

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

21st Sunday after Pentecost, October 17, 2021

Introit

I was Glad

C.O. Beck

Words of Welcome

Who doesn't want to be great, or at least great at something? We all have a desire to be recognized for what we do well. For some the desire to be great is a driving force that has created champions in business, sport, media, and many other areas of work. Greatness is also something that people in both the Old and New Testaments sought to achieve. So let's take a look at what greatness meant for those who followed Jesus and for us in our time.

Call to Worship

Welcome! There are many places you could be right now,
but you have chosen to be here:

where we learn how to live in God's Kingdom.

Welcome to this moment - full of music, of words, of prayer –
yet also filled with danger:

where we encounter a Wisdom we cannot always understand.

Welcome to this time of worship, a place to honour God,
the most dangerous place in town:

**where we talk about and with God, and are reduced to silence
so we may hear the call to discipleship.**

Adapted from ©2021 Thom M. Shuman. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com> October 17.

***Hymn**

I am the church! You are the church!

475

Refrain

I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together!

All who follow Jesus, all around the world!

Yes, we're the church together!

1. The church is not a building; the church is not a steeple;
The church is not a resting place; the church is a people.

Refrain

2. We're many kinds of people, with many kinds of faces,
all colours and all ages, too, from all times and places.

Refrain

3. Sometimes the church is marching; sometimes it's bravely burning;
sometimes it's riding, sometimes hiding; always it's learning.

Refrain

*I am the church! You are the church! We are the church together!
All who follow Jesus, all around the world!
Yes, we're the church together!*

4. And when the people gather, there's singing and there's praying;
there's laughing and there's crying sometimes, all of it saying:

Refrain

5. At Pentecost some people received the Holy Spirit
and told the Good News through the world to all who would hear it.

Refrain

"I am the church," Words and Music by Richard Avery & Donald Marsh © 1972 Hope Publishing Company. Used By Permission. CCLI License #11276509 + Streaming License #21035127

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Praise be to you, O God,
for the wonders of your creation.
You spin the shining stars and stretch out the seas to the furthest horizon.
You lift the curtain of dawn so light can chase away the night.
You give the earth its seasons and each creature its lifespan,
breathing life and love into each precious soul.
And so, we come to praise you,
knowing human greatness is a mere shadow of yours.
In this hour of worship,
breathe your Spirit into us once more,
to inspire us to serve you with creativity and commitment,
and with the honesty and humility we meet in Jesus Christ,
your Son, our Lord.

**Lord Jesus Christ,
you call us to walk your way in the world,
to serve our neighbours and love our enemies.
We confess these are not easy choices for us.
We sometimes turn a blind eye to a neighbour in need.
We like to follow the crowd rather than challenge popular opinions.
Forgive us, Jesus, for seeking an easier way than your way.
Guide us in the way we should go and then walk each step with us.**

Holy One, you are the Source of Wisdom for the ages. Prepare us to learn from your Word. Send the Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts to the scriptures, that we may grow wiser as we listen, and serve you more willingly as we live.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 21st Sunday after Pentecost. October 17, 2021. Year B.

Assurance of Pardon

Our God deals gently with those who stumble, who lose their way, and who get dazzled by wanting power and glory. That is the good news for us. We are forgiven, and graced with new life.

**Thanks be to God, who is the home of our hearts,
who fills us with grace and mercy in every moment. Amen.**

©2021 Thom M. Shuman. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com> October 17.

Scripture Reading Mark 10:35-45

³⁵ James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' ³⁶And he said to them, 'What is it you want me to do for you?' ³⁷And they said to him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.' ³⁸But Jesus said to them, 'You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' ³⁹They replied, 'We are able.' Then Jesus said to them, 'The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.'

⁴¹ When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. ⁴²So Jesus called them and said to them, 'You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. ⁴³But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.'

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 How to Become Great

There is a true story about six kids who got shipped wrecked of the island of Tonga in the 1960's. They were from a boarding school and decided that they wanted an adventure so they stole a boat and headed off. The long and the short of it is they were not well prepared, ended up in a storm and were shipwrecked on a small rock island for a year. What to me is so incredible about their story is that it was through cooperation and servanthood that they survived a year together on the island. Writer Rutger Bregman talks about this story on the podcast *Throughline*, in an episode called *Chaos*. He says,

So [the boys] worked together in teams of two - two to be on the lookout for ships continuously, to tend to the garden because they sort of started planting food and crops, et cetera, and two to cook. That was sort of how they worked. Did they have fights? Well, obviously they had. But what's really amazing here is that when there was a fight, they had this policy that one would go to one side of the island. The

other would go to the other side of the island. They would cool off a little bit and then, after a couple of hours, come back and say sorry.¹

If you want to learn more about that story you can Google “The Real-life Lord of the Flies”², but the point is this group of young men managed to survive not by tearing one another down, or fighting, but by cooperating and serving one another. So often we are led to believe, through media, politics, and business, that to get ahead means that you have to leave someone or something behind, that power and prestige are things to strive for above the cost to another human being.

Wars have led us to believe that someone always has to be in control of power. Politicians at odds with one another can nearly cripple a government as those in power want to keep their power, when working together, finding solutions rather than belittling one another would bring about needed and lasting change the world over. Having experienced the US elections not so many months ago, our own national elections merely weeks ago, and the signs of a provincial election in our future, one can get tired of the rhetoric, the put-downs, and mud-slinging, longing and hoping that there could be a future where people learn to work together for the good of all.

