

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay
<http://standrewspres-tbay.ca> - Minister: Rev. Joyce Yanishewski
3rd Sunday of Easter - April 14th, 2024

Call to Worship

Peace be with you.

And also with you.

Come and see the love God has given to us.

Come and see what it means to be children of God.

Come with this hope, that Christ's presence is real.

With joy, we come to see the Lord.

[re:Worship: Call to Worship, Prayer: Easter 3 B \(re-worship.blogspot.com\)](http://re-worship.blogspot.com)

Hymn

Come sing, O church, in joy!

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1. Come sing, O church, in joy! Come join, O church, in song!
For Christ the Lord has led us through the ages long!
In bold accord,
come celebrate the journey now and praise the Lord!
2. Long years have come and gone, and still God reigns supreme,
empowering us to catch the vision, dream the dream!
In bold accord,
Come celebrate the journey now and praise the Lord!
3. Let courage be our friend, let wisdom be our guide,
as we in mission magnify the Crucified!
In bold accord,
come celebrate the journey now and praise the Lord!
4. Come sing, O church, in joy! Come join, O church, in song!
For Christ the Lord has triumphed o'er the ages long!
In bold accord,
come celebrate the journey now and praise the Lord!

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Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God our Maker,

We praise you for all the wonders in your creation:

For the detailed perfection revealed in a baby's tiny fingers,

in pussy willows unzipping their jackets to greet the spring,

in each rock face worn by wind and water,

witnessing to your ancient design

like wrinkles around an aging smile.

Such details lift our hearts to praise you.

So let the life, teaching and resurrection of

the Risen Christ lift and instruct our hearts this day,

that we may greet a new week
as an occasion to discover him in our midst,
making all things new in the springtime of your Holy Spirit.

**God our Redeemer,
in raising Jesus from the dead, you showed us your power
to defeat all that brings fear and sorrow to our lives.
Yet we confess we are sometimes uncertain
if we can trust the promise of resurrection for ourselves.
Forgive us when we struggle to trust your goodness for us.
Forgive us when we miss the signs of your love in our midst.
This we ask in Jesus' life-giving name. Amen.**

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Scripture Reading 1 John 3:1-7

See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure. ⁴Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

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Message Children of God

One thing that is certain is that we are all born into families. I'm not saying that we are all born into loving families that are longing to care for our needs and nurture us into fully functioning adults, but we are all born into families of one sort or another. We are all children of someone.

It is the hope that every child will be loved by their parents. Sometimes that love means giving up a child for adoption. It can be a heartbreaking choice to give a child up to be raised by another, still it may be the most loving choice one can make, for all kinds of reasons. And I have witnessed the amazing love that parents who have an adopted child can lavish over the new person in their families. However, no matter what one's family is like, even in the best of families, the love of parents or caregivers is imperfect because we human beings are imperfect.

The first line of chapter 3 from the reading today says, "How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!" What amazing and full words. What hope for all of us that God loves us lavishly. God who can see and knows everything about us, loves us lavishly.

Biblical teacher and preacher Stan Mast writes, “The word “lavished” comes from a French word that means to wash. God has washed us in his love—not with a little drop of love, not with a feeble shower dribbling a few drops of love down from heaven, but with multiple showerheads, with buckets, gallons, barrels, rivers, waterfalls, gushing, flowing, overwhelming love that has swept away all our sin.”¹

Wow! With that description hear again the words from verse 1, “How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!” Which is followed up with the verse that says, “And that is what we are!” Both of these verses ending with an exclamation mark!

We are children of God! This is the starting place for the reading today, but from there it gets a lot more challenging to hear what the writer of 1 John has to say. In fact, the scripture that follows what was read today, verses 8-10, are really difficult to unpack, and so in what is called the Revised Common Lectionary, a prescribed list of readings for each Sunday, these verses are not included as there would not be the time during a sermon to deal with the questions that arise. But I acknowledge this, not so that you think that I am avoiding the difficult parts of scripture, but rather to say that it is complex.

As for what we have before us, it is affirmed not just in the first verse but again in verse two, “Dear friends now we are children of God” with the addendum, “what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he [Jesus] appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

It sounds very much like the line from 1 Corinthians 13, where the Apostle Paul writes, “Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” (v12)

Understanding that we are people still in the making, people becoming more Christ like, is important as we consider the words in verses 4-7. Words about sin and lawlessness. Words that say that “No one who lives in him [Jesus] keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.” Those are harsh words, words that seem impossible to live into as we all know that we continue to sin. We know that sin is part of being human. We do not do the right thing every time. We cause pain for ourselves and others.

Really, knowing human nature, one might hope that the intent of these words is that we do right, as to the best of our ability. It is not that we don’t sin, even as we strive to live lives worthy of Christ. However, as followers of Christ we no longer look upon sin in the same way as the rest of the world does.

¹ STAN MAST. [1 John 3:1-7 - Center for Excellence in Preaching \(cepreaching.org\)](https://www.cepreaching.org/). Accessed April 12, 2024

Once again, I turn to some wise words from Stan Mast where he writes, “A child of God has a different perspective on sin, a different attitude toward sin, a different intention toward sin.”²

The intention is that we should not accept sin as normal or okay. Using one of my favorite quotes from Maya Angelou, “I did then what I knew how to do. Now that I know better, I do better.”

It isn't that we stop sinning, but rather we do our best to stay attuned to God, to behave in ways that brings life to ourselves and others. To do better as we come to know better. Responding to God's love with our love for God, for creation and those God has created. We are transformed slowly but surely so that “we shall be like him,” like Jesus in how we love others and live in the world, and that means paying attention to our sinfulness. Knowing that in Jesus we are forgiven and set free to live together in community and for community. Community that again is loving and transformative.

Another piece, a poem by Maya Angelou puts things in perspective.

When I say... “I am a Christian”
I'm not shouting, “I'm clean livin'.”
I'm whispering, “I was lost,
Now I'm found and forgiven.”
When I say... “I'm a Christian”
I don't speak with pride.
I'm confessing that I stumble
And need Christ to be my guide.
When I say... “I'm a Christian”
I'm not holier than thou,
I'm just a simple sinner
Who received God's good grace, somehow.

For the moment, we rest in the words, that describe God's love for us, that great love that is lavished on us, knowing that we are children of God. Imperfect, but forgiven, daily renewed and washed clean as we seek forgiveness and live in and lean into the grace of God. This grace which helps us to see where we need to change ourselves. We trust in God's continuing work in us that leads us to be transformed people. Becoming the people we can be and the people we are meant to be; the image bearers of God.

I speak to you in the name of the God the Creator, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Amen

Prayers of the People

God our Maker,
Source of Easter power and hope,

² Ibid.

You have walked with your faithful people through many generations,
people facing challenge and uncertainty,
people seeking your purpose and promise.
We still face challenges and uncertainty, even with Easter in our hearts.
Walk with us and with those for whom we pray for this day,
so that your resurrecting power may lead us in lives of faithfulness.
In the name of Christ our Risen Lord, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for children and young people
who must think about the future in uncertain times,
facing threats old and new.
Give them hope rooted in the knowledge that their lives matter to you.
Show them how to make a difference in the world,
whatever threats they face as they grow.

We pray for people for whom age or experience, illness or disability
create barriers to full participation in your world.
Surround each one in pain or despair with your comfort
and renew in each one a sense of dignity and purpose.
Show them how much they matter to you and to us.

We pray for all those facing grief and any kind of loss.
Give them strength and comfort.
We pray for communities challenged by forces beyond their control:
natural disaster and environmental threats,
conflict and violence,
economic hardship.
Give courage to those facing these challenges,
and wisdom to those who lead,
so that wellbeing may be restored
and hope for the future prevail.

As signs of spring emerge, we pray for your creation,
for creatures losing habitat and unique species at risk,
for oceans clogged with plastic,
and the earth aching for moisture as the climate warms.
Jesus, you are the firstborn of all creation;
Help us to honour you by caring for the earth and its fragile balances
in the ways we live and the priorities we set.
In these ways, too, we would be your disciples
and so we pray the words you 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

Our lives overflow with blessing and goodness in Christ and in creation.
Out of the bounty with which God has blessed us,
let us present to God our offering with gratitude that overflows.

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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

We are God's people

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1. We are God's people, the chosen of the Lord,
born of the Spirit, established by the word;
our cornerstone is Christ alone, and strong in him we stand;
oh let us live transparently,
and walk heart to heart and hand in hand.
2. We are God's loved ones, the bride of Christ our Lord,
for we have known it, the love of God outpoured;
now let us learn how to return the gift of love once given:
oh let us share each joy and care
and live with a zeal that pleases heaven.
3. We are the body of which the Lord is head,
called to obey him, now risen from the dead:
he wills us be a family, diverse yet truly one:
oh let us freely give our gifts,
and so shall God's work on earth be done.
4. We are a temple, the Spirit's dwelling place,
formed in great weakness, a cup to hold God's grace;
alone, we die, for on its own each ember loses fire:
yet joined in one the flame burns on
to give warmth and light, and to inspire.

"We are God's people," words by Bryan Jeffery Leech Music Johannes Brahms. Words and Music arrangement © Fred Bock Music Co. 1976 All rights reserved. Annual License with podcasting OneLicense.net A-723877

Benediction

Go in faith, with the peace of Christ going with you,
to witness to his mercy and grace in the world.
And may God's resurrecting love open the future for you, empowered by the Spirit,
and embraced by the presence of Jesus Christ, our Risen Lord.

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