

## **BEACHBURG PASTORAL CHARGE**

**Worship Service, July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

### Welcome

Welcome. I am glad that you have joined me for today's service from my favorite place on this planet. As many of you know I was born and raised in Golden Lake so it was an interesting and heartwarming week. On the evening of July first there was an outpouring of support from people around the lake as they lite up the night with candles in support of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation community who are mourning the lost souls that are being discovered across this country. The hope was that these candles will light the path for them to travel home to the Creator.

So I open today's service with a song entitled One More Light originally written by Linkin Park it is performed by the One Voice Children's Choir Although it is written in the context of the loss of one young person life through suicide, the message is relevant to all of us as we hold out hope for all the children of this world both past, present and future.

Scripture Luke 4:16-21

<sup>16</sup> He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup> and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

<sup>18</sup> "The Spirit of the Lord is on me,  
because he has anointed me  
to proclaim good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners  
and recovery of sight for the blind,

to set the oppressed free,

<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

<sup>20</sup> Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. <sup>21</sup> He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

### **Meditation - Reflecting on the Bible**

Today, I want to share with you my thoughts about the one book that many of us have grown up with, the Bible. This book is mainly responsible for western civilization as we know it, the good, the bad, and the ugly. It is no exaggeration to say that this book has affected every area of our lives: law, politics, medicine, literature, art, & music. It is the source of inspiration for three of the world's great religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Everything I write I try to ground in scripture and that is why I want to put together some of my thoughts on the Bible.

It is the one book that has united Christians and at the same the one book that has divided us. Liberals and fundamentalists alike quote it as their authority. As a matter of fact there are many people who don't read it for that very reason.

In my time with you as your minister I have tried to use some of the distilled wisdom that have come down to us through the many authors and philosophers over the

centuries. But primarily I base what I have to say from what we call the Word of God. I do that because I agree with Kierkegaard the Danish Theologian who said that “the chief reason for reading the Bible is that the Bible is a letter from God with our personal address on it.”

Now today not many of us actually receive any letters and if we do it is probably a type of letter that we don’t usually like, say in the form of a bill or junk mail. In the same way I would for the record like to state some of the 5 reasons why we don’t read God’s letter.

(1). First of all It is *Big* – that is lengthy. It runs to over 1200 pages. It is a library of books written over a period of 1600 years by about 40 authors. At first glance it does not appear to be very personal. Yet when we isolate a book or a phrase it suddenly captures our attention Like for e.g. From the Book of Isaiah... I have called you by name you are mine...

Or from the 139 Ps. “ You knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

Or from Hosea. It was I who taught Ephraim to walk. I took them up in my arms.... I led them with cords of human kindness. I was like those who lift infants to their cheeks.

Or from John, Let not your hearts be troubled.....

(2) It is **Big** but not when you take time to look closely you will find out another thing about the Bible. It is **Boring**.

Large parts of the Bible are very dull. Have you ever tried to read a chapter of begats in 1<sup>st</sup> Chronicles . After the 20th one you practically fall asleep .That also applies to the elaborate measurement of the various buildings by cubits.

(3) It is also **Brutal**. Someone once described the Bible as being all about a lot of people who went about smiting a lot of other people. Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands.

(4)It is also **Bawdy**. Consider Potiphar the wife of the Pharoah accusing Joseph of rape or David lusting after Bathsheba.

(5)It is also **Bewildering**. In the first chapters of Genesis we have two creation stories. In the first human is made at the end of creation . In the second the human is made at the beginning of creation.

In chapter one of Genesis light is made before the sun was created. Two different people killed Goliath. David and Elhanan.

It is big, boring, brutal, bawdy, and bewildering but it is also **Beautiful**.

The Bible is a very human book, full of obscurities and contradictions. God chose to be revealed through the frailty of human words. And I for one am grateful. For if it had come down from heaven perfectly formed and perfectly right in everything how could we possibly identify with it. The truth is we do identify with it, precisely because it is so human.

Have you ever noticed very young children in front of a mirror. At first they are confused. But gradually they begin to get it. It is their own reflection they see. That is the way it is with scripture. We see ourselves in this book and that is why it has lasted and forms the foundation of our worship.

Francis Bacon said that Some books are to be tasted. Some swallowed. Some few to be chewed and digested. No wonder Ezekial said the word was “sweet to the taste”.

Now I want to speak about two words that might provide you with some motivation to read the the Bible yourself.

The first word is **Eternal**. It is the author of Ecclessiastes who said God has planted eternity in our hearts.

John's gospel refers to it as eternal life or the bread that comes down from heaven.

The Bible context is of human beings living in two worlds at the same time. We live in this world, which we can see and taste and touch and hear and smell. The world of objects like cars and trucks and hens and cows and grass and trees and sky and sea. We dwell in time and space.

Yet we also dwell in another world parallel to this one which is everlasting. That same Psalm 90 also gives us a description of this world:

LORD, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting thou art God.

