

SA, SL, TS & DSM United Churches

Second Sunday of Lent – March 16th, 2025

Prelude: - by Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

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

Lighting the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: Children of God, when you are surrounded on every side by shadows that frighten and voices that deride and confuse, what do you say?

People: **God is our light and our salvation! Whom shall we fear?**

Eric: When threats bombard you from every corner, stealing the security and peace you long for, what do you say?

People: **God is the stronghold of our lives! Of whom shall we be afraid?**

Eric: When anxiety and loneliness overwhelm and you do not know who or what to trust any more, what do you say?

People: **Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!**

Eric: Because God knows our suffering. God makes a home among us, welcoming us to come home to God and one another.

People: **Come! Let us worship God who hides us in the day of trouble and conceals us together under the cover of the tent of Love. ****

Opening Hymn: VU 286 “If You Trust in God to Guide You”

If you will trust in God to guide you,
and hope in God through all your ways,
God will give strength, whatever betide you,
and bear you through the evil days.

Who trusts in God's unchanging love
builds on the rock that will not move.

God will embrace your pain and weeping,
your helpless anger and distress.

If you are in God's care and keeping,
in sorrow will God love you less?

For Christ, who took for you a cross,
will bring you safe through every loss.

Sing, pray, and keep God's ways unswerving;
so do your own part faithfully,

and trust God's word; though undeserving,
you'll find God's promise true to be.
God never will forsake in need
the soul that trusts in God indeed. **

Opening Prayer:

People: Loving God: We pray for those in our community who are bombarded with troubles, surrounded on all sides by threats to their well-being, their livelihood, and their thriving. God, be their shelter in the time of storm.

We pray for those in our community who long for peace, those who are burnt out, shut out, and ready to hide out because it all feels like too much. God, be their shelter in the time of storm.

We pray for those in our world who can't remember what safety feels like, who, after years of violence and unrest, cannot imagine what a day, a week, a year without fighting would feel like. God, be their shelter in the time of storm.

God, teach us to be your sanctuary in the world. Give us the courage to make peace, extend care, and provide for the thriving of all who wonder how they will even survive. Help us be their shelter in the time of storm. Amen. **

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 27

A Prayer of Praise

You, Lord, are the light that keeps me safe. I am not afraid of anyone. You protect me, and I have no fears.

Brutal people may attack and try to kill me, but they will stumble. Fierce enemies may attack, but they will fall.

Armies may surround me, but I won't be afraid; war may break out, but I will trust you.

I ask only one thing, Lord: Let me live in your house every day of my life to see how wonderful you are and to pray in your temple.

In times of trouble, Lord, you will protect me. You will hide me in your tent and keep me safe on top of a mighty rock.

You will let me defeat all my enemies. Then I will celebrate, as I enter your tent with animal sacrifices and songs of praise.

Please listen when I pray! Have pity. Answer my prayer.

My heart tells me to pray. I am eager to see your face, so don't hide from me. I am your servant, Lord, and you have helped me.

Don't turn from me in anger. You alone keep me safe. Don't reject or desert me.

Even if my father and mother should desert me, you will take care of me.

Teach me to follow, Lord, and lead me on the right path because of my enemies.

Don't let them do to me what they want.

People tell lies about me and make violent threats, but I know I will live to see how kind you are.

Trust the Lord! Be brave and strong and trust the Lord **

Children's Story:

Children's Song: VU 269 "The Care the Eagle Gives Her Young" (Tune of VU 75)

The care the eagle gives her young,
safe in her lofty nest,

is like the tender love of God
for us made manifest.

As when the time to venture comes,
she stirs them out to flight,
so we are pressed to boldly try
to strive for daring height.

And if we flutter helplessly,
as fledgling eagles fall,
beneath us lift God's mighty wings
to bear us, one and all.

Gospel Reading: Luke 13: 31 - 35

At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "You had better get away from here, because Herod wants to kill you!" Jesus said to them: Go tell that fox, "I am going to force out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and three days later I'll be through." But I am going on my way today and tomorrow and the next day. After all, Jerusalem is the place where prophets are killed. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem! Your people have killed the prophets and have stoned the messengers who were sent to you. I have often wanted to gather your people, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you wouldn't let me. Now your temple will be deserted. You won't see me again until the time when you say, "Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." **

Message: "Conceal Me"

If David is the psalmist, he indeed knows trouble. David was threatened by enemies and loved ones alike, loved and despised in turn, filled up with God's presence and then seemingly abandoned by God because of his arrogance and self-conceit. He knew what it was to fear. He knew what it was to want to hide. But to David's credit whenever he found himself in trouble, David turned back to God. David humbly repented. David sought redemption from God, who is the only one who could calm his fears.

It wasn't David's own strength, by flexing his muscles that brought him comfort. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" Who do we fear? Fear is an emotion that may use to control others. Maybe even, have others think we are the only one who can bring them safety. We have plenty of fears whom we can place in front of God and declare, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"

While we live in the world, we don't live by the ways of the world. We are called to live differently. We are called to live confidently. "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?". No one!

Have you ever noticed the opposite of faith is not doubt? Doubt seems to be prevalent in the Bible. Doubt seems to coexist with faith rather well. Belief and

unbelief often sit side by side. If we believe without some doubt, it can cause us to be like David in his times of arrogance, thinking we are right about everything. A certain amount of doubt gives us the right amount of humility to believe in God's grace and love.

So what is the opposite of faith? It is fear. Throughout the Bible, we are called not to fear. Angels said it to Mary, to Joseph, to everyone they showed up to see. There is no room for fear when we are filled with love.

