

**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”**

June 19th, 2022

Third Sunday After Pentecost

...We Gather to Worship God...

Call to Worship

It is good to give thanks to the Lord;
Let us sing praises to God’s holy name!

We will declare God’s steadfast love in the morning,
And God’s faithfulness night after night.

Let us make a joyful noise to the Lord!
For God is good and we know God’s blessings.

Let us worship God with grateful hearts;
We will give God thanks in our prayers and praise.

Announcements:

- We are glad you are with us today and welcome your online voices joining with us.
- Margaret Nicolson passed away in her 107th year on Monday, June 13, 2022, at the F. J. Davey Home.
- There is a Board Meeting tomorrow night at 7:00 p.m.

Birthday Train: We have one birthday this week. Deacon Deubel has his first birthday tomorrow! May you be surrounded with joy and much love on your birthday!

Offerings and Tithes:

Our Session would like to encourage our members and friends to prayerfully consider your contributions to our ongoing ministry here at Westminster. Contributions may be made in person, by mail, or by e-transfer to office@westminsterchurch.ca. We thank you for your continued support and prayers.

Hymn: Dare to be a Daniel (lyrics printed)

Opening Prayer

Lord, we confess that we do not always understand Your ways.

We are easily discouraged when life takes unexpected turns and our carefully laid plans and dreams come to nothing.

We confess that we are quick to give up when things get difficult, and quick to question Your presence and Your power.

Forgive us. Grant us patience to wait for Your good timing.

Open our eyes to recognize Your leading in our lives — to listen for Your gentle whisper when we least expect it.

And then give us courage to step out in faith and obedience, trusting in Your leading even when we cannot yet see the outcome.

We praise You for Your faithful love, and pray that You would make us worthy to bear Your name.

Hear us as we pray as your Son taught us to pray, saying: Our Father ... (The Lord's Prayer)

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

Word of God:

- **Old Testament: 1 Kings 19:1-15**
- **New Testament: Luke 8:26-39**

Hymn: 324 – Great is thy faithfulness

Message:

Yesterday had been a bad day for Baal. He had not only lost the contest with God on Mount Carmel, but also his priesthood. Baal had been shown to be a false and weak god. And King Ahaz of the northern part of Israel who worshiped Baal had been sent packing by Elijah in complete disgrace. When Ahaz's wife Jezebel, she who had introduced Baal worship into the Israelite nation heard of what had happened she told Elijah he'd be dead the next day...she was coming to kill him. And today became a bad day for Elijah. And the man of God who the day before had seen the power of God consume the waterlogged sacrifice in a blinding flash of explosive fire, was on the run this day, in fear for his life. There is a belief that one strong day of faith leads to another and then another...each building on the shoulders of the last triumph in our journey with God.

Loved ones, if you believe that faith in God is a means of avoiding life's disappointments, then this text is for you. If you expect appreciation as a response to faithful service, this text is for you. Elijah had done what needed to be done as a prophet of the Lord. He had risen up in his faith against the worship of the false god, Baal. His faith led him to action which got him into difficulty. And this does give us an important lesson for our Christian journeys. Difficulty and obedience to God go hand in hand.

To stand for the Lord, to dare to be a Daniel, will lead to confrontation with the world. In truth, if we choose to live our lives firmly rooted in the faith, we can be certain that conflict will soon

be on our doorstep. In Elijah's case it is Jezebel and her cry for vengeance. Elijah discovered, as we must if we are to grow in our faith, that serving the Lord brings both joy and challenges. And sometimes those challenges can seem absolutely overwhelming. Maybe you know what it feels like to feel persecuted, beaten down by the world, trapped, cornered...seeing no way out of the situation you are in.

But just as the previous truth about trouble following faith is true, so is the next truth about God's presence to us in the midst of our trials. Because note that Elijah cannot run away from God. And it's interesting to me that God lets Elijah run for awhile, on his own strength...until he reaches the end of his resources and then God provides for Elijah's continuing run, with powerful supercharged manna, so Elijah, can run and run and run until he finally comes to stop and hide in a cave from the world which seeks his destruction. And then God demonstrates His power and control over the universe to Elijah, and then in the still small voice, that can be heard anywhere if one is quiet enough to listen, speaks to him again and asks, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

Now, please know that God knows why Elijah is there...he knows how broken he is, how scared he is, how lonely he feels, and how disappointed with others he has become. After all, the people who had risen up with him to give glory to God for his amazing miracle with the bulls, were apparently nowhere to be found to say to Elijah "we will stand with you". But God knows the answer to the question he has just asked Elijah, yet God makes Elijah pour out his true heart to Him..."I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away.' The question is one that can be very easily summed up by saying: "God, I followed you, I did your will...where were You when I needed you?"

Maybe you know that feeling. I do, and I know that some know it even deeper. But note that it is God who pulls that question out of Elijah...and out of us if we will be honest, because until we ask that question of God we will never listen to hear His answer. And His answer always comes that we forget who He is. That it is easy to forget who God is, and His power over every aspect of our lives. That we forget that He who is in us is stronger than he who is in the world 1John4:4. And that's ok...and that's very human of us...because we often need to fall in order to be picked up. Maybe there is a saint somewhere who never learned through failure, who was victorious in all their efforts for the Lord, but I don't know them. All the saints I know of in the faith have had to fall and be lifted up, sometimes again and again. And I know in my own life that strength in the Lord does come through failure.

