

WESTMINSTER CHURCH
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA

Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario P6A 3B5

*“Trusting God, nurturing disciples for Christ,
being empowered by the Holy Spirit”*

May 9th, 2021
Mother’s Day

...We Gather to Worship God...

Call to Worship (based on themes from Psalm 139)

We’ve come to worship God, who loved us before we were yet born, who knows us even better than we know ourselves, whose presence never leaves us, and whose love for us never ceases. This is our God. Let’s worship together!

Announcements: We are glad you are with us today and welcome your online voices joining with us in praise and in prayer. Our Session would like to encourage our members and friends to prayerfully consider your contributions to our ongoing ministry here at Westminster. We have noticed that contributions at the beginning of this year are not as strong as they were throughout the past year. We wish to note that our fixed costs continue and some new bills for repairing the church roof have recently been received and we are unable to open our Bargain Box at present. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Hymn: On Eagle’s Wings 57

Opening Prayer:

You raise your hand and gently begin the concerto of creation: Birds carry the melody while stars keep the beat; mountains dance in merriment and little children clap their hands with joy. Love’s Composer, our new songs are lifted to you.

The old, old song is made new in our hearts: Christ is Risen! Sing Alleluia!

You invite us to sing to a world deafened by despair and haunted by the tunes of fear. Lord of the Dance, our new songs are lifted to you.

Believing we cannot carry a tune, we hesitate to join in the chorus of praise sung by all creation. So, you softly and gently hum the melody in our hearts until they burst with you, raising a rousing chorus of Amazing Grace.

Music-making Spirit, our new songs are lifted to you.

Every song, old and new, is offered to you, God in Community, Holy in One, even as we lift the prayer Jesus taught his disciples saying, Our Father . . . Amen

...We Listen to God's Word...

Word of God:

Old Testament: Psalm 20

New Testament: Mark 12: 38- 44, John 10: 7-10

Hymn: When Mothers of Salem

Message: Living Abundantly - Mother's day Sermon - 2021

I still like this fb post from three years ago from Lora Lee.

Teen: What time are you waking up tomorrow.

Lora: Oh, around 9am probably.

Teen: Oh good. Could you wake me up at 7:30 so I can make you breakfast in bed?

Happy Mother's day again. I hope that this day brings good memories to all of you about being a mother or of your mother.

As I was looking through the past few years of sermons that I had written for Mother's day, I came across this story from the 2018 sermon. I was commenting that John had submitted the title of my sermon for the week because I was spending a few days in Toronto staying with my brother and sister -in- law and time with Andrew, my oldest son. I had forgotten about that trip. It was so much fun. Andrew gave me a great tour of the downtown and his favourite places. He treated me to a wonderful brunch at a small restaurant in the Kensington market. I don't remember the name but I think it was Bannock. It was a fabulous day with my son. I had planned to go back to Toronto in January 2020 and do the same sort of thing, with the same people. Things came up in January so I left the trip until the spring. Which never happened.

Though I have seen Andrew since because he has come home three or four times, I have not spent time with him in his neighbourhood which is always a treat. I miss that.

Mother's day comes with its own joys and sorrows, doesn't it? But I would not want my life any other way. Or would I?

This is a good question to ponder in a pandemic year. The first Mother's day was still early in the lockdown so we all knew that we could do this. We could live with this weird mother's day for one year. Life would be back to normal and mother's day would be celebrated properly again. As my friend said to me on Monday, this celebrating of birthdays during a lockdown pandemic is getting old. I am sure that many of you feel the same way about Mother's day.

So what is our complaint? As I was thinking about this sermon, I was thinking that my complaint is this. This is not an abundant life! What I am living is a narrow, confined life that I really do not like. I want to socialize with friends and eat at restaurants and see where my son works. This is my complaint. I cannot do these things. But here is the catch - does this mean that my life is not full? Does this mean that I do not have an abundant life? Is my life just about me enjoying friends

and family and travel and shopping?

To answer this, I am going to put two scripture passages together. John 10:10 where Jesus uses the words abundant life and Mark 12: 41- 44 where the widow gives her two small coins to God.

This story of the widow's mite or coins in the Gospel of Mark caught my attention when we were looking at these stories during Holy Week. This story does not stand alone. It follows some comments that Jesus makes about the teachers of law and how they conduct themselves. They demand attention in the market place, get the most important seats in the synagogues and banquets, make a show of their lengthy prayers and devour widows' houses. Such an odd comment. I looked up the word and it is not simply take. It means consume, eat, devour. After these comments, Jesus and the disciples sit and watch people putting their offerings in the temple treasury. Jesus tells his disciples to take note of the widow.

