

Hybrid Worship for, July 31, 2022

8th Sunday after Pentecost

(please stand in body or in spirit*

bold print is for all to share)

Territorial Acknowledgment and Announcements

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is situated upon traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron - Wyandot, the Haudenosaunee and later the Mississauga of the Credit First Nations. The territory is mutually covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Iroquois Confederacy and the Ojibway and other allied nations to peaceably share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes.

Today, this remains the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island and we are grateful to have the opportunity to work in their community, and to share and respect Mother Earth.

Centering Music: “Where Two or Three Are Gathered” MV 14

Where two or three are gathered in my name.

I am there, I am there.

Where two or three are gathered in my name,

I am there, I am there.

*** Call to Worship and Opening Prayer**

One: Come from your busy lives into God’s house of prayer.

All: We are blessed with God’s love!

One: Come away from your worries and responsibilities.

All: We are blessed with God’s grace!

One: Come and be in God; come and be with God.

All: We come to worship God!

One: Holy God, ever-original yet always the same:

All: You call us to new ways, new ideas, and to shaking up our complacency and stagnant thinking.

Open our ears to hear new concepts, our eyes to see new visions, our minds to consider new interpretations, and our lives to new actions of love and caring for all your people. In Jesus’ name.

*** Opening Hymn: “It’s a Song of Praise to the Maker” MV 30**

It’s a song of praise to the Maker,

the thrush sings high in the tree.

It’s a song of praise to the Maker,

the gray whale sings in the sea,

and by the Spirit you and I can

join our voice to the holy cry

and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's a call of life to the Giver
when waves and waterfalls roar.
It's a call of life to the Giver
when high tides break on the shore,

and by the Spirit you and I can
join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's a hymn of love to the Lover;
the bumblebees hum along.
It's a hymn of love to the Lover;
the summer breeze joins the song

and by the Spirit you and I can
join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

It's the chorus of all creation;
it's sung by all living things.
Its' the chorus of all creation;
a song the universe sings,

and by the Spirit you and I can
join our voice to the holy cry
and sing, sing, sing to the Maker too.

Prayer for Reflection and Revelation

The warmth of the sun's embrace,
the gentle breeze swept in by incoming tide,
the rhythm of seasons,
of new birth,
death and recreation.
All these speak so clearly of your love,
your power
and your beauty.
All are expressions of your creativity,
and more importantly of yourself.
As an artist might share his personality
within each brushstroke,
so within the myriad colours of a butterfly's wing
you share the exuberance of your love

Sung Response: “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” VU 400

Lord, listen to your children praying,
Lord, send your Spirit in this place;
Lord, listen to your children praying,
send us love, send us power, send us grace!

Scripture Readings:

Colossians 3:1–11

So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, for you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient. These are the ways you also once followed, when you were living that life. But now you must get rid of all such things—anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have stripped off the old self with its practices and have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!

Luke 12:13–21

Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.’ But he said to him, ‘Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?’ And he said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’ Then he told them a parable: ‘The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, “What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?” Then he said, “I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.” But God said to him, “You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?” So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich towards God.’

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the church.

All: Thanks be to God.

Solo: “Somebody Bigger Than You and I” Sophie Cook

Reflection: “Prescription for Happiness”

*** Hymn: “Love Divine” VU 333**

Love divine, all loves excelling,
joy of heaven to earth come down,

fix in us thy humble dwelling,
all thy faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, thou art all compassion,
pure, unbounded love thou art;
visit us with thy salvation,
enter every trembling heart.

Come, almighty to deliver;
let us all thy grace receive;
suddenly return, and never,
nevermore thy temples leave.
Thee we would be always blessing,
serve thee as thy hosts above,
pray, and praise thee, without ceasing,
glory in thy perfect love.

Finish, then, thy new creation;
pure and spotless let us be;
let us see thy great salvation
perfectly restored in thee,
changed from glory into glory,
till in heaven we take our place,
till we cast our crowns before thee,
lost in wonder, love, and praise.

Offering Prayer:

**All: You have given to us abundantly.
We now return these gifts to you.
Help us to share and care so that
everyone may have what is needed for life and health and happiness.
Amen**

*** Hymn of Dedication: "Your Work, O God, Needs Many Hands" VU 537**

Your work, O God, needs many hands
to help you everywhere,
and some there are who cannot serve
unless our gifts we share.

