

South Buxton and Talbot Street Pastoral Charges

Seventh Sunday of Easter – May 24th, 2020

Prelude: “Standing in the Need of Prayer” – Lois Pratt

Welcome & Announcements:

Welcome to our service on this Seventh Sunday of Easter. Next Sunday is Pentecost. Today’s message prepares us for the presence of the Holy Spirit coming among humanity.

I’d like to share updated information put out by the Chatham Kent Hospitals and Health Unit, especially as tomorrow May 25th, some restrictions are being lifted, such as; the ability to visit some of our local parks, play a round of golf, and support local businesses. This should be balanced with caution, in that the Corona Virus is part of our new normal, and despite flattening the curve, it will be with us for a very long time. Chatham Kent Hospitals will continue to see COVID-19 positive patients and patients awaiting test results. All of Chatham Kent must be diligent in our efforts to keep everyone safe. Any visit to the Chatham Kent Hospital, will require wearing a supplied mask and eye protection. It will be a must!

This might be good suggestion, if you re cautious when you need to go out. The Health Unit is suggesting you use Sanitizer often, versus wearing gloves, that could carry the virus. Numbers according to the Chatham Kent Health Unit are holding steady, and our Long Term Care facilities are still virus free. Thank you for all you are doing!

The Chatham Kent Health Alliance remembered JoAn Dale on Friday with lowering their flags to half mast. JoAn was a pillar in the Nursing Program at St. Clair College, and since retirement has managed the Boutique Grand Gift Shop at the Hospital with her sisters Isabelle and Elinor. Memorial donations can be made to several Charities, including St. Andrew’s United Church. As the Funeral Home really cannot take Memorial Donations during the pandemic, it may be easier to just mail your donation to St. Andrew’s Treasurer; Joy King, 5988 Fourteenth Line, Merlin ON N0P 1W0. This will be a very busy week, and I will plan to have a Reflection by Wednesday, and Sunday’s Service for May 31st.

Continue to keep in touch with others and to share our websites; at southbuxton.ca, and talbotstreet.ca and blenheimunitedchurch.com

We are blessed once again to have Christie Coatsworth offer the music for today’s service. Thank you Christie. Thank YOU to Don Jackson for sharing the scriptures today.

We will be hosting a “Zoom Gathering” – each Sunday morning at 10 am, until 10:20 am. Like today, on June 7th, after the “Gathering”, will be the Service (celebrating the 162nd Anniversary of St. Andrew’s – South Buxton) – Everyone is invited to join us.

Remember our local Food Banks for June 7th – the first Sunday of the month.

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: Here we gather, each from our individual lives.

People: **We carry into this place the joys and the worries of our week, the weight of our personal experience, the anxieties of all that the future may hold.**

Eric: Here we gather, in prayer and preparation.

People: **Here we knit ourselves into a community, here we hold one another in compassion, here we remember that the work you have called us to do, we do not do it alone.**

Eric: Come let us worship.

Opening Prayer:

Holy God, listen to your people praying for your presence with us, as we gather in worship and praise, for your encouragement as we go out into the world, seeking to do your will, for the unity that we find, as the many members of one Body, for the guidance of your Holy Spirit in opening our hearts to hear one another in love. Holy God, listen to your people praying.

Hymn: VU 333 “Listen To Your Children Praying” – Christie Coatsworth

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!

Scripture: John 14: 1 – 11 (from the Contemporary English Version *(By Don Jackson)*)

Jesus Is the Way to the Father

Jesus said to his disciples, “Don’t be worried! Have faith in God and have faith in me. There are many rooms in my Father’s house. I wouldn’t tell you this, unless it was true. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you. After I have done this, I will come back and take you with me. Then we will be together. You know the way to where I am going.”

Thomas said, “Lord, we don’t even know where you are going! How can we know the way?” “I am the way, the truth, and the life!” Jesus answered.

“Without me, no one can go to the Father. If you had known me, you would have known the Father. But from now on, you do know him, and you have seen him.” Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father. That is all we need.”

Jesus replied: Philip, I have been with you for a long time. Don't you know who I am? If you have seen me, you have seen the Father. How can you ask me to show you the Father? Don't you believe that I am one with the Father and that the Father is one with me? What I say isn't said on my own. The Father who lives in me does these things. Have faith in me when I say that the Father is one with me and that I am one with the Father. Or else have faith in me simply because of the things I do.

Reflection: "We Are In This Together"

Today's scripture comes from the night of Jesus' betrayal, between the Last Supper and his arrest. This scripture comes from one of the four chapters where Jesus is preparing his disciples for life after Jesus. Only short hours later, Jesus is arrested and sent off to trial. Jesus says to his disciples, and this is like a prayer to them, "Don't be worried! Have faith in God and have faith in me". Yet in two hours the disciples will have scattered, fleeing for their very lives. They are worried. Their faith in God and their faith in Jesus flees from them, much like as they have flee from Jesus' attackers.

Jesus offers words of comfort to all disciples, including us today, "They are many rooms in my Father's house. I am going there to prepare a place for each of you". These very words Clergy use at Funerals and Celebrations of Life to remind us that we will see and be with Jesus again. We are not be alone. "I will come back and take you with me. Then we will be together". Jesus will come and take us home to our Father's house. These are great words of comfort, that this scripture offer to us humans – especially those humans who believe and follow in Jesus' footsteps.

