

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
3rd Sunday in Lent - March 3rd, 2024

Call to Worship

With friends and strangers, with family and neighbors, we gather:

Come among us, Healing God, with that love which never ends.

With faith reaching out to touch, with hearts straining to trust, we hope:

**Come among us, Friend of the broken,
with your compassion which makes us whole.**

With word and wonder, with silence and song, we wait:

Come among us, Dryer of our tears, to lift us to our feet to follow you.

Written by Thom Shuman, and posted on Lectionary Liturgies. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.ca>.

Hymn

My shepherd is the King of love

691

1. My shepherd is the King of love
whose goodness fails me never;
for all things good from God above
restore my soul forever.
2. Where streams of living water flow,
my ransomed soul is guided,
and where the verdant pastures grow,
with heavenly food provided.
3. Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
but yet in love you sought me,
and on your shoulder gently laid,
and home, rejoicing, brought me.
4. In death's dark vale I fear no ill,
with you, dear Lord, beside me;
your rod and staff my comfort still,
your cross before to guide me.
5. You spread a table in my sight,
anointing grace bestowing,
and, oh, what rapture of delight:
your cup is overflowing.
6. And so through all the length of days
your goodness fails me never;
Good Shepherd, may I sing your praise
within your house forever!

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Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of majesty and mercy,
you set the whirling cosmos in motion and call all creatures into being.
Mountains and molehills alike speak of your majesty,
for no detail misses your care and attention.
You know each of us by name, and make yourself known to those who seek you.
We gather in your presence to listen for your wisdom for our times and our lives.
To you, O God, our Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer, we offer all honour and glory
in our prayers and our praise this day and every day, now and always.

Wise and welcoming God,

**You are always seeking us out, yet we confess we are easily distracted from
your presence. We envy those who are successful in the world's terms,
and pursue our own desires.**

We fail to question the cost of our desires to the earth or those in need.

Forgive us, O God.

**God of wisdom, you send us your Holy Spirit to teach us truth for our times
and wisdom for our lives, through Christ, your life-giving Word.**

**Re-awaken us to your purposes and re-ignite our commitment to pursue them
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 3rd Sunday in Lent. March 3rd, 2024. Year B.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The Apostle Paul wrote that the Cross of Christ is foolishness to many,
but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

By this power, we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God for the wisdom to live as forgiven people.

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Scripture Reading Mark 5:35-43

While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader's house to say, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?' ³⁶But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, 'Do not fear, only believe.' ³⁷He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James. ³⁸When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. ³⁹When he had entered, he said to them, 'Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.' ⁴⁰And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and said to her, 'Talitha cum', which means, 'Little girl, get up!' ⁴²And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement. ⁴³He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Message Fear of Death

One of our basic fears is that we won't exist any longer or that someone we care for deeply will no longer exist. There is a lot about that we could talk about but basically our fear of death is about the fact that we cease to be. We are very tied up in being human, as we should be. Our lived experience is what we have, what we know, whether it be a good life or one fraught with harm.

This is not an easy topic for any of us. We all want to be alive, to thrive, to have meaning and purpose, and regardless of what the Bible tries to tell us about life after death, we only know life as it is right now, and the thought of not having life or of severed relationships, is more than we can often bear.

This Lent we are looking at times when Jesus spoke the words, or some variation of the phrase, "do not fear" (v36). In this case it is when a crowd of people had come to tell Jairus that his daughter was dead. But let's start at the beginning.

Jesus is back in the area of Capernaum. A crowd is once again gathering around him. They are those who are curious, those who have heard good, and those who are just checking this guy out. In the midst of this "one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw Jesus, fell at his feet and begged him repeatedly, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay you hands on her so that she may be made well, and live." (v23)

Think about this scene, people crowding in, and this man, not just once, but repeatedly say help me, my daughter, my little daughter is dying. There are those hearing those words then and now that know that pain, that fear, the hopeless and helpless feeling of this parent. Jesus is the last hope. So Jesus in compassion chose to go with Jairus.

But they get waylaid. There are others holding out much hope for what Jesus can do for them, in particular a woman who has been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. She doesn't want to call attention to herself, and thinks, "If I can just get close enough to touch the hem of Jesus' cloak, maybe that we be enough to heal me." She manages to do so, but that stops Jesus in his tracks. He knows that power has gone from him. He is not angry. He just seems to want to take the time to assure the person and to help them go away in peace. After a conversation where the woman reveals herself, Jesus does just that, sends her away in peace.

In the meantime, the delay has meant that the daughter that was on death's door has passed through it. People who had been at the Jairus' house have left to announce to Jairus that it is done, might as well not bother Jesus any more. But Jesus ignores them and says to Jairus, "*Do not be afraid, only believe.*"

We are not told what Jairus is to believe, but faith, belief, and trust all work together and so this may be a moment where Jairus is to trust fully in Jesus. We can trust, we can

believe, we can have faith, and still have doubt and questions. Those human responses are part of us and God and Jesus do not ask us to set that aside, but also not to let go of trust.

Well, you heard the rest of the story. Jesus goes in the room, takes the little girl by the hand and says, “Little girl, get up!” ... Life has been restored!

Now these two stories about the woman who was hemorrhaging and the little girl brought back to life have often been used to say to people, ‘if you just have enough faith’. Those words have cut more than one grieving person to the core, thinking that if they just had enough faith, if they were better people, then the prayers would have been answered. Then a bunch of “if only’s” start to creep their way in. This kind of talk puts way too much onus on us to stop death, which we cannot. Try as we might, as much as we keep talk of death from our lips, it is the way all life ends.

So if this is not about how much faith we have, what might be another perspective? Could it be that these stories are more about Jesus’ power in life and death than they say anything about us?

