

6th Sunday after Epiphany - February 16, 2025

Call to Worship

Blessed are those who trust - in God!

We come in trust, to be grounded in God's love.

Blessed are those who hope - in God!

We come in hope, trusting in the One who gives us life.

Blessed are those who delight - in God's Word!

We come to hear God speak, hoping for healing and joy.

©2025 Thom M. Shuman. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com> February 16.

Hymn

Be thou my vision

461

1. Be Thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art;
thou my best thought in the day and the night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.
2. Be thou my wisdom, be thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord;
thou my great Father, thine own may I be;
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.
3. Be thou my breastplate, my sword for the fight;
be thou my armour and be thou my might;
thou my soul's shelter and thou my high tower:
raise thou me heavenward, O Power of my power.
4. Riches I heed not, nor vain earthly praise,
thou mine inheritance, through all my days:
thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
high King of heaven, my treasure thou art!
5. High King of heaven, when the battle is done,
grant heaven's joy to me, O bright heaven's Sun!
heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Words and Music: Irish, anonymous. Trans. by Mary Byrne; paraphrase by Eleanor Hull. Public domain.

Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God of majesty and mystery,
we come in wonder and humility.

Source of all that is, you are beyond our imagining,
astonishing us with the detail and designs within your creation.

Word of hope and healing,

you touch our lives with truth and tenderness,
revealing our need and our gift.

Spirit of purpose and possibility,
you move within us when we least expect it,
awakening our gifts, urging us to respond.

Receive our praise and prayer this day,
and prepare us to receive your Word in its wisdom and warning,
for we come to you through Christ our Lord, trusting in his grace and truth.

Confident of your forgiveness and out of a desire to begin again with you and one
another, we confess our sins:

God of life and love,

**at this season of the year our hearts are grateful for all the love that touches our
lives. Still, we confess that we are not always shining examples of the love we
long for. Forgive us for those times when we failed to keep our word and
disappointed those who love us. Forgive us when we gave into our tempers and
temptations and disappointed your hopes for us. Renew and remake us through
the grace of your Son, Jesus, your love made flesh.**

God, you are the source of wisdom and understanding for us.

In the midst of all that distracts us, help us listen in stillness.

In the midst of competing voices, may we hear your Word for our lives and our times.

By your Spirit, help us discern Jesus' call to follow him. Amen.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 6th Sunday after Epiphany. Heritage Sunday. February 16, 2025. Year C.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Blessed are you: for God forgives you and restores you to new life.

Rejoice in this day and dance for joy!

**Thanks be to God! Our faith is true, and our hope is grounded in the promises
of the One we can trust not only on this day, but in every day to come. Amen.**

©2025 Thom M. Shuman. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com> February 16.

Scripture Reading 1 Corinthians 15:1-20 (from *The Message*)

¹⁻² Friends, let me go over the Message with you one final time—this Message that I proclaimed and that you made your own; this Message on which you took your stand and by which your life has been saved. (I'm assuming, now, that your belief was the real thing and not a passing fancy, that you're in this for good and holding fast.)

³⁻⁹ The first thing I did was place before you what was placed so emphatically before me: that the Messiah died for our sins, exactly as Scripture tells it; that he was buried; that he was raised from death on the third day, again exactly as Scripture says; that he presented himself alive to Peter, then to his closest followers, and later to more than five hundred of his followers all at the same time, most of them still around (although a few have since died); that he then spent time with James and the rest of those he commissioned to represent him; and that he finally presented himself alive

to *me*. It was fitting that I bring up the rear. I don't deserve to be included in that inner circle, as you well know, having spent all those early years trying my best to stamp God's church right out of existence.

¹⁰⁻¹¹ But because God was so gracious, so very generous, here I am. And I'm not about to let his grace go to waste. Haven't I worked hard trying to do more than any of the others? Even then, my work didn't amount to all that much. It was God giving me the work to do, God giving me the energy to do it. So whether you heard it from me or from those others, it's all the same: We spoke God's truth and you entrusted your lives.

¹²⁻¹⁵ Now, let me ask you something profound yet troubling. If you became believers because you trusted the proclamation that Christ is alive, risen from the dead, how can you let people say that there is no such thing as a resurrection? If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it—if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of barefaced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ—sheer fabrications, if there's no resurrection.

¹⁶⁻²⁰ If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead. And if Christ weren't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and resurrection, because they're already in their graves. If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot. But the truth is that Christ *has* been raised up, the first in a long legacy of those who are going to leave the cemeteries.

[The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

Message Trusting the Proclamation (based on v12-20)

I have to admit, this is a tough one. I can usually come up with some sort of sermon illustration to get us warmed up to whatever topic a sermon is going to be about, but this one scripture just doesn't seem to lend itself well to some sort of story to make a point. I think it is because the topic is one defies reason or scientific proof. This scripture is based in conviction. Not blind following or trust, but a conviction based in experience, that of Paul, that of the earliest Christians who gave us the New Testament, and based in our own lived experience of God at work in the world.

Now, you heard verses 1-20 of chapter 15 in order that you would have the basis for what the sermon is going to focus on. Last week I preached on verses 1-11, so if you want a reminder, you can go back and look at that sermon, but it has been read today so that you have Paul's preamble to where he is going in the next part of the scripture. Without the first verses, which assert that Jesus was raised from the dead and lists a lot of people who saw Jesus in his resurrected body, then what I am about to talk about now would appear to be coming out of nowhere. Verse 11 sets us up, "We spoke God's truth and you entrusted your lives" or as another translation of scripture says, "Whether then it was I or they, so we proclaim and so you have come to believe." (NRSV)

Basically, Christ's resurrection has been proclaimed and believed and now we are to live into that truth. No one that Paul was writing to at the time is needing to be convinced that Jesus was raised from the dead. That was actually pretty easy for them to believe. Eye witness accounts were still able to be confirmed at the time that Paul wrote the letter. As well, many of the new believers in Corinth were people who believed in heroes and many small "g" gods with power. Paul Brown notes, "It was only the heroes, the ones who were worshiped and sometimes immortalized bodily, who attained a special destiny and thus, the Corinthians could deny their own future resurrection while still embracing the resurrection and worship of Jesus, the Messiah, as one with hero status."¹

And that was the problem. The Corinthians could believe in Jesus as having been resurrected; their problem was that some could not get their heads around the fact that Christ's resurrection was a promise of their own resurrection. It is interesting that in our day and age, more people would probably attest that their bodies will be able to go on in another form and deny Jesus' resurrection, but that was not the challenge then, and for many now, it is all a conundrum.

For Paul though, this is all fact and it is based in what he has witness in his own life and in the lives of countless others. Life breathed in anew when one believes that Jesus' resurrection is the promise of new life for us now and in our dying. Paul's point is that our resurrection and that of Jesus is inextricably linked. God choose to come to earth in flesh and blood so that we would be connected in ways that could not have been if that had not happened. Unlike other gods, our God is with us because of love, not because of power. We are not pawns in God's game of life, but rather players who have the ability to make decisions about how we will live our lives. The hope being that the love of God as shown in Jesus' life, death and resurrection, we be the guiding light for our own lives.

Still, how Paul goes about writing on this is all from a pretty negative stance at this point in the scripture...

If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it—if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors. Not only that, but we would be guilty of telling a string of barefaced lies about God, all these affidavits we passed on to you verifying that God raised up Christ—sheer fabrications, if there's no resurrection.

¹⁶⁻²⁰ If corpses can't be raised, then Christ wasn't, because he was indeed dead. And if Christ weren't raised, then all you're doing is wandering about in the dark, as lost as ever. It's even worse for those who died hoping in Christ and

¹ Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15*, 94.

resurrection, because they're already in their graves. If all we get out of Christ is a little inspiration for a few short years, we're a pretty sorry lot.²

I for one would be one of those "pretty sorry lot" as I have given my life to preaching the gospel, of telling people what I have come to believe, and sharing that my life has been hugely impacted and changed, transformed really, by the belief that Jesus was raised from the dead and that means you and I will be too. I have left family and work, moved to a completely different place in Canada then I would have ever thought I would go, because I am so convinced of the power of God to change lives...for people to live abundant lives...because of the resurrection power of God to raise Jesus from the dead and that means you and I can be too.

