

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Fifth Sunday of Lent – March 17th, 2024

Prelude: Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning!

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: Come and seek God, with your whole heart:

People: meditate on Christ's teachings, fix ourselves on the ways of Christ, and delight in God's Holy word.

Eric: Come and worship God.

Opening Hymn: VU 262 "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God"

A mighty fortress is our God,
a bulwark never failing;
our helper sure amid the flood
of mortal ills prevailing:
for still our ancient foe
doth seek to work us woe;
with power and malice great,
and armed with cruel hate,
on earth he has no equal.

Did we in our own strength confide,
our striving would be losing,
were not the right man on our side,
the man of God's own choosing:
dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is he;
Lord Sabaoth his name,
from age to age the same,
and he must win the battle.

And though this world, with devils filled,

should threaten to undo us,
we will not fear, for God hath willed
the truth to triumph through us:
the prince of darkness grim,
we tremble not for him;
his rage we can endure,
for lo! his doom is sure,
one little word shall fell him.

That word above all earthly powers,
no thanks to them, abideth;
the Spirit and the gifts are ours
through Christ, who with us sideth:
let goods and kindred go,
this mortal life also;
the body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
God's kingdom is for ever. **

Opening Prayer:

Loving Jesus, High Priest of our hearts, draw us close to you, so we may glorify you and proclaim your goodness, in all that we are, all that we do, and all that we say. Amen.

Children's Story:

Children's Hymn: MV 209 "Go Make a Difference"

Go make a difference.
We can make a difference.
Go make a difference in the world. (2X)

We are the salt of the earth,
Called to let the people see
The love of God for you and me.
We are the light of the world,
not to be hidden but be seen.
Go make a difference in the world.

We are the hands of Christ
Reaching out to those in need,
The face of God for all to see.
We are the spirit of hope,
We are the voice of peace.
Go make a difference in the world.

So let your love shine on,

Let it shine for all to see.
Go make a difference in the world.
And the spirit of Christ
Will be with us as we go.
Go make a difference in the world.

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 51: 1 - 12

A Prayer for Forgiveness

You are kind, God! Please have pity on me. You are always merciful! Please wipe away my sins.

Wash me clean from all of my sin and guilt.

I know about my sins, and I cannot forget the burden of my guilt.

You are really the one I have sinned against; I have disobeyed you and have done wrong.

So it is right and fair for you to correct and punish me.

I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born.

But you want complete honesty, so teach me true wisdom.

Wash me with hyssop until I am clean and whiter than snow.

Let me be happy and joyful! You crushed my bones, now let them celebrate.

Turn your eyes from my sin and cover my guilt.

Create pure thoughts in me and make me faithful again.

Don't chase me away from you or take your Holy Spirit away from me.

Make me as happy as you did when you saved me; make me want to obey!

Scripture: Jeremiah 31: 31 - 34 by

The New Agreement with Israel and Judah

The Lord said: The time will surely come when I will make a new agreement with the people of Israel and Judah. It will be different from the agreement I made with their ancestors when I led them out of Egypt. Although I was their God, they broke that agreement. Here is the new agreement that I, the Lord, will make with the people of Israel: "I will write my laws on their hearts and minds. I will be their God, and they will be my people. "No longer will they have to teach one another to obey me. I, the Lord, promise that all of them will obey me, ordinary people and rulers alike. I will forgive their sins and forget the evil things they have done."

Message: "A Heart For God"

We in the 21st century believe God is the God of love. We follow in Jesus' way to better know how God wishes us to live – in love. Love for ourselves and love for our neighbours and as Jesus' said, "even love for our enemies".

This week's reading from Jeremiah brings us another covenant – the fifth covenant this Lent. Jeremiah, the prophet speaks God's words of forgiveness; God forgives the people's sins and seeks to fill their hearts with love. The covenant shared with us today is different than the covenant made with the people who had escaped slavery in Egypt and wandered in the wilderness. God's earlier covenant with the people had included the ten commandments – laws for living together in loving community. The people, however, struggled to keep these laws; they did not hold up their end of the covenantal relationship. But God remains faithful, forgives

and gives a new way of living together. In forgiving the people for what happened in the past, God also commits to not bringing up their past sins. That is, future generations will not be reminded of the sins of their ancestors. It is a new beginning.

