

BEACHBURG PASTORAL CHARGE
United Church of Canada
October 18th, 2020
Trinity ~ 9:30 am; St. Andrew's ~ 11:00 am
World Food Sunday - Creation 6

Minister: Rev. Kevin Moratz
Ministers: The People of the Congregation
Organist: Heather Campbell - Pianists: Barry Stephen, Murray Gutz

Our Shared Mission Statement

The congregations of St. Andrew's & Trinity United Churches celebrate and share God's accepting love known to us through Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit calls us to discern God's Word as we reach out with concern and compassion to others, seeking justice, healing and hope for the world.

ORDER OF SERVICE

Lighting of the Christ Candle

As worship begins today and we light our Christ candle, let us remember that Jesus came to bring his divine peace and light to all people in this chaotic world.

Introit – This Is The Day (please no singing but please feel free to stand)

This is the day (this is the day); that our Lord has made;
We will rejoice (we will rejoice), and be glad in it;
This is the day that the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it.
This is the day; this is the day, that our Lord has made.

Welcome and Announcements

Call to Worship

From a world where more is best,
we have come to hear of stewardship and of sharing.
From a world where people look out for number one,
we have come to follow Jesus who lived for others.
From a world where advantage over others is a priority,
we have come to love our neighbour as ourselves.
From a world where everything has to be new and shiny,

we have come to cherish and celebrate our heritage.

From a world that tries hard not to feel,

we have come to open our hearts to God's embrace.

As we receive God's Word and sing and pray this morning,

may we be filled with a new understanding.

As we offer our prayers,

may we be forgiven, comforted, and challenged by God's guidance and strength. And may we be encouraged to live as those who bear Christ's name.

Gathering Prayer

O God, who offered bread to desert wanderers;

O Christ, who offered bread on the night he was betrayed;

O Spirit, who feeds all who hunger,

join with us here, we pray.

Through tears, let those wounded and lost find hope.

Through passionate eyes, let friends recognize Christ in one another.

Through compassionate action, let all the world satisfy its hunger

for bread and for peace, until children and elders,

enemies and friends all smile together. In Jesus name. Amen.

Hymn: "Come, and Find the Quiet Center"

1 Come and find the quiet centre in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter, find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.

2 Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace,
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, face to face,
making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.

3 In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:
there's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
in the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare!

Minute For Mission

Ministry of Music - Turn, Turn Turn – The Byrds (Ecclesiastes 3)

Prayer of Confession and Words of Assurance

Too often, God, we allow our hungers to consume us instead of looking to you to satisfy them. We confuse hunger for meaning with hunger for food, filling our stomachs with food instead of filling our souls with your word, leaving us even more starved. We confuse hunger for service with looking after our own wants, leaving us impoverished while self-satisfied. Forgive us, God, and send us on your path, where our hungers can be named, addressed, and fulfilled. Amen.

Words of Assurance

When we honestly name our hungers before God, God hears us and accepts us. Through Jesus, God offers us forgiveness and offers the opportunity to begin anew. Thanks be to God.

LISTENING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Ecclesiastes 2: 1-11 Pleasures Are Meaningless

2 I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure to find out what is good." But that also proved to be meaningless. **2** "Laughter," I said, "is madness. And what does pleasure accomplish?" **3** I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly—my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives.

4 I undertook great projects: I built houses for myself and planted vineyards. **5** I made gardens and parks and planted all kinds of fruit trees in them. **6** I made reservoirs to water groves of flourishing trees. **7** I bought male and female slaves and had other slaves who were born in my house. I also owned more herds and flocks than anyone in Jerusalem before me. **8** I amassed silver and gold for myself, and the treasure of kings and provinces. I acquired male and female singers, and a harem^[a] as well—the delights of a man's heart. **9** I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.

10 I denied myself nothing my eyes desired; I refused my heart no pleasure. My heart took delight in all my labor, and this was the reward for all my toil.

11 Yet when I surveyed all that my hands had done and what I had toiled to achieve, everything was meaningless, a chasing after the wind; nothing was gained under the sun.

Mark 10:17-21

¹⁷ As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸ “Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹ You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’^[d]”

²⁰ “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

²¹ Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²² At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

Meditation – “*What’s Life Worth?*”

The book of Ecclesiastes is known to us primarily for two expressions with which practically everyone is familiar. The first expression is one the one we just listened to, “To every thing there is a season, and time for every matter under heaven” (RSV, Eccl. 3: 1). And the second, from the king James version is, “vanity of vanities! All is vanity” (NRSV, Eccl. 1: 2). I have, on a few occasions especially at funerals, preached on the first phrase, “For everything there is a season”. But I’ve never preached a sermon on “vanity of vanities! All is vanity”. I want to do that today.

“Ecclesiastes” is, by the way, an English transliteration of a Latin translation of the Hebrew word “qoheleth (Ko-hell-a)”.

In some texts, you will find it rendered as "preacher". In others, it will be translated as "teacher" or "philosopher" or "sage." It's not a proper name, but simply means "one who calls the assembly together." For our purposes this morning, we'll translate "Ecclesiastes" as "Teacher".

You may not know this teacher, this speaker very well, but he's probably one of the most modern personalities in the entire Bible. Apparently, when the canon of the Bible was being determined, there was a heated debate about whether this book should be included. I for one am glad it was, because in fact, here is a speaker very much like a lot of us in our affluent western society.

He is a successful man by any measure of worldly achievement, and he knows how to enjoy the pleasures of this world. But like many people today, he's also restless. He's looking for deeper meaning, for greater fulfillment in life. He is honest about himself, and even a bit cynical about his world. He looks at what he has done with his life and asks the question many thoughtful people ask, 'What's it all about? What's life worth, anyway? What am I working for? What am I living for?' Or to use his own words, "What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun?" (RSV, Eccl. 1: 3)

Jesus even paraphrases these words in Mark 8:36, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul" Or the

modern day prophet the late Tom Petty when he sings "It just seems so useless to have to work so hard and nothing ever really seems to come from it."

The Teacher of this book clearly possessed everything. His story reminds me of that old TV show *Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous*. All he could have ever wanted, he had, but it was not enough.

Please understand that the word "vanity" here does not mean the conceited smugness we associate nowadays with the term. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity" is an English phrase originating in Elizabethan times. The best translation I've come across for the word "vanity" is given in our own translation *The New International Version* which we use every week and is a better translation for the 21st century. "Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

That is the theme which is repeated through the twelve chapters of the book. It is the voice of an angry, cynical, skeptical man who doubts the lasting value in anything. Have you ever wondered about the lasting value of things?

We must give the ancient Teacher credit though. Despite his opening hypothesis that there's nothing in this life that has any enduring worth, he at least sets about to test his theory. He decides to see if wisdom and knowledge will do the trick, and

resolves to become the wisest man in the world. But he notes that both the wise man and the fool end up dead, so why bother? He checks to see if pleasure will offer meaning to life. So he gives himself all the wine, women and song he can stand, but finds they just wear him out. He tries everything: wealth, power, status, influence. And yet he still says, "Meaningless! Meaningless! Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless."

I think it's interesting to contrast the Teacher with the person in the Christian scriptures identified as a Rich Young Ruler. And he too had everything the world regards as important: affluence, achievement, power, and prestige. He did not say life was meaningless. Yet when he was asked to give up his treasures for eternal life, he walked away, saddened. He voted with his feet. Both people, in different ways, thought that life wasn't worth it.

Perhaps the Teacher was more honest than the Rich Young Ruler. The Teacher was at least willing to test his theory. The Rich Young Ruler played it safe and held on to what he had. In the end both sought the same thing, meaning.

Here is where I would like to quote the late Eugene Peterson, the person who gave us the wonderful version of the Bible called *The Message*. In his introduction to the book of Ecclesiastes, he says this: "Ecclesiastes is a John-the-Baptist kind of book. It functions not as a meal but as a bath. It is not nourishment. It is cleansing. It is repentance. It is purging. We read Ecclesiastes to get

scrubbed clean from illusion and sentiment. It is an exposé and rejection of every arrogant and ignorant expectation that we can live our lives by ourselves on our own terms. (Eugene Peterson, *The Message*)

Ecclesiastes also reminds me of a quote from perhaps the foremost scientific genius of the 20th century, Albert Einstein: “The man who regards his own life and that of his fellow creatures as meaningless is not merely unfortunate but almost disqualified for life.”

Here is the big mistake the Teacher and the Rich Young Ruler made, albeit for different reasons. For all their interest in life and the search for meaning, they forgot an essential truth. We can't live our lives on our own terms. For them, there were others with whom they rubbed shoulders day-in and day-out, who could have assured them that life derives its meaning simply through the care and concern we exercise for others. There's an old song that comes from the famous words of the poet, John Donne that we will listen to later. But Let me quote it, using inclusive words:

No [one] man is an island; No [one] man stands alone; Each [one] man's joy is joy to me; Each [one's] grief is my own. We need one another; So I will defend Each [one] man as my sister and brother, Each [one] man as my friend.

I have read a few books in my life. But one that has a great impact on my attitude towards life. Is a book by Victor Frankl entitled, *Man's Search For Meaning*.

Frankl was a neurologist and psychiatrist who survived the 'Shoah'. Shoah is a Hebrew word for what we call the Holocaust. He was the founder of existentialist analysis called Logotherapy, based on the premise that the primary motivational force of an individual is to find a meaning in life, which he developed out of his three-year experience in a concentration camp . Here are a couple of sentences that inspired me deeply.

The one thing you can't take away from me is the way I choose to respond to what you do to me. The last of one's freedoms is to choose one's attitude in any given circumstance. (Victor Frankl)

Of course, there are any number of different aspirations we can bring to bear on what gives life meaning. Accumulation of wealth is one. The achievement of power is another. To others, what gives life meaning is beating the competition, whatever or whoever that may be. There are, no doubt, a myriad of other things that people think give their lives meaning.

But I have to agree with the experience of the Teacher and the Rich Young Ruler. Despite what you have or what you own, it's not those things that ultimately give your life meaning. The

following story which I may have used before brings home what I am talking about.

It's the story of a Scottish minister who told his congregation about dreaming he had died. When he came to the pearly gates, to his dismay, he was required to present his credentials, before being admitted. With some pride, the pastor enumerated the sermons he had preached and the prominent pulpits he had occupied. But Saint Peter replied that no one there in heaven had heard of them. Humbled, the servant tried to elaborate on his community services. He was told there was no record of them. Sorrowfully, the pastor turned to leave, when Peter said, "Stay a moment, and tell me, are you the man who fed the sparrows?" "Yes," the Scotsman replied, "but what does that have to do with it?" "Come in," said Saint Peter, "the Master of the sparrows wants to thank you."

Or to put it the way Frankl put it when he described having come through the pain of the concentration camp: "I grasped the meaning of the greatest secret that human poetry and human thought and belief have to impart and that is: The salvation of man is through love and in love."

To my mind, in the spiritual sense, in the intangible, unseen sense, the freedom to choose one's own attitude is paramount.

The truth is, given life's unpredictability and precariousness, we

never know what a day may bring forth. The only thing we can say for sure is that being alive, being human gives us opportunity. We all know that life does not offer equal opportunity. Some of us are born with great wealth, and others, into debilitating poverty. Some are born in great health, and others fight just to survive. And sometimes we stumble no matter how hard we try. Nevertheless, life still is opportunity.

Do you remember what Pat Moynihan said after President Kennedy was assassinated? "When you're Irish, one of the first things you learn is that sooner or later this world will break your heart." You don't have to be Irish to know the truth of that statement.

But knowing it and owning it, how do we respond? What response do we make? What attitude do we adopt? My life experience has taught me that the vast majority of what happens in our lives comes from our own choosing, and the consequences of our own actions.

In Robert Fulghum's best-seller, wonderfully entitled, *It Was On Fire When I Laid Down On It*, he recounts the following. He spoke with a colleague who was complaining that he had the same stuff in his lunch sack, day after day. "So who makes your lunch?" Fulghum asked. "I do," said the friend.

The question arising from that story is, who is responsible for our

own thoughts? We are. So what does it profit us to become cynical, as in the case of the Teacher, or sorrowful, as in the case of the Rich Young Ruler? We end up making a prison of our own thoughts. When this happens the meaning in life disappears, and we end up with thoughts that keep us imprisoned, in a prison of our own making. Fear and anger and self pity and resentment make up the bars of our cell, and the key to the door of that cell is on the inside.

The meaning life has, begins with the last of one's freedoms, the freedom to choose one's attitude in any given circumstance.

I want to close with a Cherokee story that I've used before.

It's about a grandfather instructing his grandson.

The grandfather said, "Each one of us has two wolves battling within us."

The grandson looked down at himself, then back at his grandfather and with eyes wide, asked,

"What are those wolves?"

"One wolf is compassion, generosity, joy, and love.

The other is greed, jealousy, vengeance, and hatred.

Both wolves are born within you, and they are fighting constantly."

"Which wolf wins," asks the wide-eyed grandson.

The grandfather replied, "The one you feed."

RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

Song – No Man Is An Island – The Lettermen

Dedication of Offering

Lord, you have spoken and we have answered. Accept our gifts today as a token of our thanks for all the blessings that surround us. May these gifts and our talents be an inspiration to us and others to build a better world in which all have enough. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer and the Lord's Prayer (in recognition of World Food Day)

Creator of all that is, all that has ever been, and all that will ever come, in this season that we call autumn, we offer gratitude for the cycle of the seasons. In this season we begin to reap what we have sown, tended to, prayed over, and fretted on. In all of this, we know that you have been there, watching over your creation and all its creatures.

We lament over crops that were lost this year, to drought, and hail, and floods, to frost, to lack of workers, to pandemic. We lament over crops that were never planted, where farmers could not access their land or do not have the privilege to acquire land. Help us to stand in solidarity with farmers whose harvest never came to yield; help us to see land not as a resource to use, but as a gift to share.

As the leaves turn brilliant reds, oranges, and yellows, we have pulled from the ground the fruit of our labour. The potatoes, squash, brussels sprouts, cabbage, apples, pears and more begin to fill our baskets. We give thanks. The corn and beans are ready to be stored; they have dried on their stocks. We know that these foods will sustain us through the winter.

We give thanks for labourers who have come to harvest, workers from near and far, many who travel to this land to find work. Sustainer, open our eyes to their sacrifice and help us to honour their gift. We pray for a safe harvest for all labourers and farmers.

As the honeybee prepares for winter, we enjoy honey's nectar sweetness. As the broiler chicken is fully grown, we give thanks for their life that will sustain us. As the hunter patiently awaits the deer, we honour its gift as nourishment.

Creator, we are called back to remember our interconnectedness during this harvest season. Forgive us the times that we have been disconnected from our relations in our desire to take more than we should. Call us back into the fabric of creation so that we might live in the abundance of life.

For all this, and more, we give thanks in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray saying. Amen.

Hymn: "O Jesus I Have Promised"

- 1 O Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
remain for ever near me, my Saviour and my friend:
I shall not fear the journey if you are by my side,
nor wander from the pathway if you will be my guide.

- 2 O let me feel you near me: the world is ever near;
I see the sights that dazzle, the tempting sounds I hear;
my foes are ever near me, around me and within;
but, Jesus, then draw nearer and shield my soul from sin.

- 3 O Jesus, you have promised to all who follow you,
that where you are in glory your servant shall be too.
And Jesus, I have promised to serve you to the end;
O give me grace to follow, my Saviour and my friend.

Commissioning and Benediction

Postlude

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October bulletins are sponsored by: Raymond & Ruby Bell in loving memory of D.N. & Fannie Bell and Dr. David Nelson Bell.

And by: St. Andrew's Unit 1 UCW in loving memory of passed members.

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CD of Sunday's Service available—contact Jean at 613-582-3597.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Anyone wishing to sponsor bulletins for 2020/2021 please contact Betty at 613-646-2120 or 582-7174.

Although food donations are not being accepted at this time, let us continue to think of others that are less fortunate through our financial donations.

Service Times

Oct thru December Trinity ~ @ 9:30 a.m., St. Andrew's @ 11 pm.

Our thoughts and prayers are with Kevin and Michele as they mourn the loss of Kevin's long time friend Terry Ellis.

Prayer List: Let us keep the following people in our prayers for healing at this time.

The Ellis Family, Lillis Bell & Family, Rob Marson, Murray Anderson, Bernie Lemke, Leanne Caniff, Audrey Gutz, Lorna Stevenson, Ruby Bell, Freda Kinnear, Mervin Kinnear, Elaine Moore, Lola Byce, Bill Douma, Keith Johnson, Nora Bennett, Gladys Powers

Please contact me if there is someone that you would like to add to our list for special prayers or you feel is in need of a pastoral care visit. I would request that you please ask the person's permission before submitting their name to be put in the bulletin. *Rev. Kevin*