

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski

**Fifth Sunday after Pentecost - June 27, 2021**

## Words of Welcome

Some of you, more well versed in the world's economies than I, could likely answer my questions about different economic systems. You know, traditional, command, market, and mixed economies. The Apostle Paul's also talks about economy though he doesn't use that word, but surely his words are about the economy of God's grace. Interested? Stay with me and together we can take a look at the business of generosity and grace.

## Call to Worship

Through every age and in every place, the Christ in whose name we gather  
calls disciples with a simple invitation, words of challenge: "Come follow me."

And where is it that we go with Christ?

Christ leads us among enemies and strangers,  
causing us to regard all persons as potential friends.

Christ leads us into uncharted places of spiritual wilderness  
where the Word and will of God are the only reliable guides.

Christ leads us to lose ourselves just so we might be found,  
just so grace might become real.

And Christ leads us toward the apparent dead-end of a cross  
to reveal a highway to new life.

We gather to worship the Christ who leads.

May we gain the wisdom and courage to follow.

© Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P32.

## Hymn

*Take my life and let it be*

637

1. Take my life and let it be  
consecrated, Lord, to thee;  
take my moments and my days:  
let them flow in ceaseless praise.
2. Take my hands and let them move  
at the impulse of thy love;  
take my feet and let them be  
swift and beautiful for thee.
3. Take my voice and let me sing  
always, only for my King;  
take my lips and let them be  
filled with messages from thee.
4. Take my silver and gold:  
not a mite would I withhold;  
take my intellect, and use  
every power as thou shalt choose.

5. Take my will and make it thine;  
it shall be no longer mine;  
take my heart: it is thine own;  
it shall be thy royal throne.

6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour  
at thy feet its treasure store;  
take myself and I will be  
ever, only, all for thee

Words and Music: public domain

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Great and holy God, source of our life and all life,  
your glory is incomprehensible and your majesty infinite.  
You are the wellspring of new life and the fountain of true freedom.  
We marvel at your love, beyond all measure;  
we are challenged by your kindness which reaches further than we can imagine.  
We worship you in gratitude,  
offering you our praise with the voices of all creation,  
and our trust, because you have come close to us in Christ Jesus.  
Receive our love and loyalty, now and always,  
offered through the Spirit who prays within us.

**Great and merciful God, our judge and our hope,  
We confess we have sinned against you and one another,  
in the ways we think, the things we say and the things we do.  
We have been quick to judge others, but less critical of our own actions.  
We focus on what we lack rather than recognize how blessed we are.  
We ignore the needs of others and fail to see how we could make a difference.  
In your tender mercy, O God, forgive what we have been,  
amend what we are, and direct who we shall become,  
through the grace of Jesus Christ, our Lord.**

God of each and every generation, send us your Holy Spirit as we listen to the scriptures read and interpreted. Open our minds to your wisdom, open our eyes to see how to serve you, and open our hearts to receive and share your healing love.  
Amen.      ©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Fifth Sunday after Pentecost - June 27, 2021. Year B

## Assurance of Pardon

God loves us, forgives us, and frees us from our sins;  
therefore be at peace and love with boldness and generosity.  
Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 2 © 2015 Westminster John Knox Press

## Scripture Reading 2 Corinthians 8:1-15

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; <sup>2</sup>for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. <sup>3</sup>For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, <sup>4</sup>begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this

ministry to the saints—<sup>5</sup>and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us, <sup>6</sup>so that we might urge Titus that, as he had already made a beginning, so he should also complete this generous undertaking among you. <sup>7</sup>Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

<sup>8</sup>I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. <sup>9</sup>For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. <sup>10</sup>And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something—<sup>11</sup>now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. <sup>12</sup>For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. <sup>13</sup>I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between <sup>14</sup>your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. <sup>15</sup>As it is written,

“The one who had much did not have too much,  
and the one who had little did not have too little.”

*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** Economy of Grace

Any one who knows me fairly well, quickly learns that anything to do with numbers is not my jam. I have learned that as the minister I have to pay attention and not glaze over at finance meetings, but it has taken much effort to get me to that point. In my personal life, I know how to balance my account, budget, and track spending as well as savings, but that is again out of necessity. I'll write a sermon, letter, or report anytime instead of having to focus on numbers. Get to the bigger conversations around money and I am likely to zone out.

Last year one of the teachers in my extended family had taken his Social Studies class online and I watched a few episodes where he talked about economies. I think it was one of the few times it made sense, but it was done with humour and using examples I could understand so that made a big difference.

In 2 Corinthians Paul is also talking finance and economics. It is a pretty basic conversation that has implications about faith, gratitude, and understanding God's gift of abundant life.

As the story goes, the Corinthian church had apparently made a commitment the year before to help the followers of Christ in Jerusalem who were in need of aid and the Corinthians had not followed through with taking up an offering, and if they had I guess Paul didn't think it was quite enough.

