

**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 15th, 2022

Fifth Sunday of Easter

...We Gather to Worship God...

Call to Worship

Jesus has given us a new commandment:

We are commanded to love one another.

Just as Christ has loved us,

So we ought to have love for one another.

By this, everyone will know we are Christ's disciples:

By our love for one another.

Come, may we join our hearts in worship:

Worship God by loving one another.

Announcements: We are glad you are with us today and welcome your online voices joining with us in praise and in prayer.

Birthday Train: We celebrate two birthdays this week. Linda Finlayson has her birthday today and Nancy Davison's birthday is tomorrow. Happy Birthday to these two dear friends.

Baby Bottle Campaign: You can fill a bottle physically with change and bring it back on Father's Day, or go online to www.algomapregnancy.com and click on the links for the Baby Bottle Campaign and fill a virtual Baby Bottle.

June Communion Date: June 12th

Stewardship: 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 financial support of our mission at Westminster.

Hymn: God is love, come heaven, adoring - 314

Opening Prayer

Living God, maker of heaven and earth, we come into your presence and we know ourselves to be recipients of great and wonderful gifts — the earth, the sky, the waters — given to us here in such abundance and beauty.

We lead enormously privileged lives.

Don't let our comfort blind us to the newness you are making in our midst — a newness that is taking us in directions we would not choose on our own; a newness that moves our safe horizons out beyond what we can control.

This much does not change: You are our God; we are your people, bound to you by the love of Jesus Christ and by the call of your Holy Spirit.

Faithful God, hold us deep in that truth even as you move us into your new creation.

Creating and re-creating God, take us in our uncertainties and make us new.

We pray in the name of your Son, who has gone ahead of us into your new future and who beckons us follow.

Hear us now Lord as we pray as Jesus taught us to pray saying, Our Father.....

Amen

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

Word of God:

Old Testament: Psalm 148

New Testament: Revelations 21: 1-6; John 13: 1-17

Hymn: Eternal, Unchanging we sing to your praise - 337

Message:

A comedian - I am not sure which one but some of you might know - concluded that if someone from another planet came to earth and observed North American society and our habits, this alien would conclude that dogs rule. Who or what else poops where ever it pleases and a servant immediately picks it up and carefully puts it in a bag to be placed in special black bins. Dogs must have some special ranking in the society. :) I know that others have determined it is cats. Dogs at least give you loyalty and affection. Cats, well, cats do everything on their terms, right?

Our text this morning is about power and serving. Jesus does something that is very unexpected and the disciples are not sure what their response should be. Then Jesus connects this washing of feet to loving one another. It may be a simple gesture but it really turns our society's beliefs about importance and power on its head.

My son pointed out to me a few months ago that please and thank you were taught to sons and daughters of the upper class as a way of speaking politely to their hired servants. This was a way that they could show their appreciation for the staff doing what they were supposed to do. Now, I realize that these words have value beyond that in our own society but it is interesting to know the history of those words.

It is interesting because I think that there are many of us who aspire to use these words in this way. We would love to be in a place where there was someone cleaning the house and looking after the gardens. I had someone cleaning my house for a couple of years when I was in Ottawa. It was really quite nice!

However, I also have become frustrated when I have seen older teens leave a mess at the lunch tables at Searchmont. I have hear more than one say that someone is paid to clean it up so it is okay to leave the mess. Well, they left a larger mess than most would and the staff are not paid enough to clean what was left behind.

Though I despise how the teens are treating the staff and am frustrated with their behaviour, I see where their attitude is coming from. What we are fairly sure happens in our society is the higher we are on the social/business/ corporate ladder the less we have to do with the mundane, everyday mess of life. The more money one has the less time one has to do things like take out garbage, clean up after pets, wash someone's feet. They are so important and powerful that they need all of their time to be cerebral.