You can't get rid of fear with wisdom. You can't argue people out of fear. You love enough to know that fear is just another emotion.

Jesus too is no stranger to fear. Today's story from Luke shares that people are out to kill Jesus, at least to run him out of town. How does Jesus overcome fear? Jesus seeks God's face. If we want to overcome fear, we too need to seek God's face. This isn't just a cliché to make you feel better. Set yourself on the task of looking for God at work in the world. We claim to believe God is at work among us; we claim to believe God is at work within us. So, look. Look for God's face in the face of the stranger serving you your lunch, working on your car, asking for a handout. Look for God's face in the gestures of kindness in this terrible world, in the opportunities to laugh and sing, in the moments of grace with loved ones, in the passion of body and soul. Seek God's face in the beauty of music, in the wonder of the world around you. When we fill up our lives with the search for God, we won't have time to fear.

When we can see God's face in our world, what shows is not us and our fears, but the presence, confidence and the hope of God. We are now concealed in the presence, confidence and the hope of God.

It is out of the desire to bring the Israelites back to God, when Jesus says, "To gather the children of Jerusalem (which mean Israel, but we are also children of God), much like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings. But you won't let me."

Is it odd that the Pharisees have come to Jesus to save his skin? We hear many stories of Pharisees who would like nothing more than for Jesus to find a speedy and messy end. These are those same guys who stumble all over themselves to find tests he can't pass and questions he can't answer. And now we are supposed to believe that they have Jesus' best interests at heart? It may seem that even Jesus suspects something, because his response is an acknowledgment of a relationship. "Go and tell that fox..." he says to them. Jesus declares that he is in charge of his own destiny. Jesus will do what God has sent Jesus to do. Jesus isn't going to run

and hide from anyone – including Herod – the fox!. Jesus knows to whom he belongs, and Jesus knows he is not far from home.

But Jesus is not avoiding the journey he must travel. Jesus knows that he has to go to Jerusalem to give his life. Jesus knows it is God who sends him on this journey. Jesus reflects on the why. “Now your temple will be deserted. You won't see me again until the time when you say, “Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.” Jesus’ heart breaks as he talks about the hen and how, “You won’t let me”, at the same moment knows the cost he will have to pay to save humankind.

We are reminded of the phrase, “The fox is in the henhouse”. So Jesus heads for the henhouse to save his chicks. Using words, Jesus’ chases the fox out of the henhouse. “Go and tell that fox, (think of scavenger, trickster, unscrupulous schemer, the one looking for more power, and the power of destruction has its limits.) Having chased away the fox, Jesus wants to gather the chicks. Where do we find our safety and security? In the powers of the world? Or in the face of God? Do we go to the one who shelters us in the shadow of his wings? One who has offered himself to be broken, and yet pours out unimaginable love for us?

We need to know love like Christ offers. We need to cling to that love, to that hope when we walk through those dark valleys, and when we feel like motherless children. We as Christians are to live the love of Jesus. All around us, there are those who feel disconnected, those who feel as though no one cares, no one is there for them. There are those who feel that their mistakes define them in our eyes. We like Jesus - need to spread our wings and gather them in. Jesus would love us to do that. We do not travel alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 807 “On Eagle Wings”

You who dwell in the shelter of our God,
who abide in this shadow for life,
say to the Lord: 'My refuge,
my Rock in whom I trust.'

*'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand.'*

The snare of the fowler will never capture you,

and famine will bring you no fear:
under God's wings your refuge,
God's faithfulness your shield.

*'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand.'*

You need not fear the terror of the night,
nor the arrow that flies by day;
though thousands fall about you,
near you it shall not come.

*'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand.'*

For to God's angels is given a command
to guard you in all of your ways;
upon their hands they will bear you up,
lest you dash your foot against a stone.

*'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,
make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand.'*

'And hold you, hold you in the palm of my hand.'

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We offer our gifts so we can reflect the love of God to each and every one of us. For some in the world today, who need to feel comfort and hope, we offer our gifts to be a blessings of love and grace to everyone! Let us give to share our love with others.

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: God, our shelter and hope, as we walk through this holy season, we come to you with hearts open to your grace. In our giving, may we reflect the love that sustains us, and may we lift one another up in times of need and vulnerability. Use these offerings to bring comfort to the weary and hope to the brokenhearted, just as you draw near to us in our struggles.

Strengthen us to be a source of light and love in this world, reflecting your compassion in all we do. In Christ's name, we pray. 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 660 "How Firm a Foundation"

How firm a foundation, you servants of God,
is laid for your faith in God's excellent word!
What more can be said than to you has been said,
to you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?

'Fear not, I am with you; O be not dismayed!
For I am your God and will still give you aid;
I'll strengthen and help you, and cause you to stand,
upheld by my righteous omnipotent hand.

'When through the deep waters I call you to go,
the rivers of sorrow shall not overflow;
for I will be with you, your troubles to bless,
and sanctify to you your deepest distress.

'When through fiery trials your pathway shall lie,
my grace, all-sufficient, shall be your supply:
the flame shall not hurt you; I only design
your dross to consume, and your gold to refine.

The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose
I will not - I will not desert to his foes;
that soul, though all hell should endeavour to shake,
I'll never - no, never - no, never forsake!

Blessing:

Eric: Go now in the blessing of God who conceals you in the tent of God's love, that you may invite others to come home to God who is Love, now and forever more.

Chorus: VU 807 Chorus

*'And I will raise you up on eagle's wings,
bear you on the breath of dawn,*

*make you to shine like the sun,
and hold you in the palm of my hand.'*

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth