

SA, SL, TS and DSM United Churches

Valentine's Day Sunday – February 16th, 2025

Prelude: – by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Thank you for your support of all our past services, which are posted on our websites - Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca

Call to Worship:

Eric: Blessed are those who follow God's way.

People: **They are like a tree planted by streams of water.**

Eric: It does not fear when heat comes,

People: **it is not anxious in times of drought.**

Eric: Like such a tree, we trust in God.

People: **We know that God always watches over us.**

Eric: Come, let us worship God:

People: **who is the source of life in all seasons.**

Opening Hymn: VU 213 "Rejoice, The Lord is King"

- 1 Rejoice the Lord is King!
Your risen Lord adore!
Rejoice, give thanks and sing
and triumph evermore.
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!*
- 2 Jesus the Saviour reigns,
the God of truth and love;
when he had purged our sins,
he took his seat above.
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!*
- 3 God's kingdom cannot fail;
Christ rules o'er earth and heaven;
the keys of death and hell
are to our Jesus given.
*Lift up your heart, lift up your voice:
rejoice; again I say, rejoice!*
- 4 Rejoice in glorious hope,
for Christ, the judge, shall come
to glorify the saints

for their eternal home.

*We soon shall hear the archangel's voice;
the trump of God shall sound, rejoice!*

Opening Prayer:

Eric: Happy are you who speak to God, you shall be heard. Bless us anew, O God.

People: **Happy are you who are honest with God, you shall be forgiven. Bless us anew, O God.**

Eric: Happy are you who open up your real self, you shall be loved. Bless us anew, O God.

People: **Happy are you who long for change, your living shall be renewed. Bless us anew, O God.**

Eric: Happy are you who put yourself in God's hands; you shall be held. Bless us anew, O God.

People: **Happy are you who long for a fairer world, you shall be given vision. Bless us anew, O God.**

Eric: Happy are you who seek God always; you shall be shown the way.

All: **Bless us anew, O God.**

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 1

The Way to Happiness

God blesses those people who refuse evil advice and won't follow sinners or join in sneering at God.

Instead, they find happiness in the Teaching of the Lord, and they think about it day and night.

They are like trees growing beside a stream, trees that produce fruit in season and always have leaves.

Those people succeed in everything they do.

That isn't true of those who are evil - they are like straw blown by the wind.

Sinners won't have an excuse on the day of judgment, and they won't have a place with the people of God.

The Lord protects everyone who follows him, but the wicked follow a road that leads to ruin.

Children's Story:

Children's Hymn: "If You Are Happy and You Know It"

If you are happy and you know it, clap your hands (*clap, clap*)

If you are happy and you know it, clap your hands (*clap, clap*)

If you are happy and you know it, and you really want to show it,

If you are happy and you know it, clap your hands (*clap, clap*)

If you are happy and you know it, stomp your feet (*stomp, stomp*)

If you are happy and you know it, stomp your feet (*stomp, stomp*)

If you are happy and you know it, and you really want to show it,

If you are happy and you know it, stomp your feet (*stomp, stomp*)

If you are happy and you know it, shout hooray (*Hooray*)

If you are happy and you know it, shout hooray (*Hooray*)

If you are happy and you know it, and you really want to show it,

If you are happy and you know it, shout hooray (*Hooray*)

If you are happy and you know it, do all three

(*clap, clap, stomp, stomp, Hooray*)

If you are happy and you know it, do all three
(clap, clap, stomp, stomp, Hooray)

If you are happy and you know it, and you really want to show it,

If you are happy and you know it, do all three
(clap, clap, stomp, stomp, Hooray)

Scripture: Luke 6: 17 - 26

Jesus and his apostles went down from the mountain and came to some flat, level ground. Many other disciples were there to meet him. Large crowds of people from all over Judea, and Jerusalem, were there too. These people had come to listen to Jesus and to be healed of their diseases. All who were troubled by evil spirits were also healed. Everyone was trying to touch Jesus, because power was going out from him and healing them all. Jesus looked at his disciples and said: God will bless you people who are poor. His kingdom belongs to you! God will bless you hungry people. You will have plenty to eat! God will bless you people who are now crying. You will laugh! God will bless you when others hate you and won't have anything to do with you. God will bless you when people insult you and say cruel things about you, all because you are a follower of the Son of Man. Long ago your own people did these same things to the prophets. So when this happens to you, be happy and jump for joy! You will have a great reward in heaven. But you rich people are in for trouble. You have already had an easy life! You well-fed people are in for trouble. You will go hungry! You people who are laughing now are in for trouble. You are going to cry and weep! You are in for trouble when everyone says good things about you. That is what your own people said about those prophets who told lies.

Message: "Blessings and Woes"

We are so blessed by God's love. We are nourished in faith like streams of water nourish the trees. Our faith grows, when we join others in the fullness of life, and as we bring about God's reign and justice here on earth. Think back to a time when you have felt blessed. What happened, or what were you involved in, when you felt that blessing? Many times it happens after these times we have worked together to bring God's reign to earth. For myself, the feeling of blessing comes upon me when I have helped others in their faith or to walk those dark times of their lives. It also happens when I can rejoice with folks in their marriage or baptism of their children. In these times we are doing the ministry of God and the feeling comes like a reward to help us continue to do that work.

