and brought forth grain, and when it grew. It produced a crop which gave thirty or sixty or even a

Sower - JJ Tissot

hundred times as much as the seed.”

If this is a comparison, who's it talking about?

Is God the farmer... probably, but the farmer is pretty careless in spreading the seed in places it won't grow well. Did people

laugh when they first heard this? Perhaps the farmer isn't silly, maybe Farmer God is very generous - giving the seeds a chance to grow anywhere?

Who or what are the seeds?

Maybe we are the seeds and the ground is the world. We can end up in all sorts of places, and in some places it's easier to grow. That's an option.

Maybe the seeds are the Kingdom (reign) of God, and the ground is the world. Maybe it's not about us growing, but the Reign of God growing better in some situations?

Or maybe the seeds are the Reign of God, but the ground is people?


- The path is people who don't listen to the parables - who don't accept God.
- The rocky soil is like those who get really excited about God and the good news, but don't work to build depth and connections - then they can't get through hard times.
- The thorns are like those who give their energy to things other than God (wanting what others have, or to be looked up to) - then they won't grow to what they could.
- and the good soil - are those who pay attention to the parables.



♪ We have a song that takes this interpretation. Let's sing it now. (page 11)

So far we've learned about parables - but Jesus wants to do more than tell odd little comparisons. He uses parables to help connect people with God - to help us see what the Reign of God is like. Let's look at two more parables that are in Chapter 4.

Imagine you are God and you want everyone to do what you say. ...No. That's not quite right. You want everyone to live in the best way possible - the way you created them to live. How would you do it? Would you use mind control and force them? or an army? "If you have ears, listen" to this parable.


 ²⁶Jesus also said, "The Reign of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground. ²⁷They sleep at night, are up and about during the day - and all the while the seeds are sprouting and growing. Yet, they do not know how it happens. ²⁸The soil itself makes the plants grow and bear fruit; first the tender stalk appears, then the head, and finally the head full of grain. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, immediately he goes in with his sickle because the harvest has come."

What's this say about God taking over? It will be like a seed that just does its thing. It's gradual, ...unnoticed, ...natural, ...and (for Jesus' society) not understood.

What comparison would you make?

(You'll have a chance to share in a bit.)

The last parable might have reminded the original listeners of something from Daniel. There a vision is given of a mighty tree, bigger than the huge cedars of Lebanon, and that it will provide a home for all the animals and nations of the world. Is that the comparison Jesus will use?

 ³⁰Then he continued, "What can we say the kingdom of God is like? How shall we put it in a parable? ³¹It is like a tiny grain of mustard-seed which, when it is sown, is smaller than any seed that is ever

sown. ³²But after it is sown in the earth, it grows up and becomes bigger than any other plant. It shoots out great branches so that birds can come and nest in its shelter."



Mustard Plants

Okay, so not a mighty tree. Instead Jesus describes a common plant that grows everywhere. It's useful, but not impressive. Like the last parable it starts as a seed, a really small one, and grows big enough to provide a home for the birds.

Which reminds me of the parable about the farmer scattering the seeds. A crop that produced 15 times as much as was planted was considered good. The parable says that this harvest was 30, 60, and even 100 times as much. That is surprising - and amazing.

So, what is Jesus trying to say?

If you had to tell a story of God's reality coming to be, how would you do it?

Let's brainstorm some key points...

- starts small
- natural
- the growth is surprising, amazing, and provides for people's needs.

If you had to write a parable for now, what comparison would you make?

Writing your own will help you with the other aspect - to be able to notice the seeds that are growing.

*Thanks be to God
Amen.*



Responding to God

✦ Presbytery Letter

We received a letter last night from the Moderator of Presbytery. I'm going to read it now as we remember that God's Reign is growing, though often unseen. The hymn we'll sing after, that Zoé chose earlier this week, is also fitting.

The letter is regarding last Friday's news reports that the Rev. Sampson Afoakwa has been found guilty of sexually abusing a minor. The Presbytery will follow our Policy for our own disciplinary process. You may find the full letter on page 9.

♪ Hymn: In suffering love.....pg 12 (696)
www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0tkfL64I48

☞ FaithTalk: These are some questions for you to discuss with somebody... or many somebodies.
Do what you feel safe (and practice stretching a little).

Memories: What is your favourite parable?

Wonder: Share a parable you find confusing.

Values: Which aspect of the Reign/Kingdom of God catches your attention today?

