

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany  
Feb 7th, 2021  
Immanuel United Church

Welcome

Call to Worship:

God is with us.  
**We are not alone.**  
Christ is present here.  
**The Spirit is among us.**  
Let us give thanks to God,  
**in memory  
and in hope.**



Hymn: VU 94  
***Lovely Star in the Sky***  
*(Tong bang ui byol)*  
Korean text based on “*Brightest and Best Are the Suns of the Morning*”, Reginald Heber 1811

Prayer:

**Splendid Star,  
shining in the sky,  
light the path we have travelled,  
trodden together.  
Eastern Star,  
rising over the horizon,  
guide us to the honourable baby,  
to worship the child.**

Scripture: Isaiah 40:21-31

Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
Has it not been told you from the beginning?  
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?  
It is God who sits above the circle of the earth,  
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;  
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,  
and spreads them like a tent to live in;  
who brings princes to naught,  
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,  
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,  
when God blows upon them, and they wither,  
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

To whom then will you compare me,  
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.  
Lift up your eyes on high and see:  
Who created these?  
God who brings out their host and numbers them,  
calling them all by name;  
because God is great in strength,  
mighty in power,  
not one is missing.

Why do you say, O Jacob,  
and speak, O Israel,  
'My way is hidden from the Lord,  
and my right is disregarded by my God'?  
Have you not known? Have you not heard?  
The Lord is the everlasting God,  
the Creator of the ends of the earth.  
God does not faint or grow weary;  
God's understanding is unsearchable.  
God gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.  
Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint.

Message: Tapping with Children; Tapping with God

These days, I tend to start my sermons with one of the daily insights I obtain from interacting with my sons. It's a no-brainer; in our long and weary sojourn in this physically-distanced world, my firsthand social bubble is my family. I've been really focused on my kids lately; there is always one more new challenge to figure out each day, especially for children's mental health at home and at school. Jah-bi is in his new school, and my oldest child is a teenager. I thought I graduated from being a novice parent a long time ago; 12 years ago, when I was in perpetual motion, chasing my older son, I had a stack of parenting books at hand to understand the three-year old's mind (and perhaps my own mind, as well). I realize now that I have to update my

parenting skillset for my growing adolescent at home, a high school kid in a Canadian school - a double task to figure out, as I grew up in Korea. If we were not in the middle of a pandemic, you would have often found me in the parenting section of the library or Chapters. And yet, I have another child to care for.

One morning, I was explaining to my younger son about Tapping. He loves King Kong and Godzilla, and seems to find relevance and stress-releasing strategy from mimicking King Kong thumping his chest or Godzilla roaring out laser beam from his mouth to the sky. (Show the pictures.) That's when I found the "Tapping Solution". There's a video to help kids find a way to alleviate the stress that comes at them from every direction these days. "Jah-bi, sometimes when you get really stressed, try this: tapping. You can thump on your chest like King Kong. You can also tap on yourself with two fingers, and no one will be able to notice that. (Demonstrate tapping.) I heard that when we tap on our body, it sounds like the mother's heartbeat that the baby hears in her belly before they're born. Tapping can help us feel calm and protected, and that we are with someone who loves us, wherever we are."

In today's reading, Isaiah paints God as a Great Tapper. Not because God has hands to tap on us, but we can hear and feel and tune in to the tapping of the Creator's heartbeat everywhere we go. Everywhere we are, if and when we wait on the Lord. Chandra Taylor Smith says that African Americans have faithfully turned to Isaiah 40, today's reading, because of its awesome vision of liberation and hope in the face of oppression and helplessness. In African American church services across North America, gospel choirs regularly sing a moving rendition of a song titled, "They That Wait on the Lord". The melodic blending of alto, soprano, tenor, and bass voices intones the lyrical prose of Isaiah, telling suffering souls that "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings like an eagle, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

(Play the first part of this video, until 1 min 30 secs.)

God is tapping. (Did you see the singer tapping on her chest while singing "Lord teaches me today"?) God is tapping on the body of the earth. God is tapping on the body of our beings.



Does that make God a good parent? Does God know how to parent us? How does God parent us?

Isaiah sings that God "Sits above the circle of the earth, stretches out the heavens like a curtain and spreads them like a tent to live in." We hear that when God is doing these things, God is tapping God's rhythm on the world with freedom and vigour, like the soaring eagle. Isaiah invites us to visualize the imposing wingspan of this regal bird, hovering unfettered and confident above the earth, inspiring the downtrodden to *look up* toward the heavens.

I watched a Korean drama on Netflix the other day. The drama is set in the early 1900's. A servant child, about Jah-bi's age, was carrying wood on a mountain, surrounded by trees. Only a small circle up high right over the clearing allowed the Sun to shine down and let him see the sky. A black raven soared up from nowhere and crossed over the Sun-filled circle, casting a fleeting shadow. The boy looked up at it, thinking, "How can a bird darken the sky?" At that moment, (for some reason) a noble elder was sitting there and said to him, "Child, it's no good for a servant or a slave to look at something far and up high like the sky. They don't live long."