I have always pitied this widow. She only had two small coins and she gave them to the temple treasury. She had so little compared to the others. I know I was told that she gave the most but it was always emphasized that she had very little. All I was ever told about was this person's poverty. For some reason, I went back to this text this week and realize that this was a mother, more than likely. She was definitely married and she probably had children. Maybe she did not have much wealth but maybe she had an abundant life. I think I remember John mentioning that these two coins would have been given in thankfulness and joy. Maybe Jesus was pointing her out because she knew more about life and living than those wealthy people around them.

Jesus says 'The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.' What does Jesus mean when he says that we have an abundant life when we follow the Good Shepherd.

I think this abundant living is something that many of us are trying to figure out. The New York Times had an article this week entitled "The other side of languishing is flourishing: here is how to get there." It was a good article and I realized as I was reading it that the person was describing many Christian spiritual disciplines or practices that have been used for hundreds of years. After all, we know that many Christians before us have lived an abundant life in challenging times like this.

So I am going to emphasize a few of the steps given in the article that have been used by Christians to find that place of praising God in all circumstances. One of the steps in this article was "find purpose in everyday routines". I think this is one of the important first steps. I did not really think about daily routines much until I was reading a book about monastic life and monasteries. The writer commented that it was the routine of the monastery that made days livable when times of depression or anxiety would take hold. The community rules and routine would force one to get out of bed, get dressed, pray, feed animals and interact with others in the community. Somehow, I think I lived through a time where we were to question all routines and rules. We were to try new ones and get rid of ones we did not think worked for us. Routines were to have meaning and if we decided they were meaningless then we were to pitch it and do something different. I

decided to keep some of my routines. I have a very specific, going to bed routine. I like to get into bed, read an evening devotion of some sort and then I tend to read a novel for a little. Short, sweet and predictable. My mom's bed time routine was long. When I was living at home, I knew that my mom was thinking that it was getting to be bed time when I would hear her begin to water her house plants. Once that was done, it would be time for a bath. Then there would be prayers and in to bed. I did not often hear the whole routine. As a child and teen, it was comforting to know that the day was ending as it should and I would fall asleep in the middle of the routine. Maybe routines are not just for ourselves but for those living around us as well.

The abundant life of the sheep include them going in the gate during the evening for safety and going out the next morning for food and pasture. There is routine to this life that they are given.

Another step to an abundant life is try something new. I know that many people were trying new things a year ago. They were bread making, they were gardening, they were biking. Now it is good to see how many of those things were fun and worth doing again as well as being creative in those activities. Maybe it is growing something new. Maybe it is branching out to a different kind of bread. Maybe it is time to try something completely new and different again. There are many things that are not possible but there are many things that are possible. Trying something new. Is this Biblical? I think it is. I think God is often calling us to try something new.

Sunday dinner gratitude. We live in a time that it is easy to get sucked into seeing the negative of each situation all of the time. We have been taught to analyse and assess things. That usually means seeing what is negative. Being grateful or thankful is a completely different exercise, I think. It is not just seeing what is good about something. It is being grateful that we could do whatever it was in the first place. It was being thankful that the project was even possible. It was being thankful that we were able to get together with someone even though the conversation was sad, or stressful or worrisome or wonderful. Being grateful. Being thankful daily or weekly is a very good Christian disciple to practice.

I think this discipline of being grateful leads to this next step. Celebrating and savouring the small things. There are not many large things that we can do right now. However, maybe we overemphasize the spectacular a little too much. There is the term "making memories" which is often about the big events in life. Many of the small things are also very important. When you look back at memories of your parents or important adults in your life, I bet there are as many small things as there are big events. The small things may be the more important ones! One of the places that my mom was happiest and content was working in the garden. While working, she would tell us stories of her childhood and talk about her parents. Often tell us funny stories. I still remember some of those stories. She was also a very good listener while ironing so if you needed a listening ear there was always time while she was doing that.

Lastly, focus on people around you for a little each day. The article says 'look for connections and communities'. I can tell you that if you want to make connections and get to know a few more people in your neighbourhood, start redoing your rock wall which is right by the sidewalk. We have had so many people stop and tell us how much they like the rock wall, think we are

doing a good job and glad that we are keeping it in rock. We also have had at least four people wanting the left over rocks. That should make the clean up of the boulevard easy! I have seen some of these people walking by our house on a regular basis and it was fun to have the chance to speak to them. I hope they felt the same way. I had no idea we would have so many encouraging words while doing this job. I know that I have made comments on other people's work as I was walking and I now realize that these can be very encouraging word for the recipient. Reaching out to someone lessens your own anxiety and worries feel less. Reaching out can give someone else some joy in life and hope. I have also found that God is also often in some of these day to day encounters.

