

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church
July 5, 2020 5th Sunday after Pentecost

207 South Brodie St. Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Words of Welcome

Do you ever find yourself doing things that you don't want to do? I don't mean having to do the dishes or organize the garage, or taking on a task at work that needs doing. I mean like sitting in front of a screen for hours on end when you know there are tasks to be done, or maybe it is even more life altering like giving in to the temptation to drink, do drugs, hurt someone through your words or actions. Maybe it is fear that stops you from acting when something needs to be said to protect another. Today we look at what one scripture has to say about how difficult doing the good or right thing can be. Let's begin with our call to worship.

Call to Worship

Return to the Lord your God, for God is gracious.
Confess to the Lord your God, for God is merciful.
Repent to the Lord your God, for God is slow to anger.
Praise the Lord your God, for God abounds in steadfast love.
Together, let us worship God!

~ written by Rev. Daniel Commerford, Bethany Presbyterian Church, Covington, GA. Posted on [LiturgyLink](https://www.liturgylink.net/). <https://www.liturgylink.net/>

Being a Christian is not easy, but it is life giving and so we sing this prayer..

Hymn

Lord, I want to be a Christian

571

1. Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart, in-a my heart;
Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart.
In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be a Christian in-a my heart.
2. Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart, in-a my heart;
Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart.
In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be more loving in-a my heart.
3. Lord, I want to be more holy in-a my heart, in-a my heart;
Lord, I want to be more holy in-a my heart.
In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be more holy in-a my heart.
4. Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a my heart, in-a my heart;
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a my heart.
In-a my heart, in-a my heart,
Lord, I want to be like Jesus in-a my heart.

Words: public domain

Even though we are separated in our worship we can come together in heart and mind as pray. Let us pray.

Opening Prayer

Grace filled and powerful God, we come to this time of worship knowing that you desire the very best for our lives. You have given us the gift of creation to heal and bring joy. You have given us relationships to bring wholeness and love. We give thanks for your faithfulness towards all your creation, to all people, bringing the power and desire to redeem and restore.

Forgive us when we take for granted all that you have prepared and given for our living. Forgive us when we harm or hurt through thought, word, or action. You know how often we do things that we do not want to do and in fact hate doing, and yet we don't refrain, or turn away from the action, but rather perpetuate that which destroys our own being, or impacts the lives of others.

As we worship open our eyes, ears, and minds to your restorative word so that we may delight in you in our inmost being. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! Amen.

©Joyce Yanishewski written for the 5th Sunday after Pentecost, Year A. July 5, 2020.

Assurance of Pardon

This is the good news: God forgives us and takes our burdens from us.

We would let go of them and welcome hope, joy, grace into our lives.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

©2020 Thom M. Shuman. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com> July 5

We listen now as John Mason reads verses from the Word of God.

Scripture Reading Romans 7:15-25a

¹⁵I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand.

²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. ²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?

²⁵Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org>

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

Message What dwells within me

This scripture seems to be a cross between a tongue twister like, “How much wood could a Wood Chuck chuck if a Wood Chuck could chuck wood?” and excellent spoken word poetry. Paul, the writer of the letter to the Christian community in Rome, weaved words to describe what was going on with sin and what God had done in Christ Jesus to change the trajectory of humanity.

We have landed in the middle of a conversation about the death that sin brings into the world, and the gift that God has given in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection so that we can live fully. This is a passage that is most often preached in the sense of personal sin. I think we can all relate to Paul’s statements that we do not understand our own actions. For we do not do what we want, but we do the very things we hate. In very personal ways we choose to do things that harm our bodies and relationships. We choose to do things that have us behave in ways that we want to change and yet we fall into the traps and temptations that would once again bring us to a point of frustration and hopelessness, instead of making choices that build and restore, ourselves, other people, and creation.

It has been easy to use this scripture in a very personal sense because of the single letter word “I”. We like being the center, the focus, and this scripture gives us every reason to think that this is about us as individuals, and there is value in reading the scripture this way, but what if this “I” was more of a corporate or encompassing “I” which included each of us in the fullness of humanity, not just as individuals?

This also means that we have to look at the word sin as not just those things which individuals choose to do that impact their own lives, but how our systems and structures, are complicit in the sin that we all participate in. From government, to health care, education, and policing, and mental health we would need to examine and hold accountable those things which cause us all to sin. Because, as it turns out we are all part of systems that perpetuate sin and death. Death which can come in the form of emotional, spiritual, social and in the extreme, physical death.

When Paul was writing he was looking at the long history of Israel. He was a direct descendant of that history and had celebrated who he was, but now he was looking at that history of God’s promised redemption for the world, for God’s own people, in light of what he knew and understood to be true about Jesus Christ. Paul was looking at the big picture.