And here we have Jesus in the thirteen chapter of John, just as Jesus is finishing his earthly ministry and he is washing his disciples feet! This would have been as strange and unusual for Jesus to be washing feet in his day as it would be for a CEO or president doing this today. Many understood Jesus to be the Messiah by this time. In Gospel of John, Jesus teaches the disciples that he and God are co-equals. They share everything. One does not do something without the other knowing. Now this is a time when there are many gods recognized in the society. Caesar is considered a god. The pharoah in Egypt is considered a god. Then there are the Greek and Roman gods who are visualized in statues. I do not remember any of them stooping to wash someone's dirty, dusty feet.

Yet, Jesus washes the disciples feet and then tells them that they should also wash people's feet. The disciples will never be greater than their master, who is more than willing to do this humble gesture for them, so they should learn to care for people the way that Jesus has cared for them.

This passage, which is often used on Maundy Thursday, is interesting to use when the focus is not Holy Week. Now I can look at it in light of learnings that we are beginning to glean from the pandemic. We tell ourselves that we have learned during the pandemic that care givers that work in senior's homes and nursing homes are undervalued. They worked in some horrific conditions attempting to look after people when there was no possible way to even do the necessities. There was neglect. There were many who voiced their anger and disbelief that this could happen to their loved one that they had placed in the home to be looked after and cared for. We have told ourselves that we will change this.

However, maybe the problem is deeper than this. Maybe we have really failed to value and care for vulnerable people properly in our society on many levels. Maybe we really do believe that if someone is not useful or is hindering our ability to be useful then they are not worth as much as we are. So we let someone else look after them in a place that we call a home but still looks like an institution with better paint and decor. I know that I have said at some points in my life that I am not a very good caregiver. Now I am wondering if it is not so much as a gift given but a discipline to hone everyday.

I know that people who get into this profession because they do care about the elderly or the vulnerable and they want to provide the best care that they are able to do. However, once in the system they are told how many minutes that they have to care for someone. There are so many minutes for a bath, so many minutes for teeth and bed. Maybe not all are like this but I have read these stories. Many 'homes' are a profit making enterprise. So it really should not be a surprise when money becomes the most important value in this capitalist structure.

I read a post on Facebook this week that said "Somedays I struggle with wondering if I will ever make a difference in the world, other days I know I do in little ways ..." I am sure this sentence is connected to the phrase "be a game changer" and "change the world". As I thought about this post, I began to realize that this is not my role as a Christian. My role is not to change the world. Jesus is fairly sure that is God's department. We see that in the Revelation passage. My role is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, washing feet and watching the world change because God is in this.

I have talked about spiritual disciplines. Deep breathing, mindfulness, prayer. However, I am wondering if caring should be on this list. Jesus said that the world would know that we were Christians by our love. What does our love look like? Do we believe that God can change people around us by us caring for them and loving them? Do we believe that there is an 'unearthly'

‘Godly’ power to being a servant and helping someone? Maybe this should be part of our daily routine regardless of age or stature.

I want to finish this sermon with a prayer written by Leonard Sweet.

Draw me today into fresh encounters with Jesus, O God.

Make me a servant of love

so that others may know how much You love them
and I may know how much You love me.

Let me not be afraid of new pastures,
whether they be green or brown or parched.

And as I pass through whatever the day’s valleys,
keep my head lifted up to the mountain,
from whence my help comes.

Never let me forget the people Jesus welcomed...

the greedy and the great,

the bad and the good,

the respected and the cheats.

Even as the world becomes more callous and chaotic,

may I never underestimate Your capacity

to fashion the miraculous from the monstrous,

even to make me a choice masterpiece

from the mire and the clay.

May we never underestimate God’s capacity to fashion the miraculous from also the mundane as we work on being servants of the risen Christ.

...We Respond in Service...

Prayers of the People:

Gracious God,

As those who strive to follow Jesus in our living

and to trust your power in our dying,

we gather to reflect upon the life that ended on a cross and was resurrected.

We recognize in ourselves the strengths and weaknesses of Jesus’ disciples: although they loved him, they disappointed and failed him.

