

SA, SL, TS and DSM United Churches

Sixth Sunday of Easter – May 5th, 2024

Prelude: – Christie Coatsworth

Welcome & Announcements:

Good morning! Thank you for your support of all our services, which are posted on our websites - Southbuxton.ca and Talbotstreet.ca .

Thank you to Christie Coatsworth for our music this morning. Thank you to Tracey Major for putting together the Power Point slides.

Lighting of the Christ Candle:

Call to Worship:

Eric: Now, with voices joined as one, we offer our commitment as the church of the Risen Christ:

People: **May peace be in us and the joy about us be obvious to all;**

Eric: By the words we share, the actions we take, and the compassion we show

People: **These are the marks of the Risen Christ – the one we follow.**

Eric: For by them, we are as Christ to one another and the world.

People: **By God's grace, may it be so. Hallelujah! Amen.**

Opening Hymn: VU 222 “Come, Let Us Sing”

Come, let us sing to the Lord our song,
we have stood silently too long;
surely the Lord deserves our praise,
so joyfully thank God for our days.

O thirsty soul, come drink at the well;
God's living waters will never fail.
Surely the Lord will help you to stand,
strengthened and comforted by God's hand.

You dwell among us and cause us to pray,
and walk with each other following your way;
our precious brothers and sisters will grow
in the fulfilling love they know.

Deserts shall bloom and mountains shall sing
to the desire of all living things.
Come, all you creatures, high and low,
let your praises endlessly flow.

Opening Prayer:

Creator God, we trust in your guidance. Everything is possible with you. Our life journeys continue with you with us. Our fears and worries are less when we trust your presence. Inspire us with hope today, and especially those days when we feel all is lost. Give us confidence that your love will overcome our fears. Your grace surrounds all people. Your love benefits everyone. Help us to know you, in Christ's name, we pray. Amen.

Children's Story:

Children's Hymn: VU 217 "All Creatures of Our God and King"

All creatures of our God and King,
lift up your voice and with us sing:
 hallelujah, hallelujah!
Bright burning sun with golden beam,
soft shining moon with silver gleam,
 sing praises, sing praises,
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

O rushing winds and breezes soft,
O clouds that ride the winds aloft,
 sing praises, hallelujah!
O rising morn, in praise rejoice;
O lights of evening, find a voice:
 sing praises, sing praises,
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Earth, ever fertile, day by day
brings forth rich blessings on our way:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
The flowers and fruits that verdant grow,
let them God's glory also show:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

And everyone of tender heart,
forgiving others, take your part:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
All who long pain and sorrow bear,
praise God and yield up all your care:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
 hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Let all things their Creator bless,
and worship God in humbleness:
 sing praises, hallelujah!
Praise God eternal, praise the Son,

and praise the Spirit, three in one:
sing praises, hallelujah!
hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah!

Responsive Psalm: Psalm 98

The Lord Works Miracles

Sing a new song to the Lord!

He has worked miracles, and with his own powerful arm, he has won the victory.

The Lord has shown the nations that he has the power to save and to bring justice.

God has been faithful in his love for Israel, and his saving power is seen everywhere on earth.

Tell everyone on this earth to sing happy songs in praise of the Lord.

Make music for him on harps. Play beautiful melodies!

Sound the trumpets and horns and celebrate with joyful songs for our Lord and King!

Command the ocean to roar with all its creatures, and the earth to shout with all its people.

Order the rivers to clap their hands, and all the hills to sing together.

Let them worship the Lord!

He is coming to judge everyone on the earth, and he will be honest and fair.

Scripture: John 15: 9 - 17

I have loved you, just as my Father has loved me. So remain faithful to my love for you. If you obey me, I will keep loving you, just as my Father keeps loving me, because I have obeyed him. I have told you this to make you as completely happy as I am. Now I tell you to love each other, as I have loved you. The greatest way to show love for friends is to die for them. And you are my friends, if you obey me. Servants don't know what their master is doing, and so I don't speak to you as my servants. I speak to you as my friends, and I have told you everything my Father has told me. You did not choose me. I chose you and sent you out to produce fruit, the kind of fruit that will last. Then my Father will give you whatever you ask for in my name. So I command you to love each other.

Message: "Love Each Other"

Our responsive Psalm reminds us that the Lord works miracles. In the working of these miracles this brings us joy. We celebrate. We sing songs, we play beautiful melodies. We sound the trumpets and the horns. We gather all of creation to share our happiness and in our songs. Together we all worship the Lord. With all of Creation we worship the Lord because the Lord has been faithful in Love to his children; the nation of Israel. As God's children, we share that loving faithfulness.

Jesus shares many lessons in the four chapters of John on the night of his arrest. These four chapters are found after Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, and before they head for the garden, where Jesus is arrested. Jesus is sharing the concept of love with the disciples. Not just any love, but God's love, and how God's love changes how we as disciples, love others.

Love with God and with others share the divine. Love gives us Joy. Love builds us up to do anything, especially with the help of the Holy Spirit.