Being raised to life means we are able to lead an abundant and amazing life now, and to be in the presence of Godself in our physical dying. It does not mean that we are free from danger, or illness, brokenness and pain, but it does mean that we can live through them in hope, grace, and the promise that those things do not have the final say. Jesus has the final say, and his promise...God's promise...is that of life.

And Paul says that it is our work to proclaim the promise of new life, a transformed life, to any and all who will listen. We proclaim in words and in deeds. We proclaim when we tell people that we know Jesus through scriptures and lived experience. We proclaim the Good News of Jesus when by our actions, our generosity, and by our love, people experience the grace of God.

Jeffrey Jones writes,

The great insight of this passage is that the two are intimately linked together. Belief in Christ's resurrection provides reason to have faith in our own. Faith in our own resurrection provides reason to believe in Christ's. There is something other than rational argument at work here, for the very nature of resurrection defies reason. It is, rather, an experientially based conviction... We believe, not because of any inherent logic, but because our acceptance of that conviction opens us to the wonder and power of God at work. It moves us beyond the rational and scientific so that we begin to see with eyes of faith...The power of the resurrection is the power to transform this life and bring us to eternal life. Once again, the two are intimately connected. The reality of one assures us of the reality of the other.³

Today's is not about convincing you of anything, but maybe giving you reason to consider your belief. Why you believe and what you believe. To hear Paul's words that talk about

² [The Message \(MSG\)](#) Copyright © 1993, 2002, 2018 by [Eugene H. Peterson](#)

³ Copenhaver Martin B. *Feasting on the Word: Year c Volume 1 Advent through Transfiguration*. Editors David L. Bartlett, and Barbara Brown Taylor. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville. 2009. P353, 355.

faith and about the promises of God. Jesus' resurrection was the first fruits of the harvest, an agricultural analogy about what God is up to in the world.

In a time in our society when so much is in question, when we are witnessing various ways of leading people and ways leaders abuse their power, of certain people taking and having control over the lives of others, God's story is one power as well, but it is the power of love, hope, grace, and promise. May our story be one that shows what God's power looks like in the world for the sake of the world and for the love of God. Amen.

Prayers of the People

God of mystery and mercy,
We come before you today carrying hopes and dreams,
the burdens and blessings of our lives.
We bring all that is on our hearts and minds to you,
seeking your comfort and strength,
listening for your guidance, grateful that you hear us when we pray.

God of life and love,
We give you thanks that you engage us whenever we need you,
in the midst of challenge and uncertainty.
We pray today for all those who are fearful about their future,
and for all who wrestle with challenges at work or at home.
Help us face our fears and our challenges, sure of your steadfast love.

God of hope and healing,
In Jesus Christ you confronted demons that trouble our minds
and the pain and illness that can weigh us down.
We pray today for all those who are facing health concerns,
and for all who care for the suffering and those in need of support.
Surround each one with your steadfast love.

God of peace and promise,
when we wrestle with any burden,
your Spirit prays within us with sighs too deep for words.
Today we pray for all those whose burdens seem too heavy to bear:
for the victims of violence or disaster, for their friends and families...
For refugees at risk in so many places in the world,
and those making a new home in our community...
For those caught in despair and poverty in our own neighbourhoods
and in the forgotten corners of your world...
Renew the strength of all facing realities beyond their control
with your steadfast love.

Receive all our prayers, spoken and unspoken, and equip us to do your will
as together we pray the words Jesus taught us:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 6th Sunday after Epiphany. Heritage Sunday. February 16, 2025. Year C.

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

God has been with us throughout our history.
God is with us now. And God will be with us in the future.
Let us now return some of the gifts that we have been given,
that God's work might continue to be done here
in the weeks and months and years to come.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. 6th Sunday after Epiphany. Heritage Sunday. February 16, 2025. Year C.

We give thanks for the support we receive for the ministry here at St. Andrew's in Thunder Bay. Head to our website at <https://standrewspres-tbay.ca/>

Hymn

I know not why such wondrous grace

683

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 and Music: Public Domain. Words by Daniel W. Whittle. Music: James McGranahan

Benediction

May the blessing of God, Creator, Christ, and Holy Spirit,
nourish and sustain us, surprise and reorder us,
and strengthen us in faith and hope for this life and the life to come.

Feasting on the Word Worship Companion: Liturgies for Year C, Volume 1 © 2012 Westminster John Knox Press

Postlude