

## St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

Fifth Sunday of Easter - May 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022

### Words of Welcome

We talk about love a lot in conversations. We love chocolate, we love our homes, we love the restaurant down the street. We also talk about love in our personal relationships. The New Testament is filled with stories and talk of love. Today we consider love as Jesus spoke about it on the night before he would be taken into custody and from there death. I invite you to stay with me as we consider love as Jesus thought about it and in fact, urged all followers to imitate. We begin with a call to worship.

### Call to Worship

Praise the Lord!

**Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise God in the heights!**

Praise God, all you angels; praise God, all creatures high and low!

**Rulers of the earth and all peoples, praise God's holy name!**

Young men and women alike, old and young together!

**With voices united, let us praise the Lord!**

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### Hymn

*Come sing, O Church, in joy!*

757

1. Come sing, O church, in joy! Come join, O church, in song!  
For Christ the Lord has led us through the ages long!  
In bold accord, come celebrate the journey now and praise the Lord!
2. Long years have come and gone, and still God reigns supreme,  
empowering us to catch the vision, dream the dream!  
In bold accord, Come celebrate the journey now and praise the Lord!
3. Let courage be our friend, let wisdom be our guide,  
as we in mission magnify the Crucified!  
In bold accord, come celebrate the journey now and praise the Lord!
4. Come sing, O church, in joy! Come join, O church, in song!  
For Christ the Lord has triumphed o'er the ages long!  
In bold accord, come celebrate the journey now and praise the Lord!

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### Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Holy God,

the first and the last, beginning and end of all things,  
you are worthy of praise from all your creation.

Sun, moon, and stars praise you. Earth, sea, and sky praise you.

Every living thing praises you in its own way.  
And so we praise you in our human diversity,  
joining our varied voices with all your creatures in heaven and on earth.  
You fill our lives with the wonder of your love in Christ Jesus.

**Loving God,**

**Jesus commanded us to love one another so the world would know we follow him. Yet we confess we do not always love one another, not the way Jesus loves us. The world has seen our squabbling, our history of hypocrisy, and our lack of compassion for those who don't measure up.**

**Loving God, forgive us. Lord Jesus, continue to love us.**

**Holy Spirit, fill us with love, so that the world will witness your love in our words and actions. Move throughout the world to reveal your purposes for every living thing. Receive our prayers and praise this day, for you are the Source of our life and our hope, Holy God, ever Three and Ever One. Amen.**

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## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

We are beckoned by God to live our faith as Jesus did, with dedication and with daring. And we are promised the strengthening presence of a love steadfast and enduring. Glory be to God.

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## **Scripture Reading John 13:31-35**

<sup>31</sup>When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. <sup>32</sup>If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. <sup>33</sup>Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' <sup>34</sup>I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## **Message To love one another**

Sometimes context is everything. Have you ever walked in on a conversation and realized that you didn't have all the information? Or what people were actually talking about was completely different from what you thought was going on?

These five short verses that were read from John 13 are pretty much taken out of context. When we read or hear it, we think, "Oh that's nice, of course Jesus wants us to love others." Many of us have been singing "Jesus love me, this I know" since we were little children. It may have been the first hymn you ever learned by heart. So, to hear Jesus say, "Just as I have loved you, you also should love on another" well it just sounds and

feels right. Jesus goes on to say “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

So, we know that Jesus loves us and we know we are to love each other. That feels right. It sounds doable. That is until you realize the context into which Jesus spoke these words. In the church we are in the time after Easter, but this scripture reading has taken us back to the night of the last supper Jesus is having with his disciples before the arrest, trial, and ultimately his death. It is the last night that Jesus will be with them as he has been with them for these last three years. They have trusted him, watched him, followed him. Jesus is their teacher and leader. They fully expect that he is going to lead them to a great victory. And he does, just not the way anyone would expect or even be able to comprehend until the days, months, and years, after Jesus’ resurrection.

For now, they are gathered together in a room, dining with one another. They feel safe. They are at ease. They are listening to Jesus, yet there are moments that are difficult to grasp.

