

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Reign of Christ Sunday – November 19th, 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: Running on empty. Drained. Overscheduled and overworked. Just plain tired.

People: When we can't see another way, we come to worship.

Eric: We come to be renewed and restored, to feel our attitude shift.

People: Together, we will find our way into joy.

Eric: We will be filled with God's love and grace, as we come and worship.

Opening Hymn: VU 222 "Come Let Us Sing..."

Come, let us sing to the Lord our song,
we have stood silently too long;
surely the Lord deserves our praise,
so joyfully thank God for our days.

O thirsty soul, come drink at the well;
God's living waters will never fail.
Surely the Lord will help you to stand,
strengthened and comforted by God's hand.

You dwell among us and cause us to pray,
and walk with each other following your way;
our precious brothers and sisters will grow
in the fulfilling love they know.

Deserts shall bloom and mountains shall sing
to the desire of all living things.
Come, all you creatures, high and low,
let your praises endlessly flow. way!.

Opening Prayer:

People: We joyfully receive your abundant gifts, God. We pause to feel the power of life within us, the potential for compassion around us, and your steady ground of hope beneath us. This we pray in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Children's Story:

Children's Hymn: VU 340 "Jesus, Friend of Little..."

Jesus, friend of little children, let me be one too;
take my hand, and ever keep me close to you.

Teach me how to grow in goodness, daily as I grow.
You have been a child, and surely you must know.

Never leave me, nor forsake me; ever be my friend;
for I need you, from life's dawning to its end.

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 123

A Prayer for Mercy

Our Lord and our God, I turn my eyes to you, on your throne in heaven.

Servants look to their master, but we will look to you, until you have mercy on us.

Please have mercy, Lord!

We have been insulted more than we can stand, and we can't take more abuse from those proud, conceited people.

Scripture: Matthew 25: 14 - 30

The kingdom is also like what happened when a man went away and put his three servants in charge of all he owned. The man knew what each servant could do. So he handed 5,000 coins to the first servant, 2,000 to the second, and 1,000 to the third. Then he left the country. As soon as the man had gone, the servant with the 5,000 coins used them to earn 5,000 more. The servant who had 2,000 coins did the same with his money and earned 2,000 more. But the servant with 1,000 coins dug a hole and hid his master's money in the ground.

Some time later the master of those servants returned. He called them in and asked what they had done with his money. The servant who had been given 5,000 coins brought them in with the 5,000 that he had earned. He said, "Sir, you gave me 5,000 coins, and I have earned 5,000 more." "Wonderful!" his master replied. "You are a good and faithful servant. I left you in charge of only a little, but now I will put you in charge of much more. Come and share in my happiness!"

Next, the servant who had been given 2,000 coins came in and said, "Sir, you gave me 2,000 coins, and I have earned 2,000 more." "Wonderful!" his master replied. "You are a good and faithful servant. I left you in charge of only a little, but now I will put you in charge of much more. Come and share in my happiness!"

The servant who had been given 1,000 coins then came in and said, "Sir, I know that you are hard to work for. You harvest what you don't plant and gather crops where you haven't scattered seed. I was frightened and went out and hid your money in the ground. Here is every single coin!" The master of the servant told him, "You are lazy and good-for-nothing! You know I harvest what I don't plant and gather crops where I haven't scattered seed. You could have at least put my money in the bank, so I could have earned interest on it." Then the master said, "Now your money will be taken away and given to the servant with 10,000 coins! Everyone who has something will be given more, and they will have more than enough. But everything will be taken from those who don't have anything."

Reflection: “Attitude of Abundance”

We have experienced the journey of the Exodus over the last several months. Now the Israelites are in the Promised Land and life is good. The Israelites are living in a state of abundance. Crops are good, the herds of animals are growing, vineyards are heavy with fruit – the Israelites are enjoying life in this new land. They have made it.

In Matthew, Jesus is telling the story of the Master who gives money to his servants to invest. This could be a story about investing – investing time, energy and yes even money. Matthew was written for the early followers of Jesus, when the Jews and the Gentiles were coming together to form the early church. Matthew also uses the Hebrew Scriptures to back up Jesus’ ministry and his connection to God. Matthew portrays Jesus as a new Moses, providing Torah-like wisdom. Matthew shares with us today Jesus’ response to the disciples’ questions about the “end of the age.”

