

**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 22nd, 2022

Sixth Sunday of Easter

...We Gather to Worship God...

Call to Worship

Those who love Jesus keep his words;

Those who love Christ will make their home with God.

Those who know Jesus will know his peace;

Those who know Jesus will be taught in the ways of peace.

Come, follow and love Jesus our Lord, who has come to be among us.

Come, worship God, who lives among us, loves us, and calls us home. Amen.

(inspired by John 14:23-29)

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 have one VERY special young woman celebrating her birthday next week, and that is Vera McCron on Thursday May 26.
- 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 e-transfer 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: 651 Guide me, O thou great Redeemer

Opening Prayer

All nations on earth shall bless you, O God, for you have redeemed by our people and brought them new life. Through Christ you have caused your word to shine on the just and the unjust. By your Spirit your saving power is known by all those who believe. We come confessing that Christ is our Saviour; we give you all the glory for your gift of redeeming grace.

Lord, You know how easy it is for us to sit here, tethered to our darkness and fear.
We get bound up by chains of mistrust.
We dare not to hope, for so many times before we have been disappointed.
So we sit here and wonder where you are.
We are not unlike the disciples who wondered also, who feared.

Lord, come to us in our darkness.
Flood us with your powerful light of love and mercy.
Help open our eyes to the good news of your eternal glory.
Give to us visions of the place in which love and hope will reign.
Forgive our stubborn resistance to your mercy and your love.
For we ask this in Jesus' Name. And pray as he taught us to pray saying, Our Father.....
Amen

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

Word of God:

Old Testament: Psalm **62:1-8**

New Testament: John 14:23-29; John 15:1-17

Hymn: 324 Great is thy faithfulness

Message:

There is a wonderful sign at the entrance to the Soo just off of Hwy 17....It says: You are needed here. It's an advertisement for Soo College....a small logo in the bottom corner of the sign. The first time I saw the sign I thought to myself...that is a great public service to have a sign that first says to everyone...you are needed here. Now I don't know what the full intention of the advertising campaign was for the sign, but let me say that I believe they have met a Holy need in

the main part of their advertisement...the need to say to people “you are needed”....you matter. Now it may be that it calls to young people to think of coming to the Soo to study...and from what I can see, we have a real valuable asset in education levels here in the Soo....Soo college, Algoma University and access to Lake State. That’s a big thing...to be known as an education centre up here in the North. But we need to also be a place that builds value into people for values’ sake. Advertising that “You are needed” is a worthy effort. Because there are so many souls who don’t believe they are needed...that they have value to others, to the society, to themselves.

We are living in a dark season right now. A season of pestilence that we hope is coming to an end and just as it’s ending we are being met with a season where war and sabre rattling of nations is building, we have economic worries.... there are fractures and severe divisiveness in our social structures, a distrust in institutions and governments, in law and order, distrust in the legal and court systems, etc. These are some of the macro shakings that are taking place across the world, but the micro shakings are perhaps fundamentally worse and I believe we see this in the despair in people, young and old and the tragedy of suicide levels and drug deaths. There is a lack of hope in our society these days and at the base of it is a lack of self-worth in many, many people. Life isn’t valued as it used to be in our society. On the one side now are suicide hot lines and mental health awareness outreaches and on the other side is doctor assisted suicide which will soon allow access to the mentally ill. It doesn’t take much to see why so many people read the ethos of our times and realize consciously or subconsciously that life doesn’t have intrinsic value...that they don’t matter.

And so I came to our texts today looking for hope and I came to today’s gospel reading where Jesus says, “Anyone who loves me will obey my teachings” and my first thought was... well how is this going to be helpful to us? How is a list of does and don’ts going to help us with the self worth crisis that is in the air we breathe these days? Because, make no mistake, you and I need to hear a hopeful word today because we are being affected by the constant negative powers of the world in which we live....so, how is a message about obedience to Christ’s teachings going to help...isn’t that going to lead us into a guilt producing internal quantifying of our good deeds and bad deeds.