Actions: Together write a modern parable (short comparison that is relatable and surprising) about the Reign of God. (I'd love to hear it.)

Prayer: ...that we can learn to see the world as Jesus does.

✦ Spirit Sightings

Despite the cold we had 14 people out the movie last Friday. Between us the Spirit built community - and we heard a lovely sermon by Charles Dickens as delivered by The Muppets.



Next week we'll start watching The Chosen (again, but for first time for many).


✦ Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on our **website**: kensingtonchurch.ca. Just click the 'Donate Now' button, and then the pretty button. It gives you various options that are easy

to follow.

You can also donate through **interac e-transfer**. Our name is Kensington Presbyterian Church and the e-mail address is info@kensingtonchurch.ca.

Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (**PAR**) are also good options.

 Prayers of the people

Lord God,

We thank you that your way of doing things is growing.

That ever since Jesus, and even before,
You have been growing your Kingdom
in this world

In ways that are often unseen
but sometimes - we notice.

Jesus,
today we heard about your teaching.

Help us to pay attention
and think about what you teach.

Help us to recognize the seeds of your way
whenever we see people caring for each other
and experience love and hope.

Thinking of teachers,
we also pray for our teachers, and those who work with them.

Dear Jesus,

We've also heard stories of your healing.

We pray for all those who need healing:
even if we don't know how.

We pray for: Karin's recovery, Pansy's upcoming surgery, Pansy's daughter's treatment, Rhona's upcoming tests, for those with

dementia, for others with appointments, or who need appointments, and for others. . .

We also pray for all those who need healing from Sampson's actions. For his victim, her family, his family, and their congregation. We even pray for him.

Jesus, there are times we can't imagine what healing will look like, but you can.

May your Spirit bring healing.

Jesus, the world can seem dark and hard.

Please be our light,
so we can see the amazing hugeness of your kingdom.


In the name of Jesus, the Christ,

Amen.

Praise the Lord - M Moyers

♪ Hymn: This little light of mine.....pg 12

www.youtube.com/watch?v=J2kDsqGeoLU

 **Benediction** (based on Ephesians 3: 20-21)

*Now to him who, by the seeds growing within us
is accomplishing way more
than all we can ask or imagine,
to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus,
forever and ever.*



January 20, 2024

Dear members and friends of the Presbytery of Montreal and its congregations.

The Presbytery of Montreal is aware that on January 19, 2024 the Rev. Sampson Afoakwah, a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and of this presbytery, has pled guilty and been convicted of sexually abusing the 13-year-old daughter of a member of his congregation. He has been sentenced to 8 months in prison, according to news reports.

We express our deep distress and disappointment that a minister of the Presbyterian Church in Canada and of our presbytery has committed this crime and caused this harm. We know that the congregations and ministers of this presbytery will share this distress and disappointment.

Those of us who serve as pastoral leaders have a profound duty of care for all those we serve, especially the most vulnerable among us, and we are heartbroken that this duty of care has been betrayed. Our first prayer in this situation is that the compassion and grace of God will surround the young person who has been harmed, and her family.

The Presbytery of Montreal became aware in August 2022 that the Rev. Sampson Afoakwah, minister of Montreal West Presbyterian Church, had been arrested and charged with criminal offences. Based on the information that was available to the presbytery at that time, the Presbytery of Montreal followed the denomination's Policy on Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harrassment (SASH) by immediately placing the Rev. Afoakwah on a paid leave of absence. This meant that he would not be able to fulfill the duties normally associated with his position and could not be involved in the life or worship of the congregation.

Concretely, we also extended pastoral care, according to the policies and practices of The Presbyterian Church in Canada, to the victim and her family.

The Presbytery was unable to act further, according to the SASH policy, until such time as the criminal proceedings came to an end. With the criminal conviction, the presbytery will now continue its own disciplinary process. The presbytery is also extending appropriate pastoral and prayerful support to the Rev. Afoakwah at this time.

An Interim Moderator has served the congregation of Montreal West Presbyterian Church since August 2022, and continues to provide leadership and care among them at this time. Our prayers are with the congregation, that they will know the grace and leading of Christ as they respond to the pain and challenge of this moment.

To the members and friends of congregations in the Presbytery of Montreal, we pray that you also will know God's healing grace as you hear and respond to this difficult news.

Any questions about the Presbytery's response to this situation, or about the policies of the church that we are following, may be directed to the Presbytery office (presbytery.of.montreal@gmail.com).

