

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Fourth Sunday of Epiphany – January 31st, 2021

Prelude: “Dance of the Spirits” – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning!

Over the past week we have completed the Annual Meetings for all three Churches. As we are unable to meet in-person this year, we emailed or delivered Check Sheets to our members and adherents to voice their thoughts about the motions moved and seconded at the Annual Meeting Planning Meetings. The members and adherents shared their “voices” with the Church Board through the Church Board Secretary, and their thoughts were relayed to the Church Board during the actual Annual Meeting. The United Church of Canada shared with our churches, “that if we could not hold in-person Annual Meetings because of the pandemic, the Church Board is responsible for holding the Annual Meeting in a timely manner”. Hopefully this procedure has given everyone the opportunity to feel they have been a part of their Annual Meeting.

On a Financial note; you may have noticed that each church has maintained their financial situation (over a time of closed churches). This speaks highly to your dedication for your Church. We were able to host a few fundraisers before COVID struck in March. At Year End, our fundraising revenue was drastically lower than past years – yet you gave more to compensate for the lost fundraising. Some folks shared they donated extra to cover the meals they would have been at. Another interesting point is during the Pandemic, our churches donated more than ever to Community Projects, such as; Food Banks, Christmas Baskets, “The Gift” on November 21st, and Outreach Projects. Thank you so much.

Will we be able to fundraise this year? God only knows. We might be able to consider some take out options, once we leave lockdown. The Church Boards will talk about options at their meetings. At this point, it looks that our Churches will need to do ministry with further help from you – our faithful supporters. Please keep this in mind as you donate. Thank you for your faithful contributions. Together – We are the Church!

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Call To Worship:

Eric: Take off your dress shoes; you may need to cross a rocky path.

Annette: Take off your hat, scarves and gloves; feel God's Holy Breeze on your forehead.

Eric: Take off your coat and feel the warm presence of the people around you.

Annette: God is in the air, and God is in the space between us. God will make the emptiness into a holy place.

Eric: Come, let us worship.

Opening Prayer:

God, we trust that you are in the holiest of holies. We also trust that you can make all places holy. Guide our understanding of your presence, so we will find comfort wherever it is available. Guide our hearts so that we may be drawn toward places that will challenge our beliefs about what is holy. Amen.

Scripture: Mark 1: 21 - 28

Dear Paul,

You may remember me from Corinth. My father taught me about scriptures and your letters to the Church in Corinth, and more about you and your travels. He said that you would know the answer to my question because you are one of the smartest people we could ever hope to meet.

I want to know what is right and what is wrong, so I ask my teachers and the religious experts. Some of them offer long lectures about morality and others simply tell me to do what seems right to me. Some people find it easy to follow rules, but I have to search with questions.

My mother says that I am the kind of person who will need both wisdom and knowledge if I want to know how to love. She says that when wisdom informs our study of scripture, we call it an epiphany. I asked her what she meant, and she told me a story she heard about a time Jesus taught in the synagogue and a man came in weeping and crying and begging Jesus to answer his questions and calm his fears. She said the man knew who Jesus was. But he didn't know that Jesus was loving and kind. This person had knowledge, but needed wisdom.

The man was emotional and upset, which is what compelled Christ to be compassionate and to drive out the spirit of fear that had gripped him. Jesus' words drove the evil spirit out of the man. This was surprising to the crowd. "He has powerful teachings. Even the evil spirits obey him". My mom says they had an epiphany. She loves the element of surprise that comes with an epiphany.

Do you think Christ has compassion on those of us who ask some many questions? It's not like we are disagreeing with those who think differently. I believe we should love those who disagree with us. It seems to me that Jesus was a teacher, who answered your questions – many times even before you asked the question. It comes to us like a surprise – according to mom – an epiphany. What do you think?

Perhaps we will see you again soon and share a meal with you; you are always welcome in our home.

Until then, travel safely, Your friend in Corinth

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!

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!

Message: “In Holy Places”

We are still in the Season of Epiphany for a few more weeks. Epiphany can happen anywhere to anyone. An Epiphany is an experience of sudden and striking insight. Today for the man with the evil spirit, and for the synagogue crowd, the epiphany is that Jesus could actually draw out the Evil Spirit from his body. Mark says, “Everyone was completely surprised”. They said to each other, “This must be a new kind of powerful teaching!” Jesus is already changing the world, and we’re only half way through the “First” Chapter of Mark.

What makes a place feel holy? Might it be its rich cultural history? Or it is built and decorated to inspire praise. Can we take the simplest of place and make it feel holy? In Mark, Jesus shows up in a surprising way – as a teacher with a difference. The scribes of the day gathered their teaching skills through scholarship, knowledge, and studying. Mark presents Jesus as one who teaches with the independent authority of God and the backing of his actions. Jesus demonstrated a divine authority that had not been seen before. Immediately Jesus was perceived as a threat by the scribes. The Scribes could not do what Jesus did. What might be the difference is that Jesus starts by offering compassion to the man, and then Jesus tells the evil spirit to come out of this man. It’s understandable why the Scribes would be afraid of Jesus’ authority.