And then it came to me...foolish me... it’s Jesus talking here...not the negative voices of our world, or in our minds. Let’s remember that Jesus is for us, and he came to tell us in his life and actions that His Father is for us...God is on our side. And so what teaching from Christ do we need to obey first in order to be his disciples? That we are needed...that we have value. That we are needed and we are valued not because of what we do or don’t do, but because of whose we are. There are all sorts of things we can improve upon in our lives and morals and attitudes, there are sinful ways of our hearts and minds that need repentance and renewal, but they all mean nothing if we don’t understand the very first principle of our faith... that we matter. You matter. You are loved beyond all imagining. The basic teachings of Jesus come in his life, death and resurrection

to redeem us...to redeem the whole world because in God's eyes we, his human beings that he loves, are worthy of this sacrifice. And if God believes we are fundamentally worthy of such a sacrifice then we ourselves need to believe this as a first principle of our obedience to Christ.

Loved ones, from before you were born, God chose you, ...you, to be his child. Hear this message of love from your Saviour and friend Jesus Christ..."You didn't choose me, remember, I chose you...".

Jesus chose you. He chose you before you chose him, he was calling you before you ever heard that still small voice that was moving you here. You are not here by accident, you are here on purpose.

Here is a central tenant of our faith, that we have been chosen by God. That we have been called into existence by the will of Christ, that he chose us from before we were even born. Jeremiah 1:5 "Before you were even formed in your mother's womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart" You and I need to learn to live out of our true identity, our true identity is how God sees us. Believing that is our first and most important act as a Christian.

Now I have a suspicion. A suspicion in my heart about all of you....that you like what you've heard so far, that it has found acceptance in your mind. But that you're going to go from here today and sometime later this week, or sooner, you will find yourself feeling unworthy, weighed down by the cares of this world, your family, the economy. Now why am I so suspicious of you?. Because I do the same thing. I've got a heart problem just like you. It's why the first thought about our texts today was "How are they going to help?" Knowing something is true in our minds does not make it real in our hearts. That long journey from our head to our heart is always a work in progress. To hear in our heads that we are needed, that we have been called by God, that we are loved by Christ, etc.does not flow immediately into the depths of our hearts so that we know that we are worthy. We know it to be true but we don't know it to be real.

And this is why it's important for us to rehear this message over and over again, because we have to get this. Not just for ourselves but for the sake of this world. The sign on the entrance to the Soo that says "You are needed here is really good, but an even better sign would be the one the Lord would like to post on every heart...You are worthy. You are worthy because I say you are.

This is after all the scandal of grace. That we are loved before we are loveable, we are called before we are equipped and we are empowered before we are responsible. The scandal of grace. What then can we do to help ourselves in solidifying our self worth in our hearts? Because it does us no good, it does me no good, to not be strong in my sense of self worth in my heart when life begins to go pear shaped. What can we do to position ourselves to have this truth grow roots in our hearts, become a foundational understanding in our hearts as instinctive as breathing?

Well, the passage Abide in me came to mind. Jesus says, “Abide in me, and I in you.” The word “abide” shows up ten times in this reading. It is an important word throughout John’s writings, and this is its most concentrated usage. We might translate it as live in me, dwell in me, remain in me, stay in me. When Jesus says, “Abide in me, and I in you,” he is building on the image of the vine and branches, and he is building on the truth of our hard-won connectedness and relatedness, to give us a word of hope, power, strength, and encouragement. Our natural tendency would be to try to break away. Our tendency would be toward death instead of life. Our tendency would be toward brokenness and alienation all over again. But Jesus says, keep living the new life I have won for you. Know that I am living in you, and let that give you strength to keep living in me. Indeed, it is the purpose of the life of Christ to give us life. So the encouragement to abide in Christ steers us away from countless dead-end roads.

More than this Jesus says, “Abide in me, and I in you”. Focus on Jesus here, he is promising of himself to abide in you. Look at what Jesus does when he "abides". He stays, he remains, he continues, he does not depart, He keeps us continually, he holds us so we do not perish.

There was was a boy that attended His grandfathers death bed, His grandfather gave him a pocket watch and said keep it and when you open it look up and think of me, the boy cherished that pocket watch. But one day working at an ice plant He lost the watch out of his pocket, when he realized he lost it he began to turn the place upside down looking for it but with all the sawdust on the floor from the ice it was impossible, he scratched and dug around to no avail. Then he had an idea, he shut off all the equipment and let it get so quiet in the factory you could hear a pin drop, not only could you hear a pin drop, you could hear a pocket watch ticking, he found his watch not by running around in a panic, but by slowing down, abiding, and listening till he could hear the ticking.

Slowing down, abiding, resting, and listening...paying attention to the Present moment of God’s movement in our lives is how we we help ourselves in solidifying our self worth in our hearts. Making this a learned behaviour, an instinctive reaction to the darkness that threatens. Abiding. Abide in Him-quit running around, settle down and listen for the heartbeat of God beating next to your own heart and you will experience the self worth of God deep within and you will know even better than a signboard that you are needed here.

...We Respond in Service...

Prayers of the People:

God of new possibilities, we give thanks for your constant reminder that you have a vision for our world that far exceeds our present realities.

You call us up out of our cynicism, apathy and fear to keep our eyes on the life you would have us live.

We are grateful for the courage and determination you make available to us to sustain our efforts to work for better relationships, justice and peace. Help us to find the language and the courage to share our own faith stories with each other, and to be open and honest and humble in all of our interactions.

God, we pray for our world and those nations where violence and tyranny cause so much suffering.

We pray for people driven out of their homes and their homelands, and struggle to survive in refugee camps.

We pray for those who do not have enough food to sustain them or water to quench their thirst.

We pray for those who are victims of slavery, even in this 21st century;

God, we feel so helpless at times. Help us to enact your command to love and to feed your sheep.

For those who are suffering in body, mind or spirit, we ask for healing and peace. Be our light in this world, God.

In Jesus' name we pray; Amen.

Hymn: He's got the whole world in His hands! (attached)

Benediction

He's Got The Whole World In His Hands

1. He's got the whole world in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
2. He's got the tiny little baby in His hands
He's got the tiny little baby in His hands
He's got the tiny little baby in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
2. He's got you and me brother in His hands
He's got you and me brother in His hands
He's got you and me brother in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
4. He's got you and me sister in His hands
He's got you and me sister in His hands
He's got you and me sister in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
5. He's got ev'rybody here in His hands
He's got ev'rybody here in His hands
He's got ev'rybody here in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
6. He's got the wind and the rain in His hands
He's got the wind and the rain in His hands
He 's got the wind and the rain in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands
7. He's got the sun and the moon in His hands
He's got the sun and the moon in His hands
He's got the sun and the moon in His hands
He's got the whole world in His hands

CCLI Song # 33681

Prayers – Wednesday May 18, 2022

Praise reports: Mother and son found a place to live! I am sure that is a relief.

Birthdays this week: We have one VERY special young woman celebrating her birthday next week, and that is Vera McCron on Thursday May 26.

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.

We pray for all of those who have been involved in mass shootings in the states and those who lost loved ones in them. We pray specifically for congregations of Irvine Taiwanese Presbyterian church and Geneva Presbyterian church as one person was killed and five were wounded last Sunday during the Taiwanese service. Lord, may they look to you for strength and may they find comfort in your word.

We pray for those who were involved in the shooting in the Buffalo store yesterday. Be with those who are grieving and those who are injured. May they heal well and not live in fear, but in your strength.

Lord, both of these shootings were done because the shooter was full of hate for those he did not know nor care about. Lord, help us find ways to combat this kind of hate so that these shootings stop.

We pray for COVID patients, those recovering and those who are quite ill. We pray for quick healing. We also pray for those who have lost loved ones to this virus.

Pray for those who are suffering and working through mental health issues. We particularly pray for a person who is struggling again with depression and feelings of negative self worth. Be with him, Lord. Help him to see he is worthy because he is loved. Lord help us to listen and care, be with all who are suffering.

Lord we lift up those dealing with cancer.

We pray for Melinda's, Uncle Ronny, pray for his comfort and that he knows God is with him. We pray for Melinda's aunt as she goes to Arch to get details about the hospice for Ronny. Be with them and may they know your peace. 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 two weeks ago and ask for Your Comfort and Peace in that family as they await news of a treatment plan and prognosis.

We pray for the family who had just found out two weeks ago that their Nona had cancer. Be with them in their grief and sorrow. May they know your peace and comfort is with them even as they mourn.

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 Charity who found our church site today and is asking for pray for her pain. She has just had spinal surgery and is experiencing excruciating nerve pain. Lord, we pray that you would give her relief for her pain so that she can get some sleep and she is able to heal.

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 continue to 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.

We pray 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 continue to pray for Ariaahna. We are so thankful that she is over covid. Be with her as she heads to Sick Kids on Monday for appointments. Be with her and her family as they continue in this journey.

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