

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

25th Sunday after Pentecost - November 19, 2023

Call to Worship

This is the Lord's Day, the day of wonder and grace.

This is the day to worship the One who calls us here.

This is the Lord's Day, the day we are given joy and peace.

This is the day promised to us, the day of healing and renewal.

This is the Lord's Day, and it has come just in time!

This is the day we gather with hope, with faith, with joy, with love!

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Hymn

Hosanna

216

1. Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!
Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest!
Lord, we lift up your name
with hearts full of praise;
be exalted, O Lord my God!
Hosanna in the highest!
2. Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!
Glory, glory, glory to the King of kings!
Lord, we lift up your name
with hearts full of praise;
be exalted, O Lord my God!
Glory to the King of kings!

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Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Transforming God,
you take the night and give us day.
You take our strife and give us peace.
You take our sadness and give us joy.
You take our fear and give us courage.
You take death and give us new life.

O God, you give and you give and you give. So we come to praise you and offer our love and loyalty as your willing servants in the name of Christ who enriches our lives with grace and in the power of the Spirit who prays within us when we cannot find the right words to honour you, God most kind and generous.

**Trusting God,
you placed your mission in our hands and gave us gifts to accomplish
amazing things in Jesus' name.
We confess sometimes we've taken credit for what your love has done.
Sometimes we've called our own desires your will.
Sometimes we've stepped back and let others carry responsibilities.
Forgive us when we've failed to honour your trust in us and ignored the hope
and joy in Christ who promises to strengthen us.
May we come to think on things that are worthy of praise
and fill us with your peace. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 25th Sunday after Pentecost. November 19, 2023. Year A.

Assurance of Forgiveness

As we are forgiven by God, we can begin to reflect on all those ways in which we can live justly, act honorably, love completely. This is indeed good news for us.

Trusting God's grace, and filled with joy, we now may go and bring hope and peace to everyone we meet. Thanks be to God.

[Lectionary Liturgies: Liturgy w/communion for October 15, 2023 \(Pentecost 20/Trinity 19/Proper 23/Ordinary 28 - A\)](#)

Scripture Reading Philippians 4:4-13

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. ⁵Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. ⁶Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

¹⁰I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. ¹¹Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. ¹²I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

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Message In Everything

I would hazard to guess that we all know someone who is a chronic complainer. No matter what comes to them it is not good enough. It's too hot or too cold. There is never enough money, time, or care directed at them. They feel neglected or worse victimized even when all we can see is that they have enough money to spend and people trying their best to care for their needs and even love them.

My grandmother was someone that rarely expressed joy. She seemed to find the worst in people and felt that she had been treated poorly by her children and husband. I spent a lot of time with her, but had a ground rule; if she spoke harshly about my grandfather, from who in later years had separated from her, or about my mother, who she just didn't seem to love at all, then I would simply say, grandma, don't go there. She knew that I was one of her last remaining visitors and rides so she would heed the warning.

When I took her shopping, she would have lovely conversations with other people sitting on benches in the shopping mall, and they would say to me what a delightful person she was. I would nod and smile, knowing that her unkind nature was a thorn for her family. Hers was a funeral where only a few tears were shed and that, not because she would be missed, but rather because she had missed out on the love and joy others would have shared with her if she had only found a way to be kind and loving to those closest to her.

The Apostle Paul actually had a lot to say about how to live a life of gratitude, thanksgiving, and joy in a way that would bring the peace of God into one's life and to others. The passage we heard read actually comes near the end of Paul's letter to the Philippians. What you may not realize is that Paul is writing these words from a jail cell and he doesn't know if he is going to survive this ordeal or not. Paul was in state that not many of us experience. In that jail cell, Paul would most certainly have longed for the comforts of home, good food, a warm place to lay his head, a place to wash himself.

Yet in this place of depravity, he chose to focus on what had been his ministry since his conversion. He focused on Christ and life in Christ. We hear him say, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice." Not the words one would expect to hear from someone struggling with the day-to-day realities of imprisonment in ancient Rome. But rejoice! is Paul's instruction.

Not only that he continues, "Let your gentleness be known to everyone... Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made know to God. Need I remind you again that Paul is sitting in a jail cell and he says, let your gentleness be known to everyone.

Let's stop on that word alone, gentleness. Think about your lives, those whose lives intersect with your own. Think about the conversations of the last week, month or three years you have had with others. And we all know the topics have ranged from covid

vaccinations, to freedom convoys, to politics, and now Russia and Ukraine, and the horrifying scenes in Gaza. Now go back to Paul's instruction, "Let your gentleness be known to everyone." I encourage you to do your own reflection on how you have or have not let your gentleness be known to everyone around you. And remember gentleness is not about being a door mat that others trounce on, but it is about respect for others as fully human, as made in the image of the creator, and treating them with kindness, humility, and love.