In Jesus’ day, owners of large family enterprises often travelled to protect their business interests and increase their wealth. Carefully selected inner circles of servants managed affairs in their absence. In today’s story, the master entrusts large sums of money to his trusted servants. Jesus starts out his story by saying the “The Kingdom is like...”. For those who first heard this story, this money metaphor story to describe God’s reign likely would have been surprising and controversial. What are your thoughts about this story?

By the time of Jesus, money coined by governments was the accepted form of payment for goods, services, and taxes. Banks served the business community by exchanging currencies and lending money. Banks paid interest on funds deposited with them. Most citizens had little money to save and probably hid what they had for safekeeping.

As with any parable, Jesus’ teaching is open to multiple interpretations. The reference to “some time later” could refer to the time when God’s reign will come in its fullness. So, for some, this parable is a mandate to take risks for the sake of following Jesus’ mission. For some, it is a warning against living one’s life of discipleship in a maintenance manner, waiting for the fulfillment of God’s reign and not making the most of the gifts that God gives.

What about us as the modern day church? Are we expected to take risks for the sake of following Jesus’ mission? Reaching out into the community and offering a new ministry can be risky. Will this ministry be used? Will it be continually

funded? Will we have enough volunteers to keep the ministry going? What happens if the ministry grows? Will there be enough? You can start to see the risks that churches take when reaching out into their communities.

If for us, this story is a warning for us as Christians, not to live our faith in maintenance mode – waiting for Jesus’ return, “and” is about making the most of God’s gifts of abundance to us to do God’s work to build the Kingdom in our place and time – now is that place and time.

In our day to day working lives, we save some of what we make, for retirement and life after work. This saving can be voluntary, or required such as the Canada Pension Plan or our work Pension Plan. This saved money is invested on our behalf and 40 years later when we retire we have a steady stream of income to live our lives until our passing. We may also do the same with what we save, to make that pot bigger to enjoy life even more, in our retirement.

It is because of investing that we can work for 40 years and live another 40 years on the small amount that we set aside. Using the rule of dividing by 72, if we invest money at 12%, it takes 6 years to double your investment. But if interest rates were 7%, it takes 10 years to double that investment. At today’s 5% - it would take 14 years to double your investment. In Jesus’ story today the servants had doubled the master’s money.

The Lord’s Prayer that we say together each Sunday includes the words, “Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, Give us this day our daily bread...”. The prayer suggests that God’s kingdom will be a kingdom of “enough”. When we acknowledge that we have more than enough and trust in that abundance, we are free of the greed to go beyond “enough.”

We are just a week away from the first Sunday of Advent. Advent is the four weeks that lead us to Christmas Day. The Christmas Season is a time for us in North America to spurge on consumer goods, parties, extra rich foods, and the list goes on. Next Sunday is also Communion, where we receive a small chunk of bread and a small glass of grape juice. These small elements are the food and drink that Jesus offers to his followers to nourish their faith, as we gather together in a common meal. It may be just a small bit, but it is enough.

When we invest in our faith and in our church, God invests even more to our blessings to bring God’s Kingdom to our neck of the world. We have already chosen who to follow, who to serve and who to believe. God’s story is not finished. We invest our time, faith and money, and the dividends are so magnificent. Like the

United Church Creed reminds us - We are not alone. God is with us. Thanks be to God!

Reflection Hymn: B 337 "Blessed Assurance"

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of the Spirit, washed in Christ's blood.

*This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long;
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Saviour all the day long.*

Perfect submission, perfect delight!
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending, bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love. R

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Saviour am happy and blessed;
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with God's goodness, lost in Christ's love. R

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: Thank You for 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: Thank you for this community and for the responsibility of being your people. As a community, help us support and encourage each other so we can share all of our gifts for and to your glory. Bless these gifts, seen and unseen so that they might be a blessing to others. Amen.

Chorus to Prayer: VU 291 "All Things Bright..." Chorus

*All things bright and beautiful,
all creatures great and small,*

*all things wise and wonderful:
in love, God made them all.*

Pastoral Prayer:

Closing 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. R

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. R

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. R.

Benediction:

Eric: May God bless you with enough wisdom to believe we do make a difference in our world, now and forever more.

Go Now in Peace:

**Go now in peace, never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.
Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, Amen, Amen.**

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week – as “In the Spirit We Are One”.

Cancer:

**Carol
Susan
Barb
Margie
Jerry
Erin**

**Larry
Ken
Natalie
Joan
Rick**

**Janet
David
Dave**

**Elizabeth
Mike and Janice
John and Barb
Rick**

**Lloyd
Don
Audrey
Edy
George
Harry/Ruth
Joyce
Rob / Sharon
Leora and Clarence Rodwell**