

June 14, 2020 – Second Sunday After Pentecost

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our fifteenth online worship service. This past week, our province announced that worship settings could be re-opened at 30% capacity. We also heard from our Eastern Synod's Bishop Michael Pryse with a recommendation that we consider moving slowly into re-opening for worship gatherings, to ensure that we keep everyone as safe as possible. Our Bishop in his letter recommended "our synod's congregations not contemplate initiating in-person worship experiences within our church buildings until the beginning of September at the earliest."

We anticipate being back together, at least for small group gatherings & small group worship, well ahead of September, but we want to let our Church Council and the Ministry of Risk Management formalize and finalize our plans for reopening our building up for small group meetings. Once we see how these protocols are working, we can look toward allowing weekly on-site worship services, and inviting back our user-groups and outside rental groups. We must do this safely and with utmost care to what will work for us and what will not.

Adequate supplies of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including hand-sanitizer, a temperature-gun, gloves, and masks for staff and those responsible for clean-up must be obtained. There will be some trial and error and re-entry could be bumpy until we all get used to how we need to function together. This will all take some time and we ask for your patience until we can gather together again.

Each week, we will update you on progress through these communications included with Sunday Worship, and also by telephone, email, website and Facebook. We will move forward carefully, safely, and in consideration of all the care we have taken individually to keep safe over the past 12 weeks, until we can gather again with confidence 😊

I am available for outdoor visits (porch, deck, driveway, patio) or telephone visits and 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 responding to you rather than having the inner resources to proactively reach out. You remain in my heart and my prayers and I am thankful for your emails, texts and notes – every single one 😊

Please remember that, as things are opened up, the COVID-19 virus remains alive and well, and 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:

Compassionate God, you have made a way for us to be one with you in Jesus. Fill our hearts to overflowing with your love and joy, that we may share abundantly the blessings of your ever-unfolding Kingdom with a generosity that emulates your generosity with us. Please help us and guide us in these days, to follow Jesus' instructions for discipleship and evangelism. Remind us of the promises Jesus gives of divine protection. May we remember and live each day knowing Jesus is our Redeemer and Way-Maker. Amen

The Reading: Romans 5:1-8

Therefore, since we have been justified [that is, acquitted of sin, declared blameless before God] by faith, [let us grasp the fact that] we have peace with God [and the joy of reconciliation with Him] through our Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed). ² Through Him we also have access by faith into this [remarkable state of] grace in which we [firmly and safely and securely] stand. Let us rejoice in our hope *and* the confident assurance of [experiencing and enjoying] the glory of [our great] God [the manifestation of His excellence and power]. ³ And not only *this*, but [with joy] let us exult in our sufferings *and* rejoice in our hardships, knowing that hardship (distress, pressure, trouble) produces patient endurance; ⁴ and endurance, proven character (spiritual maturity); and proven character, hope *and* confident assurance [of eternal salvation]. ⁵ Such hope [in God's promises] never disappoints *us*, because God's love has been abundantly poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

⁶ While we were still helpless [powerless to provide for our salvation], at the right time Christ died [as a substitute] for the ungodly. ⁷ Now it is an extraordinary thing for one to willingly give his life even for an upright man, though perhaps for a good man [one who is noble and selfless and worthy] someone might even dare to die. ⁸ But God clearly shows *and* proves His own love for us, by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

[The Amplified Bible]

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: Psalm 100 & Exodus 19

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)

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

Click here: <https://youtu.be/qgbD58GJAQk>

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 9:35 – 10:1, 5-16, 19b-20.***C: Glory to you O Lord.***

Then Jesus made a circuit of all the towns and villages. He taught in their meeting places, reported kingdom news, and healed their diseased bodies, healed their bruised and hurt lives. When he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke. So confused and aimless they were, like sheep with no shepherd. "What a huge harvest!" he said to his disciples. "How few workers! On your knees and pray for harvest hands!"

The prayer was no sooner prayed than it was answered. Jesus called twelve of his followers and sent them into the ripe fields. He gave them power to kick out the evil spirits and to tenderly care for the bruised and hurt lives.

Jesus sent his twelve harvest hands out with this charge:

"Don't begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don't try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously.

"Don't think you have to put on a fund-raising campaign before you start. You don't need a lot of equipment. *You* are the equipment, and all you need to keep that going is three meals a day. Travel light.

"When you enter a town or village, don't insist on staying in a luxury inn. Get a modest place with some modest people, and be content there until you leave.

"When you knock on a door, be courteous in your greeting. If they welcome you, be gentle in your conversation. If they don't welcome you, quietly withdraw. Don't make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and be on your way. You can be sure that on Judgment Day they'll be mighty sorry—but it's no concern of yours now.

"Stay alert. This is hazardous work I'm assigning you. You're going to be like sheep running through a wolf pack, so don't call attention to yourselves. Be as cunning as a snake, inoffensive as a dove.

And don't worry about what you'll say or how you'll say it. The right words will be there; the Spirit of your Father will supply the words." [The Message Translation]

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

Click Here for Audio of Today's Meditation: <https://youtu.be/usoWeXGsHV8>

Meditation (imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here):

On Monday morning of this past week, I read the scriptures that were designated for this Sunday. By Monday afternoon, we heard that places of worship were being authorized to re-open at 30% capacity. To be honest, the 30% capacity gave me a chuckle, since, on most Sundays before COVID, our regular attendance was less than 30% capacity. But then I thought about the differences between our relationship with God as a worshipping community, and our relationship with God as disciples – or followers of Jesus here to share the Good News of salvation in Christ.

I venture to guess that in almost all relationships, each person plays multiple roles. If we consider days in which we celebrate relationships, like Mother's Day or Father's Day coming up, we might celebrate the parent who serves the role of caregiver, nurse, cheerleader (think of your mom or dad and how they encourage you in the things you might have difficulty with), protector. For many of you who, during COVID lockdown have become grocery delivery people for your elders in your family or community, sometimes the roles get reversed. We were cared for, and as time passes we might become the caregivers, the advocate, even the cook and the maid. The point I am making is this: in perhaps all relationships there are multiple roles.

These roles might stem from different needs or demands – whether within ourselves or outside of ourselves. We may have responded to risk for elderly parents or loved ones by offering to pick up and drop off groceries. This stems from our need to protect those we love. It stems from the risks we identified for those we love. Ideally, all we do would come from a place of love within ourselves – and not from obligation, tradition or “mandates”.

So maybe, when we are little children, we go according to rules ...

- Don't hit your sister. Share with your brother.
- Don't be a spoilt brat, demanding things by screaming in a grocery store.
- Don't say unkind things.

Hopefully, somewhere along the way, as we get older, we come to understand that we refrain from violence, we share, we learn to ask in gentle ways, we are kind – we come to understand that we exercise these behaviours and ways of being as acts of love. We come to understand that we live in and occupy a world that is hungry and in need of love. And we recognize the abundance in our own lives and in our thankfulness, we move from “meeting requirements” to “acts of will” which stem from a place of love within us.

If we believe in the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that place of love within us is an ever-springing well whose groundwater is God. We are connected to that abundant, never-ending love-source. And even if our wells run dry for a little bit, we know replenishment is coming soon.

So it is that, in our relationship with God, we have a worshipping nature – the desire to be people who gather together to sing songs of thanksgiving, to hear and study the word of God, and to share in the feast of the lamb of God. We look and yearn for ways to express our thanksgiving for this ever-springing well of never-ending love which is God. We look and

yearn for ways to give thanks to God who clearly shows *and* proves His own love for us, by the fact that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.¹ We are thankful that God did not wait for us to be perfect or become perfect, but loved us abundantly, in, with and through Jesus in our broken-down states and ways – and through this love made us worthy delivery mechanisms for divine love, even though we are, but human.

And then, if our spiritual plumbing is all working well, we also look and yearn for ways to be pipelines or access points, or delivery mechanisms of this love of God ... we look and yearn for ways in which we can pump this love out into this hungry and sometimes destitute world. When we notice dry places in the world – places that are dry of love, we feel uncomfortable, we want to be true followers of Jesus, who, like Jesus, pour ourselves out to be love for the world.

That's how this Christian plumbing mechanism called a disciple of Jesus is supposed to work anyway, as I understand it.

In our Gospel reading today, at the end of Matthew Chapter 9, we witness Jesus encountering the hunger, need and destitution of the world: he had been going to all the towns and villages, teaching about the Kingdom of God, healing not only diseased bodies but also bruised and hurt lives. The gospel says, when he looked out over the crowds, his heart broke.

But Jesus did not see these needs as simply burdensome. I would argue he did not see them as burdens at all – no more than, as a mother or father, you would see your own children as burdens (even though they might be annoying at times, especially if you have to home school them due to COVID lockdown). Jesus sees the confusion and aimlessness of the people – he sees the need and he describes it as a harvest.

A Huge Harvest.

A sea of needs, of confusion, of bruised and hurt lives, a field of aimlessness – and he sees a harvest – something to be received, picked, gathered up – something that yields productivity and good.

Think about that. We don't look at a backyard full of weeds as a harvest – not even if they are edible weeds like I have in my backyard right now, busily blooming away! But if we have a backyard full of peas, or spinach or tomatoes or cucumbers – then we think ah – there is a harvest – there is something nourishing and good, something to be picked – something that is not just a gardening chore like weeding.

Jesus' heart breaks at the extent of need – in the way that if you looked out at a field so full you could not possibly reap it all yourself, on your own – and Jesus prays for the mechanism to reap this huge harvest.

Together with his disciples, he prays for harvest hands, and then Jesus sends his followers out into this harvest field.

¹ Romans 5:8

During this time when we have not been able to be together for worship, I know that many, many of you have felt the hunger, the need, the disease of the world – whether that was in your immediate family, in your neighbourhood, in our health care system, in Black Lives Matter, or in the wider world. I know that we have felt that heart break. And I know that we have responded with love in our own ways ... and today I want to invite you to see the needs of our world as your opportunity to be part of reaping an incredible harvest.

In the spiritual plumbing model I described, this invitation has to do with the outflow part ☺

- How can YOU be a well-spring of love?
- How can YOU be a harvest hand?
- How can YOU be a follower of Jesus?