Moving on, Paul says if we let our gentleness be known, not worrying about anything, but in everything praying with thanksgiving, somehow in that, the "peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and mind in Christ Jesus." There is a phrase in there worth pausing on, "the peace of God which surpasses all understanding."

I have said so often that I find it difficult to explain what it means to live a life with God at the center, Christ as the focus, and the peace that it brings. Some people say that thinking this way is a cop out or escapism, but once you have experienced that peace from God that surpasses all understanding you get it. It is not a human construct, it defies understanding, but is so deeply felt that one knows that they have experienced the peace of the divine. And the peace is undeniable. The hope for life morphs into a joy that appears unthinkable. Not happiness, but joy, profound joy that one has breath and lives.

The next verses need no preaching. They are an instruction guide for how to think, which in turn will change the way you perceive and experience the world. Hear these words again,

⁸Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

Paul follows that up with, ⁹Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."

I recently heard something that I hadn't thought about before and that was seeing Paul as a mentor. I knew he was, but I hadn't actually named it that way. We have Paul to look to, but maybe you have others in your life who have mentored you and helped you to see the world differently, with beauty, joy, and love. Maybe there is someone you can ask to mentor you to see the world and your relationships in the way that is described by this passage. You see, this kind of thinking does not come naturally to any of us. We all need to work on thinking this way.

Complaining, feeling like you got the short end of the stick, that you are always the one giving the most in your marriage, at work, at the table over a meal, well that comes

naturally. Thinking about what is honourable, just, pure, pleasing, commendable, excellent, well that takes practice. You might want to start simply with coming into the door of your home, wherever or whatever kind of home you live in and give thanks, say something pleasant, set the tone with your gentleness, and kindness, and your gratitude.

There is much more that could be said about all of this passage. It is rich with meaning, but when you think on it remember Paul did not write this from the comfort of a couch, or behind a desk, he was in prison and he could say, "I have learned to be content with whatever I have. ¹²I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me."

In everything, may you be able to give thanks to God, walk in the world with gentleness, and think on things in a way that can transform your relationships, transform you, and may that transformation be so evident that people wonder at your gratitude, your love, your joy. Amen

Prayers of the People

God of all life and each life,
We thank you that you are with us every day,
in each challenge and opportunity.
In our weakness, you are strength.
In our confusion, you light the path ahead.
In our questions, you offer wisdom for our choices.
Stay with us in these days when so much seems uncertain,
and help us to serve you faithfully, when and as we are able.

God of loving kindness:
Thank you for each moment of joy and celebration in our lives:
for love given and received,
for friendships which bring meaning and happiness, even from a distance,
and for family members who show us glimpses of unconditional love.
In all our relationships and interactions,
keep us mindful of your call to see you in each another.

God of the nations,
we worry for the world filled with conflict and division,
when the earth itself is put at risk by destructive human actions.
Guide diplomats and politicians to look beyond short term interests,
and keep the well-being of vulnerable people and the planet in focus.
Open our leaders' minds and hearts with wisdom
to develop more equitable ways of ordering our common life.

God of healing:

we pray for those who are suffering in these days when winter is closing in.

Draw close to all who fear the future.

Comfort those with pain or problems that seem overwhelming.

Shine the light of your love into our sadness and sorrows

and show us how to comfort and support each other.

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God of life:

Thank you that we can bring to you everything by prayer with thanksgiving, letting

our requests be made known to you, that your peace which surpasses all

understanding will guard our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus who taught us to

pray...

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

With joy we gather our gifts together

and present them as an offering of gratitude and praise.

Should you wish to support this ministry and/or 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

All my hope on God is founded

462

1. All my hopes on God is founded
who does still my trust renew;
through all change and chance God guides me,
only good and only true.
Love unknown, God's alone,
calls my heart to be God's own.
2. Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown, betray all trust;
what our care and toil establish,
tower and temple, fall to dust,
but God's power, hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.
3. God's great goodness reigns eternal,
deep in wisdom, passing thought;
light and life are all God's splendor
bringing beauty out of naught.
Evermore from God's store
newborn worlds rise and adore.
4. Daily does Almighty Giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow,
God's desire our soul delighting,
pleasure leading where we go.
Love will stand at God's hand;
joy will wait on God's command.

5. Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ, the Son.
Hear Christ call one and all:
you that follow shall not fall.

"All my hope on God is founded," words by Robert Bridges and Joachim Neande
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Benediction

The love of God the faithful creator,
the peace of Christ, the wounded healer,
the joy of the challenging Spirit,
the hope of the three in One
surround and encourage you
today, tonight, and always.

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