

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

17th Sunday after Pentecost – September 27th, 2020

Prelude: “Edelwiess” – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning folks. It is fun to record inside our churches, although it would be better if you were here. Last week and this Monday as I looked out into those seated for the Church Board meetings with masks and safely distanced – it was eerie to see how church will be so unlike what we are used to. Without singing and greeting everyone - it will be different. We will continue to monitor the community numbers and base our decisions on what's good for everyone. Today we are back at St. Andrew's for the recording, as we have rotated through the three churches. We continue to learn as we go.

We are collecting socks and underwear for the homeless (mainly men) this fall. Next Sunday is the first Sunday of the month, so we will have St. Andrew's open on Saturday from 10 am to noon, for you to drop off your food bank articles. If you bring socks and underwear, we will make sure it gets to the United Way.

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: People of God, let us gather by the river of life.

People: **We come to the river with our whole selves.**

Eric: In our sorrow, the river offers comfort.

People: **In our joy, the river rejoices with us.**

Eric: In our loneliness, the river provides companionship.

People: **In our uncertainty and pain, the river offers new life.**

Eric: Let us celebrate together the great gift of water God has given us.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Hymn: VU 453 “Out Of Deep, Unordered Water”

- 1 Out of deep, unordered water
God created land and life;
world of bird and beast, and later,

twosome people, husband, wife.
*There is water in the river
bringing life to tree and plant.
Let creation praise its giver:
there is water in the font.*

2 Water on the human forehead,
birthmark of the love of God,
is the sign of death and rising;
through the sea there runs a road.
*There is water in the river
bringing life to tree and plant.
Let creation praise its giver:
there is water in the font.*

3 Standing round the font reminds us
of the Hebrews' climb ashore.
Life is hallowed by the knowledge:
God has been this way before.
*There is water in the river
bringing life to tree and plant.
Let creation praise its giver:
there is water in the font.*

Opening Prayer:

Gracious God, be with us today, in our joy and sorrow, anticipation, and exhaustion. Lead us to your life-giving water so that we may be renewed to carry out your transformative work in the world. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.

Scripture: Revelation 22: 1 - 5 (in story form)

About 100 years after Jesus was born and had taught people about God's love and how to live in God's loving ways, it became very dangerous to say that you were a follower of Jesus. The ruler in the land wanted people to obey him and to realize that he was very important – he was like a god, and that's how he wanted to be treated. The people who were followers of Jesus knew that the ruler wasn't a god. When those people refused to recognize the ruler as a god, they were put into prison and beaten and treated cruelly. One man, John, was sent to the island of Patmos to live alone there. (He wasn't the disciple John, and he didn't write the epistles of John and the gospel of John.) While he was a prisoner on the lonely island, he wrote to the churches. John wanted the followers of Jesus to know that God loved them and had not forgotten them. They needed to keep on worshipping God and try to be brave. John wanted the people to know that life would be better in the future and told the people about some strange dreams he had had, messages from God. John's dreams were strange, mystical, and mixed up, but the followers of Jesus knew what they meant. John wrote about a spectacular river and the amazing things that grew along that river.

From John: To the seven churches of Asia.

I send my greetings to you all.

I have had the most amazing dream – it was a wonderful dream, a beautiful dream.

I saw a city, a city of hope and peace. This city is called the new Jerusalem; it is so beautiful that we might call it paradise. I saw wide streets made from gold and magnificent shiny buildings. Most cities have a temple or church in the middle square, but this city has a large throne, full of God's light and love.

The streets are lined with fruit trees, but there is one tree that looks very special. It is huge and has a great big root system that goes from one side of the river to the other. This tree is called "The Tree of Life." During every season, it has fruit on it – not just apples or oranges but special sorts of fruits that we don't know about. Every month the tree produces a different kind of fruit – 12 different varieties in a year – one variety every month. The leaves are special, too. The people living in the city can pick them, and the fruits will keep them healthy. The gardens do not have any weeds, and the trees do not have prickly thorns.

A river flows from God's throne in the middle of the city, down the main street. The water in this river is life-giving water. The water glimmers and shines. People drink this water, and it gives them the power to communicate with God. This power is like the power that we receive from the Holy Spirit, and people are kind, generous, and loving.

Life in this paradise is peaceful. The people love God and will stay there forever. They will not do anything that is wrong and will not be tempted to do evil deeds.

All will see God's face. God will have special jobs for us and is thinking about these now.

There won't be any night in this special city. Light will come from God. People living in this paradise will truly be the children of God, and we will have everything that we need.

Grace and peace from John of Patmos

Message: "Seeing God in the River"

God is the Water of Life – our source of renewal and strength. All creation depends on water. We as the church use water for baptism, a sign of new life stored. Water quenches our thirst and water as rain make our crops grow and produce good fruit. We as the church share the good news with others, much like water, quenching the thirst of those longing for the truth and a full life.