It feels as if, no matter where one looks, we are bombarded with images and messages that suggests that you are only somebody if you have power, prestige, fame or glory, and money to buy whatever you want. It seems this is human nature, even the sons of Zebedee were bold enough to come forward to Jesus and try to bargain their way into the power they thought was a part of the revolution they assumed Jesus was going to lead. They said, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” Rather presumptuous of them I’d say. They continue, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.”

They are oblivious to what they are asking, which is wild if you put this whole conversation in context. Just prior to this ask, Jesus has pronounced what is understood as his third passion prediction – in other words, Jesus has predicted his death describing the kind of death he is to face. The story goes in verses 32-34(NRSV) that Jesus “took the twelve disciples aside and began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, ‘See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him, and after three day he will rise again.’”

I have a feeling the only part they heard was that Jesus will rise again. As Jesus said, they do not know what they are asking. After James and John have asked their question, Jesus responds with “Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” Of course, they reply yes, which leads one to believe

¹ <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/977526130>. Accessed October 15, 2021.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYebOCCoTYM>. Accessed October 15, 2021

they didn't hear any of the part about being mocked, spit up, flogged, and killed. They just want to be great and important.

When the other ten heard this, they were incensed, angry that James and John would think they should be the ones to be honoured in such a way. At different points in the Gospel of Mark, the disciples take turns in misunderstanding what it means to follow Jesus. They want to control his power, lead him in the way they understand things should go. They didn't get that Jesus' whole life was about serving others, not having power of them, even though he could.

Jesus says to his disciples, "You know that among the Gentiles [these would be the people who do not believe in the God of the Hebrews] those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but [...but] whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all." And here is the kicker, "for the Son of Man [Jesus] came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many."

Now we can be pretty smug about the disciples and their thick headedness, but how many of us secretly long to be served rather than to serve, would rather be honoured than to put others in a place of honour, covet the fame and fortune of the rich and famous whether actors or the head of a Fortune 500 company. And yet Jesus words ring as true today as they did back then, "whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. Remember this is not doormat obedience where you allow people to walk all over you, but it is a choice to think of another and their needs, and then find ways to help meet that need.

To be a disciple of Christ means that you will serve God first, your family, your community, the community of faith, and the community in which you live. Interestingly enough, it is in serving that we heal brokenness, our own and that of others. It is the example of Jesus' ministry of service that will bring about wholeness in community...in life. We get to be a part of that, we need to pay attention to our behaviours, our thoughts, our desires as see how those lines up with Jesus' ministry of servanthood. In the kingdom of God if you want to be great then start by serving others in whatever small and big ways you think God might be asking of you.

And that's a point to remember, this is not about serving as others might think we should, but to find how God is calling us to care for the needs of those who are on the margins, who are down-trodden, who are ill, broke or broken-hearted. God may bring someone into your life to help you discern or to guide you, but it is always about seeking God's will, and seeing how what you are choosing to do, how you are living, lines up with Jesus' ministry of service to others.

May you be bold in your service, yet kind in your words and actions, remembering that God is using you to change the world. Now that is being great! Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of each and every life,

You open our eyes on the world you love to show us your presence and your purpose in all creation. We thank you for the wonders of the seasons as they change, and for gifts of love and compassion you offer us through friend and stranger. We pray for the earth as it struggles to support your many creatures. Make us better stewards in creation, and kinder neighbours to both friend and stranger.

God of justice,

You open our eyes on the world to show us struggle and conflict.

We see the burdens many are carrying, and the way differences create division.

We pray for all those still struggling with the economic impact of the pandemic and for those feeling the stress of these days in deeply personal ways.

Show us how to support those in difficulty and mend relationships in our community.

God of compassion,

You open our eyes on the world to show us suffering and despair.

We see challenges for health care all around us, and know many still face the effects of COVID-19 or other illnesses and complications that make life hard to cope with.

We pray for those who suffer here and in so many places in the world you love.

Give strength and compassion to all who offer treatment, and courage and hope to all who wait for healing.

God of wisdom,

You open our eyes on the world to show us its complexities.

We see countries locked in old animosities and communities overwhelmed by fresh upheaval. We pray for the millions displaced in current conflicts and by natural disasters, and for leaders here and around the world. Open their eyes to the suffering of the earth and those in their jurisdictions. And open all our eyes to ways we can participate in solutions to situations which break your heart and ours.

And so, we pray for your kingdom to come in the words Jesus taught us:

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 21st Sunday after Pentecost. October 17, 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

The scriptures remind us how much we depend on God's goodness. Jesus invites us to put others' needs before our own, to serve in the world as he did. Our offering is one way we offer God our thanks for all we have received, and one way we can serve those who depend on our kindness as well as God's.

©The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 21st Sunday after Pentecost. October 17, 2021. Year B.

As we are people from different churches and places following this service. I encourage each of you to present your offering to God this day to your church community.

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

Brother, sister, let me serve you

635

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace
to let you be my servant too. | 2. We are pilgrims on a journey,
and companions on the road;
we are here to help each other
walk the mile and bear the load. |
| 3. I will hold the Christ-light for you
in the night-time of your fear;
I will hold my hand out to you,
speak the peace you long to hear. | 4. I will weep when you are weeping;
when you laugh I'll laugh with you;
I will share your joy and sorrow,
Till we've seen this journey through. |
| 5. When we sing to God in heaven,
we shall find such harmony,
born of all we've known together
of Christ's love and agony. | 6. Brother, sister, let me serve you;
let me be as Christ to you;
pray that I may have the grace to
let you be my servant too. |

"Brother, sister, let me serve you," Words & Music by Richard Gillard
© 1993 Scripture in Song, Publisher New Zealand Hymnbook Trust
All rights reserved. Annual License with podcasting OneLicense.net A-723877

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.