These steps or disciplines become important as we take time to view our days and see what we have done. These steps move us from being self centred to seeing God and seeing others. It helps us live in the spirit of - love, joy, peace, patience. None of those happen in isolation. These disciplines also help us treasure what is important in life.

A few years ago, there was a post and thread about 'conversations I had with my mother'. The one I really found most amusing was the one written by a Presbyterian minister named Maureen. The conversation happened while she was visiting her mother while they participated in the senior's home activities for an afternoon. Maureen found herself speaking with one person and her mother was speaking to another. Suddenly, Maureen heard her name being used in her mother's conversation and she heard her mother say "So Maureen sold my house while I was unconscious in the hospital. And not only that, she then gave away my car - can you imagine - just gave it away!" Maureen wrote in her post that she leaned over to this conversation and said "you are aware that there is another version of this story". Her mother smiled and said "well, this is my story and I am sticking to it". Then she giggled. A funny, frustrating, wonderful story that Maureen will remember for a long time. This could have been framed many different ways but Maureen framed it in love.

Yes, it is another Covid Mother's day. It is getting old. We cannot change that. We can however ask God to help us change how we see things and what we are doing. These steps or disciplines will keep us from languishing and keep us living in the Lord. We might even be surprised by the abundance that we have. That is the grace of God. Happy Mother's day.

...We Respond in Service...

Collection & Dedication

Let us present to God our tithes and offerings.

(At this time Session would like to encourage the congregation to consider several ways to continue your contributions to Westminster Church. If you are already on PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance) we thank you for your continued support. You may use the regular mail. You may use the Brock Street mail slot and drop it off if you are passing by (cheques only please). You may use etransfer to office@westminsterchurch.ca. You may prayerfully consider joining PAR. We thank you for your continued prayerful and monetary support of our mission at Westminster.)

Prayers of the People:

Holy One, we gather in your presence to give you thanks and to celebrate the gift of your motherly love, both gentle and fierce, both strong and humble, both kind and true.

Your love has given birth to the whole of creation, supports and nurtures us, cares enough to correct us, and challenges us in ways that strengthen and transform us.

We offer you praise and thanksgiving for your unfailing presence in our lives and all of the blessings you so generously offer us.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Loving God, we thank you for the gift of motherhood and for the many examples of faithful mothers in scripture, like Sarah, Hannah, Elizabeth, Mary, and Lois. We give thanks for mothers the world over. We celebrate all those who have nurtured and cared for us, remembering especially, birth mothers, adoptive mothers, surrogate mothers, aunts, grandmothers, teachers, neighbours, and all women who have mothered us. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of generations, thank you for the gift of faith kindled and rekindled in us through the years. And thank you for those who have taught us the faith in sincerity and love.

Today, we give special thanks and praise for our church mothers, the women who, like Timothy's mother and grandmother, steadily and without much recognition teach a new generation of children about the love of Jesus.

And we celebrate the matriarchs who build up with compassion and strong shoulders young women and girls, revealing a deep spiritual life and love woven into the fabric of our church family. Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

God of compassion and joy, we know motherhood is a wide spectrum and our life together is big enough to stand in solidarity with all mothers.

For the seen and unseen grief and struggles of women and mothers, we ache with you.

For the seen and unseen joys of motherhood, we rejoice and celebrate with you.

May God bless all women on this special day; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God, creator of us all. Amen.

Hymn: How clear is our vocation, Lord - 649

Benediction:

It takes little faith to see the sacred in the extraordinary. To have faith in the sacred, in the ordinary, though, takes courage to believe the mundane can be enough; that grace can emerge even through the dull, the slightly disappointing, the not quite right, not quite as we intended, not really what we hoped; the clumsy, the awkward, and the imperfect.

Let your act of faith be to let what you do be enough. To let God be in the ordinary.

Let the grace, mercy and peace of God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen

Additional Announcements

Virtual Baby Shower Announcement

On this Mother's Day Sunday, we have the pleasure of celebrating two Moms and their families, in our church family.

Last month Caroline Emilson and husband Erik, welcomed the arrival of their first baby, a wee girl named Elodie. An "already" Mom, Shelby Deubel and husband Chris with little Ember, are expecting their second baby this summer.

