

July 5, 2020 – Fifth Sunday After Pentecost

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our eighteenth online worship service.

With COVID-19 re-ordering our lives, and risk management being on everyone's mind, sometimes it is not always easy to remember that the Kingdom of God is not at risk ... the unfolding of the world, towards the world God intends, this unfolding is always at hand; this unfolding is always happening and even when life might feel like a train-wreck in a whirlwind in a tornado.

We continue daily with the work of God's people: the church. And then there is the building ☺ The Risk Management Ministry team is still working on insurance and public health requirements. The tasks will be on-going as we have some phases: beginning with re-opening for small groups (10 people or less), then making sure we have safe protocols worked out for our user groups (such as Immanuel City Church, TOPS, Scouts and Narcotics Anonymous, to name just a few), then re-opening our sanctuary for worship.

The Lamplighter included more information on re-opening, and if you are reading this service but not a recipient of our fine newsletter, please contact me or the church office – we will make sure you get it.

This week's service includes an off-lectionary text which I encountered in my devotionals early this week, and felt was the perfect fit with the direction the lectionary was taking me. I hope you enjoy the combined words from our scriptures from the Psalm, the apostle Paul and the Gospel of Matthew.

This past week, and this coming week, I continue doing "safe visits": outdoor visits whether on a porch or deck, under a tree or in a carport as this maximises our safety. If these spaces are not available to you, or you are unable to get to such a space, call me and we can set up a telephone visit. I miss your faces and would love to have a safe outdoor visit where possible. Our picnic table at church is a great place to visit and I am happy to hold office there in suitable weather.

If you do not hear from me, it means I am relying on you to reach out to me by telephone, email (church phone 519-653-4721, text or cell call 519-588-7701 or by email pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org) or Facebook. We are in a season of a fire fighting model of pastoral care, where I am frequently responding rather than initiating. If you think someone needs a call or visit, you let me know and I will do my darnedest to make it happen.

You remain in my heart and my prayers – every single one of you ☺ And, as things are opened up, 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.

Please exercise these acts of love generously.

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

**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 our everything, you hold the true passport to freedom. It is the freedom which your Son gives us: freedom from the burdens of our brokenness, and free access to true love. May we always hold the knowledge of this incredible citizenship: the citizenship in your creation, as a source of reassurance and a reminder of our connectedness to the deep root of All that is you. Knowing this truth, help us to be obedient to your authority, trust in your teachings, and do as Jesus has taught us to do. Amen.

The Psalm – Psalm 145 8:14

The Lord is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

The Lord is good to all, and his compassion is over all that he has made.

All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord, and all your faithful shall bless you.

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,

to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

The Lord is faithful in all his words, and gracious in all his deeds.

The Lord upholds all who are falling, and raises up all who are bowed down. [NRSV]

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

Prayer of Confession:

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LupzAzeLIk>

Reading homework: Zechariah 9 and Romans 7.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 11: 16-19, 25-30.

C: Glory to you O Lord.

"But to what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another, 'We played the flute for you, and you did not dance; we wailed, and you did not mourn.' For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a

demon'; the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!" Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." [NRSV]

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

Acclamation of the Word: Mindful that it is not currently deemed safe to sing together, if you are accessing this at home, please consider turning up the volume and singing along – the words are included on the YouTube link (below the video)

Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia (ELW #364)

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqbD58GJAQk>

Text: B. Kaymaanywa, H. S. Olson Tune: Tanzanian Traditional

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The Holy Word according to The Letter of Paul to the Philippians 3:2-4, 10-16, 20a.

C: Glory to you O Lord.

Steer clear of the barking dogs, those religious busybodies, all bark and no bite. All they're interested in is appearances—knife-happy circumcisers, I call them. The *real* believers are the ones the Spirit of God leads to work away at this ministry, filling the air with Christ's praise as we do it. **We couldn't carry this off by our own efforts, and we know it—even though we can list what many might think are impressive credentials.**

I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it ... there's far more to life for us. **We're citizens of high heaven!** [The Message Translation]

This is the Word of our Lord. ***C: Praise to you, O Christ.****

Meditation (Imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here):

Click here to hear Janaki proclaim the sermon: <https://youtu.be/Y3xbbqsewwc>

Where are we from? Where are you from?

For many people who come from other countries, Canada is seen as a kind of utopian place: a place where many freedoms are respected and encouraged, a place where the people are identified as being peace-bearers as opposed to war-mongers. A country whose people are known for impeccable politeness and an overt kind of consideration and respect of others. If we lived in a time where "Kingdoms" were a more prevalent way of identifying nations, everyone would want to belong to this Kingdom called Canada.

The term Kingdom is intrinsically tied into the word "King" – a masculine, usually highly gentrified leader, whose authority is absolute and not subject to any other council or form of government. In the times of the bible, the term Kingdom was well known and understood, because Kings or Emperors were the rulers of lands, or empires. They were not necessarily leaders who were deeply invested in solidarity with the people. You hear me speak often of "the Kingdom of God" and maybe that term is not so intuitive for us to understand. It is not an easy term to unpack, but I want to try by an example:

Think of a household. It includes everyone in that household ... from the baby to the grandpa, from the maid to the mouse, from the basement foundation to the attics and the eavestroughs. Then think of that household not in a snapshot of time, not today ONLY or last week Tuesday ONLY or next Labour day ONLY, but over a large span of time ... from a time before the house was even built, to the way that household is today, to a time when the house will no longer be ... so if you are panning with me, we are thinking of a household that always was, is here today, and is also not yet here because it extends into the future.

Now the last parallel I want to draw with this household is that, incrementally (sometimes imperceptibly), it is always moving towards the intention of God. It is the becoming of God's will in every moment. Now that is the household of God. We can think of this household as being the same as the Kingdom of God.

The Psalm this week speaks of the Kingdom of God, and the people who are citizens of this Kingdom:

They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom, and tell of your power,
to make known to all people your mighty deeds, and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.

I invite you to bracket this Kingdom visual as we go back to the question: where are you from?

When I am asked the question "Where are you from?" my range of answers is huge ... I am from my mother and my father; I am from God. I was born in Sri Lanka. I grew up in Jamaica. I am a citizen of Canada. I am a resident of Turtle Island. I'm from Cambridge, Ontario.

At various times, I have held different documents or, as St Paul write in his letter to the Philippians, "credentials" of belonging in Canada: I came here first as a student, so there was a student visa. Then I returned a number of years later as a Permanent Resident. Then I went back to Jamaica for a few years. Permanent Residency requires renewal if one doesn't apply for citizenship. So in 2008, I moved back to Canada, I had to renew that Permanent Residency. And finally, after many years, I was granted Citizenship. It was an honour on the day I took my vows of Citizenship, to be welcomed also by so many Indigenous people – the First People of this land we now call Canada.

I realize many of you may not hold such a long list of credentials ... each one came with different rights: as a student, for example, I was not eligible for provincial health insurance. I also was not allowed to work more than a very limited number of hours, or vote on any form of government. Permanent Residency was a step up: I was allowed to work and I gained access to provincial health insurance – it was kind of like the country was saying: we want you to be healthy and work here, so we will make those things available for you. As a Citizen, I gained the benefit and privilege of being able to vote. Also Citizenship does not expire, the way Visas and Permanent Residency do. So this is my nutshell explanation of credentials. Hopefully you can see the logical progression of privileges with each level. Citizenship was the peak or top credential: it does not expire, and it gives me a say in the way things go in this “kingdom” we call Canada. It means I will be taken care of by the means and provisions of our land. To be a citizen means belonging, safety and security for me.

So it is, that in the month of June, as I read the plight of immigrant farm workers here in Ontario, affected by the highest rate of COVID-19 contagion across Ontario, I was also familiar with some of the limits of their rights. These are men who leave their families behind in the countries they come from, to do jobs on farms here in Ontario. Jobs whose wages and rigours are such that the farms cannot find local people to undertake the work. In a number of CBC news articles about the farm workers affected, and indeed those who died from COVID contracted here in Canada, I became truly aware of the privileges of Citizenship in this country: my home on Native Land.

Farm workers put their own lives at considerable risk for the somewhat limited privilege of a pay package that outweighs their earning potential in their homelands. Meanwhile, the specific work visa that they get does not include even the basic privileges offered to Permanent Residents: universal provincial health care and, of course, a clear and readily accessible pathway to Citizenship.

A pathway to a belonging that does not expire ... a pathway to safety and security and having a say.

Many advocates for the rights of immigrant farm workers have been asking of our government that, these men, whom one might argue demonstrate their desire to work just by being here as farm workers, that these men at least be provided with a pathway to Permanent Residency through the farm work program. The message is: they are literally earning the right to be entrusted with more privileges. Those advocates are asking that the immigrant farm workers lives be considered worthy enough that the risks they take at least, at least garner them a readily accessible pathway towards citizenship.

Imagine having a third party advocate for your right to be entrusted with privileges that give you safety, security, belonging and a say in life.

Wait a minute ... we all have such a third party: His name is Jesus ☺

No matter where we come from or who we are, in the household that began before this lifetime, and extends past the moments of our mortal death we have each been given a pathway to belonging to the household of God.

In, with and through Jesus, we are given the whole kit and caboodle of Kingdom Privileges: we are citizens of the Kingdom of God. Or, as Paul puts it in his letter to the Philippians: we are citizens of high heaven. Paul is also quick to point this out: **We couldn't carry this off**

by our own efforts, and we know it—even though we can list what many might think are impressive credentials.

Mortal nations cannot (or more accurately do not) exercise such abundant generosity with their citizenship, because they fear insufficiency. They fear that, if they let everyone have all the rights they will run out: of money for healthcare, of land to grow foods, of housing for everyone, of support for those who cannot work and the list of dreaded insufficiencies goes on and on.

Meanwhile, the divine nation, the household or Kingdom of God has no such limitations: all are welcome, there is food for the hungry, there is forgiveness for the sinner, there is love and a feast prepared for the prodigal – even for the one who returns having wasted it all. There is health care or healing for all. The Kingdom of God is abundant and filled with hope and promise that cannot be provided by hand sanitizer, face masks and hand washing ... the household of God is for everyone, Jesus made the pathway fully accessible – ramps, handrails and all ... and we are each a part of this household. It doesn't matter where you are from, what road you have walked: the Kingdom of God is yours. The Kingdom of God is not at risk.

The Kingdom of God is ours.

So as you go forward into the upcoming week and indeed into this summer, no matter how much the news and COVID risks and other burdens may impose their heartbreak upon you, no matter how much this time and this generation may make you question ... remember the promises of Jesus:

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

And hold fast to your citizenship in heaven, granted through Jesus – who, as the words of our hymn say: bought us with his own blood. Amen.

Hymn of the Day – #654 The Church's One Foundation

Click here. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gyYEGp_aL1g

Text: Samuel J. Stone; Tune: Samuel S. Wesley

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A Prayer In The Time Of COVID-19

Our prayers for this are from Heidi VanSchaik, our youth minister. They give focus to the things that have affected our younger brothers and sisters during these unprecedented times.

God of love, you help us turn our worries into prayers. You hear the confusion, anxiety, uncertainty, and fear in our minds right now. We lift our burdens to you so that we can let them go, knowing you are here to listen. We pray for every young person who has lost their job & now faces financial struggles, for every university student who had to return home unexpectedly, for youth whose home is not a safe place, for everyone struggling with the transition to online school or lack of routine, for the graduating class who might not get to walk across the stage, and for all people who are missing their friends. Together we grieve all the lost joy and happy memories quarantine has taken from us.

Thank you, Lord, for the person on the other side of the screen (or page) right now. For their courage, strength, and kindness despite everything weighing on their hearts. Help them to

know your boundless grace and endless love is still here even when they can't see it. We pray for doctors, nurses, janitors, cashiers, politicians, and everyone working at this time. We ask you to help us see Your face in all the brave people keeping our families and country together. Although buildings may be empty, we pray you keep our hearts full of compassion for others and love for our neighbours. We thank you for FaceTime, TikTok, Instagram challenges, and all the other things that remind us we are not alone in this.

Knowing God, you understand even the messiest of our prayers. Despite physical distance, we are still Your church. We pray for CLAY and the hundreds of young people disappointed that we can't come together this summer. We look forward to next summer.... We call you to be our lighthouse in the wavy seas and our guide in the wilderness. God, you've got some crazy plot with this whole Corona thing, but we trust you. The unknowns of Your plan have no end, but neither does your grace. Amen.

Lord's Prayer:

Click here for our familiar sung version, with Brad on organ, and Helga singing:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKpchRaebQ>

Music by Swee Hong Lim

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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 – #674 - 'Let Us Talents & Tongues Employ'

Click here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ob1C_pZapPY

Text: Fred Kaan; Tune: Jamaican Folk Tune, adapt, Doreen Potter

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Offering Prayer

God of all abundance, receive our brokenness and the offering of our lives.
Take us, who return to you in thanksgiving: form us and shape us into a love like Jesus, so that we may be love for this broken world. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn: #793 Be Thou My Vision (Brad on Organ)

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hvNjGlp6K5M>

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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.***