

Ouvry Cemetery – Memorial and Decoration Day

June 26th, 2022

Prelude: – Debi Guy

Ringing of the Bell:

Welcome & Announcements:

Words from Glenn Stephens

Call to Worship:

Eric: We are your vine, O God, your tree planted by your grace watered by your mercy.

People: **We are yours: planted in your deep, rich loam of scripture, story, and song.**

Eric: We are yours, dear God, growing in your care.

People: **Water us with your Spirit. Nourish us with your word. Hear us, as we gather to learn, to pray, to ask, to grow in you.**

Eric: Come, let us worship.

Opening Hymn: VU 315 “Holy, Holy, Holy”

- 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:

God of our being and our doing: we come from so many places; places of play and study and work; places of joy and worry and fears; places of loneliness and friendship. We give you

thanks that you meet us at all the places in our lives. Give us the power to perceive you. Give us the courage to follow you. Amen.

Poem: “The Dash” - by Ruby Guerin

I read of a man who stood to speak At the funeral of a friend
He referred to the dates on her tombstone From the beginning...to the end.
He noted that first came her date of birth And spoke the following date with tears,
But he said what mattered most of all Was the dash between those years. (1934 -1998)
For that dash represents all the time That she spent alive on earth...
And now only those who loved her Know what that little line is worth.
For it matters not, how much we own; The cars...the house...the cash,
What matters is how we live and love And how we spend our dash.
So think about this long and hard... Are there things you'd like to change?
For you never know how much time is left, That can still be rearranged.
If we could just slow down enough To consider what's true and real,
And always try to understand The way other people feel.
And be less quick to anger, And show appreciation more
And love the people in our lives Like we've never loved before.
If we treat each other with respect, And more often wear a smile..
Remembering that this special dash Might only last a little while.
So, when your eulogy's being read With your life's actions to rehash...
Would you be proud of the things they say About how you spent your dash?

Story: “Run the Race” by Glenn Stephens

Scripture: Hebrews 11: 29 – 12: 2 “Run the Race” by Sandy Campbell

Long ago, people in the church wondered why some of them were having a tough time. Others mistreated them because they were followers of Jesus, and horrible things happened to some people.

While most Christians knew that suffering is a part of life, God does not make it happen. Someone wrote a letter to others to remind them that God was with them no matter what. Here is what part of that letter said:

Long ago, our ancestors in faith did some pretty amazing things. Long ago, when they were slaves in Egypt, God brought them through the Sea of Reeds to the land of promise.

Long ago, God was with a woman called Rahab who risked everything to help some of God's people.

What more can I say? I don't have time to tell you of so many others who did amazing things: they believed in God's way and had faith that God was with them, leading and guiding them.

And we have been strong even when everyone was against us.

We are surrounded by many stories of faithful people, and there are many people today who are cheering us on as we learn to live in God's way.

So, let's run the race in front of us. Let's throw away all the things that slow us down and focus on Jesus. He risked everything to show God's love to all. Thanks be to God!

Message: “Persevering Faith”

Today’s reading from the letter to the Hebrews deals with faith. It seems that the Hebrews folks were experiencing some of the hardships of the early church. The author reminds them that “by faith” people of old did extraordinary things. Sharing the stories of how people’s faith sustained them through difficult times – can be a great reminder of how to live out our faith. It can also help us to believe as they did.

Sometimes we as humans want answers, whether those answers actually exist or not. Sometimes we want to understand things that elude us. In such times, can we just be, and able to accept what is and move forward in faith. What keeps us going when the going in life gets tough?

Stories of those faithful ones, whose final resting spot is here at Ouvry, can help us to move ahead in faith. We look at how they lived their faith. It may have been a simpler time, we say. To them it wasn’t likely a simpler time. Our past generations have faced more changes in their lifetime than any generation before them. Yet our generation is likely to top those changes. In turn, we need something or someone to ground us. Our faith helps us to do that. Our faith is something we have learnt from our parents and grandparents, and faith is not only something to believe in, by faith as we hear today is trusting in a higher power, whom we as Christians name as God.

