

BEACHBURG PASTORAL CHARGE

Worship Service

June 6th, 2021

Call to Worship

We begin this service by lighting a candle in the memory of the 215 indigenous children whose remains were found on the grounds of the Kamloops residential school. Young lives that faced pain, humiliation and ultimately death at the hands of those charged with their care.

In some small way may this candle represent our hope as we face the future. We hope for a future in which reconciliation is possible as we commit ourselves to right the injustices in this world that are bestowed upon those deemed expendable by those in positions of power.

May this light of Christ's love call us out of this dark place, and help us to offer the love of Christ to all. When we see nothing but hopelessness, may we be comforted with the breath of God's spirit as he calls us out of our complacency and routines, to spread the spirit of life, compassion, and peace, to all. In the name of Jesus lover of children, Let us pray.

Opening Prayer

Holy comforter, source of all of life and solace in death, we turn to you today seeking your peace and hope. Our hearts ache with the pain of this tremendous loss and our souls echo with the emptiness and helplessness that we feel. Be with us and all those today that feel the lasting and on-going effects of this terrible loss. Help us to find in your promises to us and in the companionship, we have with one another the strength to work towards healing and hope. We pray today for these children and all those that have died. Hold them in your love and keep them in your kindness. As we remember may their memory live on within us and within all who loved them. We pray for all who mourn, that we all may find comfort in your peace and love as we reflect upon such a terrible tragedy. Jesus into your loving arms now commend these children. Amen.

The theme of this morning's meditation is the "The Good Treasure" so let us begin with a song entitled Jesus, My Treasure" performed by Canyon Hills Worship - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RjRKHNOX78s>

Scripture – 2 Timothy 1:1-14

1 Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, in keeping with the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus,

2 To Timothy, my dear son:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

3 I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers. **4** Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy. **5** I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.

6 For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. **7** For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. **8** So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. **9** He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, **10** but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. **11** And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. **12** That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame, because I know whom I have believed, and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him until that day.

13 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. **14** Guard the good treasure that was entrusted to you—guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Meditation – The Good Treasure

Did any of you win the lottery this past week? I know I didn't win. The jackpot was \$70 million. The cashier at the convenience store said everyone was buying tickets, and they were all busy dreaming of what they would do with all that money. She then went on to tell me about how she would help the humane society take care of animals. This kind of wishful sharing is one reason the lottery has often been called a voluntary tax on dreaming. After I failed to win the lottery jackpot, I was reminded that economists call it a tax on people who are bad at math.

When I bought the ticket, I enjoyed having the chance to dream of the good I could do supporting our churches, hospitals other social services in our area like the Robbie Dean Center or the Grind. While I didn't win the lottery, I don't feel sad, because I know I am already rich.

I know I already have the good treasure which contains the most important riches of all. The Apostle Paul tells us in this morning's letter to Timothy, the good treasure has been entrusted to each of us with the help of the Holy Spirit. Every time I open my treasure chest I am filled with such joy and a sense of gratitude that is overflowing. The amazing thing is you also have this same treasure.

What is truly remarkable about this treasure is that my treasure is not diminished if yours is growing. In fact, if I help your

appreciation of your good treasure to grow, my joy and gratitude are also magnified. This good treasure truly is a gift of grace to us all.

Lotteries are popular because there are not many places, we can turn to have such hopeful dreams these days. Workers' wages have been stagnant for the past forty years. The number of full time permanent jobs that pay well keeps declining. Interest rates are low so you can't save very much by putting your money in the bank. The stock markets are more volatile than ever before. And with housing prices going through the roof, only the rich are able to invest in real estate as a way to make their money grow. So there are not a lot of places you can turn to for hope.

Now in many parts of the world today, Christianity is offering hope to those who are desperate to get ahead in life. Take Kenneth Copeland for example. Pastor Copeland is the richest televangelist in the United States with an estimated net worth of 300 million dollars. Kenneth Copeland tells his thousands of followers that "God didn't create you to be average or poor." His evangelism calls for donations to his church (even if you have lost your job during this pandemic), suggesting that his parishioners will get a "hundredfold" return on their investment.

Another popular preacher of the prosperity gospel Creflo Dollar promises the faithful a financial return on their tithes. Pastor Dollar proudly believes “God is trying to put material wealth into your hands.” Reverend Dollar does not seem to believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ is about peace, joy and love. Creflo Dollar says “NO!! It’s about MONEY!” So pastors like Copeland and Dollar get rich by promising that God will make you rich if you just give your money over to them.

The good treasure God has given each of us is not an easy thing to manage. Because it is a treasure that involves intangible riches like peace, joy and love. It is also a treasure that also has an impact on your relationship to material wealth. For we do need money and possessions to live in this world. The challenge is learning how much is enough, and how we are to treat those who don’t have enough.

Just over two hundred years ago, the British pastor Robert Malthus struggled with these same questions of how much wealth is enough. Malthus realized that the human population is capable of explosive growth, while agriculture can only increase production at a much smaller incremental rate.

He believed that economic prosperity could only happen if we used our abundance to generate more wealth rather than use

our surplus food to support a growing population. Reverend Robert Malthus believed the key to economic prosperity was to learn how to limit the food supply to control the poor.

About 50 years after Robert Malthus published his very popular ideas, the potato famine in Ireland struck. The British politicians applied the Malthusian approach and used the potato famine to drive down the Irish population as a way of promoting economic prosperity.

Here in Canada our government used Malthusian thinking as a way of eradicating Canada's indigenous population as a way of promoting financial prosperity for our new nation. And this past week we have witnessed first hand the devastating effects that that policy had on the life and death of the indigenous population.

Robert Malthus' ideas were later embraced by Charles Darwin who used them to develop his evolutionary idea of the Survival of the Fittest. Reverend Malthus was trying to come up with ways to improve the quality of life for his nation. Sadly, it gave nations the power to confer great wealth on the few at the expense of the poor. Malthus believed the poor should be "repressed by the power of moral restraint, vice and misery". For people like

Robert Malthus, God's good treasure was for the benefit of the few, and not for everyone.

About 600 years before Robert Malthus came up with his popular approach on how to generate wealth, Saint Francis of Assisi took a very different approach to sharing God's good treasure. Saint Francis of Assisi was a man who appreciated God's good treasure and did his best to share it for the benefit of everyone.

Francis was a soldier who served his country in battle. His father was a wealthy cloth merchant. Francis grew up in luxury and enjoyed all the benefits money could buy. But when he was injured in battle and taken prisoner, he started to reflect on his life. He began to appreciate the good treasure he had been given by God, and how this treasure was more valuable than anything his father's wealth could buy.

The good treasure given by God is the gift of love. It is a free gift of grace, with no strings attached. You are not loved because of your wealth, your power, your intelligence, or your moral worthiness. You are not valued because you believe the right things. You are important because you are part of God's good creation.

Saint Francis embraced the freedom this new identity brings. Opening up this good treasure helped Francis realize the limitations of a world based on merit alone. So, Francis left his father's world of privilege to embrace the wondrous possibilities offered by God's abundant grace.

In God's economy your worth is not calculated by any kind of numbers. In God's economy, the only thing that matters is the giving of love without reservation. God seeks to provide all we need. God knows the world can never satisfy all our wants. But God's world can provide for our needs if we choose to live in harmony with God's good creation.

Saint Francis quickly realized that the switch from the world of abundant wealth for the few to the world of abundant grace for everyone is not an easy change to make. In order to make the switch we must die to what we were in the world of material abundance.

We all know dying is never easy. Dying to self is never a popular topic of conversation. Death does teach us that we must learn to let go of what was, before we can embrace what is to come. The Franciscan monk Richard Rohr says "We are only afraid of death as long as we do not know who we are." Rohr goes on to say "Once we know ourselves objectively to be a child of God, we are

already home and our inheritance is given to us ahead of time.

Then we can begin living and enjoying instead of climbing, proving, or defending.”

In order for us to live fully on this earth, Saint Francis of Assisi tells us that our false self must “die before we die.” Those who learn how to die to self discover the good treasure has already been graciously opened to us in all its wondrous beauty. God’s abundant grace, mercy and peace is being freely offered to us all. God truly does provide everything we need. For God has given us Christ Jesus, who invites us to be in communion with God, our creator. Thanks be to God

Today’s Pastoral Prayer was written by our United Church Moderator Right Reverend Richard Boot in recognition of the 215 murdered children found on grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School. Although some of you may have read it when I posted it on our Facebook page sometimes, we just need to hear it out loud. Let us pray:

Pastoral Prayer

O God, we are grieving.

O God, we are shocked.

O God, we are horrified.

But, God, if we truly listened, we can’t be surprised.

The Elders and the Communities had already told the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, told the governments and the world, the stories of the children, dead and buried, unnoted by the settler systems,

but never ever forgotten by their siblings, their parents, their communities.
We grieve for the Indigenous children,
taken from their homes and parents by the government,
handed over to the responsibility of the Christian church,
the children who died under its care,
never to be held by their families,
never to be returned to their communities –
not only the 215 children of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc
and other Indigenous communities along the west coast and interior
whose bodies have now been found
on the grounds of the Kamloops Indian Residential School grounds,
but all of those children
whose bodies have not yet been found
who died in any of Indian Residential Schools.
We grieve for the survivors of the Indian Residential Schools,
the children who did come home,
but were changed by their experience,
the children who grew up,
and have the trauma of remembering, again,
what happened to them.
Even as we give thanks for their families and communities,
who hold the stories of the children,
who have kept searching,
who keep searching,
we grieve that that search is even necessary,
that even one child was taken,
that even one child died,
that even one child's death went unnoticed by the system.
Help us to stop, to sit in silence.
to remember the names we do not know.
May their spirits have peace,
and their bodies be brought home to their lands.
And God?
Help us to take this grief,
this shock,
this horror,
and turn it into right action –
action that works for right relations –
action that works for healing and justice and hope.

And, please,
don't let those of us who are settlers
and descendants of settlers,
newcomers to this land,
let the horror, the shock, and the grief,
just be an outpouring of words,
or tears,
or ineffectual hand-wringing.

Let this be a moment that changes,
a moment that transforms the brokenness,
that we might walk in right relations,
for the good of your children,
for the good of your world.

Please, God.

These things we pray,
in the name of the one who brought Creation into being,
in the name of Jesus, our teacher and friend,
in the name of the Holy Spirit,
whose wings spread across the sky.

Amen and amen.

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Our closing hymn is sung by the late Gord Downie who was the lead singer for "The Tragically Hip" and who gives us this song entitled "The Stranger" A song about 12 year old, Chanie Wenjack who, in 1966 ran away from Cecelia Jeffery Indian residential school in Kenora Ontario, and tried to walk home Ogoki post - 600 km away.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL8MiXtt7bk>

Please join us again next week on-line when we will celebrate Trinity United Church's 126th Anniversary. Until we meet again.