

Words of Welcome

Psalm 98 says...

Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all the earth;
break forth into joyous song and sing praises.

Sing praises to the LORD with the lyre,
with the lyre and the sound of melody.

With trumpets and the sound of the horn
make a joyful noise before the King, the LORD.

Today the blue grass music of Gibson, Martin and I will help us in making a joyful noise and sing praises to the Lord.

Thank you for being here with us today.

We have heard some joyful songs to lead us into a time of worship and now we acknowledge God's invitation to the service with a Call to worship.

We Worship God

Call to Worship

We gather to worship the One
who crafted creation out of chaos,
our cries of joy join the anthems of the universe.

We gather to lift our praise
to the God who gives us voice,
**we bring the songs which have echoed
in our hearts all week long.**

We gather as the children of God,
our joy unbroken in God's love.
**young and old, tone deaf and perfect-pitched
lift the new, new songs of faith.**

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Hymn

Come, children, join to sing

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| 1. Come, children, join to sing
hallelujah, amen
praise to our Servant King,
hallelujah, amen!
Let all with heart and voice
Saved by God's gracious choice,
Now in this place rejoice
hallelujah, amen! | 2. Come, lift your hearts on high
hallelujah, amen
let praises fill the sky
hallelujah, amen!
Christ calls his people friends;
lost, outcast he defends
with love that never ends
hallelujah, amen! |
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3. Loud now our voices raise
hallelujah, amen
no power can still our praise
hallelujah, amen!
On heaven's blessed shore,
God's goodness we'll adore
singing forevermore
hallelujah, amen!

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Prayers of Adoration and Confession

Holy God,
the power of your love is beyond comprehension,
the breadth of your compassion without measure,
the depth of your wisdom knows no bounds.
In Jesus Christ, you meet us in the midst of life's joys and challenges
to show us what it means to love and be loved.
And so we offer you our love and loyalty, and our prayers and praise;
through the power of your Spirit, draw us closer to you and closer to each other
as friends and followers of Christ, our Risen Lord.

Merciful God,
We often find it difficult to love others as you command.
We seek our own security before the wellbeing of others.
We fulfill our own desires rather than act for the common good.
Forgive us.
Redirect our priorities,
and renew our commitment to live out your love,
even when that demands more of us than we expect.
We ask this trusting in the loving name of Jesus. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 6th Sunday of Easter. May 5th, 2024. Year B.

Assurance of Forgiveness

The commandment that we have from Christ Jesus is that we love one another,
treating each other as beloved brothers and sisters. Abide in God's eternal love. Let
its power and joy penetrate your hearts and spirits, preparing you for new growth in
the Spirit.

[Ministry Matters™ | Worship Connection: May 5, 2024](#)

Scripture Readings

John 15:9–17

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete. ¹²"This is my commandment, that

you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command you. ¹⁵I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

1 John 5:1–6

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the parent loves the child. ²By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome, ⁴for whatever is born of God conquers the world. And this is the victory that conquers the world, our faith. ⁵Who is it that conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

⁶This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one that testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

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Message Commandments

I have to say I was surprised. I looked up the definition of the word commandment. Every one of the definitions I found made reference to a divine commandment, particularly the Ten Commandments. I had not expected that. I thought the first definition would have something to say about instruction, direction, expectation, but I did not anticipate the divine to be right at the top of the definitions for the word commandment. Especially in this day and age. But there it was.

Both the readings from the Gospel of John and that of 1 John make reference to commandments. Four times in this short passage from the Gospel we hear about commandments, “If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love.” (10) “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.” (12) “You are my friends if you do what I command you.” (14) and finally, “I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.” (17)

The again in the reading from 1 John we hear in verses 3 and 4 of chapter 5, “By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments. ³For the love of God is this, that we obey his commandments. And his commandments are not burdensome.”

So what is all this about commandments? First off, this is not about the Ten Commandments in a strictest sense, but it is certainly about the greatest commandments as we hear of them in the Gospel of Matthew when Jesus responds to the question of what is the greatest commandment saying, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.”³⁸ This is the greatest and first commandment.³⁹ And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”⁴⁰ On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” (Matt 22:37-40)

Hearing words such as this, especially anything to do with being commanded, can make some of us lash back with thoughts or actual words of “there is no way in hell you can tell me what to do.” However, there are those who serve in the military and know that a command can save one’s life and where commands can bring you together to work in sync and with purpose.

Or in an operating room where the doctor makes a command for a needed surgical tool or course of action. It can also be a simple yet stern command of a parent to a child to stay off the road. Direct but effective if you want the child to stay alive.

The commandments as given in these two scriptures are also very direct and to the point. No mincing of words, basically, obey God, be obedient to God by loving God and loving those God loves – which happens to be everyone! For most of us that is a big ask, or in the words of scripture a command. For starters it can be hard to love some of our own family members let alone a neighbour, then we remember that for God our neighbour is every other person walking the face of the earth, and I would hazard to guess that it would be near impossible to find a person who hasn’t had a problem loving someone God would consider our neighbour.

Take that same concept onto the world stage and you can see that loving neighbour is akin to someone being asked what they want for Christmas and they respond with “world peace.” That makes all of us want to wish for it but also roll our eyes because we know how impossible that is for us human beings.