Today's story in Luke starts with Jesus sharing what it is like to be blessed by God. Many of those daily emotions we may feel, may drag us down. Jesus says be happy, because God blesses those who are sad, caring or down on themselves because of what others are telling them. If you think you are not very smart, be happy – God will give you wisdom. If you think it's hard to be good, and maybe you are waffling to be bad – Jesus tells us to hold the course – God will help you to be good. God will help you feel good inside. Whenever we feel down – God will lift us up. God will build up our spirits and our resolve. We are not alone. Ever.

Jesus is surrounded by all kinds of people. Some have come to be healed. Some have come to be forgiven. Some have come to hear what Jesus will talk about today. Whatever these folks have come for, they surround Jesus and start asking for whatever they need. At times such as this, Jesus could easily be overwhelmed. Yet Jesus knows this is the ministry God has given him – so Jesus preserves.

With all these people surrounding Jesus he teaches what we know as the Beatitudes. “Blessed are you”, Jesus says. Many of the folks who have come to see Jesus that day may have felt anything but blessed. They may have felt sad, or that they failed again so they feel like garbage, or maybe everyone seems to be mean to them – whatever they were feeling Jesus reminds them that God will bless them with whatever they need. “Blessed are you. You are not alone. God is with you. As God’s blesses you your feeling will change to a blessing. Jesus’ use of the word “you” in each statement suggests that the crowd included individuals living in each of these situations. Jesus says, “You are blessed”

In Luke’s story today, these sayings of Jesus mark the beginning of a lengthy period of instruction for the disciples before Jesus sends them out on their own. Jesus’ message to those who would follow as disciples is one of astounding promise. For many in that crowd, these words may have seemed full of justice and mercy. For others, they may have seemed a harsh judgment. How do we as a modern day disciples understand Jesus’ words? Jesus reminds us that our human understandings are turned upside down when we encounter God with us. Jesus continues with his message of revealing the surprising ways of God. This good news may not always easy to follow.

There are blessings and woes in life, and we as God’s people are not exempt. Trusting in God, we are blessed to bring healing and blessing to others, inviting them to participate in the vision offered in Jesus’ teaching. Jesus reminds us that living towards the realm of God is not a single achievement, but a way of living. But we never go alone.

Most of us in Canada would not view poverty or powerlessness or being ostracized as desirable states of being. It was likely no different in Jesus’ time. What could be good news about poverty, hunger, or being hated? Yet Jesus also shares the woes for those who are rich, full and laughing. We come to understand that rich people experience many of the same emotions as we do; that they are not good enough, that they too have sad days, that they may feel guilty for their riches. We have come to know those who may always be laughing but are just covering up their insecurities. Many young folks who have overdosed in the past 10 years in the Blenheim area are characterized as fun loving, always telling jokes and seem so

carefree. Yet they use drugs to quiet their internal pain – they use humour to draw attention away from their real feelings. Yet God is always with them. They are never alone.

The Beatitudes show us how, in Jesus' mind, we are blessed both for what we are and are not, for what we have and will receive. There are many ways to consider ourselves blessed. But being blessed doesn't stop at receiving a blessing. The blessing goes beyond the gift. Our hearts are influenced by what we do. Therefore, how blessed or cursed we feel can be a result of not what we receive in life, but what we give from it. Christ's love and teachings are written on our hearts. In our blessings, we can transform our community and the world. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 337 "Blessed Assurance"

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of the Spirit, washed in Christ's blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight!
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending, bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blessed;
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with God's goodness, lost in Christ's love.

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We live in the wonderful reality of God's promise. In the name of Jesus Christ, we offer our gifts to be blessed, and shared with those in need.

Offertory: VU 541 "Praise God From Whom..."

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

Offertory Prayer:

People: May these gifts be consolation for all who are in need. May we be more blessed by the giving than we have been blessed in receiving. And may we desire only the power of Christ's resurrecting love. Amen.

Hymn: VU 400 "Listen To Your Children Praying"

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 344 "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds"

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
in a believer's ear!
It soothes the sorrows, heals the wounds,
and drives away all fear.

It makes the wounded spirit whole,
and calms the troubled breast;
'tis manna to the hungry soul,
and to the weary, rest.

Dear Name! the rock on which I build,
my shield and hiding-place,
my never-failing treasury, filled
with boundless stores of grace.

Jesus, my Shepherd, Brother, Friend,
my Prophet, Priest, and King,
my Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,
accept the praise I bring.

The effort of my heart is weak,

and cold my warmest thought;
but when I see you whom I seek,
I'll praise you as I ought.

Blessing:

Eric: Go with God's blessing to the world, now and forever more.

Chorus: VU 337 Refrain

Refrain: *This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth