

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

20th Sunday after Pentecost – October 18th, 2020

Prelude: “Be Now My Vision” – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning folks. We have a St. Luke’s Board Meeting tomorrow night – Monday by Zoom. On Wednesday we have the South Buxton Pastoral Charge Board Meeting to look after the 2021 SBPC Budget. We will meet by Zoom and Telephone.

Christmas is only a little more than two months away. This year, our Christmas Baskets Programs are strapped for how they may get food, toys and even money to provide to needy families during COVID. On November 21st, the citizens of Chatham Kent are invited to offer a gift to those less fortunate. The pick up or drop offs will be very similar to the May 16th Miracle. The intent is to stock the Christmas Baskets with food and toys, as many of the traditional fundraising and food collection is not possible this year of COVID restrictions.

We are collecting socks and underwear for the homeless (mainly men) until the first week of November. This past Sunday we received several packages with the Food Bank donations. We are sending what we have right now to The United Way, and will do another delivery after Food Bank Sunday in November. Thank you for your gifts.

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:

If you wish – grab a candle to use while we share our services. The flame of the Candle reminds us of the light of Christ that collects us as the faith community, “We are One in the Spirit”. Thanks be to God.

Call To Worship:

Eric: Behold, Loving God, these people are your people.

People: **At your calling, we have gathered; by your leading, we have arrived at this place and time.**

Eric: As you have promised, your presence is with us;

People: **and we seek your renewal and rest.**

Eric: Make yourself known to us, Holy Love.

People: **Come, Divine Life, be with us as we worship.**

Hymn: VU 315 “Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God Almighty”

1 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

2 Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore thee,
casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;
cherubim and seraphim falling down before thee,
which wert, and art, and evermore shalt be.

3 Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide thee,
though the eye made blind by sin thy glory may not see,
only thou art holy; there is none beside thee,
perfect in power, in love, and purity.

4 Holy, holy, holy! Lord God almighty!
All thy works shall praise thy name in earth
and sky and sea;
holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

Opening Prayer:

Where are you, God? We long to see you. We long to feel you near. We long to be confident of your presence and accompaniment. We bring our whole selves to this time of discernment and prayer. See in our faces your creative genius, and hear in our prayers and songs your melodies of life. Guide and nurture us, we pray. Amen.

Scripture: Exodus 33:12 - 23 *(in Story Form)*

Moses sometimes got very mixed up. Moses wanted to understand God. He also wanted to understand the people of Israel. Sometimes he would hold his head with his hands and feel very sad. "There are so many things I don't understand."

So Moses went to talk with God. "Please help me, God," said Moses. "I want to understand you."

"What would you like me to explain?" asked God.

"Well, I've seen the wonderful things you've done. I've seen how you got the people of Israel out of Egypt. I've seen how you brought us food when we were hungry. I've seen how you got water from a rock when we were thirsty. But..." Moses just stood there and shook his head.

"But what?" God's voice was soft and kind.

"I haven't seen you. I want to know what you look like. I want to see your face."

"That's a hard thing, Moses," said God. "It's hard for people to see me. You can see what I do. You can feel my love in your heart. I am all around you, just like the air is all around you. But you can't see me."

"But I want to see you," Moses was crying a little. "I want to see you, so I know who you are."

"Moses," said God. "You have worked very hard to help me. You have worked hard to help the people of Israel. So I am going to do something special for you.

"I can't let you see my face because, you see, I am not a human like you are. I don't have a head or legs or arms as you have. I'm not a man or a woman. I'm not old or young. I'm different than anything you know. But maybe I can show you something that will help you understand.

“Go to the big rock that you can see right in front of you. There’s a crack right through the centre of it. Look through that crack. I’ll show you something of who I am.”

So Moses went to the big rock. He looked through the crack. For a while, it felt as if a kind, warm hand was covering his eyes.

Then the hand went away, and Moses saw... He wasn’t sure what he saw.

Moses tried to tell his sister, Miriam, about it. “It was like a flash of lightning, except it wasn’t loud. It wasn’t hard. It was as if my whole body was filled with light. It was as if I was filled with something good and strong.”

“But what you saw was a light?” asked Miriam.

“What I saw was bright and beautiful. But that was only a small part of it, Miriam. Now I feel as if I really know God. And I know for sure that God will always be with me, and with all the people of Israel.”

Message: “God - Known as Goodness and Mercy”

Who is God for you? Do you think God as a overseer who watches your every move – ready to dole out persecution when you do bad or the wrong things, or blessings when you do good or the right things? Or do you see God as a forgiving God, who loves you no matter what? Chances are many of us see God in both ways depending on the day or circumstance. Today we consider God to be Goodness and Mercy. Goodness with integrity, honesty and righteousness, and Mercy being forgiving, sympathetic and understanding. Is that not the idea of God that everyone would want to believe?

