

## October 4, 2020 – Eighteenth Sunday After Pentecost

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our 31<sup>st</sup> online worship service ☺ This Sunday, we are NOT having a gathering on the lawn, as the day for our soft re-opening has come. All lay leaders, ministry team members, re-opening volunteer disciples, council members and choir members are invited to join us for a soft re-opening worship service, part of whose intention is to work out any glitches in our safe entry, seating, worship and exit strategies. We then are giving ourselves two weeks to work out those glitches, and communicate with you as necessary before we re-open for congregational worship, 10 am, October 18<sup>th</sup> (pandemic closures permitting).

At my preparation of these worship notes, we are seeking to populate a roster for at least 4 Sundays of volunteer disciples in place, beginning on October 18<sup>th</sup>, so that we are prepared to continue with worship, if we are not placed in lockdown conditions again based on rising infection rates. If you have not yet volunteered or been called on specifically, but are interested in helping – please contact Hazel & Nyle (519-653-2901) or the church office (519-653-4721). A number of people are now trainers, and a one-on-one training session can be organized with you, as needed. Volunteer disciples are to gain access through the Church Street accessible entrance only.

If you normally receive the worship service by email, this week will be the last week of “before Sunday” email worship. On Sunday October 4<sup>th</sup>, we will record the gospel acclamation, gospel reading and sermon from the worship service, and this link will be made available to you on the website and Facebook as follow-up to the Saturday worship email.

Come October 11<sup>th</sup>, worship emails will be sent out on Sunday afternoon. This prepares us for October 18<sup>th</sup> and following weeks when worship emails (including the recorded Youtube link for the sermon) will be emailed to you in the afternoon, following Sunday morning live worship. Likewise, those who received physical mail of service will receive your mail a little later in the week following the service. This will allow us to resume a Sunday in-person worship practice that we can share, as best as possible, with those who are not yet comfortable or able to return to in-person worship.

The in-person worship services will have live music, possibly soloists, and possibly slightly different hymnody than the email service will; this allows us to ensure the best quality recordings in the online delivery. Eventually we hope to get to where we can livestream the service, either on Youtube, Facebook or some other streaming service. But for now, as we continue to rely on the generous sharing of gifts by many volunteers who are also working day jobs, we will only be able to offer a link after the live service has been completed and the sound file then uploaded.

One of the items we need for the COVID safe cleaning requirements are throw-away “rags” or wiping cloths. They will be dampened with COVID-safe solution, and used to sanitize, both by our custodial contractor and by our volunteer disciples. Most of us have old sheets, linens and towels which could be re-purposed for this use. We are asking that you donate any spare sheets, linens and towels that could be used in this way, freshly laundered, to our church. Drop off may be done at front porches at these locations: 23 Shade Street in Galt and 746 Regent Street in Preston. We will cut them into the appropriate sizes, so that we have a ready stock handy. If you are looking for an outing, maybe check out the thrift stores near you for items we could use, and consider purchasing some to share with church as a donation. They don't need to be brand new, just clean.

As always, if you need a phone call or distanced visits, please do reach out by email or phone: [pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org](mailto:pastor@st-peters-cambridge.org) or 519-653-4721 ... It is not my intention to neglect pastoral visitation ministry during this time, sometimes my shins just need a swift kick ☺

- 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'. It's not too late to get in on the fun! Providing permissions are given, you may include photos that include people, not just scenery. If you have some photos you might like to send along, please be in touch with me by email, [lorre.calder@sympatico.ca](mailto: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:** Beloved God, Creator of all: you have made all things according to your will, and you have given us stewardship and dominion over the things of this world. Through Jesus you have provided us the keys to your Kingdom, and given us the responsibility and call to herald this Kingdom of love, justice and peace into being. Give us courage and strength in this time, in this age, to do our work as ushers of your Kingdom come. Amen.

The Lesson: Isaiah 5:1-7

I'll sing a ballad to the one I love,  
a love ballad about his vineyard:  
The one I love had a vineyard,  
a fine, well-placed vineyard.  
He hoed the soil and pulled the weeds,  
and planted the very best vines.  
He built a lookout, built a winepress,  
a vineyard to be proud of.  
He looked for a vintage yield of grapes,  
but for all his pains he got junk grapes.  
"Now listen to what I'm telling you,  
you who live in Jerusalem and Judah.  
What do you think is going on  
between me and my vineyard?  
Can you think of anything I could have done  
to my vineyard that I didn't do?  
When I expected good grapes,  
why did I get bitter grapes?  
"Well now, let me tell you  
what I'll do to my vineyard:  
I'll tear down its fence  
and let it go to ruin.  
I'll knock down the gate  
and let it be trampled.  
I'll turn it into a patch of weeds, untended, uncared for—  
thistles and thorns will take over.

I'll give orders to the clouds:  
 'Don't rain on that vineyard, ever!'"  
 Do you get it? The vineyard of God-of-the-Angel-Armies  
 is the country of Israel.  
 All the men and women of Judah  
 are the garden he was so proud of.  
 He looked for a crop of justice  
 and saw them murdering each other.  
 He looked for a harvest of righteousness  
 and heard only the moans of victims. [The Message Translation]  
 Word of God, word of life. *C: Thanks be to God. \**

### **Reading Homework: Psalm 80 & Philippians 3**

**Gospel Acclamation: Il signore. Taizé; Bradley Moggach, piano, Debbie Lou Ludolph, vocal**  
**Click Here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93PRP79QbIQ>**

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### **The Holy Scriptures according to Matthew 21:33-44**

***C: Glory to you O Lord.***

Here's another story. Listen closely. There was once a man, a wealthy farmer, who planted a vineyard. He fenced it, dug a winepress, put up a watchtower, then turned it over to the farmhands and went off on a trip. When it was time to harvest the grapes, he sent his servants back to collect his profits. The farmhands grabbed the first servant and beat him up. The next one they murdered. They threw stones at the third but he got away. The owner tried again, sending more servants. They got the same treatment. The owner was at the end of his rope. He decided to send his son. 'Surely,' he thought, 'they will respect my son.'

But when the farmhands saw the son arrive, they rubbed their hands in greed. 'This is the heir! Let's kill him and have it all for ourselves.' They grabbed him, threw him out, and killed him. Now, when the owner of the vineyard arrives home from his trip, what do you think he will do to the farmhands?

"He'll kill them—a rotten bunch, and good riddance," they answered. "Then he'll assign the vineyard to farmhands who will hand over the profits when it's time."

Jesus said, "Right—and you can read it for yourselves in your Bibles:  
 The stone the masons threw out  
 is now the cornerstone.  
 This is God's work;  
 we rub our eyes, we can hardly believe it!

This is the way it is with you. God's kingdom will be taken back from you and handed over to a people who will live out a kingdom life. Whoever stumbles on this Stone gets shattered; whoever the Stone falls on gets smashed. [The Message Translation]

Word of God, Word of Life: **Thanks be to God.**

### **Sermon (by Pastor Janaki)**

**(please check the website on Sunday afternoon to access the audio of the sermon) imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here:**

Today it is with some excitement as well as perhaps trepidation and anxiety that we gather for worship: some of us in person, here at church, and others at home. We will find our worship services slightly out of step with each other as we strive to hold together, for the purposes of worship, during a time when we are asked to maintain a certain distance. The municipal and provincial rules have allowed us to use up to 30%

the capacity of our church space – which would have us seating about 100 people, but because of how our pews are arranged, and to maintain social distancing, we have closer to 50 people worth of spaces now available in our sanctuary.

For those of you who entered via the church street door, which again, is the majority of you who are physically present today, you might have noticed the mortar of the wall by the door is crumbling. This is true in many places of our physical building: mortar is crumbling, things are falling apart.

For over six months, including many cold months, this building has stood mostly empty. In this same six months, our municipality has spent good money, good tax dollars I might add, to ensure that those in our community who are homeless had shelter. The Bridges shelter in downtown Galt had to reduce the number of people they allowed to sleep in their bunking area, because the bunks in that area were packed together so closely before COVID, that even in their sleep, the residents would have been violating the 6 foot social distancing.

Before COVID, our building used to be quite heavily used. We have had to restrict usage considerably as we re-open to ensure safety and to assess what the cost will be of maintaining COVID sanitization in our building in between uses. Much like the school system, we know more custodial hours will be required to clean in between user groups, to ensure safety.

Also, if you observed the average age of disciples who are volunteering today, and most of the disciples who we trained for COVID safe entry, exit and cleaning protocols are over the age of 65. An age at which our synod office recommends disciples refrain from placing themselves at risk by volunteering in ways that might expose them. We all are taking a risk to be present physically with anyone these days. And today, we are taking that risk in order to worship and celebrate God's love together.

Meanwhile, many of you both here physically present, and worshipping from home are able to honestly say you did not need this physical space to be able to effectively worship God. Many of you have said to me that you found the freedom to read or listen and pause as you needed to ... you found that freedom enabled you to worship in a more mindful way.

So, it begs the questions:

- Why do we (those who are gathered here) meet here today?
- For how many people do we consider it worthwhile to preserve this sanctuary for worship, and to preserve this crumbling building?
- Is this the most cost-effective way to continue being disciples of Jesus? In a building that we will, as COVID continues to impact our reality, a building that we will increasingly be spending more money on than we can put into the offering plates?

