

Pentecost 14 / Blessing of the Backpacks

September 14, 2025

Prelude: Elevation from Mass for the Convents

Couperin

***ProceSSIONAL Hymn: Morning has broken**

No. 814

1. Morning has broken like the first morning,
blackbird has spoken like the first bird,
praise for the singing, praise for the morning,
praise for them springing fresh from the Word.

2. Sweet the rain's new fall sunlit from heaven,
like the first dewfall on the first grass,
praise for the sweetness, praise for the morning,
sprung in completeness where His feet pass.

3. Mine is the sunlight, mine is the morning,
born of the one light Eden saw play,
praise with elation, praise ev'ry morning
God's recreation of the new day!

Welcome, Announcements & Worship Theme

CALL TO WORSHIP:

We come to worship as those who sometimes have trust issues.

Some of us have been taken advantage of and hurt in some way or betrayed in our trust.

We live in a world that can be anything but safe, where there are predators all around and where scammers and fraudsters are ready to use and abuse us whenever they can.

To trust is to risk exposing our need and our vulnerability. It also requires that we swallow our pride in naming our need and seeking out help.

To love requires trust, and to open our heart to love requires us to trust others.

How may we heal of our mistrust while staying safe in a world that is all too often unsafe?

Come to us as we worship you this morning, O God, heal our hearts, and grow in them anew: faith, hope and love.

ALL: Let us worship God together!

***Hymn: I'm gonna live so God can use me**

No. 648

1. I'm gonna live so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna live so
God can use me anywhere,
Lord, anytime!

3. I'm gonna pray so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna pray so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

2. I'm gonna work so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna work so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

4. I'm gonna sing so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!
I'm gonna sing so
God can use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!

Prayer of Approach, Confession & The Lord's Prayer

**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,
the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

The Peace of Christ be with you all;
And also with you

Children's Time & Blessing of the Backpacks

God, we give you thanks for walking with us into a new season of school and work, of exploration and learning, of hoping and loving.

We ask for your blessing on the backpacks and bags that carry the items that help us throughout our day.

May they be tools that serve as vessels of your blessing, filled with purpose, peace, and promise.

We ask for your blessing upon our classrooms, workplaces and homes.

May they be full of kindness, listening, and communities ready to learn and grow together.

We ask for your blessing on our footsteps and the path ahead.

May they take us to wonderful new places and remind us that you walk with us no matter the twists and turns on the journey.

And may our hearts be open like the path of a labyrinth—

Winding, wondering, and always held by you, loving God.

ALL: Amen.

(Children are invited to join in programming following Children's Time)

Choir: Welcome back!

*1. Summer days will soon be no more.
Autumn's knocking! Open the door!
See the blazing harvest moon!
Let us sing a merry new tune!*

Refrain

Welcome back to the church once again!

Welcome back! Let the journey begin!

Welcome back to the colours of Fall!

Welcome back one and all!

*2. Welcome couples married this year!
May your lives be filled with good cheer!
Honour husband, cherish wife.
For His church Christ laid down His life.
(R)*

words & music by Bruce Nasmith
*3. Welcome precious treasures new
born!*

*Radiant light your faces adorn!
Hear our Saviour's ageless decree:
"Let the children come unto me." (R)*

*4. Life is but the night before day.
Seasons fly and vanish away!
Fond farewells to loved ones who've
gone.
In God's heav'n they shine like the sun!
(R)*

Scripture Reading: 2 Kings 5: 1-19 (p. 528)

Pam McCarroll

INTRO: Our scripture reading this morning is taken from the second book of Kings, 5:1-19. The Syrians are enemies of the Hebrews and have defeated them repeatedly. The one chiefly responsible for such victory is the brilliant and mighty commander of the Syrian Army, a man named Naaman. But the story takes a turn when Naaman becomes ill. Listen:

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Aram, was a great man and in high favor with his master because by him the Lord had given victory to Aram. The man, though a mighty warrior, suffered from a skin disease. ² Now the Arameans on one of their raids had taken a young girl captive from the land of Israel, and she served Naaman's

wife. ³ She said to her mistress, “If only my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his skin disease.” ⁴ So Naaman^[a] went in and told his lord just what the girl from the land of Israel had said. ⁵ And the king of Aram said, “Go, then, and I will send along a letter to the king of Israel.”

