

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

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

20th Sunday after Pentecost – October 23, 2022

### Words of Welcome

Our lives are a mix of joy and sorrow, hope and despair. Scripture speaks to that and particularly highlighted in the reading that we will be looking at from the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Timothy. Join me in a call to worship as we begin to ponder how these words of scripture can speak into our lives.

### Call to Worship

This is the day the Lord has made:

**a day for praise and prayer; a day for gratitude and generosity.**

This is the time God has given us:

**a time for singing and silence; a time for speaking and listening.**

This is the life to which God calls us:

**a life of humility and service; a life of faith and trust.**

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### Hymn

*What a friend we have in Jesus*

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| 1. What a friend we have in Jesus,<br>all our sins and griefs to bear;<br>what a privilege to carry<br>everything to God in prayer.<br>Oh what peace we often forfeit,<br>oh what needless pain we bear,<br>all because we do not carry<br>everything to God in prayer.                           | 2. Have we trials and temptations?<br>Is there trouble anywhere?<br>We should never be discouraged:<br>take it to the Lord in prayer.<br>Can we find a friend so faithful,<br>who will all our sorrows share?<br>Jesus knows our every weakness:<br>take it to the Lord in prayer. |
| 3. Are we weak and heavy-laden,<br>cumbered with a load of care?<br>Precious Saviour, still our refuge:<br>take it to the Lord in prayer.<br>Do thy friends despise, forsake thee?<br>Take it to the Lord in prayer;<br>in his arms he'll take and shield thee;<br>thou wilt find a solace there. |  |

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### Prayer of Adoration

Creating God,  
the mountains you raised reflect your strength and majesty.  
Sunrise and sunset frame the day with your light and joy.  
Fields bursting with grain and trees coloured with autumn glory  
sing of your steadfast love. Pictures from the depth of space  
give a glimpse of your infinity, yet in Christ you have walked

the humble earth. You alone are worthy of our praise.

You alone give us hope.

Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer of Life, we praise you,  
and join our voices to those of every precious thing  
to wonder at your mystery and majesty.

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## Prayer of Confession

**Merciful God,**

**You created human beings with gifts of intelligence and imagination.**

**Yet we confess we often use these gifts to exploit your creation and put others in their place. So often we think that we are great when we are small. Or we claim smallness when you set a challenge before us. We convince ourselves that our sin is not nearly as great as others, yet, every sin offends your purpose for us. Forgive us, we pray, and grant us a truer picture of ourselves.**

God of all truth, when we think that we have life all figured out, hold up the mirror of your Word so that we can see our own foolishness. If we think we are beyond forgiveness, reflect to us your Word of mercy and love, offered to us through Christ, your Living Word. Amen.

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## Assurance of Pardon

Friends in Christ, God is gracious. Christ has promised that those who humble themselves will be exalted. Having confessed our sin, let us trust the good news of the Gospel. In Jesus Christ we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

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## Scripture Reading 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18

<sup>6</sup> As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. <sup>7</sup> I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup> From now on there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

<sup>16</sup> At my first defence no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! <sup>17</sup> But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup> The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory for ever and ever.

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

## Message Poured Out

I was going to start this message by telling the story of a movie I watched when I was a teenager. It was about a mom who died and left her infant daughter a letter. As I could

not remember the title, I did what many of us do, I did a Google search. Well, I came up short on the title of the movie, but found link after link to just that sort of thing, letters written to loved ones that were to be read after the death of the one who wrote the letter.

I have also had the privilege of sitting at the bedside of those who were dying and have experienced pretty much the gamut of emotions. From gratitude for life to fear the kind of death one would die, and everything in between with all the mixed up emotions. One person in particular comes to mind when I think of this passage of scripture. I could not tell you her name, as I don't remember it. It was a chance visit in a hospital room here in Thunder Bay. I had gone in to visit with someone from our congregation and ended up sitting on a hospital bed beside a woman I had never met before. As I was about to leave the room of the person I had come to visit, the person in the bed next to her began a conversation with me. It was lovely.

