

Pastor Andrew Gilliland  
Charing Cross Pastoral Charge – FB LIVE  
22 August 2020

Scripture: Psalm 124

Hello everybody and good morning once again to another Facebook live message. My name is Andrew Gilliland and I am the minister of Charing Cross United Church and Wesley United Church they are the churches that make up Charing Cross Pastoral Charge. Today is the 23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2020 and I am excited to be able to share with you once again. Before that though if you have your Bible handy please turn to Psalm 124 as that will be our reading this morning.

I mentioned last week that we are returning to in-person worship on 06 September that is the Sunday of Labour Day weekend. As a reminder, we are only opening Charing Cross United Church for the time being and so are only planning one service to happen each week which will begin at 10AM. Some reminders about this process on Sunday mornings:

- 1) You will not be able to enter the building, unless you are helping in some way with the service, until 9:30AM.
- 2) We will only be using one set of doors which are the doors right by the big gravel parking lot. All other doors will remain locked with signs on them identifying where to go.
- 3) We will have music but no congregational singing for the time being.
- 4) All people will have to wear a mask for the duration of their time in the building unless they are speaking or singing.

Some pews will be marked off and lines marked out with 6 feet of spacing to help people remain physically distanced from each other. We are still going to live-stream the service but due to copyright laws we will not be able (at this time) to live stream any music that does happen, we may consider changing this in the future but these are our plans for now. This means that even though church might start at 10AM in the sanctuary we probably will not be live until after that as we will begin the service with some music. The only parts that will be live will be the reading of Scripture, the message, the prayer after the message and the announcements which for the time being will be moved to the end of the message.

With this in mind we also ask again that you RSVP that you plan on coming to church and which dates you plan to attend. You can do this through this Facebook page, by calling the church office number (519) 352-8460 or by emailing us at [charingcrosspc@gmail.com](mailto:charingcrosspc@gmail.com). All this information will be posted in the

description for this video. If you do not RSVP you can still attend but please, if you can, let us know that you plan on coming, what dates you plan on coming and how many will be coming with you. This will make it easier for us in planning and preparing for a return to worship in the sanctuary each week.

If you do plan on attending worship in person we are required to keep track of who you are and your contact information and so with the letter that we sent out and I talked about last week we also attached a pre-screening form. We ask that if you can that you fill that out before coming to church each and every Sunday to make entering the building go a bit quicker and hopefully smoother. We will have these forms available on each Sunday morning but filling out the information before hand will make things a lot easier as we return to the building.

If you have attended Charing Cross or Wesley for any length of time you know that I love to preach in series. I enjoy preaching on similar topics for a set amount of time. I have done several preaching series over the last few years

- 1) “Not Your Sunday School Lesson” series which was focused on familiar Sunday School lessons.
- 2) “Romans and the Christian Worldview” which was focused on Paul’s letter to the church in Rome and what it tells us about the Christian Worldview.
- 3) “Prince of the Prophets” which was a series on the prophet Isaiah.
- 4) Last Fall we also did a Christian Virtues series which was on different Christian virtues.

If you attended church in March, you might remember that we had started a series on the letter to the church in Philippi also known as Philippians. The plan was to read the whole letter and preach through the whole thing with a focus on the Christian Community over I think an 8-week period of time. I put that on hold because of the pandemic and not knowing what church would look like for the foreseeable future. For the time being we will not be returning to that, but I do have a new idea for a new series of preaching, but I need your help. The new series that I want to begin in the near future is going to be called “How Does God...? If you are watching this video, I want to hear from you as you fill in that blank and finish that question. Some examples could be “How does God love us?” or “How does God protect?” or “How does God give us strength?” I cannot guarantee that I will get to all of them but I would love to hear from you and what is the question you want to hear an answer for, “How Does God (blank)?”

I think a lot of people have a lot of questions right now, and some of them might be why questions, but for the purposes of this series I want to focus on the

how instead of the why. Though answering “Why does God (blank)?” could also be a great preaching series at some other point in time. Comment below though your “how does God...” questions so I can hear what you want to hear. Remember all our future messages will be on FB Live and available after the fact as well so even if you do not attend in person you can still hear the message.