Naaman went, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten sets of garments. ⁶ He brought the letter to the king of Israel, which read, “When this letter reaches you, know that I have sent to you my servant Naaman, that you may cure him of his skin disease.” ⁷ When the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his clothes and said, “Am I God, to give death or life, that this man sends word to me to cure a man of his skin disease? Just look and see how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me.”

⁸ But when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, he sent a message to the king, “Why have you torn your clothes? Let him come to me, that he may learn that there is a prophet in Israel.” ⁹ So Naaman came with his horses and chariots and halted at the entrance of Elisha’s house. ¹⁰ Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, “Go, wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean.” ¹¹ But Naaman became angry and went away, saying, “I thought that for me he would surely come out and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God and would wave his hand over the spot and cure the skin disease! ¹² Are not Abana^[b] and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” He turned and went away in a rage.

¹³ But his servants approached and said to him, “Father, if the prophet had commanded you to do something difficult, would you not have done it? How much more, when all he said to you was, ‘Wash, and be clean?’” ¹⁴ So he went down and immersed himself seven times in the

Jordan, according to the word of the man of God; his flesh was restored like the flesh of a young boy, and he was clean.

¹⁵ Then he returned to the man of God, he and all his company; he came and stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel; please accept a present from your servant.” ¹⁶ But he said, “As the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will accept nothing!” He urged him to accept, but he refused. ¹⁷ Then Naaman said, “If not, please let two mule loads of earth be given to your servant, for your servant will no longer offer burnt offering or sacrifice to any god except the Lord. ¹⁸ But may the Lord pardon your servant on one count: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, leaning on my arm, and I bow down in the house of Rimmon, when I do bow down in the house of Rimmon, may the Lord pardon your servant on this one count.” ¹⁹ He said to him, “Go in peace.” Amen.

We are listening, O God
Speak to us!

Sermon: THE HEALING OF TRUST
(included below)

Dr. Harris

Choir: “Morning glow” from Pippin
Soloist Shaun Alphonso

Stephen Schwartz

*Why won't my hands stop shaking
When all the earth is still
When ancient ghosts are waking
So many steps need taking
So many plans need making
I think I will
I think I will*

*And sweep this whole land through
Morning glow is long past due*

*Morning glow fill the earth
Come and shine for all you're worth
We'll be present at the birth
Of old faith looking new
Morning glow is long past due*

*Morning glow, morning glow
Starts to glimmer when you know
Winds of change are set to blow*

*Oh, morning glow, I'd like to help you
grow*

*We should have started long ago
So...
Morning glow all day long
While we sing tomorrow's song
Never knew we could be so strong
But now it's very clear
Morning glow is almost here*

*Morning glow, by your light
We can make the new day bright
And the phantoms of the night
Will fade into the past*

Morning glow is here at last

*Morning glow, by your light
We can make the new day bright
And the phantoms of the night
Will fade into the past*

*Morning glow is here.....
At last
We've got magic to do
Just for you
At last*

Prayers of Thanksgiving & Pastoral Concern

***Hymn: For the healing of the nations**

No. 736

1. For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

2. Lead us forward into freedom,
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and
hatred,
all may come and go in peace.
Show us how through care and
goodness
fear will die and hope increase.

Benediction

3. All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned,
pride of status, race or
schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow brief life's span.

4. You, Creator God, have
written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service,
earth its destiny may find.

***Threefold Amen**

Organ Postlude: Prelude from Te Deum

Charpentier

**Remain seated if you are more comfortable*

~

We invite you to join us for coffee hour in our adjacent hall after the service.

All are welcome!

