

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

St. Luke's 122nd Anniversary Service – September 17th, 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: When we look around we see the wilderness that calls us;

People: **To the fields of soybeans to the west, and the bare fields harvested of wheat towards the east, we are surrounded by many different grounds.**

Eric: It is in this wilderness that we celebrate the Anniversary of St. Luke's United Church.

People: **In the wilderness of September we see the leaves of the trees around us exhibit many colours, in response to the cooler fall weather. On this Anniversary Sunday, we are open to the Holy Spirit around us.**

Eric: We come today, here in this sacred space to celebrate the faithfulness of those gone before us.

People: **We continue to hold out the hope we find in God, for many more years of faithful worship.**

Eric: Come let us worship, on this Anniversary Sunday, knowing God is with us.

Opening Hymn: VU 315 "Holy, Holy, Holy..."

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!

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.

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.

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:

People: O God, like so much of your work, we arrive on the edge of this sacred day with a sense of what it can be for us, on this Anniversary Sunday. We imagine this day to be many things; reflections on the past, celebrations of current ministries, and a vision of future opportunities. Move us beyond our assumptions of scarcity to find wisdom in the abundance of all you have blessed us with. Connect us and remind us that we are all part of your great love. We are a part of all there is. Be with us today as we celebrate St. Luke's heritage and legacies. Amen.

Children's Story & Lord's Prayer:

Children's Hymn: BH 587 "Birds Are Singing"

Birds are singing, woods are ringing,
With Thy praises, blessed King;
Lake and mountain, field and fountain,
To Thy throne their tributes bring.

Refrain:

*We, Thy children, join the chorus,
Merrily, cheerily, gladly praise Thee;
Glad hosannas, glad hosannas,
Joyfully we lift to Thee.*

Waters dancing, sunbeams glancing,
Sing Thy glory cheerily;
Blossoms breaking, nature waking,
Chant Thy praises merrily.

Angels o'er us join the chorus
Which on earth we sing to Thee;
Heaven is ringing, earth is singing,
Praises to Thee joyfully **

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 18:

David's Song of Praise

I love you, Lord God, and you make me strong.

You are my mighty rock, my fortress, my protector, the rock where I am safe, my shield, my powerful weapon, and my place of shelter.

I praise you, Lord! I prayed, and you rescued me from my enemies.

You are good to me, Lord, because I do right, and you reward me because I am innocent.

I do what you want and never turn to do evil.

I keep your laws in mind and never look away from your teachings.

I obey you completely and guard against sin.

You have been good to me because I do right; you have rewarded me for being innocent by your standards.

You, the Lord God, keep my lamp burning and turn darkness to light.

Your way is perfect, Lord, and your word is correct.

You are a shield for those who run to you for help.

You alone are God! Only you are a mighty rock.

You give me strength and guide me right.

Scripture: Romans 8: 23 - 27

The Spirit makes us sure about what we will be in the future. We wait for God to show that we are his children. And this hope is what saves us. But if we already have what we hope for, there is no need to keep on hoping. However, we hope for something we have not yet seen, and we patiently wait for it.

In certain ways we are weak, but the Spirit is here to help us. For example, when we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit prays for us in ways that cannot be put into words. All of our thoughts are known to God. He can understand what is in the mind of the Spirit, as the Spirit prays for God's people. We know that God is always at work for the good of everyone who loves him. They are the ones God has chosen for his purpose.

Reflection: "Living in the Wilderness"

We are being invited to reconnect with creation. Two weeks ago it was with the forests and trees, last week with the land and the dirt. This week we are being invited to reconnect with the wilderness. The wilderness can be an empty place, yet a place where we can think clearly in the silence. In that silence we have the opportunity to find God's presence with us. If we look back 125 years ago, the land surrounding our rural churches were pretty much a wilderness. If you took a walk, you didn't have to watch out for cars. You didn't have a lot of other noise pollution that we are bombarded with today. As you walked you could hear the birds singing, the woods ringing as the wind rustled the leaves of the trees.

Our Psalm reading this morning connects us with signs of God's work in our lives. We are reminded of the relationship of creation that we all experience in our relationship with God. We are reminded of God as our rock and our shield. Knowing God keeps our lamps burning brightly, and even our darkness turns into light. God is our mighty rock.

Paul writes a personal message to the community of Jesus' followers in Rome knowing that life may seem hopeless to the Christ followers living under the rule of Imperial Rome. Paul reminds us we are one in the Spirit. Whenever we are weak, the Spirit is there to help us. In those times when we do not know what to pray for – pray anyway – for the Holy Spirit will pray for us in ways that cannot be put into words.