In terms of earthly realities, not only are fewer of us coming to church, but also there is less income by way of offerings, and most of our fundraisers have had to also be cancelled this year due to COVID. So what does it mean to be the workers in God's vineyard in this context?

If we assess the two focus scriptures today, from Isaiah and the Gospel of Matthew, we hear tell of vineyards. In the Old Testament reading, a well kept and well attended vineyard is described – yet it yields only junk grapes.

The question is asked of the reader: "What do you think is going on between me and my vineyard? Can you think of anything I could have done to my vineyard that I didn't do?"

Remember this question is being posed to people from the Old Testament era; people from before the time of Jesus. One might argue that God hasn't done the biggest thing God could do for his vineyard yet ... Jesus has not come yet ... but so many other things were provided: nourishment, watering, tending, weeding ... yet the result was junk grapes.

Junk grapes. I don't like to think of myself as a junk grape. I don't like it one bit.

But the Isaiah reading closes with these words:

God looked for a crop of justice and saw them murdering each other.

God looked for a harvest of righteousness and heard only the moans of victims.

As a called and ordained minister of the body of Christ, the church, I have struggled hard during these months knowing this building that could give so much shelter stood mostly vacant and unused, while the homeless remained homeless, the marginally housed remained marginally housed.

God looked for a harvest of righteousness and heard only the moans of victims.

Have we heard the moans of victims? Have we brought forth a harvest of righteousness?

These are not easy or comfortable questions to ask, but as people of God gathered to worship in a space we have stewardship of, we must ask the difficult and uncomfortable questions: is this the best we can do with what God has given us?

It is human nature to want to keep for ourselves the good thing, the best thing, the most choice morsel, this most beautiful space. And this brings us to the Gospel reading, where Jesus shares a parable (apologies to Barb Jones – I know how much you hate parables Barb).

In this parable, a vineyard owned by a wealthy farmer is tended to by farmhands until harvest time. The owner sends a servant when it is time to collect the harvest profits. The farmhands beat him up. A second and third servant are sent by the owner. They are murdered and stoned respectively. Finally, the owner decides to send his own son ... in whom he is very well pleased I imagine. He loves this son. He thinks, surely, the farmhands won't be so wicked as to hurt his very own son.

But the farmhands have an entirely other plan.

They would much rather keep everything for themselves, than pass the profits of this land back to the owner through his son. So they kill the son.

Jesus then asks of the people in the temple, what do you think the owner will do when he returns and finds out his son has been killed?

The farmhands are not stupid. They completely get it ... they reply to Jesus' question: He'll kill them—a rotten bunch, and good riddance. Then he'll assign the vineyard to farmhands who will hand over the profits when it's time."

We as children of God through Jesus are called upon to demonstrate our thanksgiving not only in gathering to worship together, not only in worshipping at home. We have received the bounty of God's love: salvation, forgiveness, life everlasting. And we have received the responsibility of stewardship of God's resources. All this we see: this church, this land, these walls, these facilities ... all these belong to God.

"This is God's work; we rub our eyes, we can hardly believe it!"

And God tells us to love each other the way God has loved us: with a sacrificial and unselfish love. We are to be stepping stones leading the way into God's kingdom not only with our words, but with our actions. If we form stumbling blocks, God's kingdom will be taken back from us and handed over to a people who will live out a kingdom life.

Jesus is the cornerstone of our faith. Not a building. Not a tradition.

Jesus is who we are called to follow, leaving all else behind.

Whoever stumbles on this Stone gets shattered; whoever the Stone falls on gets smashed.

Let us not be stumbling blocks. Let us not get smashed ☺ But instead, let us be bread and wine for the world, trusting in God to guide us in all things. Amen.

### **Hymn of the Day: If You But Trust in God to Guide You ELW 769**

**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IZY2Q7rXegE>

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

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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 Koelhofer, 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 all those who have now returned to school,

And for those who have lost beloved family members in the past weeks:

May your Spirit walk alongside them to comfort them.

We pray that you would also keep us in good spirits, as we feel the colder weather coming,

And as we contend with the reality of rising infection rates ... please keep us in your care.

We pray in the name of Jesus. 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 – Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ ELW 674**

**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVKkz95RBdw>

Jessika Mannell, vocal; Bradley Moggach, Piano; Text: Fred Kaan

Tune: Jamaican Folk Tune, adapt, Doreen Potter; ©Words 1975 Hope Publishing Co.

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### **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: The Lord's My Shepherd (Crimond) SBH 522**

**Click here:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8k3YyC8pV2s>

Composer: Jessie Seymour Irvine; Words: Public Domain; Music: Public Domain  
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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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