

August 23, 2020 – 12th Sunday After Pentecost

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our twenty-fifth online worship service ☺ This has been a super busy week, and as I prepare to take my usual sabbath on Friday (I prepare this on Thursday morning), I parallel the question of “who do we say we are?” to Jesus asking the question of his disciples, “who do you say I am?”.

Your church council and Risk Management ministry teams plus many disciples have been hard at work this week to continue moving church re-opening forward. Our building is one of the largest buildings in the Eastern Synod, and also one of the most utilized. As such there are many considerations for safety, and trying to re-open safely and as cost-effectively as possible is no simple process. We are now at the point that we need people to sign up to be:

- **Ushers (involved in directing people to marked out seating when they come in).**
- **Greeters (or welcome team, to assess safety as people enter).**
- **High-touch Wipe-Downers (as the name suggests ☺).**
- **Helpful in other ways with re-opening tasks.**

We also have an amended re-opening checklist from the Synod Office which we are populating with the names of people who are helping with the re-opening tasks, and this checklist we hope to post on our website, so that you can see where we are at in progressing towards our re opening for in-person worship.

Again, as I reflect on “who do we say we are?”, a community of fellowship and friendship is certainly one of our identities, and nothing beats seeing each other’s faces. As we move towards re-opening the building, I will be available, weather permitting, on the church lawn on Sundays, 10 am to 11 am for an informal visiting time. You are encouraged to bring your lawn chair and complete all toileting before coming out. We will have the opportunity to visit at a safe distance, without the requirement of masks (as we will be outdoors). The goal of this time is to gently re-open the experience of in-person time, in preparation for re-entry to the building. Prayer together will be part of our visiting time on Sundays.

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 still have not heard from me since my return from leave, and you had reached out, please kick my shins with a phone call. It is not my intention to neglect visitation ministry in the administration heavy time of re-opening.

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.

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: Holy God, you unite us. With all your faithful disciples through all time, we give thanks for your presence and grace in our lives. Be our strong foundation. Bind us together with your Spirit. Show us how to be your church in this time. With Jesus as our redeemer and Way-maker, we know all things are possible in the unity of your church. Amen.

Psalm 138

Click Here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uyENM47u0hM>

Music by Bradley B. Moggach, July 2020

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Psalm 138

bbm

The musical score for Psalm 138 is written in 4/4 time. It consists of three staves of music. The first staff has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The second staff has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The third staff has a key signature of one flat (Bb) and a common time signature (C). The lyrics are written below the third staff.

Chords: F, Dm, C, F, Dm, Bbmaj7, C, Am, Dm, Bb6, F/C, C7, F, F, C/E, Bb/D, F/C, F/A, Bb/D, C7, F.

Lyrics: 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 Holy Gospel according to Matthew 16:13-20

C: Glory to you O Lord.

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. [NRSV]

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

Reading Homework: Isaiah 51

Acclamation of the Word: **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.

The Holy Scriptures according to St Paul's letter to the Romans 12:1-8

So here's what I want you to do, God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for God. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you. Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand

ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we? So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvelously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else; if you help, just help, don't take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy; if you're put in charge, don't manipulate; if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond; if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them. Keep a smile on your face. (The Message Translation)

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

Sermon (by Pastor Janaki):

Click here: <https://youtu.be/uf-scylauZ0> to access the audio of the sermon, or imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here:

As a child I remember when I would make a mistake that happened because of disobedience, my mother or father would ask me the question "What did I say to you?"...It was meant to be a teaching question I think...It would usually be accompanied by a forefinger wagging...I would usually mutter under my breath what they said, eyes anywhere but on them. Then they would ask me to say it louder. Then I would repeat it louder. And depending on the idiocy of my disobedience, they might underscore my mistake by saying something along the lines of "If you did what I said we wouldn't be in this mess!"

I remember the bodily feelings that went with this dialogue:

- A hot embarrassment usually creeping up the back of my neck (because clearly, I thought my way was better, and clearly it had landed me in this dialogue...so no!).
- Deep regret for whatever fool thing I had done in disobedience (now visible for all to see).
- A very bodily or somatic wish to be anywhere but there in that moment – what I call the slither factor – like wishing I could just slither away under a rock somewhere. If there was a billboard that went with the feeling it would say: "Have rock, will travel."

Whenever this Gospel reading comes up, Jesus asking, echoing the question: "Who do people say I am?"..."Who do you say I am?" I feel again that slither factor and that hot feeling up the back of my neck. My inner dialogue says "Oh Heck...I feel like I am totally doing this wrong. And now it's been discovered."

