

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay

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

1st Sunday in Lent - February 18th, 2024

Call to Worship

It is by grace that we are who we are:

people who are called by Jesus, yet fearful to follow.

It is by God's grace that we can become followers:

people who are fearful, yet gifted with courage beyond wonder.

It is with God's grace that we become who we might be:

people who step out in faith, sharing the good news generously.

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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 and Music: public domain

Opening Prayer

Holy God, by your grace:

you touch our fears with the fire of your compassion;
you touch our brokenness with the fire of your forgiveness;
you touch our hearts with the fire of your love.

Jesus Christ, by your grace:

you step into our lives and an unpredictable journey begins;
you challenge us to new thinking, with overflowing results;
you so confront our doubts that we can cast away our fears.

Holy Spirit, by your grace:

you give us eyes to see the emptiness of the world;
you give us ears to hear the cries of the hungry;
you give us gifts to bring hope and healing to all.

God in Community, Holy in One,
by your grace we are who we are,

your children, your people, your church, through Christ. Amen.

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Call to Confession

It is so simple to say, yet so difficult to live out - 'do not be afraid!'

Yet, whatever fear burdens us, God will lift from our souls.

Whatever foolishness we have uttered, God whispers mercy to us.

Whatever wrong we have done, God's forgiveness is poured out upon us.

I invite you to join with me as we pray to the One whose love is constant in every moment, in every place, of our lives.

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Prayer of Confession

God of wonder and joy, we look in the mirror and do not see holiness reflected back. We long to be sisters and brothers with others, but don't want to be an intrusion in our friends' lives. We yearn to be more compassionate, yet it is often spite and malice we offer to someone else. We are so busy listening to those internal recordings, that we have trouble hearing the cries of loneliness coming from those around us.

Forgive us, God who longs to be enthroned in our hearts. You call us to different lives, so we might make a difference for all who hurt. You invite us into your kingdom, so we might show the others the way. You challenge us to take a risk by following Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, so we might become your children once again.

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Assurance of Forgiveness

The One who alone is Holy became wholly human so we might see the face of grace. The One who is seated in the heavens endured the cross so we might see the face of salvation. This is our good news: we are forgiven!

By God's grace, with God's grace, we are who we are meant to be: forgiven, restored, called people. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Scripture Reading Luke 5:1-10

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Message Fear of Inadequacy

The one thing I am not is a fisherman. I have almost no understanding of what is necessary to catch one fish let alone a great haul of fish. I have carried a fishing rod, but I have never actually used one, so this story of Peter is likely one of the one I have the least understanding about when it comes to the location and circumstances. However, I do get some things. No one wants their work to be unproductive. A fisherman is out to catch fish, a teacher wants to teach, a doctor, nurse, or PSW desires to bring health to the body and mind of those in their care. A minister hopes that those with whom they

spend time would be strengthened in their spirit. A tradesperson, artist, crafter, musician, or dancer wants to create something that is meaningful.

Well, at least that is what one hopes for. There are so many people who do not find meaning and purpose in their lives that it is truly distressing. It also becomes increasingly difficult as we age and we discover that what defined us in our working lives is no longer. Then our physical ability to move and be helpful to others, or to even be able to be physically present in the community becomes limited. It can be frustrating to say the least.

So maybe we can relate to Peter and the other disciples in this story as they have worked all night to no avail. No fish. No income. Just a long night of disappointment. They are busy cleaning up their nets when Jesus decides to commandeer Simon's boat and teach the crowd from that vantage point. Jesus needed a little space. Then after a while Jesus tells Simon Peter to let down the net again. Of course, Peter explains that there is little possibility of anything happening as they have already worked all night, but rather than continue to argue the point, Peter gives in and sets the nets. We are told what happens next...this great catch of fish...is so big that it nearly busts the nets and starts sinking two boats while every available hand is needed to get the haul in.

Now this is a miracle story, but what happens next is something to take note of. Peter's response is not, "Wow! Thank you. That is amazing." But rather we are told, "Peter fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!'" (v8). Not what one might have expected to hear in the moment, but then again, Peter may have just realized that he is truly in the presence of someone with power. Power over people and power over nature itself.

This is not the first time Peter has watch Jesus in action. He has already hosted Jesus in his home and watched as his mother-in-law was healed from a high fever. Not only that, others who were sick were brought there to be healed that night. (Luke 4:38-42) For some reason though, this encounter at on the shore of the lake of Gennesaret, where a crowd was pressing in and all watching witness this great haul of fish, well this has really hit at Peter's core. His response to witnessing Jesus at work this day, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man."

You might think that Jesus would say something like, "Your sin is forgiven" but nope he instead says, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." (v10).

Could it be that Peter recognized his own inadequacy when faced with the power of God and thought it best to let Jesus know that he should just leave rather than bother with someone like him? Yet Jesus saw the value in this humble fisherman. You see, though the pictures in our children's bibles and stories always have the fisherman looking clean with nice robes, on top of that looking rather Romanesque, that is far from what would have been. Think dirty after a long night's work, possibly a little or a lot stinky because of working with fish and fish nets, and poor. Fishermen were low on the rungs of society's ladder. They made little money and shared their catch with those with power.

