

August 16, 2020 – Eleventh Sunday After Pentecost

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our twenty-fourth online worship service ☺ It is my pleasure to be back serving you after return from leave, and this Sunday's lectionary has offered some fine scriptures for us to meditate on as we think about September approaching so fast, and the return from our summer pace.

A big thank you to Brad and Lorre, for all their extra efforts during my leave, and to Bonnie Berg and Nick Stienberg for also providing thought-provoking and Gospel-centric sermons. We have so many gifts within our community, and it is a blessing to see them shared.

This coming week, your church council as well as ministries of Facilities Use and Risk Management will be continuing their efforts towards re-opening our building for worship and user groups in the early fall. We hope to communicate some updates on these items to you very soon.

In the meantime, as we continue to gently re-enter places that are opening up, remember the COVID-19 virus remains alive and well. For us to likewise remain alive and well, precautions are advised: safe distancing, avid handwashing and polite consideration of and respect for the fears of others are, at this time, acts of love. As followers of Jesus, we are called to love each other, so please exercise these acts of love generously ☺

If you reached out to me during leave and I have not gotten back to you yet, please bear with me; there has been a lot going on and I am working my way methodically through emails and messages. In the coming week you will hear back from me in response to messages left, if you have not heard back from me yet.

And if you would like an outdoor, safe distanced visit, or a phone visit from me, please do reach out by email or phone: pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org or 519-653-4721

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

The bulletin today is being sponsored by Don and Virginia Davidson in celebration of their 69th wedding anniversary which takes place on August 18th. Don would also like you to know how much he appreciated your help in making his 90th birthday extra special by your participation in surprising him with his birthday parade. St. Peter's wishes God's richest blessings to Don and Virginia!

I want to offer a word of thanks for those of you who have allowed us to use your photos, or who have offered the use of your photos in the creation of our music videos. It truly adds to our worshipping community and makes worship more of a 'group effort'. If you have some photos you might like to send along, please be in touch with me by email, lorre.calder@sympatico.ca . We can arrange how best to co-ordinate access to your photos. Full credit will of course be given.

—Lorre Calder

Please take a few moments of silence, prepare your heart,
centre yourself for worship.

Prelude: Land acknowledgement with Brad's creative composition ☺

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9Zar8-GeUs>

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

Prayer of the Day: God of all peoples, your arms reach out to embrace all those who call upon you. Teach us as disciples of your Son to love the world with compassion and constancy, so that we may be witnesses to a world so in need of Christ-love. Amen.

Psalm 138

Click Here: <https://youtu.be/KxeBnnNXL3I>

Music by Bradley B. Moggach, July 2020

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Psalm 138

bbm

The musical score for Psalm 138 is presented in three staves. The first staff contains the chords F, Dm, C, F, Dm, Bb^{maj7}, and C. The second staff contains the chords Am, Dm, Bb⁶, F/C, C⁷, and F. The third staff contains the chords F, C/E, Bb/D, F/C, F/A, Bb/D, C⁷, and F. The lyrics are: "So let us sing of the ways of the Lord. Great is the glo-ry of the Lord!"

I will give thanks to you, O Lord, with | my whole heart;
before the gods I will | sing your praise.
I will bow down toward your holy temple and praise your name,
because of your steadfast | love and faithfulness;
for you have glorified your name
and your word a- | bove all things. **Refrain**

When I called, you | answered me;
you increased my | strength within me.
All the rulers of the earth will praise | you, O Lord,
when they have heard the words | of your mouth. **Refrain**

They will sing of the ways | of the Lord,
that great is the glory | of the Lord.
The Lord is high, yet cares | for the lowly,
perceiving the haughty | from afar. **Refrain**

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you | keep me safe;
 you stretch forth your hand against the fury of my enemies;
 your right | hand shall save me.
 You will make good your pur- | pose for me;
 O Lord, your steadfast love endures forever;
 do not abandon the works | of your hands.* **Refrain x 2**

The Lesson: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

"Guard my common good:

Do what's right and do it in the right way,
 For salvation is just around the corner,
 my setting-things-right is about to go into action.

"And as for the outsiders who now follow me,
 working for me, loving my name,
 and wanting to be my servants—

All who keep Sabbath and don't defile it,
 holding fast to my covenant—

I'll bring them to my holy mountain
 and give them joy in my house of prayer.

They'll be welcome to worship the same as the 'insiders,'
 to bring burnt offerings and sacrifices to my altar.

Oh yes, my house of worship
 will be known as a house of prayer for all people."

The Decree of the Master, God himself,
 who gathers in the exiles of Israel:

"I will gather others also,
 gather them in with those already gathered."

(The Message Translation)

Word of God, word of life. **C: Thanks be to God.** *

Reading Homework: Romans 11 (I recommend reading in the Message Translation for chapter 11, in which the apostle Paul talks about a fierce minority of God's faithful people, the grafting in of outsiders into the faith, and the completion of God's Kingdom – Israel).