Now Paul uses some tactics in his writing to the Corinthians that me or anyone talking about generosity would do well to steer away from. The first is playing a game of one-up-man-ship. He starts with, "let me tell you about the Christians in Macedonia. They have less money than you, suffer more hardship and yet their generosity has 'overflowed in a wealth of generosity.'" On top of that they begged "for the privilege of sharing in this ministry of generosity to the saints." In this case, saints being other Christians. It was almost as if he was planning to shame them into being more generous.

Then he turns around and starts complimenting the Corinthians telling them they excel in everything – in faith, speech, knowledge, utmost eagerness, and suggests that they also excel in how much Paul and those with him love them. Maybe butter them up a little before he hits them with, sooooo...we want you to excel also in this undertaking of giving generously, stating that it is a test to see the genuineness of the Corinthians love compared to others.

I hear my mother's voice in my head as she was not a fan of Paul's, and these types of passages may have contributed to her opinion. Stirring up a sibling rivalry, telling one child that you love them more than another, shaming them to get what you want, really doesn't cut it. Then making it a test on top that, well seem like trouble. Thankfully, after all that Paul begins to say to them things that are helpful. Paul tells them and us, why this giving is so important. This kind of giving is so important because it reflects the generosity of God in sending Jesus so that we might have abundant life and it reflects back our gratitude for that gift.

In verse 9 Paul talks about Jesus becoming poor, this was not about material wealth or having money, that Paul was speaking about. It was that Jesus gave up everything as the Son of God to live like you and I, to become a flesh and blood being in the world. Jesus gave up the constant love and communion of God the Father and the Holy Spirit in the way that he had, from before time, experienced it. That is how for our sakes he became poor so that by his poverty we might become rich. Again, not rich in wealth, but rich in relationships, love, forgiveness, and grace. This is often referred to as the "economy of God".

God's economy does not usually find itself aligned with our sense of how economies should work. Humans often desire more, more stuff, more money, more trips...well you fill in your blank. God's economy meant that Jesus suffered, but it was because of love. It was because of God's desire to be generous in helping people become whole again. It is about giving away, not about acquiring. Interestingly, in God's economy the more

we give the more we receive. You may not receive more money, but you will receive meaning and purpose.

Recently I learned about a game called, “spend bill gates money”<sup>1</sup> you start out with 1,000,000,000,000 and see if you can spend it all. It is hard to do. Elon Musk is another gentleman that has been in the news a lot of late. It is estimated that Elon Musk has made over \$16 billion dollars an hour since January 1, 2020.<sup>2</sup> Many people celebrate and have as their life goals to achieve at least some status as one of the richest people in the world. It certainly makes me ponder this kind of economy that allows individuals to have so much when so many don’t have a pillow, a bed, water, or a bathroom. This would have gone so against Paul’s principals of seeing people in need, having the ability to make a difference, and yet being hesitant.

Now I realize wealthy people give plenty and have foundations, ect. But Paul references an Old Testament quote that comes from the story of the manna the people found on the ground each morning when the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years. It goes like this, “The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little. (Exodus 16:18) If we lived in God’s economy and not by the standards of human beings, we would find a lot more equity in people’s life experiences.

There are of course people who feel that one needs to earn their way or they will be lazy and rely on others. I am not about to argue those kinds of points with anyone in this moment. All I am trying to say is that God’s economy has a lot more room for every one to have enough. And God’s generosity is not limited to our experience day to day on this planet, but it also extends beyond our lived experience to a time when we rest with God. It is “divine economy”.

Paul is saying in verse 9 that God’s economy was seen in the saving act of grace in Christ Jesus and this is to be how we, as Christians, determine how generous we can be. It is a model of Christian economics. Paul goes on to say how that is played out in the Christian life. In my own words I hear Paul saying follow through when you have made a commitment to help others. He is careful to say that the gift should come from what one has - not according to what one does not have.

If you have to take out a loan to be generous you are not helping anyone. You are creating more burden, mostly for yourself. Giving should not put us at risk of needing help ourselves. That defeats the purpose.

Giving until it feels good is what we are after, not giving until it hurts. One should feel good about what their gifts of time, energy, money, talent, and more are achieving. If you have to go to bed worrying because you have shorted yourself or your family then it may be time to rethink your giving. One must always examine one’s motives around giving. If

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://neal.fun/spend/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.celebritiesstatus.com/elon-musk-has-made-16-million-per-hour>. Accessed June 26, 2021

you give to feel important, your give beyond your means, or your giving shorts someone you love and value of your time, energy, money, or whatever, then some reflection about that would be important.

In God's economy we see the need of another and respond as we are able. We see the need of those working to help others and respond as we are able. Paul states, "I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance."