Because we love you and your work,
our offering now we make:
be pleased to use it as your own,
we ask for Jesus' sake.

Prayers of the People

Our Creator God, Ancient of Days,
Holy Mother of all worlds and living souls:
your arms that once flung galaxies of stars
like grains of sand are open wide.
You are close enough to carry each of us like a father cradles his newborn next to his heart.
May your sacred name be praised!
May your rule prevail—a commonwealth of mercy, peace, and justice.
Your love knits all created nature
into one amazing whole.
Your will for us is love, and so we pray:
may your love be done on earth, as it is in eternity.
Give all of us each day the bread we need;
and give hope to all who hunger for your life.
As we share our bread along the way,
pardon us the times we have broken faith.
Forgive our lack of loyalty and love;
move us quickly to forgiveness
when wrongs are done to us.
Do not abandon us in the time of hard testing.
Save us from every sort of evil, from the powers that possess our spirits and our structures.
Forever bind us to your liberating joy!
For you alone are God of grace and glory;
you alone are Rock of our Redemption.
Let it be so; let it be so.
Paul Fayter, Seasons of the Spirit

The Lord's Prayer (sung) VU 959

Our Father, in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come, your will be done
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread,
Forgive us our sins,
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and glory are yours
now and forever. Amen

*** Closing Hymn: "In Christ there is no east or west" VU 606**

In Christ there is no east or west,
in him no south or north,
but one great family of love

throughout the whole wide earth.

In him shall true hearts everywhere
their high communion find;
his service is the golden cord
close binding humankind.

Join hands, then, people of the faith,
whate'er your race may be;
all children of the living God
are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west,
in him meet south and north;
all Christ-like souls are one in him
throughout the whole wide earth.

*** Commissioning /Blessing**

Let us go into the world filled with the Holy Spirit,
confident in our decision to follow Christ,
to work for the coming of God's kingdom on earth.
May the Spirit go with us,
Jesus the Son lead us,
and our God smile upon us as we go.

*** Sung Amen VU 974**

**Barb Finlay's Reflection
Prescription for Happiness**

Let us pray:

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts
be acceptable to you,
O Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

What is the secret to happiness? How do we become content, happy and comfortable in our lives? There is no shortage of answers out there in the world. You only have to spend a few hours watching television with commercials to find out that you can be happy by using the right products, foods and services offered for sale. These advertisers claim to be able to enhance the quality of your life with the right mattress, deodorant, coffee maker or subscription meal plan.

The right car, vacation plans, clothes and sunscreen can impact not only your happiness but improve your standing among others. This is only the beginning. Investment programs from complex financial

portfolios to spending on lottery tickets can provide us with the satisfying notion that we can be financially content.

Outside the walls of the church, these are the standards and trends that shape the reality of our world. And let's face it, we like to be comfortable. We want everything the world has to offer us as well as the assurance of a relationship with God.

Both of our readings today are telling ordinary folks that for true satisfaction, a follower of Christ must be rich in the things of God and to seek the things that are from above. We certainly get the reference, but how about some practical help?

For individuals, one way to tap into this richness is by our own spiritual practices. Just as there are great varieties of types of people in the world, there are also many different types of spiritual practice. One of the most common spiritual practices is prayer. Not only used by the Abrahamic religions, it is used by Hindus, Buddhists and many other faiths. Quite contemplation and a desire to commune with a higher power is so common that I have no doubt that someday we will discover an evolutionary explanation for it; that we are innately wired for this type of activity.

The advice given in our first reading today is: *"But now you must get rid of all such things: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive language from your mouth."* It also follows up with the caveat not to lie. Now there is a prayer. If you have to commute to a job each day, I think this would be an excellent prayer to say before getting in your vehicle.

When one is saying the Lord's prayer and you try to think of what is meant by "lead us not into temptation", those things would be at the top of the list. During difficult times, we may pray for strength to overcome or to see a path forward, but just as important during times of trouble are to avoid anger, wrath, malice, slander, abusive language and lying. Those are temptations that we get caught up in when we are stressed and they are the evil we need to be delivered from.