I needed to make this confession to you as I swapped the focus reading for today from the Gospel to the Romans reading. I did this because, using the words of St Paul to the Romans to unpack our identity with Jesus is an easier task than doing the parental "What did I say to you?" (complete with forefinger wagging).

The letters of Paul were written to guide communities of believers which he had either started or supported as they grew. In that regard, sometimes his letters, especially in the

modern language of The Message Translation, are excellent teaching tools for us in this business of how to be followers of Jesus, how to be the church, how to be the body of Christ.

And maybe we (felt we) didn't need that guidance when our church buildings were open and COVID was not a thing in our world that redefined so many of our normal ways. But as we adjust to our new normal, as we learn how to live with different levels of risk and fear, it bears good purpose to be reminded not just of who Jesus is, but also who Jesus calls us to be.

So let us read Romans together in small pieces, without the scary finger wagging or slither factor...and as we read, pay attention to where you feel squirmy because you fall short of the instructions for disciples. Falling short is NOT a matter for shame. It IS very much a matter for repentance and repair, so that you can more effectively witness to what God wants of you: made in divine image and likeness.

God helping you: Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering.

In other words take everything of your life and be comfortable and honest in placing it before God. Obviously it won't be perfect. That is ok. Offer it anyway.

Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for God. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God.

When we embrace what God does for us, what God does in, with and through us, we lose our ego-centric idiocy, our culture-centric fool ways, and we truly become children of God.

Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

Not only are we to pay attention to God's instructions and call on our lives, but we are to respond to God's desires for us with obedience. This brings out the best in us and for us.

I'm speaking to you out of deep gratitude for all that God has given me, and especially as I have responsibilities in relation to you.

I, as your pastor, am so deeply thankful for all God has given me, and especially for my call to serve YOU.

Living then, as every one of you does, in pure grace, it's important that you not misinterpret yourselves as people who are bringing this goodness to God. No, God brings it all to you. The only accurate way to understand ourselves is by what God is and by what he does for us, not by what we are and what we do for him.

I recognize that my call to serve, like your call to do whatever you do – is all about God's goodness in our lives ... it is not about how wonderful I am, how hard working you are, how capable someone else is, how gifted or skilled the next guy is ... everything that is alive and enabled within each one of us is thanks be to GOD.

In this way we are like the various parts of a human body. Each part gets its meaning from the body as a whole, not the other way around. The body we're talking about is Christ's body of chosen people. Each of us finds our meaning and function as a part of his body. But as a chopped-off finger or cut-off toe we wouldn't amount to much, would we?

Just like each part of our body serves a purpose (although, grey hair, I don't know but God knows! Every hair on our head God knows the Bible says) ... each part of our body serves a God-given purpose, and each part, each member, each person, each personality, each character in the body of Christ serves a purpose – even if we cannot fathom what that purpose is.

So since we find ourselves fashioned into all these excellently formed and marvellously functioning parts in Christ's body, let's just go ahead and be what we were made to be, without enviously or pridefully comparing ourselves with each other, or trying to be something we aren't.

So, as a member in our church, if you think you don't have something to offer, if you think pandemic time has rendered you irrelevant, even if you cannot come back to church because of health concerns...YOU are still a part of this body! And being a part of this body is not about what you can or cannot do on your own. It is about the fact that GOD designed you: you are wonderfully made, excellently formed and fully functional in the body of Jesus – so don't be shy!

If you preach, just preach God's Message, nothing else;

Note to self ☺ But also note to each one of us, for our lives are the only sermons many will hear. Self-explanatory.

if you help, just help, don't take over;

Self-explanatory.

if you teach, stick to your teaching;

Self-explanatory.

if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don't get bossy;

Self-explanatory.

if you're put in charge, don't manipulate;

Self-explanatory.

if you're called to give aid to people in distress, keep your eyes open and be quick to respond;

Self-explanatory.

if you work with the disadvantaged, don't let yourself get irritated with them or depressed by them.

Self-explanatory.

And finally...*Keep a smile on your face.*

What's this, you might say? Why is smiling important? Because smiling shows that you understand something very special: that all we are able to do and be is pure grace on God's part, and therefore a blessing, a gift, an object of thankfulness. We smile because we don't need to have a slither factor before God. We smile because God is not finger-wagging at us. God loves us and wants only the best for us – no matter what is going on.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Hymn of the Day #796 How Firm a Foundation (don't forget to read Brad's notes!)
Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TxDIMF6P77E&feature=youtu.be>

Text: J. Rippon, A Selection of Hymns, 1787, alt. Tune: Early American Words: Public Domain; Music: Public Domain Used by Permission. CCLI License # 11098609

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 Koelhoff, 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=I1bOIkJGvWU>

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: For the Beauty of the Earth

Click here: #879 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AFPhyp7fvJI>

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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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