You don't need to be a Bill Gates, Elon Musk, or anyone else that you admire in order to have abundance in comparison to another who may have less. It is about looking at what you can give and balancing that with another person or group of people's needs or those providing for others.

Now, Paul was specifically talking about money, and that is how our economy operates – with money. So to say that we shouldn't exam our generosity in terms of money is just not Biblical. It can also be through this same lens that we extend, not forget or ignore the piece about money, but extend that concept of generosity in terms of love, forgiveness, opportunity, and grace.

We can extend our money, our love, our grace, our desire to be in community in a way that reflects God's economy of grace and splatters it everywhere, so that it covers our conversations, our bank accounts, our vision and imagination, our concern, and our willingness to hear the story of another even when it is far from our own experience and knowledge.

All this is grounded in the central verse, "For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sakes he became poor so that by his poverty you might become rich."

God's economy is about richness of life in all its wondrous variety, experience, and people. Open wide your hearts, minds, and lives to God's generous and abundant grace and may it flow through you to others, this day and every day.

In Christ, with Christ, and through Christ.

## **Prayers of the People**

Lord Jesus Christ,

You are our source of peace and healing, and we are grateful.

Today we pray for each one who faces choices and decisions about their health—for those trying to follow good diets and exercise enough;

for all waiting for appointments or wondering if they should make another;

for any who find caring for their health frustrating,

and for all facing pain or anxiety after the months of pandemic.

We hold in prayer all Indigenous peoples who are being retraumatized by the news of more graves, more unspeakable pain. May there be reconciliation and acknowledgements of harm done in this land and country *(Pause)*  
In all our struggles and good intentions, bring healing, strength, and peace.

Lord Jesus Christ:

You are our source of wisdom and generosity, and we are grateful.

Today we pray for each one facing choices and decisions about finances—  
for those struggling with bills and budgets;

for those torn between covering necessities and enjoying a treat;

for those who want to be generous and yet feel overwhelmed by all the need. *(Pause)*

In all our financial struggles and good intentions to be generous  
bring healing, strength, and peace.

Lord Jesus Christ,

you are our source of love and forgiveness, and we are grateful.

Today we pray for each one facing choices and decisions about their relationships.

We pray for people we ought to call but just haven't;

for those with whom we feel a grievance and have been avoiding;

We pray for those we'd like to invite into closer relationship but haven't yet;

and for those we miss dearly and need to tell how much we cherish them. *(Pause)*

In all our good intentions to live out your love and mercy  
bring healing, strength, and peace.

Lord Jesus Christ:

you are the source of rest and right relationship for God's whole creation,  
and we are grateful.

We pray for the earth, its many creatures and inhabitants competing for survival,  
for its scarce resources and its abundant beauty. *(Pause)*

Challenge us to live out our good intentions for the earth in our lifestyle choices,  
big and small, so that your kingdom may come on earth not by disaster but through  
discipleship. For it is as your disciples we pray together:

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. Fifth Sunday after Pentecost - June 27, 2021. Year B

## 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

Paul challenged the church at Corinth to recognize their abundance, that they might share with those in need. God calls us to give out of our bounty, that all might have enough to live on without fear. With eager hearts, let us joyfully give out of our abundance of material wealth and in response to our gratitude for God's love for us. I encourage you to present an offering to God this day to your church community.

<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/2896/worship-elements-june-27-2021>

If you consider St. Andrew's your church, regardless of where you live, would like to learn more about St. Andrew's, get involved in our ministry and work, or 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 or to connect with me.

## Hymn

*Christ, you call us all to service*

585

1. Christ, you call us all to service,  
call us all who follow you;  
plant in us a deep commitment  
all your work and will to do.  
Fire a passion for your justice;  
in us kindle love of peace;  
help us heal the brokenhearted;  
to the captive bring release.
2. Teach us how to work together,  
brother, sister, side by side,  
equal partners in the struggle,  
in the cause of truth allied.  
To each one some gift is given—  
man or woman, young or old;  
help us use each skill and talent,  
your great purpose to unfold.
3. Let us be a servant people,  
reconciling, ending strife,  
seeking ways more just of sharing  
and of ordering human life.  
Fill us with a glowing vision  
of this world as it should be;  
send us forth to change that vision  
into blest reality.

Words: Joy F. Patterson ©1994 Hope Publishing. Music: Public Domain  
Used By Permission. CCLI License #11276509 + Streaming License #21035127

## Benediction

As apprentices of the servant Christ,  
learn the essential skills of faith -  
devoted prayer and determined action,  
persistent hope and practiced love.

May your deeds reflect the wondrous grace of God. Amen.

© Glen E. Rainsley. *Hear Our Prayer: Resource for Worship and Devotions*. United Church Press. Cleveland, Ohio. 1996. P174.