Gospel Acclamation: Be Still For the Presence of the Lord

Click Here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAGYMj3gbfU>

Be Still, for the Presence of the Lord by David Evans
 Helga Morrison, soprano and Stephanie Burgoyne, piano.

Click Here for an audio reading of today's gospel by Pastor Janaki or read the text below. <https://youtu.be/bqZCrTi9c5Y>

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 15:10-20, [21-28]

C: Glory to you O Lord.

He then called the crowd together and said, "Listen, and take this to heart. It's not what you swallow that pollutes your life, but what you vomit up."

Later his disciples came and told him, "Did you know how upset the Pharisees were when they heard what you said?"

Jesus shrugged it off. "Every tree that wasn't planted by my Father in heaven will be pulled up by its roots. Forget them. They are blind men leading blind men. When a blind man leads a blind man, they both end up in the ditch."

Peter said, "I don't get it. Put it in plain language."

Jesus replied, "You, too? Are you being willfully stupid? Don't you know that anything that is swallowed works its way through the intestines and is finally defecated? But what comes out of the mouth gets its start in the heart. It's from the heart that we vomit up evil arguments, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, lies, and cussing. That's what pollutes. Eating or not eating certain foods, washing or not washing your hands—that's neither here nor there."

[From there Jesus took a trip to Tyre and Sidon. They had hardly arrived when a Canaanite woman came down from the hills and pleaded, "Mercy, Master, Son of David! My daughter is cruelly afflicted by an evil spirit."

Jesus ignored her. The disciples came and complained, "Now she's bothering us. Would you please take care of her? She's driving us crazy."

Jesus refused, telling them, "I've got my hands full dealing with the lost sheep of Israel."

Then the woman came back to Jesus, went to her knees, and begged. "Master, help me."

He said, "It's not right to take bread out of children's mouths and throw it to dogs."

She was quick: "You're right, Master, but beggar dogs do get scraps from the master's table."

Jesus gave in. "Oh, woman, your faith is something else. What you want is what you get!" Right then her daughter became well.]. [The Message Translation].

The Gospel of our Lord. ***C: Praise to you, O Christ.****

Sermon (by Pastor Janaki):

Click here: <https://youtu.be/zQU3wFMTkmM> to access the audio of the sermon, or imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here:

It is wonderful to be back with you for worship after a much-needed break. Although I had booked the study leave before vacation leave, I found myself so exhausted on the first day of leave that I had to do the vacating part first. I spent the first two full days of leave sitting at the Georgian Bay shore, listening to the water, trying to read, think, pray, meditate – and finally just surrendering from all of these active things, to a much more passive just sitting and listening ... to the waves, to the sound of the wind, and the occasional bird call.

God was faithful to my passive, silent waiting...and before too long the tiredness, worry, angst, and fear of the past few months evaporated and, in its place, came a calm stillness. I took many things with me to read and had planned on spending a lot more time especially with my Bible. But it ended up I spent the most time just with God. I was alone for a lot of the time, but not isolated, because the presence of Spirit was powerful. It was a time of experiencing faith without scaffolding.

We have many rituals and traditions that scaffold our faith. And COVID has definitely challenged our scaffolding. When I began my leave, a big part of my exhaustion was from thinking about the risks involved in moving us from worship in isolation back to worship in person together. I remembered in a very bodily way during this time off, that we are given

faith through the enormous grace of God alone – and it is not the scaffolding that provides the faith, but rather the faith that gives reason for scaffolding and structure.

So it is that in our gospel reading today, we encounter Jesus having a bit of a hissy fit at the Pharisees and religious scholars...his claim is that they are focused (to paraphrase a bit) more on the scaffolding than on the faith. In the verse preceding the reading, Jesus cites the prophet Isaiah:

These people make a big show of saying the right thing,
but their heart isn't in it.
They act like they're worshipping me,
but they don't mean it.
They just use me as a cover
for teaching whatever suits their fancy [Matthew 15:8-9, The Message Translation]

Jesus is angry, irritated, irate that those charged with the responsibility of teaching and leading in the faith are focused more on the scaffolding of that faith, than on the spirit of love and relationship which is at the centre of that to which God calls us.

He uses a particular set of traditions to explain himself, referring to food purity rules. In the laws given to Moses, there were many, many rules about foods, as well as cleanliness. But none of these rules or laws was meant to supersede or outweigh the rule to love God first and then to love our neighbours as ourselves. And the thing about love is that it springs from within us – it is not about what we put into our bodies in terms of food purity, it is not about how carefully we clean ourselves or sanitize – but it springs from the centre of ourselves, gushing and welling up out of us if and when we are deeply connected with God.

