

**St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay**  
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski  
14th Sunday after Pentecost - September 3, 2023

## Call to Worship

There are so many directions in which we are being pulled.

**We struggle and hope that we have chosen the right way.**

Some of these paths are falsely enticing and others dangerous.

**How can we know what to do?**

Look to Jesus! He will be your guide and Holy Spirit will guard your life.

**We are going to follow Jesus.**

**He is the example of compassion, healing and hope.**

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Connection: September 3, 2023](#)

## Hymn

*Brother, sister, let me serve you*

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

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## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

Holy, Mysterious, Eternal and Ever-loving God,

In you we live and move and have our being.

You are the beginning and end of all things. In your depth, we find mystery.

In your breadth, we know your tender embrace.

We can only wonder at your love for us,

so small a part of your whole creation are we.

Yet in Jesus Christ we meet your generous grace.

In the Holy Spirit, you move with us to inspire our action and fill us with hope.

Our thoughts cannot exhaust your wisdom, nor can our hearts fathom your mercy.

And so we worship you in humble praise,

Holy God, ever Three and ever One, now and always.

**Faithful and forgiving God,  
we confess we do not live out your love and mercy.  
We cling to old hurts and familiar habits.  
We nurse anger and envy.  
We are often so self-absorbed that we turn our backs on those in need.  
Forgive what we have been, amend who we are,  
and guide us toward who we may become  
according to your generous grace.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 14th Sunday after Pentecost. September 3, 2023. Year A.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

In our love for others, we discover God's love for us.  
In our forgiving of others, we learn once more how deeply God has forgiven us.  
Friends, this is the good news offered to us!

**We are God's children, called to be different, called to act differently,  
called to live as new people. Thanks be to God. We are forgiven.**

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## **Scripture Readings**

### **Romans 12:9-21**

<sup>9</sup> Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; <sup>10</sup>love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honour. <sup>11</sup>Do not lag in zeal, be ardent in spirit, serve the Lord. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. <sup>13</sup>Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. <sup>15</sup>Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup>Live in harmony with one another; do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly; do not claim to be wiser than you are. <sup>17</sup>Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' <sup>20</sup>No, 'if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.' <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

### **Matthew 16:21-28**

<sup>21</sup> From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. <sup>22</sup>And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.' <sup>23</sup>But he turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup>For what will it

profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

27 'For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. <sup>28</sup>Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.'

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## **Message** That's how you change the world.

Dianne Loufman is the Lead Pastor at First Lutheran Church in Duluth. In a devotional she writes, "When I was pregnant with our second child, a nodule was discovered on my thyroid. I was fearful that it was cancer. I shared my fears with a friend who responded, "I can't go there." "Well, good for you," I thought, "I am there." It was such a lonely feeling that they wouldn't? couldn't? enter into my fear. In today's gospel, when Jesus shares that he must suffer and die, Peter essentially uses my friend's line," I can't go there." Peter's focus wasn't on Jesus, but on his own pain. His heart couldn't handle losing his teacher. His mind couldn't take the alteration in his understanding of Messiah, which did not include suffering and death. How often that is how we listen—hearing how our lives will be impacted rather than entering into what is being said. Perhaps, had Peter stayed there with Jesus, he would've also heard: "on the third day be raised."<sup>1</sup>

What a powerful testimony to what it means to be a follower of Jesus. It means being in it with others and letting others be in it with us. This being is what living in it is all about.

Let's just step back in the story a little to last week's scripture where Jesus is pleased with Peter's response to his question of "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter says "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." And Jesus blesses Peter and says upon the rock of Peter's faith the church will be built.

Now it is apparent that a little time has passed between these two scenes as verse 21 says, "From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

So, Jesus has been going on about this, suffering and eventually of death and being raised, for some time and Peter basically says, "Okay, enough already with all this talk. Let's get this right. In order for you to be the Messiah you need to come in by force and take over the government." Well, the scripture only says, "And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.'" (v22) Kinda makes one think that Peter thought he understood Jesus' purposes better than Jesus did and that the faith, knowledge, and understanding Peter displayed earlier made him feel confident that he better set Jesus right. You can just see him, putting his arm

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<sup>1</sup> Loufman, Dianne. [Friday, September 1, 2023 \(luthersem.edu\)](http://luthersem.edu). Accessed September 1, 2023.

over Jesus' shoulder, walking him to a spot away from everyone else, you know, like when you have something to say to someone and you want to appear like you got this.

Guess Jesus was not impressed because Peter goes from being a rock to a stone one might stumble over in the middle of the road. Imagine the scene continuing, Jesus turning toward Peter and saying "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." (v23)

Now Jesus is not saying that Peter's thinking is stupid, it is just way too small. God has bigger things in store. I have heard a saying that we can not imagine as big as God can do. That seems to be the case here. Peter only had the knowledge of his life experience which included the teachings that the Messiah would overthrow powers that oppressed. How could he have understood that the power was in a resurrected Jesus. A Messiah that suffered because of love, compassion, and grace.

We don't think of those things as having power and being a threat and yet daily power wants more power not more grace and compassion. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness and self-control, these things are a threat to those who want to control because there is no way to control these attributes. How do you stop one from caring? Caring leads to compassion, compassion to grace, and grace to a life that is transforming, regardless of circumstances.

