

JUNE 13th WORSHIP SERVICE

WORDS OF WELCOME

INTROIT: “*As We Gather*” (2 Times)

CALL TO WORSHIP:

L: What a beautiful thing, God,
to give thanks, to sing an anthem to you, the High God!

***P: To announce your love each daybreak,
sing your faithful presence all through the night,***

L: Accompanied by dulcimer and harp, the full-bodied music of strings.

***P: You make us so happy, God. We see your work and shout for joy.
How magnificent your work, God! How profound your thoughts!***

L: Come, let's shout praises to God, raise the roof for the Rock who saved us!

***P: Let's march into his presence singing praises,
lifting the rafters with our hymns!***

L: Oh yes, he's our God,

P: and we're the people he pastures, the flock he feeds.

Based on Psalm 92 & 95, *The Message*. Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson

HYMN OF PRAISE: v.v. 1 & 4 “*Alleluia, Alleluia, Give Thanks*”

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH: A New Creed

One: We are not alone, we live in God's world.

***All: We believe in God: Who has created and is creating,
Who has come in Jesus, the word made flesh, to reconcile and make new,
Who works in us and others by the Spirit.
We trust God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence,
To love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil,
To proclaim Jesus, Crucified and risen,
Our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.
We are not alone. Thanks be to God.***

United Church of Canada, 1980

SCRIPTURE:

Ezekiel 17:22-24 (NIV)

²² “This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I myself will take a shoot from the very top of a cedar and plant it; I will break off a tender sprig from its topmost shoots and plant it on a high and lofty mountain. ²³ On the mountain heights of Israel I will plant it; it will produce branches and bear fruit and become a splendid cedar. Birds of every kind will nest in it; they will find shelter in the shade of its branches. ²⁴ All the trees of the forest will know that I the Lord bring down the tall tree and make the low tree grow tall. I dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish.

“I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it.”

2 Corinthians 5:6-17 (NIV) –

⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

The Ministry of Reconciliation

¹¹ Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. ¹² We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart. ¹³ If we are “out of our mind,” as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you. ¹⁴ For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

Mark 4:26-34 (NIV) -

The Parable of the Growing Seed

²⁶ He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷ Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸ All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹ As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

³⁰ Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹ It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³² Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

³³ With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. ³⁴ He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

REFLECTION: Christ’s Love Compels

When I say the word Christianity, what comes to mind? ----- Christianity is more than just a faith or religion, it is a way of life that is urged on by the love of Christ. Christianity, when truly embraced, acknowledges that Christ died for all, not just some but for all so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for the one who died and was raised for them. All throughout the scriptures and especially in today’s readings God has never been about raising up one for the purpose of self-greatness, but so that others might be blessed through their lives. Christ’s love compels us to see beyond our own lives

In Ezekiel, when God plants the twig, God plants it to grow, bear fruit, and to provide shelter. The same can be said of the mustard seed in Mark about the kingdom of God. The planting is not about getting big and noticeable, but about using what’s there for God’s purposes. Christianity when embraced, is more than a profession of beliefs and doctrines, it is becoming a new creation and being given the gift to see others in a light that this one too, is one for whom Christ died. All are worthy of hearing the gospel and experiencing the gospel even if all might not embrace the Gospel. This means that no matter what we have done or left undone, we are worthy of the Gospel message and having our lives transformed by God into a new creation in Christ, but what does it mean to be in Christ?

The Rev. Dr. Fred Anderson shares these insights about that very question. “What does that mean in plain language? It means the Christian life is not about grinning and bearing it until the end so all things can become new. Nor is it about awaiting salvation in a new heaven and a new earth. It is about becoming new right here and now, cracked pots and all! The Kingdom of God which Jesus constantly talked about is ... the infusion of God’s presence into our everyday lives—the mundane,

the profane the everyday. It is about God meeting us in those places, every day, and changing them and us. ... It is about coming into the presence of Jesus Christ and therein being transformed. ...

... You may be struggling with the broken pottery of your life, God is focused on the treasure within it.”

