

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost – July 16th, 2023

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

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: We bring our hopes and fears, our struggles and our lives as they are,

People: into the presence of the One who leaves doors and futures open to gracious possibilities.

Eric: God's word lights the paths before us.

People: May this time of worship empower us to make faithful choices.

Eric: God's word lights the paths before us.

People: May this time of worship renew and restore our relationships with God and each other.

Eric: Let us come to hear God's word that lights the paths before us.

Opening Hymn: VU 96 "Will You Come...?"

Will you come and see the light from the stable door?

It is shining newly bright, though it shone before.

It will be your guiding star,

it will show you who you are;

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Will you step into the light that can free the slave?

It will stand for what is right, it will heal and save.

By the pyramids of greed

there's a longing to be freed;

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Will you tell about the light in the prison cell?

Though it's shackled out of sight, it is shining well.

When the truth is cut and bruised,

and the innocent abused,

will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Will you join the hope, alight in the young girl's eyes,

of the mighty put to flight by a baby's cries?

When the lowest and the least
are the foremost at the feast,
will you hide, or decide to meet the light?

Will you travel by the light of the babe new born?
In the candle lit at night there's a gleam of dawn,
and the darkness all about
is too dim to put it out:
will you hide, or decide to meet the light? **

Opening Prayer:

People: Light up our path, God of Peace, with voices of our ancestors whispering and singing hope and encouragement. Remind us that the union they found in their spirits can illuminate this moment. In their wisdom, we can seek wholeness in your Spirit and find peace in your presence. Hold us together from generation to generation as the joy in your heart. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Children's Story & Lord's Prayer:

Consider how the Spirit has worked in the stories of our ancestors and our church. Good or bad. If the Spirit is to work must it always be good? Can it be bad?

Children's Hymn: "Father Abraham"

Father Abraham had many kids,
and many kids had Father Abraham,
I am one of them, so are you,
So, Let's all praise the Lord.

Right arm! Left arm! Right foot! Left foot! **

Scripture: Genesis 25: 19 - 34

Isaac was the son of Abraham, and he was 40 years old when he married Rebekah. Almost 20 years later, Rebekah still had no children. So Isaac asked the Lord to let her have a child, and the Lord answered his prayer.

Before Rebekah gave birth, she knew she was going to have twins, because she could feel them inside her, fighting each other. She thought, "Why is this happening to me?" Finally, she asked the Lord why her twins were fighting, and he told her: "Your two sons will become two separate nations. The younger of the two will be stronger, and the older son will be his servant."

When Rebekah gave birth, the first baby was covered with red hair, so he was named Esau. The second baby grabbed on to his brother's heel, so they named him Jacob. Isaac was 60 years old when they were born.

As Jacob and Esau grew older, Esau liked the outdoors and became a good hunter, while Jacob lived the quiet life of a shepherd. Esau would take the meat of wild animals to his father Isaac, so Isaac loved him more, but Jacob was his mother's favorite son. One day, when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came home hungry and said, "I'm starving to death! Here and now give me some of that red stew!" Jacob replied, "Sell me your rights as the first-born

son.” “I'm about to die,” Esau answered. “What good will those rights do me?” But Jacob said, “Promise me your birthrights, here and now!” And that's what Esau did. Jacob then gave Esau some bread and some of the bean stew, and when Esau had finished eating and drinking, he just got up and left, showing how little he thought of his rights as the first-born.

Reflection: “Struggles in Our Lives”

Life can be very unpredictable. We can be living day to day with many blessings coming our way, and then something happens and we are tumbled into struggles we wonder whether we will ever get through them. That is the time we look towards God for help and strength. As we gather here this morning we are connecting to God with open hearts. This connection helps us to grow our relationship with God. It helps us to know God is with us in the times of blessings and times of struggles. Our relationship with God becomes an everyday event, regardless of the type of life we may be dealing with. We become in relationship with God much like Isaac and Rebekah have done.

As teenagers and young adults, we are cautioned about connecting others as good friends who are not also Christian. The family unit can struggle between differences of opinions and beliefs. Maybe one partner seeks to have advantage over the other - much like Jacob over Esau. It is hard to live life living in a house divided. God's words can be guidance for navigating the tensions and struggles of the family, including our church family. The good news is that God's words of love can be wise advice for our wider communities. The Scriptures deal with stories of life struggles and offer God's response to the community. God's steadfast love also offers forgiveness that frees the community from the guilt and shame of past errors. God's Spirit is generous, providing abundant opportunities for growth – exactly what many communities need today.

Rebekah and Isaac having been childless for many years - are finally blessed with the news that Rebekah is pregnant with twins. It is a difficult pregnancy, and Rebekah prays that the struggling of her unborn children might cease. God offers a vision of the struggle that will continue after their births: “The elder shall serve the younger”.

Esau is born first and appears “red” and “hairy.” The name Esau sounds like the Hebrew word for “hairy.” Jacob is grasping Esau's heel as he is born. His name is from the Hebrew word for “heel.” The differences continue. Esau is a hunter, and Jacob prefers to work around the home. Esau is Isaac's favourite; Jacob is Rebekah's favourite. This many very well be typical family dynamics.

The brothers' tension peaks when Esau returns from a hunting trip. Hungry for Jacob's stew, he trades his birthright – disregarding it or despising it. The part of this story we may understand is that we make many decisions for our lives “living for today”. We are not really sure why Esau would give up his birthright – but we know he was hungry. Esau's stomach makes the decision versus Esau's brain.

In today's world the eldest son may still be favoured in some ways. Although, I hear stories of the eldest son enduring the mistakes their parents made - while they are learning how to be parents.

In Jacob and Esau's time, the birthright refers to the honour and privilege awarded to the family's oldest son. Being the first-born twin, Esau would have a double share of the family inheritance, a larger role within the family, and take on leadership responsibilities when the father died. A birthright could be transferred or revoked. Esau opted to transfer his birthright for a bowl of good smelling stew.

Today's scripture is very much a human story. The people and incidences are so messy and so real – the favouritism of parents for one child over another, the uneasy relationship between siblings, poor decision-making and lack of insight/long-sight opportunism for self-gain. Today's message is amongst all the struggles of life. Today's message is regardless - God is there – always present.

How do you interpret this story? Do you see Esau as foolish because he gives up his birthright in an instant for short-sighted gain? Can you think of a time when we have done something very similar? What struggle or tension exists in our families?

Differences are not always bad. Differences can help to make us a better team, as one knows and understands this part, and the other knows and understand the other part. Differences can help bring us together because we get to talk it out and reflect on a different perspective. We can learn from each other's interests or passions? We can learn from our children as we support them in the own understandings and choices in life. We can work hard not to pick favourites in our own children, even if we had favouritism happen to us as siblings. We may still have to work through some of that hurt we have carried ourselves.

Jacob saw Esau's birthright as desirable and wanted it for himself. This story about these rival twins can be jarring, especially if we have lived similar experiences in families, or in our community, maybe even as nations that are divided through differences or inequality. With the help of following God we are challenged to live a just life.

God tells Rebekah that her twins “shall be divided,” yet God worked in the divided lives of these people. God continues to be present in all that concerns us, especially our conflicts, struggles, and divisions. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 663 “My Faith looks Up to Thee”

My faith looks up to thee,
thou Lamb of Calvary, Saviour divine.
Now hear me while I pray;
take all my guilt away.
O let me from this day be wholly thine.

While life's dark maze I tread,
and griefs around me spread, be thou my guide,
bid darkness turn to day;
wipe sorrow's tears away;
nor let me ever stray from thee aside.

May thy rich grace impart
strength to my fainting heart, my zeal inspire.
As thou hast died for me,
O may my love to thee
pure, warm, and changeless be, a living fire. **

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: Thank You for all your gifts. Your gifts of time, talent, skills, prayers and money. All of these gifts added together, makes us the Church. We as givers are so blessed we can give. May those who receive - also know they are blessed. Thank you for being the church!

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: We give with gratitude for your love despite all our imperfections, O God. We will use these offerings to seek more union through our division and greater love through all that separates us. Bring to being in us genuine expressions of your love and grace in our world. Amen.

Chorus to Prayer: VU 892 "Who Comes From God"

Who comes from God, as Word and Breath?

Holy Wisdom.
Who holds the keys of life and death?
Mighty Wisdom.
Crafter and Creator too,
Eldest, she makes all things new;
Wisdom guides what God will do,
Wisest One, Radiant One, welcome, Holy Wisdom.

Pastoral Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 481 “Sent Forth By God’s Blessing”

Sent forth by God's blessing, our true faith confessing,
the people of God from this dwelling take leave.
The supper is ended, O now be extended
the fruits of this service in all who believe.
The seed of Christ's teaching, receptive souls reaching,
shall blossom in action for God and for all.
God's grace did invite us, God's love shall unite us
to work for the kingdom and answer its call.

With praise and thanksgiving to God ever living,
the tasks of our everyday life we will face.
Our faith ever sharing, in love ever caring,
embracing God's children of each tribe and race.
With your feast you feed us, with your light now lead us;
unite us as one in this life that we share.
Then may all the living with praise and thanksgiving
give honour to Christ and the name that we bear. **

Benediction:

Eric: Go from this place finding the strength to right any wrongs. Go in peace, now and forever more.

Closing Hymn: MV 145 “Draw the Circle Wide” (2X)

Draw the circle wide, draw it wider still.
Let this be our song: no one stands alone.
Standing side by side, draw the circle wide...

Amen, Amen, Hallelujah, Amen. (2X)

Postlude: – 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:

**Carol
Cheryl
Susan
Barb
Margie
Jerry**

**Larry
Ken
Natalie**

**Evelyn
Wes Chalmers' Family
Amy Lou Wolfe's Family
Elaine**

**Gary
Janet
David
Alice**