Jesus’ actions disrupted social norms. Those in charge of social, political, and even the religious authorities came to view Jesus as a blasphemer and revolutionary. As interesting as Jesus’ exorcism of the evil spirit was, it seems to be the fact that the evil spirit listened and left the man’s body. The healing of the man amazed the people who saw what happened, but they were more amazed by the authority in which Jesus acted.

Prophecy, blessings, conversions, and teaching can occur on street corners, in prisons, and in shantytowns just as often as they may occur in synagogues, temples, and sanctuaries. Holy Ministry happens when those who journey with us – join us

and together we come through the holy places. Remember, Holy places could be on the street corner. What may make it holy is as Jesus said, “When two or three are gathered in Jesus’ name”. Maybe the holiest places can be found in our hearts and minds.

The language of unclean spirits can be difficult for us in the 21st Century. While our communities of faith try not to shun people who are prisoner, homeless, asylum seekers, or with physical or mental health issues, they are often still held at arm’s length from mainstream society. Chances are we do not feel we have the skills to help them. We may even be afraid of them, in their differences and in their sufferings. Jesus shows us not to be afraid – God wants us to reach out and build a stronger community, which includes all of God’s creation.

As we explore the community around us – what do we see? Do we see the church being a lively, dynamic presence in our community? What are we as the Church being called to? Has that call changed since the start of the pandemic 10 months ago? What might we as the Church have to start doing, stop doing, or doing better. How do we exercise authority in our local community?

As people of maturity we do know a great deal about the dynamics of authority and power in their families, schools, communities, and workplaces. We as parents and grandparents know what it means to have authority, to delegate authority, to answer to one who has authority, and, sometimes, to claim authority. Being part of the working world, we know authority – either as the worker or the boss. We also know as business folks the authorities we have to deal with like government inspectors or the police and local bylaw officers.

Much of the authority we are talking about is authority given to those we want to protect us, which is an authority given to them by society – for the common good of all. Jesus’ authority is not given by society – the very reason he is at odds with the authorities of the day. Jesus’ authority is not about what society cares for, No, Jesus’ authority is about what God cares for. Each and every one of us!

How might we the Church receive our authority? The obvious answer is through the teachings of Jesus the Christ. The reality is that we may receive our authority through the presence of the Holy Spirit. The calling we have is to live with our eyes and ears open to the community. When we see a change needing to be made in the community, the Holy Spirit leads us to make that change. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: VU 334 “All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”

- 1 All hail the power of Jesus' name!
Let angels prostrate fall;
bring forth the royal diadem,
and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.
- 2 O seed of Israel's chosen race
now ransomed from the fall,
hail him who saves you by his grace
and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.
- 3 Crown him, you martyrs of your God,
who from his altar call;
praise him whose way of pain you trod,
and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.
- 4 Let every tongue and every tribe,
responsive to the call,
to him all majesty ascribe
and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.
- 5 O that, with all the sacred throng,
we at his feet may fall,
join in the everlasting song,
and crown him, crown him, crown him,
crown him Lord of all.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: As we live in and out of Holy Places - let us give in Love.

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:

We have entered this holy place without any trepidation. We now freely leave behind a piece of our treasure, in faith that courage will lead to more courage and we will be amazed by your willingness to provide for us and our willingness to give to those who have less. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

People: We know that we can demonstrate your love.

Eric: So in this time of prayer we name those who need us to act as advocates:

People: For healing of the body, we name those who suffer illness and those struggling with COVID. *(Pause.)*

Eric: For healing of the spirit, we name those who suffer complacency or ambivalence – those suffering in loneliness and the strains of the COVID isolation. *(Pause.)*

People: For healing of the mind, we name those who question their intelligence or need companions in the work to help them understand – including our students who are learning online. *(Pause.)*

Eric: For healing of war-torn countries, we name those places where holiness has been ignored in favour of control. *(Pause.)*

People: In poor countries where the reality of a worldwide pandemic is life or death, as there is no health care, treatments or vaccines. *(Pause.)*

Eric: For healing of the backbones of our planet, we think of our neighbours to the south, and their democracy, for our own country Canada, and our leaders. *(Pause.)*

People: We name those areas of our planet that suffer because of what we do as humans. *(Pause.)*

Eric: We offers all these prayers to you in the name of Jesus, as we pray his 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, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

Benediction:

Eric: We may fail - God does not. We may end - God does not. We are blessed and a blessing, now and forever more.

Postlude: "Trumpet Voluntary" – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.

We have offered prayer for these people each Sunday morning just before the Zoom Service. It was suggested to share these names with the total group – as "In the Spirit We Are One".

Cancer: Wayne
Karen
Jasmine
Tom
Randy

Special: David
George
Richard
Cleata
Ken

June
Melonie
Susan
Zoe
Ingrid
Jerri
Willie & Gisele
Ronald

COVID testing

Garth's Family
Coombs/Darnley Family "Harold"
Ritchie Family "Art"