For many of us, it does depend on what going on in our lives at the time. Yet we value our relationship with God and all that God has created, including our family, friends, and our blessings. Even as imperfect people, we work to give voice and witness to the work of God in our world today. We share those stories of the Bible when they are imperfect people, yet they are still redeemed by the goodness and mercy of God. The same Goodness and Mercy that we are called to live and share with our world.

In the Exodus story today, we once again see that the Exodus from slavery is not an easy journey. It was one thing for the people of Israel to be freed from bondage; it was another thing to live as free people. The experience of slavery and the ways they have lived under the captivity of a system of domination was never far from their hearts and minds. It would take time for them to learn a new way of being and living together in community. As slaves there was little or no mercy – as their systems are designed to keep people under control - therefore maintaining the power for those with authority and

privilege. If they had little mercy, there was no goodness towards the Israelites. So now that they have once again failed God, failed Moses, and failed each other by worshipping the Golden Calf, the Israelite people have every reason to expect retribution.

Moses may be feeling the same thoughts. He goes to God for a heart to heart. Moses wants to seek reassurance from God that the Israelite people, now freed from slavery, will no longer need to live under oppression, including from God. Moses knows that God is different. Moses knows that God cares for them. After all God changed his mind after Moses pleaded with God to forgive his people. Moses is unwilling to relinquish the hope and belief that God's relationship with God's people can be mended, and the covenant once again restored. Yet, at the same time, Moses admits the harm done by the Israelites, when the trust in God is broken.

This violation of trust has most likely created distance between God and the people. God intends to keep that distance. Fortunately for the people, Moses is persistent. Moses apologizes on behalf of the Israelites, admits their broken trust, and calls upon God to help his newly formed community to start living as free people with tiny faith - that needs to be grown to a newly formed community of strong faith. Moses asks God to reveal God's glory.

This ideal fits into who we are as the church. Each and every one of us has experienced times when our faith is tested. Many times in the testing, we find our faith is strengthened. When we talk to others about God in our lives, or how Jesus helps us to be a Christian, or how the Holy Spirit leads us; we are usually talking to someone with little faith – they may even share they do not believe. It is in our experiences that we do believe.

The Bible shares when we are babies we drink our mother's milk. Like our faith it is fed to us by someone who knows at least a bit more than us – we are still a baby in faith. Yet as they share their experiences and we start to experience for ourselves that God is in our lives – our faith grows stronger. We start to walk in our faith, maybe even running in faith. Sometimes we will fall and scrap our knees. We may need to go to the one who helped us to help us again. After a pep talk, we are running again.

All our lives we continue to grow our faith. There may be times we feel that we have lost it. Then we realize by some new experience our faith has been with us all along. Somehow we became disconnected.

Like Moses, we are not willing to return to our life of slavery. We have not been set free from bondage in faith just to be sucked back into the oppression which we once lived. We are now Christians – tied to Jesus Christ the Son, connected to the Holy Spirit, who helps us to experienced the goodness and mercy of God. We know, “We are not alone”. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: VU 663: “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

- 1 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.
- 2 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.
- 3 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: As God is known for God’s goodness and mercy, we also know God as the giver of all we have. As Christians we are asked to share what we have, knowing that God continues to provide. Today God provides for God’s Children through us. Let us give in love.

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:

Generous God, out of our privilege we give. Out of our longing, we seek your face. Bless these coins, bills, and promises and claim them for yourself, knowing we give them to you happy to release their hold on us. Use them toward your mercy, goodness, and glory; 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:

Eric: Holy One, even though we have not always been aware, we know you have been with us along the journeys of our lives.

People: **We have not always recognized your presence, but we thank you for your abiding love. Your glory is all around us. Your mercy has seen us through. Your goodness is our strength and our renewal. And we thank you for the abundance in which we live and move and have our being.**

Eric: We pray today for people who remain on the journey and feel alone along the way... (pause).

People: **We pray for those who seek your face in times of sickness and ill-health – who long to feel your healing presence intimately...** (pause)

Eric: We pray for all who suffer under the powers and principalities of this world – who have been treated as collateral damage in a battle for loyalty to false gods... (pause).

People: **We pray for our planet – for your true face all around us. Help us not only to see you clearly in all of its wonder, but to remember our commitment as stewards of your lands, your seas, your air, and your creatures. Guide us in our efforts to care and tend to your world** (pause).

Eric: We pray that you will help us always to see your face beaming at us in every face of humanity we encounter.

People: **Show us your anguish as well as your delight; your struggles as well as your strengths; your discouragement as well as your resolve; your sadness as well as your love. And in all of these, help us to know you and your grace more perfectly.**

Eric: We pray in Christ’s name, as we pray his 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.*

Benediction:

Eric: May the goodness and mercy of God, go with you 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: "I Saw the Light" – Christie Coatsworth