Hebrews shares what God requires of God’s people. The Letter sums up with comparing life to a race, “Let’s run the race in front of us. Let’s throw away all the things that slow us down and focus on Jesus.” Yes, let us today focus on our faith much like our ancestors have done. The Letter helps us to focus on that great cloud of witnesses whom we have been and are now. This letter is a pep rally to those feeling down on themselves.

The Letter talks about what happened in the time of the Exodus, and then about Rahab, which seems like an unusual choice. We are reminded that those people who live by faith are not always who we think they may be. Rahab is both a foreigner and a prostitute, yet by her faith she risked her own life to save the lives of others.

The community for which Hebrews was written, is believed to have faced severe persecution. They are risking their own lives by following Jesus. Concerned that people would turn away from the Christian faith, the writer encourages the people of God to hold fast, reassured by those faith-filled people of the past, who have persevered to the very end. “Look to the past and see how the faith of those witnesses is seen in their suffering.” This is a reminder to us today, faith is easy when life is good, what happens to our faith when life is not so good.

We are surrounded by the many stories of faithful people, and there are many people today who are cheering us on - as we learn to live in God's way. We too are surrounded by all the faith stories of our past, and today as we gather at Ouvry Cemetery, we are surrounded by the Faith stories of those whom we are honouring today. As we walk around this cemetery, we see names of folks that we know had a deep faith and used their faith to bear life's challenges.

The writer's talks about "we" and "us". This is not a solo run. We as the community of faithful people journey together – not so much in competition, but in a spirit of collaboration and encouragement. When we share examples of those who persevered in faith against all odds, their stories encourage us to get back in the race. The faithful of the past become our mentors of today – they help us to value our faith and work with God to make this world new. As with a race - faithfulness is not easy - nor passive. It can be demanding and often requires change and growth.

Life can be unsettling. We want easy answers, but easy answers are not available. We want to understand a world that often defies explanation. That's not the point. We would do well to let go of the things that weigh us down and persevere, looking at the examples of Jesus, and the faithful who followed in Jesus' ways.

Think of your ancestors here - how did they persevere? How might their story of perseverance help you to get back in the race - to help you fulfill your ministry of caring for others? In turn, how might our faith help the next generation to persevere in their life struggles? How might we be an encouragement to others?

Life is not always easy. Life has it ups and downs. Many times life is compared to a race. Life takes perseverance to get through some days. Races take perseverance to get to the Finish Line. We have such a cloud of witnesses that can help us on our journey. Those witness care for us today in our race. When folks run a race for cancer or other charity, they are running for someone they know and someone they care about. That connection and care will help them persevere in the race. RACE becomes CARE!

We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 560 "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee"

(Collection during the singing)

- 1 O Master, let me walk with thee
in lowly paths of service free;
teach me thy secret, help me bear

the strain of toil, the fret of care.

- 2 Help me the slow of heart to move
with some clear, winning word of love;
teach me the wayward feet to stay,
and guide them in the homeward way.
- 3 Teach me thy patience; still with thee,
in closer, dearer company,
in work that keeps faith sure and strong,
in trust that triumphs over wrong,
- 4 in hope that sends a shining ray
far down the future's broadening way,
in peace that only thou canst give,
with thee, O Master, let me live.

Offering Prayer:

Like countless others before us, O God, we offer ourselves to you. Take all that we have and are, and use that for the work of making your reign real on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer & Lord's Prayer:

Loving God, you tend to us with such care. Listen now as we unburden ourselves of the joys and the concerns we carry.

Listen: to the names of those who need healing (*pause*).

Listen: to the challenges we face in unemployment; in finances; in habits; in fears (*pause*).

Listen: to the things we do not understand (*pause*).

Listen: to the places where we hurt in heart, spirit, mind, or body (*pause*).

Listen: to how happiness rises in us as we think of birthdays, reunions, vacations, and celebrations (*pause*).

Listen...and tend to us as we pray the Lord's 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: 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: – Debi Guy