John in Revelation shares the life giving water, both physically and spiritually. Water can be power. Water can be cleansing. All of God's creation must have water. God and water are so intertwined. Today we are reminded of the importance of water, and a reminder that our lives depend on water, and therefore we are to honour the water by finding ways to protect water, and therefore honouring God.

The River of Life in Revelations is John's vision of the New Jerusalem. The city descends from heaven offering the water of life to all within its gates. The water flows out from the throne of God through the centre of the city, highlighting the importance of water in our eternal life with God. On the banks of the river grows the tree of life whose leaves offer healing to the nations that have experienced hardship, mainly under the Roman Empire. Here, John reminds believers to experience

the power of nature to provide safety, healing, and intimate connection with the Divine. It reminds believers that life with God centres upon and incorporates all of creation, not just humanity.

This is a promise of renewal and fullness of life for all of creation. Yet in John's vision of abundance and life excludes all those left outside of the New Jerusalem. Either you are in or out. Access is limited to those who fit John's view of right belief in God. The passage raises questions about who has access to life-giving water. Yet John reminds us that all creation depends on Life Giving water that comes from God.

Water can be a powerful force that brings both destruction and new life. This week in the Maritimes, the folks are looking at the tide as it surges with the hurricane force winds of what's left from Hurricane Teddy. Even as the Hurricane is almost petered out, it still causes water to surge against the rocks and docks. Last September Hurricane Dorian left the Eastern Provinces with power outages, some up to 7 days in rural areas. So water can be life-giving, but also be life taking, in the case of storms.

Water is essential for life. It hydrates our bodies, sustains our crops, and provides food from rivers, lakes, and oceans, though all too often we take water for granted. We may also experience the power of water to take life through natural disasters, such as flooding, droughts, and hurricanes. Human-made disasters such as water contamination, global warming, and overconsumption also threaten water supplies. Water is essential to life. We, as humans, cannot live without water. All of creation cannot live without water. We have a big job to protect good clean water.

In Canada, we have an abundance of water – some estimate 20% of the world's supply. Many other countries or regions are drier and they need to preserve water the best they can. So depending on where you live, the sense of the urgency of a healthy river or water system will vary. Water is so important to life that the bottled water industry makes millions each year selling 2 cups for up to one dollar. Hydroelectric dams are a renewable source of energy, but have significant impacts on communities and ecosystems. Irrigation Systems in Southern Alberta and in New Zealand costs millions, but allow crops to be grown on drier ground.

Our scripture reading today paints a picture of justice and redemption for all people and all of God's creation. The image of water provides a powerful metaphor for life, death, chaos, and transformation. There is a beautiful picture of a healthy life-giving river that is at the centre of God's whole and healthy realm. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: VU 710 "Shall We Gather At The River"

- 1 Shall we gather at the river,
where bright angel feet have trod;
with its crystal tide for ever
flowing by the throne of God?
*Yes, we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.*

2 Ere we reach the shining river,
lay we every burden down;
grace our spirits will deliver,
and provide a robe and crown.

*Yes, we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.*

3 Soon we'll reach the shining river,
soon our pilgrimage will cease,
soon our happy hearts will quiver
with the melody of peace.

*Yes, we'll gather at the river,
the beautiful, the beautiful river;
gather with the saints at the river
that flows by the throne of God.*

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: God provides us with cool, clear water that keeps us alive. We are blessed by the beautiful nature that surrounds us, including Lake Erie and the Thames River and all the streams that empty into them. We are also blessed by the soothing sounds of the waves or the running waters of the rivers and streams. Today, as we hear the story of the River of Life, we thank you for Eternal Life. May we give of ourselves today to offer Life-Giving Waters to those in need. 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:

God of transformation, we give thanks for your continued promise to care for and sustain all of creation. Help us to follow your example, and may our gifts help to raise our concern and to care for one another and all of creation. In the Name of Jesus, 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:

Eric: God, giver of all good, you continually pour your benefits upon us.

People: Age after age the living wait upon you and find that your faithfulness has no end, that your care is unfailing.

Eric: We praise you that the mystery of life is a mystery of infinite goodness.

People: We praise you for the order and constancy of nature; for the beauty and bounty of the earth; for day and night, summer and winter, seedtime and harvest; for the varied gifts of loveliness which every season brings.

Eric: We give you thanks for all the comfort and joy of life, for our homes, for our friends, and for all the love, sympathy, and goodwill of all people.

People: We offer our thanks and praise for life-giving water, the kind that keeps us alive, both physically and spiritually.

Eric: All these things we pray in Jesus' 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:

Annette: You are a sacred part of God's creation. Just as water flows endlessly from the river of life, let us go out and spread God's love to all of creation, 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: "Ole Man River" – Christie Coatsworth