Mahatma Ghandi from the Hindu tradition also describes this reality. I do perceive that while everything around me is ever changing and ever dying, there is underlying all that change, a living power that is changeless, that holds all together, that creates, dissolves and recreates. That informing power and spirit is God... for I can see that in the midst of death life persists; in the midst of untruth, truth persists; in the midst of darkness, light persists. Hence I gather that God is life truth and light . God is love.

This speaks to the reality that we possess dual natures. We have an ordinary ego and an eternal self which is the spirit, The very spark of divinity within us. Our life has but one main purpose and that is to identify with the eternal self. It is possible to identify with this higher self.

So the Bible speaks to us of that Eternity, that Everlastingness we carry with us. The psalmist calls it our dwelling place.

And we need the news of that world that place, just as surely as we need the news of the latest development of our age. We are fools if we allow ourselves to drown in the sea of words that come from the media. Our souls will shrivel up and die unless the eternal truth is lifted up and brought to bear on what we hear and see and touch and taste.

Our culture will become a wasteland of computer driven images that will fail to nourish the truly human. The Bible story is our salvation

The second word that I want to bring to our attention is the little word **But**. I use it because it is a small word. It has no theological or philosophical or biblical baggage. It is just an ordinary word. It is this little word that the Bible uses to proclaim that there is a saving possibility in every situation.

It is a word that sums up the human predicament that the Bible portrays.

Life is pleasant and good. But it is also cruel and savage.

Human nature is godlike and sublime. But it can also sink to the inhuman.

Works of nature are majestic and awe inspiring. But we also have floods and hurricanes and tornadoes.

Human beings are so creative in art and music and literature. But we are also responsible for monstrous atrocities.

We all deal with this little word.

I want to work all day and go home and garden at night but my body won't let me.

I want to stay up late at night and get up early in the morning but my head won't let me.

I want to be younger than I am but the years won't let me.

Our lives meet this "But" in so many ways. There is the but of some specific plan or hope. We decide on a course of action and the way is blocked. We want to do some cherished project and it seems to be impossible.

We get set to open a door to a new venture and life cruelly slams it in our face.

The But of the Bible can lead us to a new place, new possibilities.

Moses was stammerer, and a murderer. But he was a leader of his people.

Sarah was past child bearing age But she gave birth.

Jeremiah was only a boy But he became a prophet.

Jonah was selfish and narrow minded But God used him to save a great city.

Peter was impetuous and unstable But he was the one who was the first to follow.

Mary Magdeleine was a woman of the street But she loved intensely.

Saul was responsible for the stoning of Steven But his eyes were opened to the truth.

Jesus was crucified But that life testifies to the enduring life of all.

There is a saving possibility in every situation and the But of the Bible speaks to the But of imagined possibilities. There is

wonderful story from Spain of a father and a son who had great difficulty getting along. Finally the father said some things and the son said some things they ought not to have said.

And the son runs away to the big city of Madrid. Weeks and months go by without word. The father regretted his words and rehearses the words he would say to his son when he returns. Finally the father devises a plan. He travels to the city armed with posters. he puts them up on every wall and every tree. He takes out a classified ad. The poster and the ad say the same thing.

Dear Paco: Meet me in front of the newspaper office tomorrow morning. All is forgiven. I love you... Your father..

Remember Paco is a very popular name in Spain. And remember the ad and the posters are simply signed with the words "your father". The story goes that the next day Paco went to the newspaper office and had a joyful reunion with this father. But there were also about 500 hundred other Pacos there. Every last one of them hoping it was his father that had taken out the ad.

The bible speaks to that hunger inside the heart of every man, woman and child who is looking for the presence of love. The Bible speaks of a love that sustains the planets in

their orbits and every child of God who is looking for a dwelling place, a home. The Bible says there is a place “where the end of all our exploring is to arrive where we started from and know the place for the first time.” (T.S. Eliot). Thanks be to God.

Prayers of the people and the Lord's Prayer

We thank you God that we have lived in this great world and known its many joys. For all of life we give you thanks.

Remembering the songs of the birds,  
The sweet scent of the earth after a welcome rain,  
The cooling breeze that ushers in the evening,  
The flaming sunset at the close of the day,  
for all of life we give you thanks.

We remember the moonlight bouncing off the water on a summers night, the gentle lapping of waves upon the shore, the soft call of the loon to its mate, for all of life we give you thanks.

Remembering the love of kin and the support of friends we give you thanks and raise our concerns to you this morning

We remember that there has come a little sorrow, and sometimes defeat, a little heartache, and the loneliness that comes with parting and the word goodbye

For all of life we give you thanks.

We Remember the breaking dawn after a long night of anxiousness and pain to the discovery that after nights gloom the morning light breaks through again, for all of life we give you thanks.

Because of these and many other blessings poured out upon us and the promise of an even richer and more glorious life,  
And most of all because your only son sacrificed life's joys for us, we thank you God that we have lived in this great world and known its many joys.

For all of life we give you thanks O Lord in the words that Jesus taught us to say... Our Father...

I am off the next two weeks on vacation and ask that you keep healthy and safe and hopefully are able to spend some

time with family and friends. So I leave you today with a song entitled “Word of God Speak” performed by Matt Taylor. Until We Meet again.