It is important to remember, the scriptures and stories that we read come from a time after Jesus’ death. This is not like a news reporter on the scene of an unfolding story, nor is it the play-by-play action of a sports announcer. The stories that are shared by writers of the New Testament, reflect on the experiences of the disciples as they spent time with Jesus. We are getting what the writers felt was most important to the narrative, to their purpose for writing. It is different from a historical account as well in that the purpose of the writing was to share with others what seemed most important to revealing the character and life of Jesus and how that then changed the world of those whose lives Jesus touched directly, and give instruction and wisdom to those who would follow, even now for us as we hear and read these words.

As the friends and companions linger over the meal, Jesus summarizes his teaching. He speaks to his relationship with God, referring again to himself as light into the world, so that everyone who believe in him should not remain in the darkness. (12:46). He continues to say that he does not judge anyone who hears his words and does not keep them, for he came not to judge the world, but to save the world. (12:47).

Then Jesus did something that seemed unthinkable... “Jesus got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him.” (13:4-5) The master was washing the feet of the followers, the students. This is important. In the story, Peter, one of the disciples, rebukes Jesus and says, “You will never wash my feet” Yet, when it comes to the command to love one another just as I have love you, you also should love one another” everything that Jesus does shows us something of that love. Jesus was willing to take the place of a servant even though he was revered by those closest to them, and he washed their feet.

After this scene comes another significant example of how to love. Jesus says that “The one who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me...After saying this Jesus was trouble

in spirit, and declared, ‘Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.’” Of course, those gathered are wondering who the heck would betray Jesus in a way that was so troubling to Jesus. There is chatter amongst them, and Jesus speaks again, “It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” “So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot.”

In this time of camaraderie, of sharing in a meal, of washing feet, Jesus knows all through this that Judas is going to betray him to the authorities, and yet he washes Judas’ feet, eats with him, and doesn’t get angry. He is troubled in spirit, so hurt, sad, and likely frustrated, but he knows it is going to happen. Jesus knows that this act is going to lead to death. Jesus also knows that it is part of what will happen, the work he has been sent to do among people, so that all people, then and now, could be reconciled to God through Jesus death, resurrection, and then ascension.

We have looked at what was going on prior to Jesus words that we should love one another, just as he has loved us. Yet this passage is also framed at the backend by Peter’s denial of knowing Christ. Something Jesus predicted. Jesus was experiencing betrayal and knew that the disciples, those he was eating and drinking with, those who had been with him for the last three years, would scatter. He would be utterly alone in just a few hours. Again, even with those things in mind, he tells them, “Do not let your hearts be trouble. Believe in God, believe also in me.” (14:1-2) He proceeds to tell them that he is going before them to prepare dwelling places for them. They will be together again.

At the time, none of this makes sense. That is why reflection is such an important part of our faith tradition and is a good practice in our lives. When we reflect on our experiences with others, ourselves, and with God, we most often come to understand more fully or at least find ways to learn about what was important and life changing about these things. It is why in looking back to when this was written we can see what was important.

Jesus said to those he had spent so much time with, had invested in them with his words and works, his teaching and love, “I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have love you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

Loving one another was not something new, what was new about the commandment was that it was to be lived out in the lives of those who call themselves followers of Christ, lived out in the example of washing feet even if you don’t have to, having a meal with those you know may betray or walk away. It doesn’t mean it isn’t troubling, Jesus was troubled, but he loved anyway. Let me say this does not mean that you have to put yourself in harms way. If you are in an abusive situation, don’t feel that God intends for you to continue to be abused. We are not asked to be a saviour, that was Jesus. But where possible and often going beyond our comfort zones, our love becomes an example of Christ’s love. Love is the ethic of Christian behavior. Love defines us. When

the church stops loving, reaching out, washing feet, feeding others, bringing good news of saving grace to others, not as those who are better than others, but as a Presbyterian Church in Canada statement call *Living Faith* (9.2.1) says, “We should not address others in a spirit of arrogance implying that we are better than they. But rather, in the spirit of humility, as beggars telling others where food is to be found, we point to life in Christ.”