While keeping our minds on that which is above, it is very often our baser reactions that keep us weighed down. We may no longer envision heaven as a celestial location, above the clouds, we do refer to a nobler reaction to negative circumstances as "rising above".

I believe that Jesus and the writer of Colossians are urging us to rise above our preoccupations and worries. Now we can read these instructions in a matter of minutes, but it takes a lifelong practice to keep these baser reactions at bay.

In the case of our parable today, greed is the stumbling block that Jesus identified in the young man who wanted a share of his brother's inheritance. Being familiar with sibling interactions, I can assure you that greed was probably accompanied by generous smatterings of anger, wrath, slander and abusive language. Jesus' parable focused on the greed of someone who did not realize that his time for being rich in the things of God, was coming quickly to an end. The greedy man chose devising a plan for personal wealth over the plans for doing God's work in the world. While money, in and of itself is fairly neutral, the lack of planning for enriching ones relationship with God is the problem for the man.

There are a few things to remember if you are going to use “rising above” as a spiritual practice. First of all, you need to feel it as well as believing it. At first, when learning any new practice, you may refrain from saying angry, wrathful, slanderous and abusive words, but you still might feel those things. The good news is, eventually, the feelings will dissipate if there is no fuel for them. In times like this you might resort to prayer. There is a familiar three-word prayer that is well known to most parents: Give me strength. If we want to truly rise above, we will need to rely on a strength we don’t possess. The power that is gained through prayer.

Secondly, treat the spiritual practice of ‘rising above’, like you would Fight Club. Don’t talk about it. I don’t mean you can’t have discussions about the practice, but you should not use it against anyone. If you were to find yourself engaged in a situation where interactions are getting heated, and when someone says something angry, wrathful, slanderous or abusive to you, you reply “I am just going to rise above this conversation”, you have immediately weaponized the spiritual practice and used it to imply you are better than the other and that they are somehow a bad person. Rising above never makes the other person feel bad and it should never be used in a passive aggressive way. You are better off not saying anything.

There are many stories from the New Testament that relate how Jesus faced the leaders of his day who were trying to trap him into saying something that would be damaging to his ministry. They were angry, wrathful, slanderous and abusive, but Jesus responded with love and was patient and kind. Jesus loved these people too, and many came to believe in what he was saying. He did not merely dismiss them, but he tried to teach them and encourage them to think in different ways.

You might be wondering how the spiritual practices of prayer and rising above can provide happiness and contentment. Practice is the key. Now, I am no expert on prayer or rising above. It takes practice to be happy. It is an intention and not some magical gift bestowed upon someone. If someone upsets me, I need to be intentional about rising above and if I do slip up (and who doesn’t from time to time) I know it and try to do better.

It has been a long pandemic. And some of my most challenging times to keep anger, wrath, slander and abusive language away have some in the past two years. Refraining from pointing out that a mask is not a bra for your chin, or that my definition of six feet and yours is much different, has been a challenge. When I do not slip up, I am happy. When anger, wrath, slander and abuse are not longer part of my coping skills, I feel free and happy. When you are quiet when others around you are not, you can learn a lot about what is bothering them, and simply asking questions can make someone feel understood and valued.

So here is my prescription for Happiness based on today’s lessons:

If you feel yourself giving into anger; try to focus on understanding.

If wrath is entering into your heart; consider the long-term outcome of hurting someone. Is that truly what you want?

If slanderous words are forming on your lips; think of up-lifting words to say about the situation or the person.

If abusive language is about to erupt; stay silent and listen for opportunities to forgive.

As with many prescriptions that tell you that you should “take with food”, these prescriptions should be taken with prayer.

Let us end with a familiar prayer that is also a recipe for happiness: Let us pray:

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me bring love.

Where there is offence, let me bring pardon.

Where there is discord, let me bring union.

Where there is error, let me bring truth.

Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.

Where there is despair, let me bring hope.

Where there is darkness, let me bring your light.

Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.

O Master, let me not seek as much

to be consoled as to console,

to be understood as to understand,

to be loved as to love,

for it is in giving that one receives,

it is in self-forgetting that one finds,

it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,

it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.