And yet, gathering with these imperfect friends at this last meal

Jesus washed their feet in service, and then

extended the bread and cup to each.
 Jesus called them to love one another,
 and invited them to share in his very life
 and in his acceptance of the road ahead.

We are humbled, honored and inspired
 by the deep love Christ extended to the world,
 and we take seriously the calling
 to be the body of Christ today.

We pray ...

For the Christians in the Ukraine who still worship each Sunday in all of the chaos that is in their
 country

For the Christians who live in other chaotic places that we are unaware and continue to follow
 Jesus and worship each day and each week.

For those who are around us and need our attention and our prayers.

Forgive us when we disappoint and fail you,
 and guide us back to a place of trust and faithful living.
 Grant us the vision to see the world as you see it,
 with love and compassion for each creature and all of your creation.
 We ask this in the name of Jesus,
 Amen

Hymn: How clear is our vocation, Lord - 649

Benediction - By Cheryl Lawrie

Let these words hold you and let them send you
 so you will never be at peace
 until all are fed
 until all know home
 until all are free
 until justice is done
 until peace is the way
 until grace is the law
 until love is the rule
 until God's realm comes
 until God's realm comes
 until God's realm comes....

Prayers – Wednesday May 4, 2022

Praise reports

Nancy back at Pathways. And she was out to church. She looked really good. Noella was able to get outside in the hospital yard today with her family to enjoy this warm weather.

Prayers

Birthdays this week. Marla Pritchard May 9 and Ben's birthday today. May God bless them richly on their special day.

People of Ukraine, keep their hope alive, may they know the world is with them. And for Russians who do not support the war. Lord, please end the war.

For COVID patients, those recovering and those who are quite ill. We pray for Peter who is hopefully better this week. We pray for quick healing and we pray for those who have lost loved ones to this virus.

Pray for those who are suffering and working through mental health issues. Lord help us to listen and care, be with all who are suffering.

Lord we lift up those dealing with cancer, Melinda's, Uncle Ronny, pray for his peace and comfort and that he knows God is with him. We pray for Charlotte, and for Peter's sister-in-law. We pray for Grayson, he has battled for two years now and we pray he beats this disease. We pray for a gentleman who was diagnosed last week and ask for Your Comfort and Peace in that family as they await news of a treatment plan and prognosis.

We pray for a Nona who was diagnosed with cancer last Thursday. Be with her and be with her children and grandchildren as they are having a hard time with the news because it is cancer again.

Lord may all battling cancer receive good care, comfort and peace.

We pray for a young mother who is in need of your comfort and care at this time.

We pray for Mary Anne, a business colleague of Melinda, whose husband has to have open heart surgery in Sudbury. Be with them, Lord, and give them courage to face this event.

We pray for a mother named Melissa whose husband died very suddenly and she is left with two young children ages 4 and 6. We pray that she will turn to you, Lord, in her grief and that she will know your comfort as she mourns.

We pray for Julie who had a heart attack and is recovering, thank you that she received the necessary medical attention.

We lift up Les Dool and pray for complete healing from shingles.

We pray for Jackie in his ongoing health struggles.

We pray Emily Michaud as she mourns the loss of her grandmother. She loved her grandmother dearly. We also pray for healing and recovery from her broken ankle.

For Josie in her ongoing rehab and pray for restoration to good health.

Lord, may all of these folks be healed and have comfort and know God's Presence

We pray for Carol and Adam Lord, please give Carol wisdom and perseverance in this relationship with her son. Help Adam to receive insight from You Lord.

We pray for Melinda's friend Pam. Lord give her continued strength and courage as she deals with emptying her parent's home. We thank you for being with Rev. Christine O'Reilly as she spends time in Switzerland finishing up her brother's estate.

Lord, we pray for a woman and son looking for a place to live. They are in great need, Lord, and we ask that you find them a home.

We thank you, Lord, that we are able to bring all of these concerns and requests to you.
Amen