Sincerely in the peace of Christ,
Rev. Dr. Glenn Chestnutt
Moderator of the Presbytery of Montreal

MISSION MOMENT Sunday, January 21



We are God's people, called to serve God with our many gifts. We belong to a denomination that is connected by faith, governance, history and mission. Presbyterians Sharing is one of the ways that Presbyterians across Canada work together to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, sharing God's love and hope in our communities, in Canada and around the world. Gifts to Presbyterians Sharing help build strong congregations, serve vulnerable people, walk with Indigenous people, seek justice and share God's love. When we work together, we can accomplish so much more than we ever could on our own.

DAILY PRAYERS

Sunday, January 21 We pray for wisdom and love for those who support family members, friends and neighbours who wrestle with addiction.

Monday, January 22 Spirit of life and liberty, we pray that you save us from all that inhibits the abundant life you give us.

Tuesday, January 23 We pray for ministries and camps providing mental health support, training and workshops.

Wednesday, January 24 We pray for the physical, mental and spiritual health of chaplains who work to meet the spiritual needs of all those who serve.

Thursday, January 25 We pray for village committees in India that are empowering vulnerable families to improve livelihoods, health and nutrition with support from PWS&D.

Friday, January 26 We pray for all camp leaders and boards as they plan for 2024.

Saturday, January 27 We pray for children, and that their parents and guardians demonstrate the kind of love we have been shown by God.

*Words: traditional liturgical
Music: Caribbean; arr. John L. Bell*

lively tempo

Arrangement © 1990 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G51 3UU, Scotland

117

The Sower

D A D A

1 A farm - er went out to plant the seed. The
 2 And some of the seed fell on the rocks. The
 3 And some of the seed fell on good soil. The

D A D A

sow - er went out to sow. And some of the seed the
 sow - er went out to sow. And some of the seed fell
 sow - er went out to sow. The seed that was sown there

D A D A D

birds ate up. The sow - er went out to sow.
 in the thorns. The sow - er went out to sow.
 bore much fruit. The sow - er went out to sow.

Refrain D Bm D Bm

God's Word is the good seed that

D A D Bm D Bm

Je - sus sowed lov - ing - ly. May I be the

D Bm D A D

good soil, where it will bear fruit in me.

Words and music: Kathleen Hart Brumm
 © 1988, 1995, Brumhart Publishing Company

In suffering love

BELMONT 8 6 8 6 CM

G D7 Em Bm C(sus4-3) /E Gsus4 3

1. In suf - fer ing love the thread of life is
 2. There is a rock, a place se - cure with -
 3. In love's deep womb our fears are held; there
 4. Lord, to our hearts your joy com - mit, in -
 5. In suf - fer ing love our God comes now, hope's

D/F# G Cmaj9 Am Em/C# G/D D D7/F# G D7 Em Bm

wo - ven through our care, for God is with us;
 in the storm's cold blast; con - cealed with - in the
 God's rich tears are sown and bring to birth, in
 to our hands your pain, so send us out to
 vi - sion born in gloom; with tears and laugh - ter

C(sus#4-3) /E Gsus4-3 /B Csus2-1 C Am/C G D7 G

not a - lone our pain and toil we bear.
 suf - fer ing night God's co - ve - nant stands fast.
 hope new - born, the strength to jour - ney on.
 touch the world with bless - ings in your name.
 shared and blest the des - ert yet will bloom.

Words: Rob Johns (1941-1986) Music: William Gardiner's Sacred Melodies 1819

Words: copyright © Elinor F. Johns, 1987 Music: public domain CCLI #4440603 One Licence #A-719461

This Little Light of Mine

This lit - tle light of mine, I'm gon - na let it shine;
 Eve - ry - where I go, I'm gon - na let it shine;
 Je - sus gave it to me; I'm gon - na let it shine;

5
 this lit - tle light of mine, I'm gon - na let it shine;
 eve - ry - where I go, I'm gon - na let it shine;
 Je - sus gave it to me; I'm gon - na let it shine;

9
 this lit - tle light of mine, I'm gon - na let it shine, let it shine,
 eve - ry - where I go, I'm gon - na let it shine, let it shine,
 Je - sus gave it to me; I'm gon - na let it shine, let it shine,

13
 let it shine, let it shine.
 let it shine, let it shine.
 let it shine, let it shine.

Hide it under a bas-ket? No! I'm gonna let it shine...

Don't let anyone (blow) it out. I'm gonna let it shine...

Share my light with others! Yes! I'm gonna let it shine...