The chorus to the Newsboys song *That's How You Change the World* has the words,

It's the prayer in an empty room  
Little things we do when nobody's around  
A hand reaching out to a heart in doubt  
It's the smallest spark that can light the dark  
That's how you change the world

Being a follower of Jesus is about changing the world through grace-filled love. It is not about power and control, but rather just the opposite. It is about leading a life that allows room for God to lead you, guide you, and change you. In the process you get to change little things in the world...the relationship between yourself and others, the mood in the room. You get to bring hope to the hopeless, companionship to the lonely, food to the hungry, love to those who do not know love.

Will you change everyone you meet or every situation you encounter? Likely not, but if each of us is intentionally and meaningfully making decisions that align ourselves with Jesus then we are living into the part of the Lord's prayer that say, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

It is going where people need you to go in their suffering and allowing people to walk with us in our suffering. And speaking of suffering. We are not to glorify suffering. We are not called to subject ourselves to suffering in order to be more Christian, rather it is about relationships. Suffering is a part of living. It will find you. It found Jesus. Most of us are

not called to die on a cross, but rather to live with the joy that there was resurrection after the cross.

That seemed to be what Peter and the disciples missed, not just in this moment, when Jesus spoke about his suffering and death, but throughout his teaching. They seemed to miss the statement that on the third day he would be raised.

We have the advantage of having the perspective of the cross and resurrection long after the fact. We get to hear the stories of vulnerability and lack of understanding, but we also hear the stories of joy, celebration, and resurrection that transforms life.

We have a story to tell about hope, about being people of God who love and have compassion because we are called to be in it with others, knowing that God is in it with us through Jesus who understands suffering to the point of death on a cross.

If you have no idea what it means to live this out then turn to the passage in Romans. These statements in and of themselves could be understood as how any good person might live, but hear them from the perspective of a Christian, as one who aligns themselves with Jesus, our Lord, who understood suffering. Hear the words again, this time from Eugene Peterson's *The Message*...

**9-10** Love from the center of who you are; don't fake it. Run for dear life from evil; hold on for dear life to good. Be good friends who love deeply; practice playing second fiddle.

**11-13** Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality.

**14-16** Bless your enemies; no cursing under your breath. Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.

**17-19** Don't hit back; discover beauty in everyone. If you've got it in you, get along with everybody. Don't insist on getting even; that's not for you to do. "I'll do the judging," says God. "I'll take care of it."

**20-21** Our Scriptures tell us that if you see your enemy hungry, go buy that person lunch, or if he's thirsty, get him a drink. Your generosity will surprise him with goodness. Don't let evil get the best of you; get the best of evil by doing good.<sup>2</sup>

This is our calling. This is our cross to bear. We are the people of God in the world who can change the world through our love and compassion, working for justice on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves, being in it with others and letting others be in it with us, knowing that the God of love, the Christ of the resurrection and the power of the

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<sup>2</sup> [The Message](#) (MSG) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Holy Spirit goes with us to love and serve in community and change the world one action, one word at a time.

## Prayers of the People

O God in whom we live and move and have our being,  
We come to you in prayer as the summer season draws nearer to its close.  
We give you thanks for the occasions we have enjoyed this summer,  
savouring the beauty of your creation right outside our doors,  
catching up with family and friends,  
and enjoying times for recreation & restoration.  
We recognize how blessed we are to live in Canada  
with many opportunities to find rest and relaxation in the summer.  
Thank you for every good thing that has refreshed us.

Yet we remember those for whom this summer has been difficult:  
Those whose homes and communities have been ravaged by fire,  
storm or flood this year;  
Those who go hungry or face violence in forgotten corners of our own community  
and around the world;  
Those whose face economic struggles at home or at work,  
those whose crops have withered in heat or drought;  
May each one find courage to face tomorrow in your company

O God, Jesus walked with so many people in their pain and grief.  
We remember those who have faced crises this summer -  
Through tragic death or unexpected loss,  
Through critical illness or injury,  
Through pain or problems that seem to have no end....  
Surround them with your comfort and compassion.

O God, Jesus often faced many demands and pressure from his critics,  
So we pray for all those who have not found rest this summer:  
For leaders trying to figure out ways forward for their communities  
when resources are tight;  
For those whose jobs and responsibilities present new challenges;  
And for all who seek secure and affordable housing when supply is low;  
May they know your strength and assurance day by day.

O God, we need the embrace of your presence, each in our own way.  
Bring healing and peace to our lives and to this world you love.  
Open our eyes and our hearts so that we may offer healing and peace  
to those we encounter, in the name of Christ Jesus who taught us to pray together...

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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

The Apostle Paul encourages us to let our love be genuine as we contribute to those in need in the world around us. Know that God will use our gifts for good things, both those we undertake in Jesus' name and in ways we cannot yet imagine.

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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

Who's goin' to tell the story

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1. Who's goin' to tell the story? You and I!  
Tell of the Lord's great glory? You and I!  
Who's goin' to let the whole world know?  
Help his disciples grow and multiply? You and I!
2. Who's goin' to bring the kingdom? You and I!  
Who's goin' to spread the gospel? You and I!  
Who's goin' to do the kindly deed?  
Comfort the one in need and help supply? You and I!
3. Jesus came to bring us good news,  
sent to earth by God above!  
And the good news that he brought us  
is the word of love!
4. Who's goin' to feed the hungry? You and I!  
Care for the sick and lonely? You and I!  
Who's goin' to let the whole world see  
people can live in harmony? Let's try! You and I!

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## Benediction

The blessing of God be with you,  
The love of Jesus fill you,  
And the power of the Holy Spirit sustain you,  
now and forevermore.

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