

# St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Thunder Bay – Liturgy

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

25th Sunday after Pentecost - November 10, 2024

Remembrance Sunday

## Call to Worship

Happy are those whose hope is in the LORD,

**For God keeps faith with us forever.**

Praise God who brings justice for the oppressed and gives food to the hungry.

**We will praise the One who lifts up all those who bear heavy burdens.**

God will reign in mercy and righteousness for all generations.

**Let us praise the LORD with our lips and honour God with our lives.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 25th Sunday after Pentecost. November 10, 2024. Year B. Remembrance Sunday.

## Hymn

*I'm gonna live so God can use me*

648

1. I'm gonna live so live so God can use me  
anywhere, Lord, anytime! anytime!  
I'm gonna live so live so God can use me  
anywhere, Lord, my Lord anytime! anytime!
2. I'm gonna work so work so God can use me  
anywhere, Lord, anytime! Anytime!  
I'm gonna work so work so God can use me  
anywhere, Lord, (my Lord) anytime! anytime!
3. I'm gonna pray so pray so God can use me  
anywhere, Lord, anytime! anytime!  
I'm gonna pray so pray so God can use me  
anywhere, Lord, my Lord anytime! anytime!
4. I'm gonna sing so sing so God can use me  
anywhere, Lord, anytime! anytime!  
I'm gonna sing so sing so God can use me  
anywhere, Lord, my Lord anytime! anytime!

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## Prayers of Adoration and Confession

God of justice and peace,

We gather at this solemn time of year,  
aware of the costliness of human history.

In the face of hostility between nations and neighbours,  
you have come to us in Jesus Christ,  
carrying no sword, calling us to serve as peace makers.

In this time of worship, renew in us the hope  
that you will turn swords into ploughshares ,  
and lead the world you love away from making war for pride or profit.

By the power of your Spirit,  
renew your promise of peace with justice for all your peoples.  
May it be so.

**God of justice and mercy,  
we confess that the world around us is in a mess.  
Nations turn disputes over territory into acts of aggression.  
Old enemies stir up conflict with their rivals.  
Threats of violence keep us all on edge.  
We confess we have not learned from past conflicts  
what leads to peace with justice among nations and neighbours.  
Forgive us, and lead us in a better way.**

O God, as we turn to listen for your Word, send your Spirit among us. Open our ears to your truth. Open our minds to your challenge, and move our hearts to live out that challenge in the name of Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh. Amen.

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## **Assurance of Pardon**

Jesus said, Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you.  
Not as the world gives do I give to you.  
Friends, through God's mercy, our sin is forgiven.  
May the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

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## **Scripture Readings Mark 12:38-44**

<sup>38-40</sup> He continued teaching. "Watch out for the religion scholars. They love to walk around in academic gowns, preening in the radiance of public flattery, basking in prominent positions, sitting at the head table at every church function. And all the time they are exploiting the weak and helpless. The longer their prayers, the worse they get. But they'll pay for it in the end."

<sup>41-44</sup> Sitting across from the offering box, he was observing how the crowd tossed money in for the collection. Many of the rich were making large contributions. One poor widow came up and put in two small coins—a measly two cents. Jesus called his disciples over and said, "The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford—she gave her all."

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## **Message Who do you see?**

Do you see her? She is right there. You must have walked past her a dozen times. Well maybe you haven't seen her. She is disheveled, shuffling her feet in tiny bounce like steps as if trying to force momentum forward. It takes a lot to notice her. Even if you have to walk around her you don't really see her...for you don't look in her face...you just want to avoid any glance that might invite a request for help.

Then there is the man who hangs out on his old decrepit front step. Is he lonely or just a hermit? Who cares? Who really wants to know? Getting to know him might make one feel obligated to chat or to really pay attention to the brokenness, the hurt that made it so that family doesn't seem to be around or care.

Then there is the widow. In the hustle and bustle of a season that is already beginning its preparations. As store shelves quickly pivot from Halloween to Christmas barely noticing that there is a day of Remembrance of war after war and sacrifice that needs to be honoured...we miss seeing her...that woman. The crowds have our attention. The couple with the three kids all dressed in their brand-named clothing, the businessmen and women meeting up at the restaurant ready to order drinks and appetizers. You are a people watcher and so the crowds get your attention, the passer-bys with their conversations, company, and ability to spend or have the credit card ready even if they don't have the cash in hand.

Then you spot her...over there...window shopping. Nobody notices her. No one is with her. There is nothing about her to draw attention. But you see her...and for some reason are drawn to watching her. Almost inconspicuously she enters a store and chooses a small item. It is under five bucks, but as she opens her wallet you notice that is all that is in there. There is no other money, no credit cards, you are not even sure if she has identification in there. She seems anonymous, but you are pretty sure she has just given her everything to buy a small token of a gift to be given to another as you listen to the brief exchange of conversation between the woman and the store clerk.