That's the great thing about forgiveness – is you are offered a new fresh start. This time, God's law will dwell in their very being. The heart, for the Hebrew people, was the place from which a person thought, felt, and acted. It's a similar feeling for us today. Once you have something in your heart it is hard to forget and it becomes part of who you are.

Through Jeremiah the prophet, God says, "I will forgive and remember their sin no more" What do we understand sin to be? Last month in February being Black History Month we are reminded how the affluent white people enslaved our Black brothers and sisters to work as their slaves. We remember so we never do that again. Question may be for us today, "Does God forgive without us asking?" Seems so in Jeremiah. What about us in the 21st century?

Once we start having a loving relationship with our coloured neighbours (with for me that includes red yellow, black and any other skin colour we may encounter), our hearts will make us do the right things. How might we know if we today are causing a sin by not caring for our neighbours?

Taylor Branch, who was a civil rights historian once expressed his surprise that Montgomery, Alabama, became the nucleus of the civil rights movement: "There weren't many real activists in Montgomery at the time." Branch did not think that the people in Montgomery had "a heart" for activism. Everything changed the Monday morning that the bus boycott started (initiated by Rosa Park's arrest); suddenly, for the Black Folk of Montgomery Alabama, their time to act had come – and despite the personal risk, they acted together as a united community. Montgomery might not have been filled with the type of people we often label as activists; still, it was filled with people who were ready to do what was right. This is the type of community we hope to create: a community with a heart for Christ's mission, ready to act together for Christ's sake in the world.

Once our faith is embedded in our hearts, taking action becomes the right thing to do. We have to let go of the past. We have to ask for forgiveness. We have to love those who we once may have hurt. According to Jeremiah God does forgive.

God forgiveness, God's love and God's very presence is beating in our very hearts. We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 657 "He Leadeth Me"

He leadeth me: O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me.

*He leadeth me! He leadeth me!
By his own hand he leadeth me!
His faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me!*

Sometimes 'mid scenes of deepest gloom,
sometimes where Eden's bowers bloom,
by waters calm, o'er troubled sea,
still 'tis his hand that leadeth me.

*He leadeth me! He leadeth me!
By his own hand he leadeth me!
His faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me!*

Lord, I would clasp thy hand in mine,
nor ever murmur nor repine,
content, whatever lot I see,
since 'tis my God that leadeth me.

*He leadeth me! He leadeth me!
By his own hand he leadeth me!
His faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me!*

And when my task on earth is done,
when by thy grace the victory's won,
even death's cold wave I will not flee,
since God through Jordan leadeth me.

*He leadeth me! He leadeth me!
By his own hand he leadeth me!
His faithful follower I would be,
for by his hand he leadeth me!*

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: We wish to see the fruits of Jesus' ministry. We want to experience God's reign on Earth. The sharing of gifts is one way we can catch a glimpse of the reign of God.

Offertory: VU 542 “We Give You But Your Own”

We give you but your own,
whate'er the gift may be;
all that we have is yours alone,
we give it gratefully.

Offertory Prayer:

Loving God, open our hearts to a new world. A world where there is no longer least and greatest, rich and poor. A world where there is enough for all, and all treated as beloved children of God. Until that day comes, bless our small contributions of time, talent, treasures and may they work towards the building of your new world. Amen.

Chorus to Prayer: VU 371 “Open My Eyes That I May See” Chorus

*Silently now I wait for thee,
ready, my God, thy will to see.
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!*

Pastoral Prayer & Lord’s Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 120 “O Jesus, I Have Promised”

O Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
remain for ever near me, my Saviour and my friend:
I shall not fear the journey if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway if you will be my guide.

O let me feel you near me: the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me, around me and within;
but, Jesus, then draw nearer and shield my soul from sin.

O let me hear you speaking in accents clear and still,
above the storms of passion, the murmurs of self-will;
O speak to reassure me, to hasten or control;
now speak, and make me listen, O guardian of my soul.

O Jesus, you have promised to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory your servant shall be too.
And Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow, my Saviour and my friend.

Blessing:

Eric: Go and embody God’s song to the world.
With your words, sing hope.

With your actions, dance peace.
With your being, play love, now and forever more.

Closing Chorus: VU 108 “Throughout These Lenten Days and Nights” (verse 5)

So let us choose the path of One
who wore, for us, the crown of thorn,
and slept in death that we might wake
to life on Resurrection Morn!

Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth