

St. Andrew's United Church (Williams Lake) – October 25, 2020
Sunday Worship (by Zoom and email)

Welcome

Welcome to the gathering of the family of Jesus. We gather on lands walked for thousands of years by people of the First Nations. We acknowledge the history, culture, and spirituality of the Secwépemc (Shuswap) People. We also honour the heritage and gifts of the Métis people. We remember our responsibility as persons who inhabit this land alongside our First Nations and Métis sisters and brothers. May we live the respect that our words offer.

In the name of Jesus, who is alive in each of us, peace to you.

And also with you.

We light a candle when we gather – a visible sign of God's presence, if you have a candle where you are, please join me as I light the candle.

Hymn – Jesus, remember me

VU 148

Jesus, remember me when you come in-to your kingdom.

Jesus, remember me when you come in-to your kingdom.

Call to Worship*

We are invited to share in Christ's ministry of compassion.

We will widen our hearts so we might cradle the lost.

We are challenged to learn more about God each day.

We will open our minds so we might discern God's dreams for us.

We are summoned to let the Spirit be planted within us.

We will deepen our souls so we might grow in love.

Prayer of the Day*

Every generation has found
its home in you,
God, our Provider,
and discovered that every moment
spent in your holy presence
lasts beyond all imaginable time.
You watch over us in your arms
as tenderly as a nurse
cares for her children,
and her neighbour's.
Full of wisdom,
Imagination of Creation,
you humbled yourself
that we might learn
to love those

who have been swept aside
by a callous and cruel world.
Witness to God's grace,
you call us to act
in ways of love and peace
to all we meet in this life.

In the fresh breeze
on a summer's day;
in the leaves dancing
across autumn's lawns;
in the crisp, new snowfall
crunching beneath our feet;
in the new life
flowering in the spring:
from everlasting to everlasting
you proclaim God' grace to us,
Spirit of Life.
Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Gracious and Loving God,
there are days when we don't notice you –
there are days when we don't feel you –
there are days when we aren't aware of you –
there are days when we don't acknowledge you –
there are days when we blame you –
there are days when we ignore you –
there are days when we question you –
there are days when we might even stop believing –
forgive us.

...silence is kept...

Words of Assurance

There are days when some of those things are true;
there are days when all of them are true ... and yet
God is steadfast in belief and love for us. You were –
we all were – known to the Holy before you were born,
woven together, cell by cell, carefully, purposefully.
Love, forgiveness, grace, and a welcome home will
always be here, right her for us, when we ask.
Thanks be to God. Amen.

Written by Jamie Miller.
Gathering, Pentecost 2 2020, page 39.
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Scripture Readings

Matthew 22:34-46 Love God; love your neighbour as yourself

The Greatest Commandment

34 When the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together, ³⁵and one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶“Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?” ³⁷He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” ³⁸This is the greatest and first commandment. ³⁹And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” ⁴⁰On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.’

The Question about David’s Son

41 Now while the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them this question: ⁴²“What do you think of the Messiah? Whose son is he?” They said to him, ‘The son of David.’ ⁴³He said to them, ‘How is it then that David by the Spirit calls him Lord, saying,

⁴⁴“The Lord said to my Lord,
‘Sit at my right hand,

until I put your enemies under your feet’ ”?

⁴⁵If David thus calls him Lord, how can he be his son?’ ⁴⁶No one was able to give him an answer, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions.

Sermon/Reflection –

The Greatest Commandment – Question and Answer

If you had the chance to ask the biblical Jesus one question, what would it be? I say the biblical Jesus because you can ask Jesus any question any time, any number of questions, the same way you can ask God any question any time, any number of questions. But if you were right there in the story – with Jesus at one of those big events, at a dinner party at somebody’s house, or walking down the street – what would you ask him? That’s always something to think about.

If you were in this story, if you were right there beside Jesus, what would you ask him? Or if you were in any story, what would you ask? No matter what you asked, I can promise one thing, “love” will be in the answer. The answer will have something to do with love. Because love is at the core of Jesus’ message, love is at the heart of Jesus’ message. And of course it is, because love is at the core of who and how we are, it’s the heart of us and how we relate to each other and to the world and to everything.

The last couple of weeks we’ve been with Jesus in the temple in his last days. He’s teaching and the Pharisees have been sending people along to ask him questions, trick questions because they want to trip him up, it’s a trap, they’re testing him because they want him to say something they can use against him. To discredit him or at least discourage his followers.

This is the last question, and you’d think it would be a hard ball question, but it turns out to be kind of a soft ball question. “What is the greatest commandment?” That’s a popular question among Hebrew people, a

popular thing for discussion, commented on a lot. And the answer comes from Jesus “love God” “and love your neighbour.” He doesn’t leave it at one, it’s AND. Love God AND your neighbour. Except that’s not all of it either, it’s “love God with all your heart and mind and your soul” and “love your neighbour as you love yourself.”

In the bible we always say there are three kinds of love: Eros – romantic love; Philos – brotherly, sisterly, friend love; and Agape – unconditional “God” love. It’s either one or the other or the other, when we talk about love in the bible. It’s

But Jesus isn’t and ‘either or’, Jesus is always about AND. I don’t think when Jesus talks about love he means one specific kind – he means and, he means all kinds of love. All of it. Because ultimately all love is at the core of who we are, and that’s the point of “love God with all your heart and mind and soul, and love your neighbour as yourself.”

The question isn’t the test, the real test is the answer. Because that’s hard. It means putting everything in the context of living out of love. And that’s hard. It’s hard to do. It sounds so simple, but it’s hard to do. It’s hard always to remember, to live from love because sometimes we don’t feel like it. We don’t feel like loving, we might feel angry, we might feel hurt, we might feel like we just want to be alone for a minute. We might find ourselves being asked to love somebody we’re angry at, somebody we hate, somebody who we don’t feel is worthy of our love. And that’s just it. Yes, they are! Yes they are! And so are you.

Let’s start with that. However, we’re feeling, love is more than that. Love is at the core, at the heart of who we are, of our very being. And when we start there and move out from there.... Well, that’s the point of Jesus’ teaching, that’s the point of love one another the way I showed you to love, look I’ve been living it Have I been doing it perfectly? No. By the way, let’s just acknowledge that – Jesus doesn’t always get it perfect, get it right every time.

Because love isn’t just about being divine, isn’t just about being human – it’s about how we’re divine AND of the earth. It’s about those things together, In fact, it’s love that brings those two things together because it’s at the core of both.

And it’s not about separating things out and learning behaviours, it’s about living first from what is in our hearts which is love that is both divinely given and of the earth. It’s the thing that connects us.

Is it easy? No it is not. The real test is living it out. But that’s the point of Jesus’ teaching, the point of Jesus’ being. To show us that’s what’s in us and we can do it. Yes we can. Is it always going to be easy? Is it always going to be comfortable with it? Are we always going to be successful? Are we always going to be good at it? No. But it’s always going to be there because it is truly at the core, in the heart of how and who we are.

Prayer:

Dear God, may we begin every day with love, may we begin every breath we take with love, may we live out every day, every breath, every action, every thing as if love were truly at the heart of it. All love, the love that builds relationships, the love that gives life and creates and inspires. May we find that love within us, share it with our neighbours and with you. Amen.

Community Prayer

And now, O God, we are one in prayer but bring our own thanks and concerns. If some need to say “help me”, or “save me”, or “hold me”, or “forgive me”, then let these be spoken now in the confidence of our hearts in a moment of quiet prayer.

*God in Community, Holy in One,

continue to be the dwelling place
of our minds, our hearts, our souls,
even as we pray as we have been taught,

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory
forever and ever. **Amen.**

Minute for Mission Snippet

Thank you to our ministers. Thank you for the sermons, the prayers, and the visits. Thank you for the times you leave your own families to sit with someone else's. Thank you for your leadership and your late nights. Thank you for answering God's call and living it out in The United Church of Canada. Thanks to our gifts for Mission & Service, ministers are supported through training at theological schools and education centres and through continuing education.

Oct 25: We Love Our Ministers!
Theological schools, education centres, and continuing education for ministry

The Life and Work of our Church

- Thank you for remembering that the work of the church needs your support even when we aren't able to meet in person:
 - we do appreciate all your gifts and support;
 - first and foremost – for the gift of YOU in the life of our congregation;
 - thank you for continuing to send in or drop off your offering or using PAR;
- **Fall Book Study – *Deep and Wide: Creating Churches Unchurched People Love to Attend***, by Andy Stanley. The Board has decided to read and study this book about stewardship. You are all invited, welcome, encouraged to join us as we learn and understand more about stewardship. The books have arrived and are available in the office during office hours if you'd like to pick one up and participate in this stewardship study.

- **Advent Small Group Study** – four sessions through the Season of Advent. We'll use a study from *The Prayer Bench* by Rev. Janice MacLean, an UCC minister in Riverview, New Brunswick.
- **The Next Newsletter.** Work on the next newsletter is beginning. If you have something to include, please have it to Heather Awmack by Nov. 5 either via e-mail to hawmack@yahoo.com, the Awmack family file at the church, or delivered to her house at 1265 Resker Place (off 12th Ave). The target distribution date will be about Nov. 19, just before Advent. Thanks for your help in making this newsletter an informative one!
- **Winter Book Study – *God, Improv and the Art of Living***, by MaryAnn McKibben Dana. Goodreads says this about this book... **God, Improv, and the Art of Living** is a playful, insightful book written by MaryAnn McKibben Dana. Finding the connection between her hobby of **Improv** and her Christian faith, the author has some fresh ways of looking at life.
- **Winter Small Group Study** – looking at a number of Jesus' parables with aid of a book by Amy-Jill Levine called *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi*, for perspective, insight and inspiration.

Commissioning Song – *May the love of the Lord*

MV 218

Commissioning and Benediction

“The world is too dangerous for anything but truth,
and too small for anything but love.” (William Sloane Coffin.)

*[Go forth now],
to love God with all your heart, your mind, your soul:
with passion, with prayer, with intelligence;
to love your neighbour:
with forgiveness, with service, with love;
and to love yourself:
with hope, with joy, with peace.

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The grace of Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Sung Amen.

VU 974

A-men! A-men! Hal-le-lu-jah, amen!