

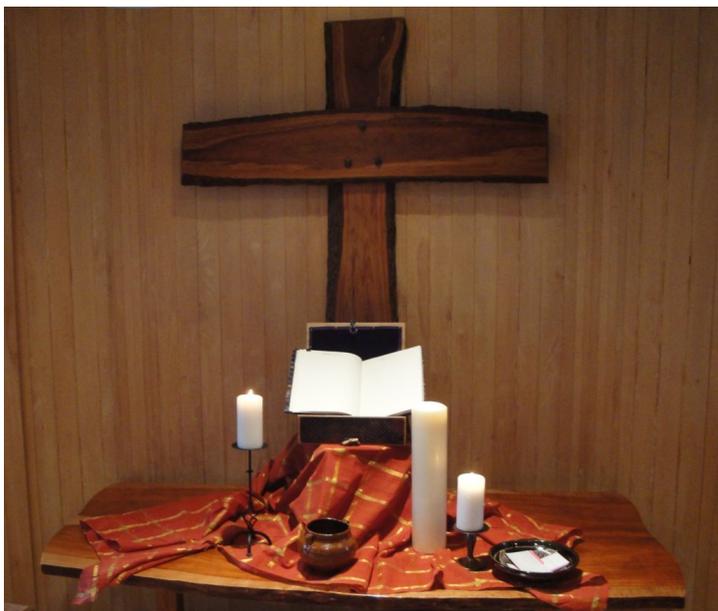
# Sermons

Seekers recognizes that any member of the community may be called upon by God to give us the Word, and thus we have an open pulpit with a different preacher each week. Sermons preached at Seekers, as well as sermons preached by Seekers at other churches or events, are posted here, beginning with the most recent.

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*Feel free to use what is helpful from these sermons. We only ask that when substantial portions are abstracted or used in a written work, please credit Seekers Church and the author, and cite the URL.*

## [“The Downward Path” by Elizabeth Gelfeld](#)



**September 19, 2021**

When I was a student at Arizona State University, I started

hanging out at the Catholic student center. I made several friends there and, despite my almost total lack of experience with the Catholic Church – or maybe because of it – I enjoyed attending the masses and study groups. One of my friends was a woman named Onoosh Garay, a graduate student who also taught part-time at a preschool. She was a devout and progressive Catholic. One day, when a few of us were talking about school and work, Onoosh said cheerfully, “Anyone who doesn’t believe in original sin should spend a day in a preschool.”

“Original sin” is the belief that we arrive on this planet already in a state of sin, just because we’re human. It’s a belief that has been replaced, for more progressive Catholics, with “original blessing,” an idea that is also the title of a 1983 book by the Episcopal priest Matthew Fox.

Onoosh was, of course, joking about the tendency of young children to be totally self-centered, unreasonable, uncooperative, and given to biting people who get in their way.

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**[“Who, What and Why?” by Marjory Bankson](#)**



## September 12, 2021

**“Who do YOU say that I am?”** When Jesus asked that question of his disciples, I suspect there was dead silence as they shifted from what others said – to their own wondering: Who was he indeed! Then, as usual, Peter blurted out his answer for all of them: “You are the Messiah.”

Quickly, Jesus warned them not to tell anyone. Why? Because he was shredding their traditional understanding of “Messiah.” In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus is quite clear that he is NOT the triumphal Messiah that his disciples have been hoping for. He is NOT there to restore Israel or free them from Roman rule.

Mark’s Jesus calls himself the Son of Man – who must suffer and die – like the rest of us. And furthermore, Jesus says, anyone who would follow him can also expect that fate as the path to life itself. There is nothing here about avoiding pain. In fact, Mark’s Jesus says “If you would be my disciple, take up your cross and follow me.”

**Notice here** that Jesus is speaking to his disciples as a group, not as individuals. This is NOT a special challenge to Peter or James or John – or to you or me. “Take up your cross” means group vulnerability or systemic loss, not individual

martyrdom.

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## [“Will You Be the Light? An Invitation to Love” by Teresa Ramsey](#)

**September 5, 2021**



Good morning, Seeker's family. I am again humbled by the opportunity to share what I have been hearing in prayer, primarily about transformation and love, love being our present theme. For several Sundays now you have heard some mighty fine sermons on love. I hope you are ready to hear one more. Let us start with a prayer:

Beloved, your children have gathered today seeking a closer connection with you and each other. Please open our hearts and still our intellects that we may receive all that you offer. Amen.

As I have shared before, I was raised in the traditional

Catholic church and carefully instructed in the reward/punishment/achievement system. The God described to me was a law-and-order type who had books kept with details of our transgressions. Christian teaching was an elaborate system of earning heavenly rewards. God's love had to be earned, it was not unconditional love. Regardless, we were tasked with loving both God and neighbor. I rejected this God as did many others. It took me years to understand the message Jesus delivered of a God of love, and more years to accept the invitation to the feast.

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## [“How Shall We Love” by Brenda Seat](#)

**August 29, 2021**

Our reflection piece for this season has a couple of phrases that have really worked on me each Sunday as they are read:



*“It is about being willing to have our heart become deeper as we move beyond the surface layers of our assumptions, prejudices and habits in order to truly see and receive what – and who – is before us. It is about being willing to have*

*our heart continually shattered and remade as we take in not only the brokenness of the world but the beauty of it...*" (Jan Richardson, "Blessing That Meets You in Love," *The Painted Prayerbook*, <https://paintedprayerbook.com/2016/01/25/blessing-that-meets-you-in-love/>.)

It is ironic, or maybe it is divine inspiration, that our theme for this summer season is "How Shall We Love?," because I am struggling about how to love right now. I am struggling to love a person I admire and respect who helped me on my path to become a lawyer and the person I am today.

He was my high school teacher and he was one of those teachers that you remember, that has a huge impact on your life. So why, you are asking yourself, is this a problem? Sounds like he would be an easy person to love.

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**["Loving in a Time of Chaos: Put on the Whole Amor of God" by Peter Bankson](#)**

**August 22, 2021**



Last Sunday, Rebecca Wheaton offered us an exciting, fresh path into our worship theme for this season, “How Shall We Love?” She held up the image of ton glen meditation as a model of loving in the way Jesus taught: breathing in the pain and suffering of others and breathing out love and compassion to help meet their needs. I could sense a deep resonance with this image during our time of reflection after the Word.

Sunday afternoon, when I returned to my own preparation for this reflection, I knew I needed to engage what I had just heard. I had been focusing on the text from Ephesians 6, where the followers of Jesus in Ephesus are counseled to “put on the whole armor of God” so that they may be able to stand against the “wiles of the devil.” That sounded sensible, particularly from the perspective of those turbulent times. But, as I’d been reflecting on “how shall we love,” I’d been wondering about finding a more loving way to describe the “armor of God.”

The metaphors Paul uses to describe “armor” made sense to those who heard them when they were written. Ephesus, a commercial city located across the Aegean Sea from Athens, was a center of Roman power in Asia Minor. Roman centurions would probably have been a common sight on the streets of Ephesus in those days.

Popular cultural images have certainly changed since late in the first century of the Christian era when this letter to the Ephesians was written. But Roman armor is still a common metaphor for self-protection and domination of others. As I watched broadcasts of the Olympic Games last week there were movie previews with threatening images of figures in armor wielding swords, and V images of warriors urging me to buy something to make me stronger. The emphasis on defeating your enemy so you can force them to do what's "right" is still pretty strong. And the news from Afghanistan emphasizes the enduring assumption that "Might makes right."

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