I have been preaching from 1 John for a few weeks now and each week the focus has been on loving others and by loving others we show that we love God. This fifth chapter of John flips that by say we know we love others when we love God and all of this hinges on believing that Jesus is the Christ, was born into the world as a fully human baby, but also is fully God’s Son. That line about “everyone who loves the parent loves the child” is saying that if you love God, the parent, then you love Jesus, the child of God.

This all can feel very convoluted, and it is not fully comprehensible to us as well, we are not God. Though we cannot fully wrap our minds around it, God is Creator, Son, and Holy Spirit, individual yet one. So, we love the parent and the child, God the Father and God the Son.

The writers of both the scriptures read today agree that to love is tied to obeying God through love. Love of God, love of the Son, and love of those God loves. This love of others comes by extension that if you love Jesus who is God's Son then you will love all of God's children. Once again, there is no separating out who God loves. God may not love sin, but God loves every person. This commandment to love may feel or appear heavy and difficult still 1 John says this commandment to love is not burdensome. There is another scripture, Matthew 11:28-30 where Jesus says, "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

To love is not meant to be a burden, it is actually supposed to be life-giving. It is life-giving when we love as Jesus loved, with compassion, joy, hope, and grace. This kind of love is not demanding or arrogant or rude...you may be hearing more echoes of scripture in that (1Corinthians 13). The love of God, the love we strive to live into is the kind of love that conquers the world, not in some domineering or dominating way, but in a way that affirms the amazing love of God and the value and worth of everyone, from your closest relationship to relationships in the broadest sense.

We are told to obey God's commandments. The commandments are to love God and love the children of God. We show that we love God by loving the people of God and we show we love the people of God by loving God. The two are inseparable. These commandments are meant to be life-giving; they are not meant to suck the life out of us. If our love comes from only ourselves to others, we will find loving difficult even burdensome, but when the love of God settles in us and from us flows out into the world, then loving ourselves and others become a gift.

This is the victory that the writer of 1 John is speaking. It is not that we have won a battle and smashed our opponents making them our subjects, less than us, we are conquerors and they the conquered. This is about a battle where all are upheld and honoured, where God's love abounds and transformed lives is the victory. We are victorious as Jesus was victorious over death. We believe in God through faith in Jesus and in that relationship we are given the power to love and to conquer the world not by force or coercion but by our love of God and love our of those God has created – God's children.

So if you haven't gotten the message yet, the command is simple and direct – love. Go into the world today with love outpoured, love for God and knowing God's love is for you and for all. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of Wisdom and Mercy,
we turn to you in these quiet moments,
and offer you our thanks for the love you have shown us,
seeking your blessing on our hopes for our lives.
This morning we give you thanks for all those people

who have shown us your face and taught us to follow you
by the faithful example of their lives.

We thank you for our life together in your church, as your forgiven people.
May the light of Christ shine through our lives
so that we become light for the world,
shining examples of your love at work.

Christ of Compassion and Action,
In you, we receive our call to live with purpose.
From you, we learn how to love those around us.
With you, we find strength to face each new day.
So today we offer our prayers for those facing challenges these days
and seek your guidance to respond to their cries.

We pray for those brought to mind by news headlines this week:
for situations of violence and deprivation, danger and devastation.....

We pray for families going through difficult times,
for all who are sick or in sorrow,
for any who are lonely or despairing:

We pray for those agonizing over important decisions and responsibilities,
for those in leadership roles,
and for those who care for the most vulnerable in our community:

We pray for ourselves and for each other,
for the situations that challenge us,
and the new possibilities that encourage us:

Spirit of Christ, move with us into the week ahead.
Remind us each day to live according to God's will and purpose,
for we want to offer your loving presence
in the lives we touch in Jesus' name,
for he taught all his friends these words to pray together:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 6th Sunday of Easter. May 5th, 2024. Year B.

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 blessed by the gift of lives transformed, of love outpoured through Christ's love for us, so we bring our gifts that the love we have found in Christ can be shared throughout our community and in the world.

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

I know not why such wondrous grace

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1. I know not why such wondrous grace
to me God has made known;
nor why, unworthy as I am,
Christ claimed me for his own,
but I know whom I have believed
and am persuaded that Christ is able
to keep that which I've committed
unto him against that day.
2. I know not why this saving faith
to me God did impart,
nor how believing in the word
brought peace into my heart,
but I know whom I have believed
and am persuaded that Christ is able
to keep that which I've committed
unto him against that day.
3. I know not how the Spirit moves,
convincing me of sin,
revealing Jesus through the word,
creating faith in him,
but I know whom I have believed
and am persuaded that Christ is able
to keep that which I've committed
unto him against that day. Words: public domain

Benediction

Children of God,
as we go from here to grow the kingdom of God,
may we do so in love.

As we go from here to share the love of God
with all whom we meet,
may we do so, knowing that God loved us first,
God loves us still, and God always will...

May you feel the love of God in your heart,
may you know Jesus' commandment to love in your mind,
and may the Holy Spirit guide and inspire your mouths,
hands and feet along that journey.

Amen.

[Sunday 5 May 2024 Sixth Sunday of Easter – Year B | The Church of Scotland](#)