~

OUR PURPOSE AS A CHURCH:

To become the hands, feet, voice and heart of Christ for each other and in the world.



Thank you for all the ways you contribute to our Armour Heights Community.

Scan here to make a donation through CanadaHelps:



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Coming Events

Sunday, September 14

Welcome Back Sunday / Blessing of the Backpacks

Monday, September 15

Dance Fitness, 10:00am

Wednesday, September 17

Learning the Prayer Practice called Examen, 7:30pm

Friday, September 19 - Sunday, September 21

Cairn Women's Wellness Weekend

Sunday, September 21

Pentecost 15

Monday, September 22

Dance Fitness, 10:00am

Wednesday, September 24

Yoga with Erin, 5:30pm

Fall Study: Writings of the New Testament, 7:30pm

Thursday, September 25

Book Club: "The Knowing" by Tanya Talaga, 7:30pm

Friday, September 26

PA Day Camp

Sunday, September 28

Orange Shirt Sunday

Joyful Noises Band Rehearsal, 12 noon

Monday, September 29

Dance Fitness, 10:00am

Wednesday, October 1

Fall Study: Writings of the New Testament, 7:30pm

Sunday, October 5

World Communion Sunday

Joyful Noises Band Rehearsal, 12 noon

Indigenous Spirit Garden Tour: Congregational Event, 4pm



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"Discover the vitality of faith"

THE HEALING OF TRUST

2 Kings 5: 1-19

Trust... Why is it so difficult to trust?... Whether it's people, systems, the weather or whatever, trust is something that has to be earned over and over again. But why is it so hard?

I remember hearing my parents' experience after the first years being in Canada as immigrants from Greece. Even as Greece is now a developed country and part of the European Union, the second world war totally devastated Greece and it took many decades for things to settle. My parents grew up in Greece where systems of finance, government and services public and private were entangled in inefficiency, corruption, nepotism and a lot of everyone-for-themselves mentality. There was little trust except within family and tight-knit community. My sister was born in Canada and I remember how my parents experienced the treatment my mother received in hospital, or when we got our first heavily used car and needed a good mechanic to repair it. They experienced being treated as human beings, with respect, no matter how little they knew the system or how easily they could be taken advantage of. There was trust, and that made Canada at the time way ahead of a nation back in Europe still broken in many ways.

Trust... But many would say that things have become worse over the decades here in Canada too. Whether it's our neighbour, public services, businesses, or even science, trust has been eroded for many in our society. Security and safety have become that much more a concern. Whether it's our children's safety, the benefits of vaccinations and public health mandates, whether it's because of the colour of our skin, our religious garb, our political alliances, our sexuality and gender expression, or our elderly in care facilities, social trust is not what it used to be in the eyes of many of us, even here in Canada.

And then, there are the very personal experiences in our lives, experiences where we have been betrayed in our trust, neglected, mistreated, taken advantage of, robbed, you name it, all of it contributes to the erosion of trust.

Even as most of us have survived the pandemic of several years ago, there has been an erosion of trust in science, a questioning of those who are recognized as experts and authorities by the state or public institutions, and further polarization among people only made worse by social media. Whether someone knocks on our door, calls us on the phone or sends us an email, we know that fraud is everywhere, that our vulnerability is being sought out by scammers, that many of us feel ill-equipped to be safe in this increasingly predatory world.

OK, all this is true, and I'm sure all of us here, each in our own way, will be familiar with some story or incident in our lives or someone we know and care about, where trust has been taken advantage of and therefore now broken. Yes, this is all true, yes. But the solution to this breakdown of trust cannot merely be a retreat into our own inner circle of me-myself-and-I and my own and to heck with everyone else. How do we rebuild trust again and how do we heal from the fear and even the trauma of broken trust?

Well, we need to examine why it is we cannot trust others and what it would take to trust them. Are we willing to risk some trust in order to build healthier, richer and deeper relationships? Even as we need to be safe and smart, are there ways to open the doors of our hearts to others who are very different than us, even perhaps those who we would deem a threat to us? Are there ways to open up to greater trust?