She explained that she was dying, but her words were calm, filled with gratitude and love. It was not that life had been an easy one for her, and certainly her imminent death was on her mind, but she shared of her life, her gratitude and hope. She had no doubt that she was going to be with God.

You may have had the opportunity and honour of sitting with someone still able to share their thoughts and hopes with you even as they knew they were dying. Or maybe it was a grandparent or mentor that in their later years were sharing words of wisdom with you. These are moments to cherish and ponder.

This is the setting for Paul. I say Paul as there is a growing consensus that the Apostle Paul did not actually write this letter to Timothy. Still, that does not detract from the content. We are to hear this as a mentor writing to a beloved person that they have spent time with, have worked with and grown with. Paul wrote the letter from prison. He had gotten out of trouble before, but this time death was going to happen. There was no escape from this prison. Paul states in verse 16, "At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me." This letter was penned at a time after the Roman empire had turned against Christians. Paul had little to no hope of freedom.

So Paul is writing Timothy. Throughout the last three weeks each service has taken us through passages of this letter. Today we come near its close. This is the last part of the letter. Even yet there is teaching, warnings, requests, and above all love. We should feel something when we read these words, the heart-break of feeling abandoned by friends and colleagues. We might imagine Paul, allowed to write and yet sitting without all he needs for his well-being. In one of the verses that was skipped today in our reading, Paul simply asks that Timothy might bring the cloak that Paul had left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments. Paul was a very real person with real needs, physical, emotional, and spiritual.

In all of this, even with a story about harm that was done to Paul by Alexander the coppersmith, and the feelings of being deserted, Paul does not become bitter. He is cautious, offers a warning about people, but ends with, "May it not be counted against them!" (v16b) It sounds very similar to the words of Jesus from the cross "Forgive them

Father for they know not what they are doing" (Luke 23:34). These words from Jesus and from Paul are words of grace and forgiveness, not judgement or hate.

The end goal for Paul was that, regardless of what he faced, he would live a life that proclaimed the gospel in word and deed. He poured out his life for Jesus, for the gospel message of hope, grace, love, and joy. In and through it all, even at the end of his life Paul wrote, "But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it." (v17)

We have considered much about the last verses of our text, but let's go back to the first verses we heard read. "As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race. I have kept the faith." (vv6-7)

For those who may need a refresher, Paul was once Saul, a most notorious persecutors of those who followed Jesus. After a stunning encounter with the risen Lord, Jesus, Paul's life was forever changed. Once the hunter of those who followed Jesus, he was now the one in chains because of his faith, his proclamation, his teaching about Jesus.

Paul has given it all. He has poured out his life for the sake of the gospel. It has been life-giving to others and to himself even as he faces death. His experience of Jesus, of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, the evidence and the knowledge has moved him, more than that, inspired his whole being and who he had become. Paul shared in ministry with others and especially with his beloved Timothy. He had seen first hand how the life-giving, life-saving message of faith had transformed lives, his own included.

He speaks of his departure but is satisfied that he has fought the good fight and finished the race that was set out for him to run. This race is not one that you compete to win, it is a race to share life with others, to live fully and trust that God always has been and always will be present. The final crowning glory is life in Christ, knowing God and Christ fully in death.

And if you don't like the thought of death, let me tell you if you haven't figured it out, that is the ending for each of us. Since January of this year alone I have done fourteen funeral services of some type, whether at the graveside, in the church or in a chapel. We keep a list of those connected to our congregation that have passed away since All Saints Sunday last November so that we can speak those names this coming All Saints Sunday this year on November 6<sup>th</sup>. We have twenty names to say from our congregation alone and we add a few more names of people that are connected to loved ones of our congregation.

This scripture is mostly about how we will live. How will we make a difference in the lives of others, those we love and those we encounter? How will our living be an example of faith, trust, hope, forgiveness, perseverance and love?

This scripture is also about death. Do you trust that in life and in death the Lord stands by you and gives you strength, so that through you, through all of us, the message might be fully proclaimed, not only in words, but in our actions?