I was reading a sermon by a man named [James Liggett](#). The sermon took a different approach to this passage than any other I had read or heard. Liggett suggests that the full meaning of the story hinges on the sentence where Jesus gives strict orders that no one should know about what had happened. Of course, good luck with that, but the point that Liggett makes is that this story cannot be fully understood without the full story of Jesus life, death, and resurrection. Without the whole story these miracles of healing would be taken out of context by those who experienced them at the time. Hence why Jesus strictly ordered them that no one should know what had happened.

Let me share some of Liggett’s writing on this.

The reason Jesus does that [orders them not to speak of the miracle] is to make it clear that the meaning, the true significance, of the event could not be known or understood at the time it happened. The obvious interpretation would be wrong. What happened with Jairus’ daughter could only be understood later, when all was accomplished. It could only be known in the light of the cross and the resurrection. That is, the real meaning of the Lord’s authority over death is not that Jesus could do miracles, (that was just an illustration, a parable) and it is not that, with enough faith, we can somehow escape the worst of life (which is nonsense.). The real meaning of the Lord’s authority over death is found in the resurrection. Neither Jairus nor anyone else who was there could have known that. So anything they said would be misleading. Anything they said would give the wrong idea.¹

¹ [James Liggett. He Strictly Ordered Them..., Proper 8 \(B\) - 2003 – The Episcopal Church](#). Accessed March 1, 2024.

The miracles were not to be a distraction, there were to illustrate a point about Jesus, his life, his power, and the power of God. The power Jesus has over death is transforming. It is as much about how we live each day as how we die. It is about living in hope, promise, and trust that God goes with us no matter what, but that also in the end, God is still with us, whether we are the ones who have died or the ones left behind.

These stories are not to say there will no longer be pain, suffering, or heartbreak, as much as they say do not say there will no longer be joy, hope, and laughter. All of these things are what it means to be human. The promise is that in Christ our lives can be lived in the promise of presence. God's presence with us, through Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is about living life fully and wholly, which includes death. It includes all the range of experience we have as human beings. Jesus experienced both life and death and through his resurrection we trust that there is life after death.

May peace be what you receive from your relationship with God. Regardless of what life brings to you. Peace that God walks with you no matter what, even when the end comes, you are not alone, you are loved. You matter to God. And just as much as in your dying, in your living, be at peace, God walks with you, even if it feels like ending are coming, you are not alone. You are loved. You matter to God.

Prayers of the People

Loving God,

we thank you for the world you created, its beauty and its life sustaining promise.

When we breathe in fresh air and enjoy the outdoors this winter,
remind us of our partnership with you to care for creation.

As spring comes closer and the sun shines longer each day,
reawaken our hope in your promise of new life.

Ever present God,

thank you for walking with us through days of uncertainty
as well as times of pleasure and satisfaction.

In times of stress and worry, you provide a still point of calm.

In times of challenge, you inspire courage and confidence in us.

Thank you for the wisdom and encouragement we receive from you.

Today we pray for those who find this winter hard going,

For those who are shut in by the weather,

For those worrying about making ends meet,

And for those concerned about the way the world is going.

Give us all peace and patience through your love.

We pray for all churches searching for new ways

to worship and witness in a changing culture.

Keep us strong in faith and fellowship,

and make us creative agents of healing and hope in our communities.

We pray for our nation and the nations of this world.

Raise up leaders the with courage, wisdom, and compassion
to confront the challenges of these times.

Guide citizens to discern the difference between conspiracy theories
and truth telling.

We pray for innocent victims of violence around the world.

Work through advocates for peace with justice
to bring an end to conflict, to inspire change where it is needed,
and offer daily bread to those whose lives and livelihoods have been disrupted.

And we pray for all those who are enduring pain and illness,
those who are facing grief and loss, and those who work to relieve suffering and
respond to crises in so many ways.

Grant rest and renewal to all who find their situations exhausting.

Be our comfort and encouragement day by day.

Hear us now, as we pray together using the words Jesus taught us:

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

We are made glad by the Good News of God's love for us and for all.

We give thanks that God created each of us, gives us all that is necessary for life,
and for God's action in Christ that brings us into relationship with God and one
another. With our offering we praise God with lives of joy and service.

Let us gather our gifts together and present them as an offering of gratitude and
praise.

If you are someone who watches all or part of this service regularly or are with us for
the first time, may I encourage you to support the work at St. Andrew's Presbyterian
Church in Thunder Bay ON. visit our website at <http://standrewspres-tbay.ca>

1. When Jesus the healer passed through Galilee,
Heal us, heal us today!
the deaf came to hear and the blind came to see.
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
2. A paralyzed man was let down through a roof.
Heal us, heal us today!
His sins were forgiven, his walking the proof.
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
3. The death of his daughter caused Jairus to weep.
Heal us, heal us today!
The Lord took her hand, and he raised her from sleep.
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
4. When blind Bartimaeus cried out to the Lord,
Heal us, heal us today!
his faith made him whole and his sight was restored.
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
5. The lepers were healed and the demons cast out.
Heal us, heal us today!
A bent woman straightened to laugh and to shout.
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
6. The twelve were commissioned and sent out in twos
Heal us, heal us today!
to make the sick whole and to spread the good news.
Heal us, Lord Jesus!
7. There's still so much sickness and suffering today.
Heal us, heal us today!
We gather together for healing, and pray:
Heal us, Lord Jesus!

"When Jesus the Healer" words and music by Peter D. Smith
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Benediction

Go into the world with assurance, hope and promise:
the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ rest upon you – and even unsettle you;
the love of God, creator and giver of life, embrace you – and even confront you;
and the presence of the Holy Spirit encourage you – and surprise you,
this day and all your days.

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