You may notice that a lot of what Paul says to the Church of Rome is found in the Hebrew Scriptures, which we know as the Old Testament. Many of Paul's encouragements come from the Book of the Psalms. "All of our thoughts are known to God". This can give us a sense of encouragement know we are not alone. In times of trouble God will be there with us. It also may help us to do the right thing – especially when we remember God is watching.

Paul also reminds the Church of Rome that God is always at work for the good of everyone who loves God. God has chosen us for God's purpose. "We are the chosen ones!" That is not to go to your head and think you have arrived. Paul says walk with the Spirit and we will be sure of what we will be in the future. Paul continues to talk about having faith and what faith actually is. We gather together as faithful people in a Faith Community. Together, there is strength and encouragement. Together we can do so much more, than what any one can do alone. We as God's Children are not to be alone as individuals, but to be a community who in hope reaches out into the community to offer hope to others. As people of Faith we hope for something we have not yet seen, and we patiently wait for it. Not idly, but continue to work and know the Spirit is working with you. We as the Church hold out hope. We walk with hope, and we offer hope to others.

Life as we know it has times when we are comfortable with what is happening. At other times we are in a wilderness, where we may be uncomfortable. It may be too quiet. It may be apart from our day to day busyness. We do not know how to slow down and embrace the wilderness. We are glancing around, looking for something to do, for something that needs us, or taking action because that is what we do. We do not know how to experience the wilderness in a way that refreshes our bodies and spirits. We find the wilderness boring. We may think of the wilderness as a place of danger, fear, discomfort and disorientation.

Yet if we ever get connected, we find so much life and value in the wilderness. We do find a refreshment of body and spirit. We may actually find the wilderness as a place of inspiring and untouched beauty. In many ways, in our day to day life, we do not get a chance to connect to God. In a place where we are at odds to the environment that surrounds us, we may need to relax and let the wilderness touch us.

This metaphor may be like the Israelites feeling they have been separated from God. They are sent out into the wilderness, whether it be the Exodus wilderness, or the wilderness where David goes to sit with God. Or maybe it is the wilderness of

early Southern Ontario, where you have brought your family from the Home Country and in the wilderness you are forging a new life full of new opportunities.

The Psalm reminds us that God is our mighty rock and shield. That there is no place we can go and God is not there, including the wilderness. Therefore many of us find the wilderness the place where we can connect with God.

The wilderness is a place where survival is challenging, and human impact is minimal. It is where Jesus goes before his ministry begins. For most of us it remains a metaphor more than physical location. Wilderness is also a place we imagine to be desolate and barren and a place without hope. Paul reminds us that hope is what saves us and that as followers of Christ we continue to hope for things we have not yet seen. Patiently wait for it, as you are not alone, God is always with us, and the Holy Spirit makes us sure of what we will be in the future. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 278 “In the Quiet Curve...”

In the quiet curve of evening,
in the sinking of the days,
in the silky void of darkness, you are there.
 In the lapses of my breathing,
 in the space between my ways,
 in the crater carved by sadness, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

In the rests between the phrases,
in the cracks between the stars,
in the gaps between the meaning, you are there.
 In the melting down of endings,
 in the cooling of the sun,
 in the solstice of the winter, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there.

In the mystery of my hungers,
in the silence of my rooms,
in the cloud of my unknowing, you are there.
 In the empty cave of grieving,
 in the desert of my dreams,
 in the tunnel of my sorrow, you are there.
You are there, you are there, you are there. **

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: Thank You for all your gifts. 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: We are called to step out beyond our homes and to see this world, to be adventurers who meditate on the vastness of this universe. God, you continue to bless us. We offer these Anniversary gifts to add to your vibrant, diverse world of life. Be with us in our giving, and be with those whom receive these gifts. In Jesus’ Name, we pray. 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 375 “Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness”

Spirit, Spirit of gentleness,
blow thro' the wilderness calling and free,
Spirit, Spirit of restlessness,
stir me from placidness, Wind, Wind on the sea.

You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
then you coaxed up the mountains from the
valleys of sleep;
and over the eons you called to each thing:
wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.

You swept thro' the desert, you stung with the sand,
and you goaded your people with a law and a land;
and when they were blinded with their idols and lies,
then you spoke thro' your prophets to open their eyes.

You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
then you whispered in silence when the whole world
was still;
and down in the city you called once again,

when you blew through your people on the rush
of the wind.

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
from the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams,
our women see visions, our men clear their eyes,
with bold new decisions your people arise. **

Benediction:

Eric: On this Anniversary Sunday, let us go forth to serve, love, and nourish this world, now and forever more.

Closing Hymn: "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

Larry
Ken
Natalie
Elaine

Gary

Janet
David
Dave

Alice
Mike and Janice
Leslie
David
Johnston Family
Charlton Family