Our church family would love to have hosted a joint shower gathering in person. Instead, many people participated with a Virtual Shower and we have put together a "Gift Bag of Gift Cards" – one for each family.

Each bag has a \$200 gift card to a great local store called "Stork and Bundle", a \$100 gift card to Rome's, a \$100 gift card to Shoppers Drug, a \$30 gift card to Tim Hortons and a \$20 gift card to Dairy Queen.

On our behalf, Charlene will be delivering the gifts bags this coming week. We know God loves all Moms and we are delighted to be able to celebrate these two Moms this year.

Caroline and Shelby, please know we are praying for you – and your families!

Charlene and Susan



The Pregnancy Centre's annual Baby Bottle Campaign is virtual once again!

The pandemic has been hard on all of us, but it has been especially difficult for pregnant women and parents of newborns. Because of your support, the Pregnancy Centre has been able to remain operational, week after week, providing essential emotional support and practical assistance to women and men who are feeling incredibly overwhelmed and anxious during this time. And your

help is essential, too!

Normally you would pick up a physical baby bottle at your church on Mother's Day weekend and fill it with cash or change. That's not possible this year. Instead, we invite you to fill a *virtual* bottle!

Simply go to our website: www.algomapregnancy.com and click on the Baby Bottle Campaign banner to donate on-line with your credit card. If you need assistance, give us a call at 705-759-9100 and we can process your credit card over the phone. E-transfers can be sent to: info@algomapregnancy.com. Or if you prefer, you can send a cheque in the mail to the Pregnancy Centre (177 McDougal Street, Sault Ste. Marie, ON P6A 3A9) anytime between Mother's Day and Father's Day. It's as easy as that! Every little bit helps, and it adds up to make a huge difference in people's lives!

Your support of our virtual Baby Bottle Campaign this year ensures that the Pregnancy Centre can continue serving our community throughout this pandemic – and beyond. Thank you!

Central United Church Online Auction: Central United Church, 160 Spring Street, will be holding their Annual Silent Auction online from May 28 – June 4 @ 3:00 pm. You can find the link to the site on our Facebook Page on May 28. If permitted the auction will also take place in person in the church at 160 Spring St. on June 3 & 4 from 10:00am-6:00pm. There will also be a treasure room on the in person days. The auction contains many items including antiques, collectibles, household, food and some clothing. Please mark it on your calendar now and plan to support our auction.

On Eagles' Wings

You who dwell in the shelter of the Lord
Who abide in His shadow for life
Say to the Lord, "My refuge, my rock in whom
I trust!"

And He will raise you up on eagles' wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His hand

The snare of the fowler will never capture you
And famine will bring you no fear
Under His wings your refuge, His faithfulness
your shield

You need not fear the terror of the night
Nor the arrow that flies by day
Though thousands fall about you, near you it
shall not come

For to His angels He's given a command
To guard you in all of your ways
Upon their hands they will bear you up
Lest you dash your foot against a stone
And He will raise you up on eagles' wings
Bear you on the breath of dawn
Make you to shine like the sun
And hold you in the palm of His hand
And hold you, hold you in the palm of His hand

When mothers of Salem

1 When mothers of Salem
Their children brought to Jesus,
The stern disciples drove them back
And bade them depart;
But Jesus saw them ere they fled,
And sweetly smiled, and kindly said,
"Suffer little children
To come unto Me.

2 "For I will receive them
And fold them in My bosom:
I'll be a shepherd to these lambs,

O drive them not away;
For, if their hearts to Me they give,
They shall with Me in glory live:
Suffer little children
To come unto Me."

3 How kind was our Savior
To bid these children welcome!
But there are many thousands
Who have never heard His name;
The Bible they have never read'
They know not that the Savior said,
"Suffer little children
To come unto Me."

Hymn 649

How clear is our vocation, Lord,
When once we heed your call:
To live according to your word,
And daily learn, refreshed, restored,
That you are Lord of all,
and will not let us fall.

But if, forgetful, we should find
Your yoke is hard to bear;
If worldly pressures fray the mind,
and love itself cannot unwind
Its tangled skein of care:
Our inward life repair.

We marvel how your saints become
In hindrances more sure;
Whose joyful virtues put to shame
The casual way we wear your name,
And by our faults obscure
Your power to cleanse and cure.

In what you give us, Lord, to do,
Together or along,
In old routines and ventures new,
May we not cease to look to you,
The cross you hung upon -
All you endeavored done

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