And then you connect this and the story of what has become know as the widow's mite. The woman at the temple, the story we just heard. The story of Jesus at the temple teaching.

What you may not remember is that the story begins with Jesus upending tables in the marketplace of the merchants, he has been harassed and challenged by temple authorities, but the crowds are taking it all in. Now Jesus is making an observation about those who walk around looking important, those who exploit the weak and the helpless while making it look like they give a dam.

They talk a big game, but the power, politics, and prestige, the wealth and income have made it so they don't even see what is going on around them, the suffering, the humiliations, the loneliness, the greed that takes from those who have little to nothing already and victimizes the vulnerable and the marginalized, over and over again.

If you have gone to church over the course of a lifetime you have heard this story preached pitting the small offering of the widow over the actions of the scribes. Her generosity when she has nothing to give lifted up as the example all of us should aspire to.

And maybe there is nothing wrong with that. However, there are few of us here who could relate to that kind of giving. It might even be hard to imagine it. Then again, I don't

presume to know what your circumstances are or have been like at times as even I could tell stories about the financial challenges Ken and I have faced at different times in our forty-two years of marriage. I do know that when things were at their most difficult, making sure we enough for our family always went before making a donation to the church or anywhere else for that matter.

And that is another criticism of this story, one where people wonder what kind of influence the teaching of temple authorities had over the widow, or what blind trust in God this woman may have had that made her give until she might need to beg another for help so that she would be okay. I don't feel that I can critique any of these interpretations or the many more that have been supplied since time immemorial. Part of what makes scripture so interesting is that one can look at the stories and glean different aspects from it, different ways to interpret and find new understanding for living and faith.

What I struggle with in all of these interpretations is that the woman become an object lesson. But what if this is a story about God seeing who each of us is. A story that demonstrates that God sees us and the idea that you matter. Every individual matters.

If you go back to the story, you hear Jesus in the Temple teaching. He sees those who believe they should be noticed because of their stature in the community, their influence and power. He describes them, "They love to walk around in academic gowns, preening in the radiance of public flattery, basking in prominent positions, sitting at the head table at every church function."

The temple authorities were powerful amongst the Jewish people. The temple itself central to their society. The church is no longer a place of power and position in people's lives but we must be careful in our church structures that the same is not happening. Yet, I think we can extend this picture of people of power and influence, of money and wealth, to what does have influence over us from capitalism and politics to who gets to make decisions and who do we listen to because we think they may have the answers that satisfy our personal needs. Jesus warns, "all the time they are exploiting the weak and helpless. The longer their prayers, the worse they get. But they'll pay for it in the end."

All this was going on as Jesus was sitting across from the offering box at the temple observing how the crowd tossed money in for the collection. Many of the rich were making large contributions. And then she comes. We know nothing about her, but Jesus sees her. One poor widow who came up and put in two small coins – a measly two cents. Jesus who to this point has been addressing a crowd, calls his disciples overs and says, "The truth is that this poor widow gave more to the collection than all the others put together. All the others gave what they'll never miss; she gave extravagantly what she couldn't afford – she gave her all."

Jesus saw her. He saw her trust, her heart, her need. He saw her. It takes time to stop and look to see those around us, especially those we tend to rush past. Those who don't seem to have anything but a measly two cents to offer. But Jesus...Jesus...sees...her.

Where on the surface the text seems to talk about the value of money, maybe if we go a little deeper, we see that the text is talking about the value of a person. Not the value of what they have to offer. Their value as a human being.

This sermon comes on Remembrance Sunday and the Sunday before Remembrance Day. It comes at a time when we are thinking about the value of human life. The sacrifices made by so many who believed that the lives of those in concentration camps and civilian caught up in war on all kinds of borders and fronts was worth the cost to stand against power that thought it had the upper hand. It came as people rose up against power of those who believed that they could say that the Jews were less than human and those who aided them also had no value.

We are living in a time when now Israel is determining that other lives, those of Palestinians and Lebanese are not valuable as they take measures to hunt Hamas, without regard for the toll and tragedy of human life. And yes, I understand that Israel has felt attacked, but at what cost do countries decide the loss of life is worth it. The same can be said of Russia determining that Ukrainian lives can be sacrificed for the power of one man's ego to be stroked. And though war is not raging in the U.S. at what cost will Trump's agenda take root.