Paul's life story shows us that belief in God does not mean you are shielded from tragedy or hardship, but rather that despite all of that God is with you. You never stand alone even when it may be that you feel abandoned by others. God will strengthen you, stand by you. The Lord will rescue you from the lion's mouth, whatever that happens to be for you.

As Mary Schertz writes, [Paul] sees his life story within the larger framework of his trust in the Lord who overcomes evil. The lion's mouth is not the end."<sup>1</sup>

This is not a message of easy answers, but hopefully is one that will help you to ponder your life experience and how you share your faith, forgiveness, hope, and love. It is about being an example in life and in your dying for those who love you and maybe even those who don't know you at all.

The letter ends with these words, "The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you." (v22) May they be a hope and comfort for you in the knowledge that God goes with you.

"The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you."

### **Prayers of the People**

Just and merciful God,  
we lift our eyes to you in hope and gratitude.  
When the world around us seems troubling,  
we are grateful for your steadfast love.  
Thank you for your Spirit at work in all times and places,  
calling out the best in your people, showing us when we must repent,  
opening paths to reconciliation where we have offended.  
With the humility of the tax collector in Jesus' story,  
may we seek your justice and know your mercy.

We pray for justice for the earth:  
Protect those creatures and habitats that our way of life is threatening.  
Protect those communities and island nations at risk from climate change.  
Open our eyes to see how we can live more responsibly  
and change our hearts to know we must.

We pray for justice among the nations:  
Create more generous sharing of resources between countries  
with good harvests and those depleted by famine.  
Where resources are extracted for export,  
protect brave advocates for fair wages and environmental protection.  
And where there is aggression and intimidation between nations,  
raise up the willingness to make peace and settle differences fairly.

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<sup>1</sup> Copenhagen Martin B. *Feasting on the Word: Year C Volume 4 Season After Pentecost 2*. Editors David L. Bartlett, and Barbara Brown Taylor. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville. 2010. P210.

We pray for justice in our court systems:

Guide those who judge and defend to serve with integrity,  
that those who are accused may receive fair trials,  
and that those who have been wronged or harmed are restored to fullness of life.  
Grant those who are convicted humane treatment  
so that your Spirit may lead them to rehabilitated potential.

We pray for justice in the work place:

May those who work for others be treated with dignity and earn a fair wage.  
May all who create that work earn a fair return.  
Create equity and respect between those of different backgrounds and identities  
and guide young people to opportunities to develop their gifts.

God, we all need some kind of healing in our lives:

We remember before you those struggling with illness of body, mind or spirit,  
those waiting for diagnosis or treatment,  
and all whose health challenges are invisible to others.

Your Spirit prays within us, O God, even when we cannot find the right words. So hear us this day and answer us in ways that encourage our faith and change the world for the good, for the sake of Jesus Christ who taught us this prayer:

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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

Sometimes we think what we have to offer doesn't matter. Somebody else has more to share. But God knows the value of a few loaves and fishes shared, a lost coin claimed, one tiny seed planted from which a tree grows. Trust God with what you have to offer and see what God can do.

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1. How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
is laid for your faith in God's excellent word!  
What more can God say than to you hath been said,  
to you that for refuge to Jesus have fled?
2. "Fear not, I am with thee; oh be not dismayed!  
For I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;  
I'll strengthen thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,  
upheld by my righteous, omnipotent hand.
3. "When through the deep waters I call thee to go,  
the rivers of woe shall not thee overflow,  
for I will be with thee, thy troubles to bless,  
and sanctify to thee thy deepest distress.
4. "When through fiery trials thy pathway shall lie,  
my grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply:  
the flames shall not hurt thee; I only design  
thy dross to consume and thy gold to refine."
5. "The soul that on Jesus hath leaned for repose  
I will not - I will not desert to his foes;  
that soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never - no, never - no, never forsake!"

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**Benediction**

Have courage; keep the faith;  
rely on the strength that comes from God.

*2 Tim. 4:7, 17*

May the Creator nurture you,  
the Teacher walk with you,  
and the Spirit strengthen you,  
this day and forevermore.

Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 2 © 2013 Westminster John Knox Press