Let’s read Psalm 124,

<sup>1</sup> If it had not been the LORD who was on our side  
—let Israel now say—

<sup>2</sup> if it had not been the LORD who was on our side,  
when our enemies attacked us,

<sup>3</sup> then they would have swallowed us up alive,  
when their anger was kindled against us;

<sup>4</sup> then the flood would have swept us away,  
the torrent would have gone over us;

<sup>5</sup> then over us would have gone  
the raging waters.

<sup>6</sup> Blessed be the LORD,  
who has not given us  
as prey to their teeth.

<sup>7</sup> We have escaped like a bird  
from the snare of the fowlers;  
the snare is broken,  
and we have escaped.

<sup>8</sup> Our help is in the name of the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.

This is a communal song of thanksgiving; it is the community of Israel giving thanks, but it is a little different because initially they do not give thanks for what God has done but rather they thank God for what He didn’t allow to happen.

Have you ever been thankful for something that did not work out quite the way you planned or hoped for? Often times when things do not work out immediately as we want them to our reaction is not to thank God for it. In fact, it is usually the opposite, we get angry or upset, we ask why. Here in Psalm 124 though the people of Israel are offering thanks to God for what never happened, granted they are thanking God that their enemies did not overcome them or defeat them but

I think the principle applies to many situations. Your car does not start in the morning when you want to leave, because of this you are late for work, you get upset and begin wondering why this happened. What if your car not starting though meant that you did not get in an accident that you might have been involved in if you had left when you planned? Or, perhaps all the doughnuts in the break room are gone once you get into work, but you want to begin eating more healthy anyways which means not having that doughnut and so the temptation to eat one gets taken away completely. Do break rooms even have communal boxes of doughnuts for people to eat if they want to?

Either way, sometimes, I think things happen, or in some cases do not happen, and we should perhaps do what this Psalm does and thank God for that thing not happening. I think that it easier to do when you are not in the midst of things not working out though. Take my time at the University of Windsor, my first attempt at a bachelor's degree. Long story short I got kicked out of the university for low grades after one year and at the time it was heartbreaking, it was a huge disappointment because not getting a bachelors degree meant that I could not get a Masters degree and not getting my Masters degree meant I could never do what I was called to do and go into ministry in the United Church of Canada. Looking back though that was the best thing that could have happened and I am so very thankful that I did not complete that first attempt at a University degree because it lead me to the school I eventually attended, Redeemer University where I completed a degree and did quite well at it, I might add.

More than likely if it had not been for my first attempt going so poorly, I would not be here in Charing Cross like I am now. I definitely would not have gone to Redeemer, who knows what else would be different. Either way I am very thankful to God for that original failure. I was not so thankful at the time, but as time went on and I began to see things a little more clearly, I was able to be thankful for that failure. Because of that experience and others similar to it, it is easier for me to be thankful for things not working out as planned because in the end God has a plan.

I am generally of a mind-set that I do not regret anything, I don't hold regrets over things I did, or even things I did not do because for me if I regretted those things I would go back and change something if I could. As I look at my life currently though, I like it, I like where I am, who I have become, and who is involved in my life. It is impossible to know what would be different about my life today if it was not for those past experiences and I rather like where I am today. I do not regret my past because if it were not for that I would not be who I am today.

Again though, often times this is much easier to do in retrospect and not while you are in the midst of something. The old adage is true though, the more you practice something, the easier it becomes, and it is never too late to start. We all start somewhere right? Just because I am at this point in my life where I practice these things does not mean you will be, and that is okay. We are all on different journeys and we are all different people. For some being thankful for things not going as planned is easy, for others it will be more difficult, but in the end it is largely a mindset that you can practice and the more you practice being thankful for everything, even if at the time it is not what you wanted, the easier it becomes.

Practice makes perfect, so start practicing thankfulness in more situations, even if things do not go as planned, because you never know what might be coming in the future.

Let's pray...

I hope you have enjoyed this message and I look forward to bringing another message to you in September on Labour Day Weekend. This message though is hopefully the last message you see from me in this office space because future messages will come to you live from the sanctuary of Charing Cross United Church with people physically present. I look forward to what we are able to do and like I said last week, please be patient with us if the sound is not great or the quality of the video is well questionable. We are small churches and live streaming at all is new for us never mind live streaming from the church worship space. This though does conclude our message this morning so as it ends just know that we love you, that God loves you and we look forward to connecting with you in person, though physically distanced, once again. Cheers.