These questions approach a different end of our spiritual plumbing mechanisms than the “how do we safely re-open places of worship” end.

This past week, part of the work of your lay leaders and your pastor have been to tackle that other end of the spiritual plumbing question ... How do we safely re-open our place of worship? Safely re-opening is not only about Personal Protective Equipment, hand sanitizer, face masks and social distancing. For us, safely re-opening is a relational question – How do we foster and build our relationships with each other, so that when we do gather again in our sanctuary to give thanks to God, we can do so with the sensitivity and love needed to help, support and encourage each other in focusing on God and thanksgiving, rather than on fear and infection risk? How do we learn to listen to each other, and contend with the dis-ease we may each feel at different levels of intensity, so that we are not diminishing anyone’s needs with our insensitivities and we are not raising anyone’s risks being able to effectively worship with our unawareness of what we each have been through during this time?

Because COVID has, so far, for all of us, been a life-changing event. Our whole entire world has changed. Not just our family life, not just our neighbourhood or even our region. I know for myself, COVID has changed my relationship with God: changed how I depend on God, changed how I listen for Spirit, changed how I speak about fear.

So how do we approach this huge harvest, as true followers of Jesus? We are given some really fine specifics in this gospel reading today:

“Don’t begin by traveling to some far-off place to convert unbelievers. And don’t try to be dramatic by tackling some public enemy. Go to the lost, confused people right here in the neighborhood. Tell them that the kingdom is here. Bring health to the sick. Raise the dead. Touch the untouchables. Kick out the demons. You have been treated generously, so live generously.

“Don’t think you have to put on a fund-raising campaign before you start. You don’t need a lot of equipment. *You* are the equipment, and all you need to keep that going is three meals a day. Travel light.

“When you enter a town or village, don’t insist on staying in a luxury inn. Get a modest place with some modest people, and be content there until you leave.”

None of these instructions are about re-opening places of worship. All of them are about simple practical ways in which we can approach the huge harvest of opportunities to love that lie in wait around us and in our midst.

In some ways, when I look back to our last worship gathering, it was like that luxury inn mentioned in the Gospel. Red carpets (literally), grand organ music, the freedom to hug and touch and stand close to each other, the freedom to share in the feast of communion and sing ... dear God, the freedom to sing.

But here it is: Get a modest place with some modest people, and be content there until you leave.

This is our starting point – this is how we are going to begin eating this elephant of a harvest, one bite at a time – with modest gatherings – of 10 people or less, of modest people – learning how to be in attentive, aware and humble relationships with each other, with contentment until we leave.

As a worshipping community, we will gather first in small groups to ask ourselves these huge harvest questions, in the new context in which we find ourselves:

- How can WE be a well-spring of love?
- How can WE be effective harvest hands together again?
- How can WE be followers of Jesus as a community?

We will talk together, we will listen to each other, and as Jesus says:

“don’t worry about what you’ll say or how you’ll say it. The right words will be there; the Spirit of your Father will supply the words.”

For the Father who supplies, we give thanks. Amen.

Hymn of the Day – #798 Will You Come and Follow Me.

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o469PRLdbHU>

Prayers of Intercession

In this time of COVID-19 lockdown, and Black Lives Matter protests, we come before God remembering that all of us are loved, and children of God. We ask God to dwell with us and hear our prayers.

All-powerful God,
Throughout creation, your diversity is demonstrated:
In each face, in every life form,
In each sunrise, in every snowflake.
All the diversity in all your church are but a sampling of your creative power.
Help us to trust in the innate order of all you have made.
Help us to restore your order, where systems of prejudice prevail
God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.

Jesus, our brother and fellow traveller,
 You intimately know the violence of human encounter with differences.
 You know what George Floyd experienced in his dying minutes.
 With your body on the cross, these differences were broken:
 Jew and Greek, Slave and free.
 Every shade made precious in your sight.
 Help us to honour your sacrifice by doing the work of your body:
 Help us to dismantle the use of difference for disprivilege.
 God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.

Holy Spirit of Pentecostal fire,
 You used different tongues to spread the gospel truth.
 Diversity was your vehicle, diversity was your canvas.
 May we trust in your power knit throughout our differences.
 Fill us with your capacity for making common the message of love.
 Let our differences be your chalk and chalkboard.
 Be our guiding presence in this holy work,
 God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.

In all our hearts, holy One, you place the nudge of your calls.
 You move us in all kinds of ways, with all kinds of concerns.
 Whether for creation, climate or individuals ...
 Whether for the church, the world or local situations ...
 We call out our concerns to you here ... out loud or in the silence of our hearts.
 God, dwell with us, and hear our prayer.

All these things, Lord, we entrust to your care, knowing that you hear all of our prayers. And we pray in the way that Jesus taught us to pray:

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 – Jesus the Very Thought of You

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rj-87CGHYrY>

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: Be Still for the Presence of the Lord

Helga Morrison, soprano
Stephanie Burgoyne, piano

Recorded at Alexandra Presbyterian Church, Brantford, ON

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HAGYMj3gbfU&feature=youtu.be>

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. ****