It is from this vantage Paul says that as humanity, we do not do what we want, but we do the very thing we hate, that it is because the pull of structures and systems, and the corruption that can be a part of those things is so strong that even when we don’t want to be acting in a sinful way, sometimes we are without even realizing it.

How many of us were brought up in good homes, with loving parents, but do not have the knowledge to recognize how the action of filling up a vehicle with gas or buying

jewelry reverberate when communities are at war over resources and the environment is impacted. We want jobs, goods and services, and convenience, and so we turn a blind eye to the devastating result of our consumerism.

We know that many people do not make a living wage and so work long hours at several jobs to make ends meet, but when it does not affect us or someone we love, it just becomes another talking point. We see abuse in homes and question police tactics in tragic circumstances but don't want to get involved. This is the broader picture of sin that Paul was talking about.

Let me share with you Eugene Peterson's version of verses 21-23 as written in *The Message*. His paraphrase, "It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge."¹

Sin is a tricky life partner; it is always there to trip us up. Still, we have hope. In Christ, considering the depth of meaning and freedom of his death, we can be freed from what Paul calls the body of death to a life that restores all of humanity to what God intended for us.

Again, I go to Eugene Peterson, as his translation gives us the hope and truth that we are in need of, "The answer, thank God, is that Jesus Christ can and does *[do for us what we cannot do for ourselves]*. God acted to set things right in this life of contradictions where I want to serve God with all my heart and mind, but am pulled by the influence of sin to do something totally different."²

It is our work to become aware of the ways in which we live complicit with sin in our lives personally and how that affects not only our own lives, but retains the power and privilege that sin has found at home in our systems and structures. We are capable of this. It is about choice, the choice to live our calling as Christians or continue living in a less than hoped for way. It may seem an overwhelming task, but we do not do it alone. We do it together, in community with each other and with God, through the life-giving work of the cross and the power of the Holy Spirit. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Today as we close with prayer, you will note that I am using a different version of the Lord's prayer to end. Many of us have spent our lives getting comfortable with one or maybe two English translations of the Lord's Prayer. I am taking this opportunity to help us learn new ways of saying this significant prayer as spoken by our Jesus as he taught the disciples. Let us pray the prayers of the people ending with the Prayer of Jesus.

¹ [The Message](#) (MSG) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

² Ibid.

Closing Prayer

God of mystery and meaning, help us to discover your purpose for our lives. Free us from the limits set by past expectation and experience and keep us open to all possibilities.

Bless those who extend the boundaries of love and respect, who show kindness to strangers and forgiveness to people who hurt them. Work among us by your Spirit to heal the invisible wounds of the heart:

We pray for those who suffer from the influence of anger, jealousy, resentment or bitterness, their own or from others. Work among us by your Spirit to create mutual respect and good relations.

We pray for your wisdom to inspire politicians, judges, lawyers, and all who form and keep our laws. Work among us by your Spirit to recognize injustice and respond to create systems of fairness and trust.

We pray for your healing for those who are ill or in chronic pain, for those grieving the many losses of the pandemic, and for all who feel afraid for the future. Work among us by your Spirit to renew hope and sustain our support for each other.

We pray for those whose workplaces are recovering from the lockdowns and economic shock during the pandemic. Give courage to those who have lost so much, and creativity to those reorganizing their lives. Work among us by your Spirit to rebuild common life with an eye to the most vulnerable.

Lord, in your mercy...
Hear our prayer.

And now we offer you the prayers on hearts today in silence...

To you, Source of each life and all life, we bring our prayers, uniting in the words Jesus taught us:

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 5th Sunday after Pentecost, July 5, 2020 Year A

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Invitation to make an offering

God is kind and compassionate and so we offer our gifts in hope, trusting that God will bless them and use them to offer kindness to our neighbours in Jesus' name.

If you would like to make a donation toward the life and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> for more information.

Once again, we sing and in doing so celebrate in our bodies what we know in our hearts and minds,

Hymn

I need thee every hour

538

1. I need thee every hour, most gracious Lord;
no tender voice like thine can peace afford.

Refrain:

I need thee, O I need thee, every hour I need thee;
O bless me now, my Saviour, I come to thee!

2. I need thee every hour, stay thou nearby;
temptations lose their power when thou art nigh.

Refrain

3. I need thee every hour in joy or pain;
come quickly and abide or life is vain.

Refrain

4. I need thee every hour, most Holy One;
O make me thine indeed, thou blessed Son!

Refrain.

Words: public domain

Benediction

May the God who brings good from broken desires,
the Christ who shares his yoke with us,
the Spirit which breathes her wisdom into our hearts
sustain and guide us this day and every day.

Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year A, Volume 2 © 2014 Westminster John Knox Press.