Well, with this intro I hope to have created the ground for appreciating a powerful and beautiful story in our scriptures. Sometimes, the obstacle to the healing that comes with developing trust again is not about overcoming an experience of betrayal, mistreatment or being taken advantage. No. Sometimes, our vulnerability of need requires us to trust in a way where we have to overcome our pride and our inner mistrust of others whom we don't trust because they are seen as different, a threat or even as weaker than us. How much pride do we need to swallow and how much need do we need to admit in ourselves before we approach someone else who can help us with the risk that we can also be taken advantage of, made a fool of, or even worse,

ruined? How much pride do we need to swallow and how much openness do we need to risk?

But imagine the possibilities! Imagine the possibilities in an enemy becoming a friend, in trust established from need met, from generosity shared, from compassion experienced, from genuine care given and felt without requiring anything in return. Are such things possible in our world today?

OK, let's work through the story that is our scripture reading more closely in search of revelatory wisdom. The main character who is the subject of healing is a man named Naaman. But Naaman is no ordinary man. He's a commander, a general, the top man of the Syrian army who is responsible for having defeated the Hebrew nation Israel over and over again. Naaman is a man's man - strong, tough, trusted like no other by the king. But Naaman has a serious vulnerability, at least one that has become visible - he's sick with a terrible flesh-eating disease - leprosy. Even as we have conquered leprosy in our world today and there are great treatments for those places in the world where it still exists, in the ancient world, leprosy was a death sentence for most.

So, Naaman is trying to hide his disease, but his family and household, and presumably the king, know what's happening. What will happen when enemies find out? What will happen when Naaman can no longer appear at the forefront of his troops? Anyhow, the situation is dire and Naaman, though not fully admitting it to himself yet, is facing a terrible fate.

But the story takes a fascinating turn when who but a young, Hebrew slave girl has some advice to offer. OK, think about the source and the trust required to listen. This is someone young, rather than someone old with knowledge, experience and wisdom. This is a girl versus a boy in a highly patriarchal world of strong masculinity. And this is a Hebrew girl, part of a subjugated race of people. She represents the enemy, and more importantly, she represents everything that is weak, the total opposite of Naaman and everything he represents - a strong, conquering man.

So what kind of healing does Naaman need? What kind of healing do you need? Is part of that healing a rising up of some trust where only mistrust and contempt exist so far? But that would have to mean recognizing your vulnerability and need. That would mean you putting yourself out there, exposing your vulnerability, risking ridicule, persecution, isolation, humiliation. Can Naaman come out of his closet because the alternative is ultimately death?

Well, even as Naaman himself may be reluctant, he listens to his wife. Moreover this also means he has to go to the king and ask for permission. Will the king reprimand him or will the king also recognize how much he needs Naaman and therefore is willing to risk some advantage taken by the enemy. A young girl, a slave of a defeated, enemy people... how much trust is required, how desperate does one have to be, how much pride does one have to swallow to listen and trust in whatever possibility there may be? Well, but this is only the beginning.

Naaman may be in need, but he hides his need by going to no less than the king of Israel decked in the finery of his military glory, with lots of loot, and a letter from the Syrian king ordering the Hebrews to meet Naaman's healing needs or else! We hide our vulnerability and need, we protect ourselves from putting ourselves out there by putting on everything that makes us great, strong and invulnerable in the world. But what happens? Well, the Hebrew king is understandably petrified. It's as if the Syrians are picking a new fight with this strange request that is more like a threat. How can I, the king of Israel, heal this man of a deadly disease?!

But then, a lowly prophet, at odds with the king, living on the outskirts of town, named Elisha, hears about the situation. He sends word to the king: Send this great general to me. I'll show him what kind of healing a prophet of the Lord God can offer. OK, the king has his own trust issues, but he sends Naaman along as he can do nothing himself. At least he can buy himself some time!

