

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Fourth Sunday of Lent – March 14th, 2021

Prelude: “Hard Times Come Again No More” by Stephen Foster – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning!

Today is the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

St. Luke’s is hosting a Yellow Perch Fish Fry Take Out this Wednesday – St. Patrick’s Day. The cost will be \$20 for a complete take out with ½ lb Lake Erie Yellow Perch.

This Friday is the Ridgetown Chaplain’s Gala by Zoom at 7 pm. Let Eric know if you would like the link. The Presentation will be posted on southbuxton.ca at a later date.

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: Give thanks to God,

People: for God is good all the time,

Eric: and God’s steadfast love endures forever.

People: For we cried out to God in our troubles, and God saved us from our distress.

Eric: The Word came to heal and deliver us from destruction.

People: Let all of humankind offer thanksgiving, and sing of God’s deeds through worship and song.

Eric: Let us gather to worship God.

Opening Prayer:

Healing God, You are rich in mercy and generous in love. Grace us with signs of your presence, so that our worship may glorify you, and lift up the Christ, who calls us towards new life. In His Name, we pray. Amen.

Scripture: Numbers 21: 4 - 9 by Alice Dale

The Israelites had to go around the territory of Edom, so when they left Mount Hor, they headed south toward the Red Sea. But along the way, the people became so impatient that they complained against God and said to Moses, “Did you bring us out of Egypt, just to let us die in the desert? There’s no water out here, and we can’t stand this awful food!”

Then the Lord sent poisonous snakes that bit and killed many of them. Some of the people went to Moses and admitted, “It was wrong of us to insult you and the Lord. Now please ask him to make these snakes go away.” Moses prayed, and the Lord answered, “Make a snake out of bronze and place it on top of a pole. Anyone who gets bitten can look at the snake and won’t die.” Moses obeyed the Lord. And all of those who looked at the bronze snake lived, even though they had been bitten by the poisonous snakes.

Opening Hymn: VU 338 “Ask Me What Great Thing...”

- 1 Ask me what great thing I know
that delights and stirs me so,
what the high reward I win,
whose the name I glory in:
 Jesus Christ, the crucified.

- 2 Who defeats my fiercest foes?
Who consoles my saddest woes?
Who revives my fainting heart,
healing all that grief imparts?
 Jesus Christ, the crucified.

Message: “Choose to Give Thanks”

Today’s reading is all about making choices. The People of Israel who are wandering in the wilderness choose to be complainers. “The food is awful”, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt just to die in this desert”, “There is no water”, to just name a few. Moses has to be getting a bit frustrated at their attitude towards God who has been protecting and sustaining the Israelites in that desert with Manna for food and water from a rock.

Again in today’s scripture we are reminded of God’s promises to the Children of God. Today story is about what can happen when you are ungrateful. If we have offered to give something up for Lent, this week, which is about half way, would be about the time we are really craving that which we gave up. You might be grumbling a bit, “Poor me, I can hardly live without having my sweets or whatever you gave up for Lent.” Hang in there because by next week you will be proud that you were able to hang in there. Your reward is just around the corner.

Some people live from the sense of “Scarcity” – there is never enough. “Why me?” When I was a kid and say something like “Why Me?” to my mother, she’d say “Why not you?”. I never had a good answer. Yet that question would change my “stinkin’ thinkin’”. A bit later, I was a changed boy, forgetting all about what woes I carried.

In life, there are circumstances that truly are serious enough, that changing your way of looking at life can be very hard – such as those dealing with cancer. Cancer is a journey that many of us do not want travel, but the odds are many of us do travel that road. There is that saying that says, “You might not be able to choose what happens to you, but you can change how you handle it”. We know those people who changed how they handled their journey. Many relied on their faith – they relied on the promises God has made to us, Children of God.

God guided the Hebrew people out of slavery in Egypt, and it is these same people who we hear about today. These same people have seen the miraculous parting of the waters, so that they could cross to the other side. They encountered God in dramatic ways; in a pillar of fire, in a cloud, and as smoke. The people are now wandering in the wilderness and perhaps have forgotten about their freedom and God’s promise to guide them to a new land. Instead we hear that they grumble and complain to Moses about a lack of food and water. The story tells about poisonous serpents that bite and kill. These serpents have the power to destroy, yet faith in the bronze serpent crafted by Moses has the power to save. The people face and look at what they fear.