I could go on, because our world is broken. We do not as human beings see value in one another. We judge, we think we know better, we believe that people get what they deserve. They didn't work hard enough, they shouldn't have started on drugs, their parents didn't raise them right. We find all sort of ways to belittle and devalue those who are different from us in all kinds of ways, including sexual orientation, social and economic status, race, religion, and culture. We judge those who don't measure up to our standards and envy, go so far as to honour those who have more money, power, and prestige than we do.

Yet Jesus said, look at the widow. Look at the one who has no power, nothing visible to offer. Look there. I see her. God sees her. And because of that we can trust that God see each of us as well. God sees your efforts, your pain, your struggle. It is a powerful thing to know that God loves you regardless of who one is. God loves but that does not leave us off the hook. Just last week we heard the command, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul mind, and strength, and love your neighbour as yourself. These words are all part of the same story. There is nothing separating them in the text. Only our time from one Sunday to the next separates these words.

God values us, love us, loves everyone, even those we think we dislike with every fiber of our body and then God says, love God, and love that person. In and of ourselves we cannot find the ability to love that way, but if we are to be image bearers of God in the world we have to find ways to see the humanity in everyone, from those who wield power to those who have none.

Take a look. With your body, mind, and spirit, look for those who you don't normally see, and love them not of yourself, but as one who bears the image of God in the world. Maybe then, just maybe the value of every human life will take root.

I speak to you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

## **Prayers of the People**

God of all the ages past, hope of years to come:

We gather in this season of remembrance,  
grateful that you hold each one of us in your memory and your mystery,  
now and for all the time to come.

Today we remember all those who have served to uphold justice and freedom  
in the wars of the last century, in conflicts of our own generation,  
and in peace keeping and relief efforts around the world.

Especially we pray for those who have died in this service  
and for those who carry scars on body & soul, having returned from conflict.

We remember their courage

and we pray for their families who still ache for lives surrendered at great cost.

Faithful God,

**Remember them now and for all the time to come.**

O God, we remember before you the victims of current conflicts,  
hiding in forgotten corners of the world, longing for safety and peace...

We remember victims of violence in our own country,  
still fearful and uncertain about what the future holds for them...

Give us the courage to speak out for their protection and recovery.

Faithful God,

**Remember them now and for all the time to come.**

O God, we remember those around us who carry on  
under the burden of sad and hard memories;  
those weighed down by grief, disappointment, anger, pain and loss.

Inspire us to offer a listening ear and an understanding heart whenever we can.

Faithful God,

**Remember them now and for all the time to come.**

O God, we remember those around us who struggle to remember day by day;  
those who fear forgetting those who matter most to them,  
and those who face the fear of being forgotten.

Help us remember to reach out in comfort and support so that no one is forgotten.

Faithful God,

**Remember them now and for all the time to come.**

God of all the ages past, hope of years to come,  
help us remember you day by day.  
Strengthen us to be disciples of your gospel  
so that hope is renewed in our lives, your church and the world  
for the sake of Jesus, who taught us to pray together, saying:

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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

The Scriptures today speak of generosity and the risk it involves, as well as God's faithfulness to generous actions. In this season of Remembrance, the risk and generosity of others is often on our minds. Let their legacy inspire us to risk generous gifts as we present our offering.

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St. Andrew's uses all the money that we receive to support the ministry of God from this church and in community. Your gifts make a difference and this includes the ministry of online worship as well. If you are able to make a one-time donation or support this ministry on an ongoing basis your gift makes an impact. Please check us out at [standrewpres-tbay.ca](http://standrewpres-tbay.ca). There you can find various ways of giving from e-transfer to the online donate button that allows you to give by credit card. We are deeply grateful for your generosity.

## Hymn

*Where charity and love prevail*

692

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|---|---|
| 1. Where charity and love prevail,<br>there God is ever found;<br>brought here together by Christ's love,<br>by love are we thus bound. | 2. With grateful joy and holy fear,<br>God's charity we learn;<br>let us with heart and mind and soul<br>now love God in return.  |
| 3. Forgive we now each other's faults<br>as we our faults confess;<br>and let us love each other well<br>in Christian holiness.         | 4. Let strife among us be unknown;<br>let all contentions cease;<br>be God's the glory that we seek;<br>be ours God's holy peace. |
| 5. Let us recall that in our midst<br>dwells God's begotten Son;<br>as members of his body joined,<br>we are in Christ made one.        | 6. No race nor creed can love exclude,<br>if honoured by God's name;<br>our family embraces all<br>whose Father is the same.      |

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## **Benediction**

Jesus said, Blessed are the peace makers for they shall be called children of God.  
Go as God's children, to bring peace into the lives you encounter this week.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,  
That you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit  
And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## **Postlude**