In another place that same document it explains, “Love is compassion for creation. Love is service of others and is not self-centred. Love speaks the truth tempered with kindness. Love grows in knowledge and discernment It is the road to Christian maturity, and is the way of seeing others as God see them. Love follows the example of Jesus Christ.” (8.3.3)

This is the kind of love that we are called to in Jesus. The same Jesus who suffered hurt from those closest to him and those who would seek his death. If God is to be glorified in us, if Jesus is to be glorified in us, we are called to live a life of faith and love whereby in this everyone will know that we are Jesus disciples, if we have love for one another, just as Jesus loves us.

This is our calling. We will not do it perfectly. We are human beings and we get it wrong, but more often than not, if we are following the forgiving grace filled example of Christ, we will bring more love to the world than was present before. We will make a difference if only for a moment by our love. Knowing that the church has lost so much creditability in the world, our hope is that people will know we are Christians by our love in Christ, with Christ, and through Christ. Not as orphan, but as people empowered and led by the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Prayers of the People**

Lord our God,  
you have given us so many wonders in this world you created.  
We thank you for spring sunshine and refreshing rain;  
for colours exploding in blossoms opening,  
grass greening, and gardens sprouting.  
Thank you for all the signs of new life around us this Easter season.  
Make the earth fruitful in this growing season,  
so that food will be plentiful for the hungry.

God of new life,  
We pray that we might learn to care for our planet as your gift before it's too late.  
We pray for scientists and all those who work tirelessly  
to teach us how to look after the environment.  
Renew their energy for the responsibilities they carry.  
We pray for leaders in government, business and communities,  
that they will make care for the earth a priority for the sake of generations yet to come.

Inspire each of us to do all we can, no matter how small or insignificant our efforts may seem, to walk more respectfully on the face of your creation.

God of the small and insignificant as well as powerful and influential,  
we thank you for our families and friends  
who offer us love and encouragement as we move through life.

We pray for those families and communities whose lives have been disrupted by war and conflict, who worry about safety each day and what the future will hold for them.

Guide all those with decision making power  
to consider the lives of the vulnerable as very precious,  
and make policies that protect the future for them.

God of the vulnerable,  
we pray for all those whose future is uncertain:  
for those facing illness or waiting for treatment,  
for those mourning the loss of someone dear,  
and those who feel lonely or discouraged.

We pray for those who are homeless or unemployed, for all who know hunger or despair, and for those facing danger or discrimination every day.

Empower us with your Spirit to reach out to those in need, in this community and in places distant from us, so that we can make your love tangible in their lives in Jesus' name.

God of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
We thank you for this community that gathers in Jesus' name, for the warmth and welcome offered here, for friendship and faithfulness discovered, for learning and leadership shared with each other.

Thank you for the hope that rises in us through the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ. Make us expressions of that hope to each other and to the world you love for his sake, as we join our voices with his followers around the world, praying the words he taught us:

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## 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 the offering

God has given us the task to love one another and with the gifts we offer we have an opportunity to bring love and life to others. May the love we share bring hope to a world that has forgotten how to love.

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Elements: May 15, 2022](#)

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

*To show by touch and word*

763

1. To show by touch and word devotion to the earth,  
to hold in full regard all life that comes to birth  
we need, O God, the will to find the good you had of old in mind. Renew our  
minds to choose the things that matter most,  
our hearts to long for truth till pride-of-self is lost.  
For every challenge that we face,  
we need your guidance your grace.
2. Let love from day to day be yardstick, rule and norm,  
and let our lives portray your word in human form.  
Now come with us that we may have  
your wits about us where we live.

*"To Show by Touch and Word" Words: Fred Kaan © 1975 Hope Publishing Company*

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## Benediction

Let us go now in friendship with one another  
to sense the Spirit and to worship God in all we do.  
May we be inspired to live the way of Christ –  
to be healers, lovers, teachers, and friends  
to a world that is God's good creation.

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