This is a story about scarcity and abundance - maybe not so much in the material sense, but in the sense of facing what we fear. It might be hard to wrestle with our fears when they are right in front of us. But hearing stories of others who have faced their fears in similar situations can change our thoughts to, “I can do this”! Many times, “We can do this” because our faith kicks in and reminds us that God cares – that God promises to be with us – regardless! The good news for us is the realization God brings healing and saves the people.

Yet when we are in distress because we are sick and anxious – we cry out to God, and God saves and heals. We are at a new place – a place of abundance – a place of giving. We are willing to share our story. We are a changed people.

Working on something that we are not naturally good at, or to live with something that is totally new to us, opens us to vulnerability and suffering. We need to rely on the help and wisdom of others, and we risk failure and humiliation. It’s scary, it’s uncomfortable, it’s foreign, but it is worth it!

Case in point may be our present COVID pandemic. We as the free people of Canada have had to hold up in our homes to avoid contamination. We have been vulnerable during this past year. We are unable to connect in person with one another. Yet that phone call from a friend or from that person who sits in the same

pew as you, makes the world of difference. We are living a totally different life as far as socially. It's been scary at times. It's uncomfortable. It's been very foreign to our traveling ways. The promise is that it will be worth it. Now with the vaccine many of us can see light at the end of the tunnel. Thanks be to God!

Sometimes we are our own worst enemy. Could the snakes be a metaphor, symbolic of our own harmful thoughts, practices and attitudes - that scarcity - that can kill our lives? Yet God provides an antidote – our faith and trust in God's promises – the abundance of God. Our faith can help us think abundantly about our blessings, and start the healing towards full life. After all we are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 236 “Now Thank We All Our God”

- 1 Now thank we all our God, with heart,
and hands, and voices,
who wondrous things has done,
in whom this world rejoices;
who from our mother's arms
has blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love, and still is ours today.
- 2 O may this bounteous God
through all our life be near us,
with ever joyful hearts
and blessed peace to cheer us,
and keep us strong in grace,
and guide us when perplexed,
and free us from all ill in this world and the next.
- 3 All praise and thanks to God
for all that has been given,
the Son, and Spirit blest
who dwell in highest heaven,
the one eternal God,
whom heaven and earth adore;
for thus it was, is now, and shall be evermore.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: As we hear of God's presence with us - let us give in Love and in Thanksgiving.

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:

Gracious God, we choose to give, as a way of giving thanks for the gifts that we have received, for the love that we have shared, for the healing we have felt. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Eric: God of Moses and Miriam, we know that there is no pain that you have not felt,

People: **no grief or longing that we cannot share with you.**

Eric: With the confidence of your companionship,

People: **we pray to you for all the long days and lonely nights,**

Eric: the unmet dreams,

People: **the cries in the wilderness,**

Eric: the inconsolable pain,

People: **the half goodbyes,**

Eric: the relationships without resolve,

People: **the truths left unsaid,**

Eric: the sighs and tears that words cannot express. *(time of silence)*

People: **When we feel alone, God, remind us of your presence.**

Eric: When we feel broken, God, remind us of all that you have made whole.

People: **And help us, God, to hold on.** *(time of silence)*

Eric: Hear these and all our prayers, as we pray together Jesus' 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.

Blessing:

Eric: When doubt, fear, and desperation hit you in the wilderness, don't forget to look around. God's love will be visible somewhere; we have only to look for it. May the Grace of God, the love of Jesus, and the abiding friendship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and forever more.

Postlude: "From A Distance" – 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”.

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| Cancer: | Karen | Ona | Earl |
| | Jasmine | Sharon - | COVID deaths |
| | Tom | Stroke | Barry/ Marsha |
| | Randy | June | Dupuis Family |
| | George | Melonie | – passing of Audrey |
| | Cindy & Connie | Susan | |
| Special: | Richard | Zoe | |
| | Cleata | Jerri | |
| | Hillie | Willie & Gisele | |