But if we are focused on the scaffolding of our faith, it is easy for things like worry, angst and fear to get in the way of love. It is easy for things like a controlling nature, or a show-off attitude to take charge of how we conduct ourselves when our focus is on the scaffolding of rituals and traditions and not on our faith in and love for Jesus.

And this is why Jesus is having his hissy fit...a hissy fit which [as often happens] seems to fly over the disciples head. Peter is the one who says "I don't get it. Put it in plain language."

And Jesus explains that when we eat, consume and digest something that is from the outside, it – for want of a more polite way of putting things – simply comes out the other end. But what emerges from our mouths bears evidence of our hearts.

Think about that statement for a minute:
What emerges from our mouths bears the evidence of our hearts.
What comes out of the mouth gets its start in the heart.

So if our hearts are not focused on the love of God in Jesus, and what that all means...if our hearts are instead focused on some self-centred thing like our own importance as individual saviours of the world for example, then what comes out of our mouths bears evidence of that: ego, boasting, controlling.

If, on the other hand, our hearts are focused on God who is love, the things that come from our lips bear the fruits of Holy, Sacred Spirit.

What happens when we live God's way?

He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard—things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely. [Galatians 5:22-23 The Message Translation].

Jesus has just finished explaining this to the disciples when he gets the opportunity to practice what he preaches...he is challenged by a foreign woman, a non-Israelite, who is asking for her daughter to be healed.

His initial response seems to be scaffolding oriented, as he refuses to help her saying he has his hands full tending to the lost sheep of Israel. She does not take this answer and meekly go away, but instead reaches past the scaffolding into his heart, summoning from him the compassion that would be offered even to the dogs under the table, when scraps are passed to them from the feast.

Jesus is quick to turn around, demonstrating the humility that comes from taking correction well: and from that place of faith in the heart, the Canaanite woman's daughter is healed. Not because she had all the right rituals and traditions, but because she had faith.

Jesus practices what he preaches, allowing love and the fruits of love to prevail. These actions remind me of the last two verses of our hymn of the day:

Help us to live in the ways that you have taught us,
Giving to others wherever there is need.
Sharing our love with our every thought and action,
Turning from anger, and hatred, and greed.

Lord as we offer our lives here before you,
Send down your spirit on wings of a dove.
Grace so amazing it knows no measure,
Circles us, holds us, and wraps us in love.

May it be so with each of us. Amen.

Hymn of the Day Morning Star

Click here: <https://youtu.be/sNWav0cgSJc>

Text: Lorre A. Calder; Tune: James P. Harding; Descant: Jan Overduin; featuring St. Peter's Senior Choir; Bradley Moggach, piano; Gregory Stroh, flute. Text written for the occasion of a family baptism.

The main prayer below was accessed through the Xavier University website, at: <https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/online-resources/prayer-index/coronavirus-prayers> and written by Sister Christine Koelhoeffer, IHM. The final two petitions were added based on our context for this Sunday.

A Coronavirus Prayer:

Loving God, Your desire is for our wholeness and well being.
We hold in tenderness and prayer the collective suffering of our world at this time.
We grieve precious lives lost and vulnerable lives threatened.
We ache for ourselves and our neighbors, standing before an uncertain future.
We pray: may love, not fear, go viral.
Inspire our leaders to discern and choose wisely, aligned with the common good.
Help us to practice social distancing and reveal to us new and creative ways to come together in spirit and in solidarity.

Call us to profound trust in your faithful presence,
You, the God who does not abandon.

We add to these prayers our prayers for the people of Lebanon,
so hard hit by the explosion in Beirut earlier in August,
And our prayers for those who are preparing for in-person gatherings whether at schools,
churches or workplaces come September – be with us all as we move forward in love. Amen.

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, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

While you listen to the offertory hymn, continue your prayers and consider how you may be an offering in the coming week.

Offertory – If You But Trust in God to Guide You ELW #769

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I1bOItJGvWU>

Text & Music: Georg Neumark; tr. Composite Organ Setting J.S. Bach BWV 691 Tune Name: Wer Nur Den Lieben
Gott Text & Music: Public Domain Administrators: Public Domain Used by Permission. CCLI License # 11098609

Offering Prayer

God of goodness and growth,
all creation is yours,
and your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.
Water and word, social distancing and hand-washing:
these are signs of your abundant grace.
Nourish us through these gifts,
that we might proclaim your steadfast love
in our communities and in the world,
through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn: Swing Low, Sweet Chariot

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IzL1a3yvX9M>

Swing Low Sweet Chariot This Far By Faith 171, Text & Tune African American Spiritual, Bradley Moggach, piano
Tune & Text: African American Spiritual Tune & Text; Public Domain Used by Permission CCLI License # 11098609

Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us.
May the face of God shine upon us with grace and mercy.
May God look upon us with favor
and give us ☩ peace.
Amen.

Dismissal: Go in Peace, Go in Hope. **Thanks be to God.**

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