

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay – Liturgy

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

13th Sunday after Pentecost - September 4, 2022

Words of Welcome

Everything we do in life seems to cost us something. It is inescapable. Jesus tells us that the Christian faith also has a cost, but there is also a message of life in those words. Stay with me in this time of worship as we look at Jesus' words. We begin with a call to worship.

Call to Worship

We gather in the presence of God:

**who knows us when we wake up and when we go to sleep,
and in all the moments in between.**

We gather in the house of God:

**who has created a family for us,
here as well as in the world.**

We gather to be the people of God:

who appeals to us to follow in love, in faith, in service.

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Hymn

Nothing can trouble

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Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.
Those who seek God shall never go wanting.
Nothing can trouble, nothing can frighten.
God alone fills us.

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Adoration and Confession

God of all creation,
you have opened the world around us
and filled it with creatures of your love and purpose.
Each one declares your praise –
the mountain states your majesty;
the ripened field, your generosity.
Birds flying aloft sing of your freedom;
the tiny ant works with your persistence.
And what do we declare about you in our lives?
We pray that our work will honour your justice and mercy;
may our relationships speak of your love and compassion.
So may we praise you, O God, not just in this hour of worship,
but in all our waking and our working.
Challenge us today to live out the praise we offer you
through the grace of Jesus Christ and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

**God of justice and mercy,
we offer you our love and loyalty in worship
yet we admit we do not live out that love and loyalty.
We don't always act on our good intentions,
we fail to keep our promises,
we hurt each other,
and then refuse to seek or offer forgiveness.**

People must look at us and wonder if this is what means to follow Jesus.

God of truth and wisdom, send us your Holy Spirit as we listen to your Word.
Refresh our understanding and equip us to respond to you in love, for the sake of
Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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Assurance of Forgiveness

The God who calls us is the God who created us; the God who formed us is the God who forgives us. This is the Good News - we are God's new creation.

In the name of Jesus Christ, we are reshaped, renewed, forgiven. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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Scripture Reading Luke 14:25-33

²⁵ Now large crowds were travelling with him; and he turned and said to them, ²⁶“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. ²⁷Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, ³⁰saying, “This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.” ³¹Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³²If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. ³³So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions.

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

Message Counting the Cost

Counting the cost of something is what we do each day. Our lives revolve around how much something costs. If you have purchased a home, are attending university, having children, even buying food and gas, you count the cost. You can't have these things in our economy without money and counting the cost. But things have always cost something, whether it be bartering goods for goods, or giving up something to have something else. Things cost.

But the cost of something is not necessarily monetary. There may be a cost of time, energy, and emotion. When a someone sits beside a person in a hospital bed as they fight illness or face death, there is a cost. There are reasons people talk about compassion fatigue and care-giver burnout. There is a cost physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually when one finds they have to give so much of themselves for the benefit of another. And in those situations, it is most often done willingly and lovingly. We are willing to let care-giving cost us our very selves at times.

When planning to have a family, one needs to count the cost. It will cost money to raise up a child from food and diapers to post-secondary education. Yet a majority of people who find themselves in a parental relationship are willing to give up time, energy, and other dreams to have children, because the relationship is life-giving. Life giving in the sense that you actually bring life into the world, and life-giving in the love, joy, and even struggle that one faces with the child.

In the scripture reading we heard Jesus speak about what it costs to be a disciple, and what he says is pretty jarring. "Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers, and sister, yes and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple." (vv28-29)

Then he gives examples from his own time of counting the cost, just as you heard from me as this sermon began. But the cost that Jesus is asking in this passage seems extreme to say the least. And how can this be what is asked of us when Jesus is all about loving God and loving one's neighbour? Are not our families and our lives about loving others as well?

This is when it is imperative that we read the passage in the context of the whole of the Gospel of Luke, and in fact, the Bible. One of the other passages prescribed for this day is from Deuteronomy 30 which is all about keeping God's commandments, obeying them, living by them, so that the people will be blessed. Verse 19 reads, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him for that means life to you and length of days..."

Contrary to popular belief and is certainly counter-cultural, is that choosing God, choosing Jesus, means life. When Jesus is saying to the crowd that was traveling with him that they need to hate their family in order to be a disciple, it was a way of showing the extreme cost. Jesus does not advocate for hating family. The next chapter in Luke is all about going to great lengths to find things that are lost, a sheep, a lost coin, a lost son. One must place these passages together to get the whole picture. God is willing to go to great lengths to save us. The cost for God was Jesus. Many of you will recall what was likely the very first verse of scripture you memorized, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life." John 3:16.

That verse still stands. Everything that Jesus is teaching must be understood in the light of God who loves so much that God was willing to count the cost of Jesus' death. God was willing to lose Jesus to death to show love in the resurrection, the ultimate life-giving experience. And that is the thing, in order to experience Jesus in our lives, we have to be willing to sacrifice, and Jesus is saying, following him costs something.

It may cost you a relationship with someone really important to you. I have met Christians who converted from another religion and their families will have nothing to do with them, but this relationship with Jesus was so life-giving they were willing to give up the relationships with those that did not support their decision.