And so, Naaman comes in all his glory, in a great chariot with a small army of men and servants, and all his loot. He surrounds this lowly house of the prophet. Wow! Imagine the sight! But what does Elisha the prophet then do?

Think about it. He doesn't go out to meet Naaman and his host, bowing to the ground in deep fear, awe and respect. No. He doesn't even come outside. He sends his servant instead with some instructions. Go wash in our little Hebrew river called Jordan. And wash seven times because seven is a special number to us Hebrews. That's it.

Wow! Imagine the kind of pride Naaman has to swallow here. Not only does this nobody of a prophet with no official standing or status not even come out to meet him. But he sends him to a crummy little local river. Why not just go back and wash in one of the great rivers in Syria? Is this an insult or what! Who does he think he's addressing?! Naaman gathers his people and loot and leaves in a huff.

But then, one of Naaman's servants, a slave no doubt, rouses up the courage to speak to him. Lord, he says, if the prophet had asked you to do something difficult, wouldn't you have done it? But here he has asked you to do something simple. Is anything lost if you give it a try? Well, to do this, of course, Naaman would have to allow his pride to be knocked down another notch. First, it's listening to a slave girl of the Hebrews. Then it's going to some no-status lowly prophet of an enemy people. And now it's washing in a muddy little foreign river. OK, he'll do it. Why? He's vulnerable and desperate. What's the alternative? Death makes us all equally humble, no?

And what happens? Naaman begins to feel healing energies course through his body. Something astonishing has happened and is happening. How could this be? Yet it is! Imagine receiving test results you could never have imagined. The treatments have worked in a remarkable way. The surgery is a success. You are healed beyond anything you had hoped because you doubted, questioned or had little trust because you didn't want to be devastated.

OK, but there's more still. Naaman returns to thank the prophet Elisha. He wants to pay him. He needs some way to restore his pride. But no. Elisha will take nothing. OK, imagine this now. A general, a top man of an enemy people, a great threat to the Hebrews, is healed and restored. And he is healed and restored without any payment or any conditions! Elisha hasn't told him that he

must never attack the Hebrews again. Elisha has not taken all the money and goods Naaman is ready to give him. Nothing!

This, my friends is: grace. And grace received through divine healing love carried by the energy of Holy Spirit as we call it, can do amazing things. It can heal, but the healing is internal as much if not more than anything external. Whether Naaman will live or die and in this case, live, he will be a changed man, a man healed. But healing is about overcoming pride, opening one's heart, risking trust and experiencing what happens when trust is rewarded with a love that is total, requiring nothing in return except calling us to become ever more human without having to hide our vulnerability.

So, here's the final, and perhaps most beautiful conclusion. If Elisha will take nothing, Naaman is finally free to speak from his heart. "Elisha" he says, can I please take two loads of Hebrew earth with me? From now on I want to worship your God. Why? Because your God is the God of us all, the God of heaven and this beautiful earth where I have been healed. And please, one more thing. I'm asking for forgiveness in advance. When I go back and my Lord King asks me to worship with him in the temple of a god who is no god, territorial and exclusive as he is, I will go and worship with him. But in my heart I will be worshipping the God that is your God and now my god and the God of us all.

Wow! What a transformation. The god of Israel is truly the God of us all. And if the God of us all, can we truly be enemies? Must we not open our hearts to trust? Must we not put away our pride, our pretences, our protective shells and open our hearts to one another?...

Yes, we live in a world where we have to look out for each other in order to be safe and protected. And yet, our healing and the healing of our world has to involve an opening of our hearts to each other and especially when trust has been broken and we see enemies and threats all around. May we experience grace, goodwill, care and compassion all around us, and may we be servants of this Spirit that carries grace, the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, wherever we go and whoever we meet.

Let us pray: Come, Holy Spirit come... Heal us... Heal us of our fear fed by hurt, that blocks any pathway to trust... Heal us of our pride that fears exposing our vulnerability and need... Help us better become brothers and sisters of on another and our mother earth... Amen.