But then there is Thomas. We come to know Thomas as "Doubting Thomas". If we have a question about what Jesus says, we can be assured that Thomas asks on our behalf. Jesus says, "You know the way to where I am going". Thomas speaks out and asks, "We don't even know where you are going! How can we know the way? Jesus responds with those famous words, "I am the Way, the truth, and the life. No one can go to the Father without me. If you know me, you know the Father". Jesus shows us, and tells us, how God wants us to live and be. Once we follow Jesus, we will be living that Godly life, therefore we will know God personally.

Jesus offers a prayer that showers all disciples – those of Jesus' day and even us, today's faithful, that following Jesus the Christ, connects us in unity with God.

Jesus is praying for the community of his followers who will become the early church, and in turn for us, as we become a community of prayer. It is prayer and words shared today that strengthens and empowers faithful witness and service. In prayer, we hold up the vulnerable in word and deed. God rejoices in our prayers.

In this passage Jesus uses the term “Father.” While many consider this word to show God’s maleness, - let us consider that “Father” can show the intimacy, like the loving relationship between Father and Son.

Today’s prayer in John comes immediately before Jesus’ arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane. In contrast, Matthew, Mark, and Luke have Jesus praying for God to remove this “cup of suffering.” John, on the other hand, presents a very different kind of prayer; this prayer focuses on unity, on glorifying the church, and for the disciples to be blessed in their work. This is a prayer for all followers of Jesus, including you and I.

John prepares us for the question, “How do we move forward?” That question lays heavy on our hearts today. We as society are being asked to do actions that are uncomfortable to us, because we have never had to do this before. How may we receive the strength and courage to move forward? The Power of Prayer can protect us as The Church, and prayer can help keep us unified as The Church.

We know what happens next throughout the next few days, but keep in mind, although the disciples have anxiety, they don’t know what’s coming? The point of John’s gospel is that prayer and hope will keep the disciples connected to Jesus’ vision and purpose - that all is not lost.

This does not mean that all Christians will agree – that would be foolish to think – but rather, we as Christians will recognize that which unites us, is far greater than that which divides us. Prayer can help us to focus on what is important, as we “DO” move forward.

Being the church is not easy – even at the best of times. We are called to be true to our tradition while at the same time being open to the presence of Christ among us. For the next few months, we have really no revelations of what will be expected of us, as The Church moves forward – and The Church will move forward. We love to hold on to yesterday, and we should hold on to that which allows us to move forward. What might that be? We probably do not know yet. John calls us to follow

Jesus in prayer. John calls us to unity – a unity that seeks understanding and strength as we reach out in service to Christ in our community.

Life usually gives us hints to the truth. We are not alone. We have the Power of Prayer. We have the nudge of the Holy Spirit. We have our relationship with Jesus, and in turn our relationship with God, through Jesus. Thanks be to God.

Hymn: VU 636 “Give To Your Wind Your Fears” - Christie Coatsworth

- 1 Give to the winds your fears.
Hope and be undismayed.
God hears your sighs and counts your tears.
God shall lift up your head,
God shall lift up your head.
- 2 Through waves and clouds and storms,
God gently clears your way.
Wait for the time, so shall this night
soon end in joyous day,
soon end in joyous day.
- 3 Even though you do not rule,
yet heaven and earth and hell
proclaim God sits upon the throne,
and rules o'er all things well,
and rules o'er all things well.
- 4 Your everlasting truth,
O God, your ceaseless love,
sees all your children's wants, and knows
what best for each will prove,
what best for each will prove.

Offering:

Eric: In this time of uncertainty, our churches rely on you and me to stay viable and to be essential in our community. We need your prayers and we need your support. Continue sending your monthly cheques to your church treasurer. All the information to donate is on our websites at southbuxton.ca and talbotstreet.ca.

Offering Music: VU 541 “Praise God From Whom All Blessings Flow”

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.

Offering Prayer:

Almighty God, we bring gifts of time, talent, and treasure and offer them, that you might be glorified. Bless all that we offer, that it might be for the stewardship and the nurture of your beloved creation, and of your children. By our gifts, may your presence in this world be made known. By our gifts, may we embody your grace and love towards all that you have made. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer:

Eric: Holy God, glorify us, that we may glorify you!

People: It is not for our own sake, Holy One, that we have chosen to follow in the way of Jesus the Christ. For we know the story; we know that the way of extravagant love is not a way to human status or worldly power. Holy God, glorify us, that we may glorify you!

Eric: Following Jesus can grant to freedom from the destructiveness of the world: freedom from consumerism, from the constant pressure to produce, from the gaze that tells us we are never enough no matter how much we have or how often we work out. Following Jesus means living into the promise that we are enough, as we are, for God to love us and call us to be bearers of the kingdom. Holy God, glorify us, that we may glorify you!

People: Yet we also acknowledge that following Jesus can make us very uncomfortable, as our freedom levels the playing field, and puts us all on equal footing. We are enough, as we are, and so are those who have long been marginalized, despised, rejected. Holy God, glorify us, that we may glorify you!

Eric: In your mercy, God of love, help us to show forth your love to all of this world. Help us to seek out and lift up your presence and the inbreaking of your kingdom wherever we might find it in this world.

People: Remind us that our work is not to our own glory, but always to yours, you who created and loved us all with grace and abundance.

Eric: Help us to look to you, not in clouds and light and heavenly splendour, but among the parched lands in need of rain; among those who are most hurt by the brokenness of this world.

People: God of grace, help us to move the prayers of our hearts into our hands and feet.

Eric: Holy God, glorify us, that we may glorify you, as we pray your special 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: Go from this time and space full of the tenderness of Jesus' care for each one of us. Go, carrying with you the abundance of God's grace and love, and letting it overflow as blessings to the world, now and forever more.

Postlude: “O Love, That Will Not Let Me Go” – Lois Pratt