

June 21, 2020 – Third Sunday After Pentecost

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our sixteenth online worship service. This past week, our church council met to make some decisions on the re-opening of church, and more will be communicated about that next week Sunday. This past week we will also have done a number of tasks inside the church, to mark off spaces for safe distancing and to prepare for opening for small groups of 10 people or less. 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 in groups of 10 or less, 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 ☺

This week's sermon is brought to you by our Eastern Synod office, preached by Rev Doug Reble and also available by video.

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:

All-powerful God, teach us to serve you as you deserve, to give and not count the cost, to persist knowing that you love us and look out for us individually, as you do all your creatures. 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 6:1b-11

Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. For whoever has died is freed from sin. But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. [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: Psalm 69 & Jeremiah 20

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=qqbD58GJAQk>

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

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The Holy Gospel according to Matthew 10: 24-39.

C: Glory to you O Lord.

"A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household! "So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not

become known. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father And even the hairs of your head are all counted. So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows. "Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven. "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one's foes will be members of one's own household. Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. [NRSV]

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

Meditation (Rev Doug Reble, Assistant to Bishop Michael Pryse, Eastern Synod):

Click here for video of sermon:

<https://elcic.box.com/s/dbbu76qe6m1sbqvj3to0dvxkl4o4laj>

I suspect most of you who are listening to or reading this sermon have never heard the name Kenneth Feinberg. He is the lawyer who chaired the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund, which gave money to the family of each person who died in the 2001 terror attacks in the United States. Starting with a formula and then using his discretion, Feinberg considered the victims' age, their dependents, whether they had life insurance and their income and earning potential. The value assigned to those lost lives varied dramatically. As little as \$250,000 for blue collar workers and as much as \$7.1 million for executives.

Feinberg, in an article I read in The New Yorker magazine, reflected on his experience. "As I met with the 9/11 families and wrestled with issues surrounding the valuation of lives lost I began to question this basic premise of our legal system. Trained in the law, I had always accepted that no two lives were worth the same in financial terms. But now I found the law in conflict with my growing belief in the equality of all life."

In today's gospel reading from Matthew, Chapter 10, we read of Jesus sending his disciples into a perilous world. There will be divisions in their families. There will be "those who kill the body." The disciples must be prepared to take up the cross.

And yet in the middle of this recitation of conflict and danger, Jesus suddenly speaks of the smallest, most insignificant creatures. "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet none one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father." In the marketplace, sparrows were the meat of the poor, the ground chuck of the first century. Yet their lives – their deaths – are not beneath God's attention and care.

“Do not be afraid,” Jesus says, “you are of more value than many sparrows.”

When I told Bishop Michael Pryse, my colleague in our Eastern Synod office, that I was writing a sermon based on Jesus’ word about sparrows, he started to sing “God Sees The Little Sparrows Fall.” At first I started to laugh and then I realized how come I didn’t know it so I did what we often do and I Googled it. That got me on to another hymn about sparrows as these Google searches often do, entitled “His Eye On The Sparrow.” I listened to a clip of Mahalia Jackson singing it in 1958 and Whitney Houston 30 years later. Never heard of the hymn so I did some research.

I learned that Jesus’ words “Do not be afraid, you are of more value than many sparrows,” inspired Canadian schoolteacher Civilla Martin, in 1905, to write the words to that hymn, “His Eye On The Sparrow”, a gospel hymn that declares with assurance, “I know God watches me.”

I also learned that this hymn became very popular in African–American churches. In a world that insists that black lives do not matter, Jesus declares that overlooked, exploited, brutalized lives are, in fact, of the greatest importance to God. In a world that says the life of a rich person is worth 28 times as much as the life of a working person, Jesus says that God pays special attention to those who are poor, struggling, and suffering. God cares. We are not alone. In these days of pandemic and COVID-19, how we all need to hear those words. God cares. We are not alone.

Jesus’ calculus for the value of a life has little to do with a person’s income or earning potential. To Jesus, our lives have innate value, in and of themselves. We have value because we are creatures, like sparrows, made in God’s image. As mystic Julian of Norwich wrote in the 15th century of her vision of the hazelnut: “I marvelled how it might suddenly have sank into nothing because of its littleness. And I was answered in my understanding: “It lasts and ever shall, because God loves it. “

Friends, to Jesus, our value does not lead to compensation or a guarantee of safety. It means that we receive attention. The God who cares for the welfare of sparrows also keeps track of every aspect of our lives, even tallying up the hairs of our heads. When St. Paul’s description of divine love comes to a crescendo in 1 Corinthians, Chapter 13, he promises that one day we will know fully, even as we have been fully known. I would say that we already are fully known, known more deeply than we even know ourselves.

Occasionally, well meaning Christians declare that “God doesn’t care if you get a tattoo “or “God doesn’t care if you have a glass of wine,” or as I used to say to my mother as a young teenager, “God doesn’t care if I wear jeans to church.” While it is true that none of these choices is, for most of us, a matter of eternal consequences, the idea that God doesn’t care is entirely untrue. There is nothing, not even the smallest thing, that is outside the circle of God’s care. And if God cares about these little details, the sparrows of our lives, then how much more God cares about the shape of each life and of all our lives. Just remember. God’s care is not for me alone, nor only for people like me, but for all of us.

After the 9/11 Victim Compensation Fund completed its work, Kenneth Feinberg received a call from the president of Virginia Tech University, asking him to manage the fund that would distribute compensation to the families of the students and faculty killed in the 2007 mass shooting. “I realized that Feinberg the citizen trumped Feinberg the lawyer. My legal training would no longer stand in the way. This time all victims — students and faculty alike — would receive the same compensation.”

Dear friends in Christ. Sparrows and disciples alike, we know God watches us. To God, we matter. Hear that again. To God, we matter. In God’s sight, there are no unimportant lives.

In the name of the God who loves us all. Amen.

Hymn of the Day – #674 Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ

Click here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ob1C_pZapPY&feature=youtu.be

Jessika Mannell, vocal, Bradley Moggach, Piano
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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:

The Lord's Prayer

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

Helga Morrison, vocal, Bradley Moggach, Organ

Music by Swee Hong Lim © 2010 Faith Alive Christian Resources Used by permission. CCLI License # 11098609

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 – Deep River - featuring Reid Spencer, vocal; Carol McFadden, piano.

Click here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OO587yGo6uc&list=PL9km5c7GxbOAJVRBWu6xiTQEsHGKGcobJ&index=20>

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: God be With You 'Til we Meet Again

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

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. ***