In John today, Jesus models for the community the kind of loving relationship they must have. It is based on obedience to God's commandments and on self-giving. In the same way that Jesus kept God's commands and abided in God's love, so will the disciples, if they keep Jesus' commands, they will abide in his love. The disciples will remain attached to Jesus, and through Jesus to God. This love is best expressed as self-giving, sacrificial love, laying down one's life for your friends.

Jesus calls his disciples "friends" and contrasts this with the master-slave relationship, which was a one-way relationship. The ideal of friendship was important in Jesus' time. Friends looked out for each other. Walking with a good friend gave you both protection through dangerous places. Friendship even applied the willingness to defend the friend with one's life.

Jesus is sharing with us that he is the disciples' friend. He is willing to give his life for them. Yet he is not his disciples' equal. Jesus has brought them into a relationship of reciprocal love, creating a community of friends, willing to sacrifice themselves for each other.

This is the nature of Christian love. The love God showed toward Jesus, Jesus showed toward his disciples, so they could show it to each other. When they love in this way, their love becomes impregnated with divine qualities. It is not just an emotional, cozy feeling, but a conscious decision to put yourself on the line and risk everything for the other. This kind of love will make sure that justice is done in the world. You will venture yourself from the safety of your community into the broader society to see that it is transformed by this sacrificial love that Jesus modeled for us.

In John, Jesus did not die as an atonement for sins, but as a proof of God's love toward humanity. John does not share the last supper, but does share the washing of the disciples' feet, a clear sign of Jesus' love for them. Jesus died as an example of love taken to its most extreme and radical demonstration, the greatest love of all.

What does it mean to be Jesus' friends? Being Jesus' friend changes the thought that Jesus is the almighty Master and Lord. As a friend, we are on a more equal relationship, yet, we understand Jesus to be that link between us and God. Jesus, besides being the Lord, is also the ideal disciple of the kingdom. Jesus calls us into discipleship and friendship. Jesus' example of love, shows us how to love one another. Jesus' love shows God's love and God's love for us. Jesus' love for us,

gives us similar strength and presence that abides in us, through Jesus, in our daily lives. This love shapes and forms us to do great work! We are not alone. God is always with us. Thanks be to God.

Reflection Hymn: VU 232 “Joyful, Joyful, We Adore You”

Joyful, joyful we adore you,
God of glory, life and love;
hearts unfold like flowers before you,
opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
drive the gloom of doubt away;
giver of immortal gladness,
fill us with the light of day.

All your works with joy surround you,
earth and heaven reflect your rays,
stars and angels sing around you,
centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
flowery meadow, flashing sea,
chanting bird and flowing fountain,
sound their praise eternally.

You are giving and forgiving,
ever blessing, ever blest,
wellspring of the joy of living,
ocean depth of happy rest!
Source of grace and fount of blessing,
let your light upon us shine;
teach us how to love each other,
lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals join the mighty chorus
which the morning stars began;
God's own love is reigning o'er us,
joining people hand in hand.
Ever singing, march we onward,
victors in the midst of strife;
joyful music leads us sunward
in the triumph song of life.

Invitation to Share Our Gifts:

Eric: Let us offer our gifts as our hallelujahs! May these gifts be our love for one another. Let us give in love!

Offertory: VU 540 “Grant Us, God, the Grace of Giving”

Grant us, God, the grace of giving,
with a spirit large and free,
that ourselves and all our living
we may offer faithfully.

Offertory Prayer:

People: Take these gifts we offer, O God, and bless them as our hallelujahs! May they become hallelujahs for people near and far. In our giving, may we become hallelujahs for each other and for those people we encounter, and be the living signs of your love in the world. Amen.

Chorus to Prayer: VU 665 “Pass Me Not, O Gentle Saviour”

Pass me not, O gentle Saviour, hear my humble cry;
while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.
Saviour, Saviour, hear my humble cry;
while on others thou art calling, do not pass me by.

Pastoral Prayer:

Closing Hymn: VU 664 “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

What a friend we have in Jesus,
all our sins and griefs to bear!
What a privilege to carry
everything to God in prayer!
O what peace we often forfeit,
O what needless pain we bear,
all because we do not carry
everything to God in prayer.

Have we trials and temptations?
Is there trouble anywhere?
We should never be discouraged;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Can we find a friend so faithful,
who will all our sorrows share?
Jesus knows our every weakness;
take it to the Lord in prayer.

Are we weak and heavy laden,
cumbered with a load of care?
Christ the Saviour is our refuge;
take it to the Lord in prayer.
Do our friends despise, forsake us?
Are we tempted to despair?

Jesus' strength will shield our weakness,
and we'll find new courage there.

Blessing:

Eric: Go out from here, and as you go about your daily lives, remember to place it all before God. May God work in you and bring out the best in you, now and forever more.

Closing Chorus: "Go Now In Peace"

Go now in peace, never be afraid.
God will go with you each hour of ev'ry day.
Go now in faith, steadfast, strong and true.
Know He will guide you in all you do.

Go now in love, and show you believe.
Reach out to others, so all the world can see.
God will be there, watching from above.
Go now in peace, in faith, and in love.
Amen, Amen, Amen.

Postlude: – Christie Coatsworth

Prayers: - Please include these people in your prayers this week.