These are the men, Peter and James and John, whom Jesus called to go with him. Later he gets Matthew, a tax collector, on board as well. These are not people with power or prestige or influence. They are about as ordinary as you can get. Peter in particular was aware of his inadequacy and it scared him. Jesus scared him. Peter felt unworthy of what Jesus had done with providing the catch of fish. He may have coupled this moment with the healing he had witnessed in his own home days before. Whatever was going on, Peter did not feel capable, or worthy of Jesus' presence in his life.

Peter, those fishing with him, and all those present that had followed Jesus as he taught, witnessed all that was going on. They heard the conversation, watched the catch happen, and all were amazed, but it also made them afraid. It was too much. Too much power, too much presence. Just too much. And so, Peter cowered in front of such power.

The difference is that the power of Jesus is love, care, compassion, and an invitation to be a part of what God is up to in the world. Peter was only used to power that was corrupt, harmful, and controlling.

Many times we think we are inadequate and so stop short of doing what we may feel called to do. We don't feel we have the right gifts, we can't find the words, we don't have enough pull. It can also be that we might feel that we are being asked to give up something that we would rather not give up. It is not likely that God is asking you or I to give up our homes, or our job, or even our retirement, though it may be that for some. It is more likely that our fear is that God will ask us to give up control and let God take the lead in our lives.

It may be our fear of inadequacy, we just don't feel like we are enough, that we have anything of value to offer. It may be our fear that God will ask too much of us. We may have many excuses for asking God to just leave thank you very much. One might choose to come to church and participate in worship, might even volunteer, because, well at least here everyone thinks about God and it is safe. But ask us to leave this building and carry our faith out into the world, even risking that God would value us enough to be invited into God's work in the world, and that becomes terrifying.

Could one become curious about God in their lives? Curious about how God values you even with your fear, your inadequacies, with all that you are and says, "I invite you to be part of what I am up to in the world." Trust me, Jesus, God, and the Holy Spirit know what they are working with and desire that you be a part of their work anyway. It is through us ordinary people, with all our flaws, challenges, struggles, and sin, that God's extraordinary love finds its way into the world. God is asking you to go with God. Do not be afraid. Follow Jesus and you will be part of something greater than yourself. Jesus is asking "Will you come and follow me into the world?" This is the invitation, "Will you spread the message of God and God's love into the world?"

These questions are asked as we live in Christ, though Christ and with Christ." Amen.

Prayers of the People

As we enter this holy season, Lord God,
we give you thanks for your promise of new life that sustains us,
encouraging us when news is difficult.

We thank you:

For tiny signs of hope, even in a bleak landscape or on challenging day;

For glimpses of beauty in a smile or a ray of sunshine;

For the people who support others in times of difficulty;

For the chance to recover from mistakes, to begin again.

Lord of life, sustain us with your presence

and give us patience and perseverance as we await the future with you.

Trusting your promise of new life, it is with hope that we pray:

For anyone we have hurt by harsh words or careless deeds;

For those known to us who are carrying heavy burdens;

For those we work with;

For all who are seeking employment or worry about their businesses;

For troubled places in our world and those who work for reconciliation and understanding;

For churches seeking new ways to minister in changing times;

For all those on our hearts this day;

Renew our hope for the future you will bring us

and our desire to live out the courage and compassion of Christ our Lord,
as we pray together 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

In letting go of the gifts we offer, in releasing them for God's use through the church, we let go of any attempts or inclinations to control God's activity in our lives and pray for the reign in our midst of God free and graceful Spirit.

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and ministry of St. Andrew's Presbyterian, in Thunder Bay visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

Hymn

Will you come and follow me

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1. Will you come and follow me
if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know
and never be the same?
Will you let my love be shown;
will you let me name be known:
will you let my life be grown
in you and you in me?
2. Will you leave yourself behind
if I but call your name?
Will you care for cruel and kind
and never be the same?
Will you risk the hostile stare
should your life attract or scare?
Will you let me answer prayer
in you and you in me?
3. Will you let the blinded see
if I but call your name?
Will you set the prisoners free
and never be the same?
Will you kiss the leper clean,
and do such as this unseen,
and admit to what I mean
in you and you in me?
4. Will you love the "you" you hide
if I but call your name?
Will you quell the fear inside
and never be the same?
Will you use the faith you've found
to reshape the world around,
through my sight and touch and sound
in you and you in me?
5. Lord, your summons echoes true
when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you
and never be the same.
In your company I'll go
where your love and footsteps show.
Thus I'll move and live and grow
in you and you in me.

"Will you come and follow me," Words by Iona Community (Scotland)
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Benediction

Live in God's presence
Exult in life's promise,
Claim the gifts that are ours each day.
Serve gladly, knowing you have much to offer,
And so find the joy of Christ. Amen.

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