(The Rev. Dr. Fred R. Anderson - Pastor, The Madison Avenue Pulpit - Copyright 1997.)

I would add to that, you may be struggling with judging the broken pottery of another person's life, but the love of Christ compels us to see that this one too is one for whom God is focused on the treasure within, it may be buried deep, maybe even very deep, but there none the less.

We see through the life of Jesus that the love of Christ compels us and gives us the courage to speak truth and shed light on that which harms, in order to bring about transformation that gives new life. We see through the life of Jesus that Christ's love offers forgiveness in order transform individuals and situations from that which is harmful and divisive into that which is life giving and reconciling and compels us to do likewise.

The love of Christ brings people into trusting relationships with God, one another and all of creation and empowers us to live out that same love which seeks the good and well-being of the whole, not just for the current generation, but for the generations to come.

The love of Christ makes us a new creation which frees us, as theologian Jennifer Pietz shared in her thought on this passage, “from a vain way of living that compels us to prove our worth by our accomplishments and seek our own interests at the expense of others.” I would add to that, being a new creation compels us to live by faith and not by sight and frees us to embrace hope where the current reality seems hopeless, and to have the courage to carry on through challenging times whatever those challenges may be. Just because something is challenging, it doesn't mean that we are not exactly where God wants us and needs us to be.

Back in 2012 I found this story from Father Baush about 2 children who walked by faith and not by sight. This is a true story of a little girl who came home every day from school on the bus. As she stepped from the bus, she was always greeted by her brother who was waiting for her with a hug and a kiss. He was mentally challenged and had a wonderful gift for showing affection. The other children on the school bus were tempted to make fun of this boy and his sister as he embraced her with the same enthusiasm every day. They realized that he was very different from them. Gradually, however, through the course of the school year the children on the bus grew to have respect for the love that was shown in that family, day in and day out. Father Bausch has confidence that the story is true because it was told to him by an observer, one of the girls on the bus who had been so ready to ridicule the boy. Forty years later, she found her own sense of love and compassion for others still growing from the "seed of love" she had witnessed between a sister and her mentally retarded brother.

Had the girl and her brother lived by sight and not by faith they would have thought that there was something wrong in how they greeted each other. Instead, they lived by faith compelled by the love of Christ planted within them and in the process planted the seeds of love not only in their own hearts, but over time in the hearts of others without even being intentional about it. They simply greeted each other with what God had placed in their hearts to do.

May we learn from these young people and live by faith and not by sight. Christ's love compels us to live faithfully, planting the gospel everywhere, and using words when necessary. Christ's Love is able to take the broken shards of our lives and systems and transform them into a new creation that seeks the well-being of all of God's magnificent creation.

Thank you, God, for offering to all the transformative love of Christ to all who are open to receive which can take the broken shards of our lives and systems and transform them into something beautiful. You continually offer us this gift; may we receive and embrace it more fully as we grow into the new creation you desire for us all.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

L: In Isaiah 57:15 the prophet proclaims, “*For this is what the high and exalted One says— he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite.”*” Knowing this, let us come before God in all honesty and confess our Sin.

**All: *We proclaim that in Christ we are made a new creation.
God forgive us when we fail to live into that new reality.***

(Moment of Silent Reflection)

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

L: God did not send Jesus into the world to condemn the world but to offer forgiveness of sin and salvation through Christ. Embrace the forgiveness freely offered.

If we let go of the past, it is gone and we are made new.

All: *Empowered by God’s Holy Spirit we will let go of the past, rise to new life in Christ and walk with God into the future; for in Christ we are a new creation. Hallelujah!*

A TIME OF PRAYER

– **LIFTING UP PRAYER REQUESTS** –

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

INVITATION TO OFFERING:

PRAYER OF DEDICATION:

L: Generous God, take our gifts this day and use them so that we may be part of your great work in this world.

All: *Guide the use of what we are offering so that how they are used will be in accordance to your will and bring about the healing of the nations for not only humans, but for all of your amazing creation, for in you all things are made new.*

SUMM-IT UP:

SENDING HYMN:

CHARGE & BENEDICTION:

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