The other thing is that we are not always given clear direction when making choices in life about whether or not something takes us from following in faith. We make mistakes, we get it wrong, we struggle and falter. So, counting the cost is not always, in fact is rarely, cut and dry. Yet, making decisions, even ones that are difficult in order to follow Jesus need to be made so that we can experience life. This life is not something that can be understood unless you make the decision to follow Jesus and work at being a disciple.

Pastor and teacher David Lose writes, "Jesus isn't inviting meaningless sacrifice. He isn't inviting door-mat discipleship or a whiney Christianity ("that's just my cross to bear"). Rather, he's inviting us to a full-bodied Christian faith that stands over and against all those things that are often presented to us as life by the culture. Jesus invites us, that is, to the kind of abundant life that is discovered only as you give yourself away. The kingdom of God Jesus proclaims is about life and love. And just as love is one thing that only grows when it's given away, so also is genuine and abundant life."¹

We count the cost of what it takes to follow Jesus knowing that even in the struggle and challenges, what we get from giving our all to Jesus is a transformed and abundant life. This sacrifice, this cost, is also about the generations to come and their lives. If the church dies, if our faith becomes lukewarm, not only do we miss out on the life promised to us in Christ, but so does each generation that comes after us. We rob our children and grandchildren, whether they are blood relatives or children that are important in our lives, we rob them of having the abundant life that only comes from experiencing Jesus.

If you have already become lukewarm toward your faith, you are not seeing or living the fullness of the abundant life God desires for you. This is not abundant in the sense that you have lots of money, power, possessions, or prestige, but an abundance of life-giving, transforming relationships, with an abundance of meaning and purpose in your life. These are things that cannot be bought.

Talking about what all this means cannot be done in one sermon, and the variety of ways people live out their faith and discipleship is as expansive as the personalities that choose this way of living. Still, this scripture, these words of Jesus are a starting point.

And Jesus is saying, living an abundant life in Christ will cost us something, but the return, once experienced will be more than you could have anticipated or imagined.

You get this life by giving away the resources you have to give from time, energy, and talents, to money, experience, stories, and more to those closest to you and those who are lost. In this you will find yourself, you will find, Jesus, you will find, God. You will reap an abundant life out of what you are willing to let it cost you, of what you are willing to give of yourself.

Thanks be to God for the love, forgiveness, grace, and hope that comes through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of all times and all people,
on this Labour Day Weekend,
we thank you for all the skill and talent with which you bless your people.
Thank you for what we have accomplished through the work we do,
and for what each one of us contributes to the wellbeing of our community.
Inspire us to work together on the challenges we face
and surprise us with the solutions to problems that once seemed overwhelming.

Today we pray for all those who labour in difficult situations:
for children who work in terrible conditions and are paid very little.;
for migrant workers who must labour far away from their families;
and for all those who are underpaid or unjustly treated in their workplace.

We pray for those who cannot labour:
for those who are unemployed or underemployed;
for those who have become injured on the job or too sick to keep working;
for those who are denied the opportunity to earn a living because of war or discrimination.

We pray for those who labour in our community.
for those who must work today and tomorrow instead of enjoying this long weekend;
for those who must work several jobs in order to care for their families;
for those who work at jobs we wouldn't do ourselves because they are messy or unpleasant.

And on this Labour Day, O God, we offer gratitude for laws that protect children,
for health and safety practices that prevent tragedies in the workplace,
and for generations before us who advocated for vulnerable employees,
fair wages and equal opportunities.

Thank you for the work that goes on behind the scenes,
delivering things we enjoy and services we rely on.

Help us to look beyond these things

to picture the faces of those whose work provides for all our needs.

Through their faces, let us see your face, Creator and Sustainer of all that is.

We ask this in Jesus' name who taught to pray together, saying:

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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

On the Labour Day weekend, we offer to God the fruit of our labour to support in the redeeming work God has begun in the world. Give in hope and in trust that God will accomplish more than we can ask or imagine through our gifts.

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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>

Hymn

Take up your cross the Saviour said

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1. Take up your cross, the Saviour said,
if my disciple you would be;
deny yourself, the world forsake,
and humbly follow after me.
2. Take up your cross; let not its weight
fill frightened spirit with alarm;
his strength shall bear your spirit up,
and brace your heart, and nerve your arm.
3. Take up your cross, nor heed the shame,
nor let your foolish pride rebel:
for you the Saviour bore the cross,
to save your soul from death and hell.
4. Take up your cross, then, in Christ's strength
and every danger calmly brave;
'twill guide you to a heavenly home,
and lead to victory o'er the grave.
5. Take up your cross and follow Christ,
nor think till death to lay it down,
for only those who bear the cross
may hope to wear the glorious crown.

Words: public domain

Benediction

Lord, please look on us with grace;
watch over us with love;
and surround us with peace. Amen.

*Felicia Y. Thomas, The Abingdon Women's Preaching Annual, Series 2, Year C,
Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, ed., (Abingdon, 2000), 153.*