God's transforming justice, God's renewing strength, is how God taps on us, how God parents us. For an eagle to soar up or swoop down, and glide along the air streams, it needs to dwell in a high cliff or tree in the first place. There's a reason eagles don't nest on the ground. The highest tree is where they rest, build their nest and grow their young ones. Eagles must expand and flex their sturdy wings to be who they are. The power of those wings, the breadth of their wingspan, are assuring visions that symbolize God's lifting up and steadying the broken and weak, empowering them to take flight and soar by themselves. It's a lofty, hovering image of God, and therefore, God taps on us to be the same, do the same: look up to the farthest and most distant sky, with the trust that God takes care of us as an eagle parent would do for their eaglets. God is not passive, but is dynamic and active in creation. When we are ourselves out in the world, especially in nature, (Imagine the pleasure you have taken, from being outside, in nature, on a snow-covered favourite trail or walking on the frozen river alone or with companions — pet or human - the steadiness and solidness that winter wonder creates.) You are never alone. Even if all is still around you, the life energy is hovering on everything and everywhere. Your heart becomes tuned to the environment around you, to the universe around you... That may be how God's tapping works in us. Tap. Tap. Tap. Mother's heartbeat. The eagle's wingbeat. To parent us, God never makes any work less than it should be, makes any of us less than who we are. Isaiah directs Israel, 'Lift up your eyes on high and see: Who created the stars' (V. 26). In God's unmatched strength and power, God created, numbered and named all the stars. "The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth" (V. 28). God asks, "To whom then will you compare me, or who is my equal?" (V. 25).

Tapping does not only happen in the vast, cosmic universe. I have seen it every morning on the concrete paved roads too. When we are in harmony and healthy, we are naturally inclined and tend to enjoy tapping, bringing ourselves into alignment with our companions, who are on the road together, those who walk with us. My younger son goes to his class, fairly late. Sometimes after the school bell rings. I drop him off and, going home, I see more late-comers. Perhaps, their school bells ring at different times. When high school boys wait at the crosswalk, they are usually chuckling, or they tap on each other's shoulders and laugh. Their bodies face each other. These are tappings. This week, I saw two siblings try to hasten their steps going their school; an older one falling back and gently dragging the younger one's arm to go faster with him. They are all tappings that move my heart in love and hope. Your screens this morning, which can shine thanks to an endless alternation of computerized 0s and 1s, tap on my heart, our hearts, and inspire prayers and joy on our lips. Those who print out the worship packages and deliver them to those who do not have computers, bringing them into alignment, into communion, tapping

out communication. All tappings matter, mimicking God's tapping, making our world a better and warmer place, "Spreading love like a tent to live in."

I am thankful for my children. They teach me how to do tapping with God.

God is tapping out the heartbeat of the universe. God is tapping on the body of the earth. God is tapping on the body of our children, and our beings.

**"God gives power to the faint,  
and strengthens the powerless.  
Even youths will faint and be weary,  
and the young will fall exhausted;  
but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength,  
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,  
they shall run and not be weary,  
they shall walk and not faint."**

Hymn: VU 619 *Healer of Our Every Ill*

Communion

Invitation

Hymn: VU 467 *One Bread, One Body*

Blessed are you, Creator of light,  
**Giver of all life, Source of love.**  
You guide the sun, cradle the moon, and toss the stars.  
At your word the earth was made  
and spun on its course among the planets.  
**You breathe life into us  
and set us among all your creatures,  
in a covenant of love and service.**

Creator, Christ, and Spirit,  
we praise you for your love revealed to us in Jesus,  
**who walks with us, our Wisdom and our Way,  
sharing our joy and sorrow,  
healing the sick,  
feeding the hungry,  
and setting the captive free.**

So it is that we join the song of all creation to  
proclaim your goodness:

**Lord of lords, Creator of all things,  
nature gives thanks,  
your creatures give thanks.  
Your praise rises in us like the great river.  
God of all things, Creator, Provider,  
we thank you in the name of Jesus Christ.  
*West Africa***

Mighty and tender God, in Jesus of Nazareth  
we recognize the fullness of your grace:  
light, life, and love, revealed  
in words that confront and comfort us, ...  
... that we may rise together  
to turn our worship into witness  
and to follow in your way.

We remember that when Jesus ate with his friends,  
he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it,  
he broke it and gave it to them, saying:  
**“Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.  
Each time you do this, remember me.”**  
Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,  
passed it to his friends, saying:  
**“Drink. This cup that is poured out for you  
is the promise of God. Whenever you drink it, remember me.”**

At this time, we also remember  
all with whom you would have us share your feast.  
We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain . . .  
all who are ill or alone . . .

all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger . . .  
all who sing a song of faith with courage, resistance and resilience...  
for nations as they strive for peace and justice . . .  
for all our families and friends . . . .

Hymn: VU 411 ***O God We Call***  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLCR8xMQ\\_Os](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eLCR8xMQ_Os)

We gather these and all our prayers,  
thankful that we may turn to you  
as to our Mother who loves us, as:

**Our Father, who art in heaven . . .**

Send, O God, your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts,  
that all who share in this bread and cup  
may be the body of Christ:  
light, life, and love in the world.  
In this hope and as your people, we praise you.

The bread that we break  
**is our sharing in the life of Christ.**  
The cup for which we give thanks  
**is our sharing in the life of Christ.**

Prayer after Communion,  
also as Benediction:

Here we have tasted God's goodness  
**and hungered for a world more just.**  
Here we have heard Christ's call  
**to be a people of healing community.**  
Though daily we touch our limits  
**here we have received the fullness of the Spirit.**  
Send us forth, Love Incarnate,  
Eastern Star, Holy Trinity,  
**in faith, in hope, and in love. Amen.**

Hymn: VU 424 ***May the God of Hope Go With Us***