Elijah hears in God's answer a couple of things. Firstly that God has not abandoned him for falling down because he says, get up and go and anoint Hazael as king over Aram. He lets him recover in rest and then he says "up you get there's work to be done". Elijah falls down and it didn't change God's call over him one iota. God was still his God when he was in the ditch the same as when he's calling down miraculous fire. That's a message that you and I need to hear. God is still our God, and our call to servanthood in His kingdom is still in us even on our worst days of our worst failure, because our service is never defined by our victories but by God's movement through us.

To push this point even further I want to look at the Garasene demoniac. Now one could argue that Elijah was a called servant of the Lord, so of course God's desire would be to see him redeemed from his fall and reinstated into active service of the Lord. But that argument falls with the healing and deliverance of the Garasene demoniac. This man that Jesus heals today of demon possession is outside of all "worthiness" in the eyes of anyone of the day. First he is a Gentile outside of the common Jewish understanding of the day that salvation was only for the Jews and not for the Gentiles. Secondly, this man is demon possessed and would be considered unclean to even be near. and Jesus travels across Lake Galilee just to deliver him. to save him. I remember traveling in Israel to the cave site where they believe this event took place. It was a bit of a hike up a hill to these cave openings in the region of Galilee where they believe the Garasenes were located. This is important to the time, and to us today, because it shows Jesus' outreach of the good news about God was not just for the Jews but was also for the Gentiles. And this story in Luke's gospel is unique in that it is a trip that Jesus makes solely for the purpose of the miraculous healing of a demon possessed man. And after his healing the man wants to leave his home and follow after Jesus and he is told to return to his family and tell everyone how much God has done for him..."So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him". So Jesus actually makes him an evangelist to that Gentile region because he goes and tells his family and his town "how much Jesus had done for him"...not a literary accident that Luke shows Jesus referred to as God in this passage.

I believe this message of deliverance, healing, and service to the good new of Jesus is a further message to us that no one is too far gone in this world for Jesus **and** that Jesus is overwhelmingly supreme in his command over evil forces.

A popular theme in movies today portrays the power of good against evil..but whether its Star Wars or way back to the Exorcist, the trouble with Hollywood is that they attribute an equal amount of power to evil as they do to God. Yet in the New Testament there is no comparison between the power of the devil and the power of Christ. Christ's power is complete. It extends over all worlds...visible and invisible. When Christ appears to the Garasene there was no fight to the finish for supremacy. Christ's power is incomparable and complete. The "Legion" of demons recognized the Lord from Glory, and they trembled. Someone once said, "Hell is close, but God is closer".

The Christian does not need to fear the unseen world...and the Christian who knows this has the power of God within to save others in the same plight as the man in today's lesson. A couple of years ago at the Cambrian Mall I saw a bumper sticker that I really loved...it said, "Not today, Satan, not today!" I loved it. Christians can and need to say that every day....we have that authority in Christ.

Deliverance is a powerful healing blessing that comes in many forms. Some do need to be dramatically healed by deliverance as Jesus did today, but many of us, like Elijah, need deliverance as well...from the trouble that comes from aligning ourselves with the Kingdom of God. And whether that trouble is "from below", or comes as a result of our human condition, let

us remember that the healing power of God is over all circumstances. Let us remember that God intends us to be lifted up from wherever we have stumbled. Let us remember that there is no place, there is no person no matter the circumstances, who cannot be met by the love and care of our heavenly Father.

...We Respond in Service...

Prayers of the People:

We praise you, O God, that into this troubled world you came as our Redeemer and Saviour. We praise you that you joined yourself with this human family, wearing our painstricken flesh to know the worries and cares of a human being. O Lord, when life is haried and burdensome, when the prospects are gray and cheerless, when we lose faith and confidence and give way to despair, when our feet are lead and songs die on our lips, comfort us with the knowledge that you will never leave us or forsake us. Help us to put our trust in you and to spend our strength in your service. From Jesus Christ we learn that the secret of joy is a heart free from selfish desires. May we find delight in simple things and ever rejoice in the riches of your grace.

O God, our heavenly Father, on this earthly Father's Day we ask You to bless our fathers for the many times they reflected the love, strength, generosity, wisdom and mercy that You exemplify in Your relationship with us, Your children. We honour our fathers for putting our needs above their own convenience and comfort; for teaching us to show courage and determination in the face of adversity; for challenging us to move beyond self-limiting boundaries; for modeling the qualities that would turn us into responsible, principled, caring adults.

Not all our fathers lived up to these ideals. Give them the grace to acknowledge and learn from their mistakes. Give us the grace to extend to them the same forgiveness that you offer us all. Help us to resist the urge to stay stuck in past bitterness, instead, moving forward with humility and peace of heart.

We ask your blessing on those men who served as father figures in our lives when our biological fathers weren't able to do so. May the love and selflessness they showed us be returned to them in all their relationships, and help them to know that their influence has changed us for the better.

Give new and future fathers the guidance they need to raise happy and holy children, grounded in a love for God and other people - and remind these fathers that treating their wives with dignity, compassion and respect is one of the greatest gifts they can give their children.

We pray for your blessing on fathers today, in the strong name of Jesus. Amen

Hymn: 635 - Brother, sister, let me serve you

Benediction

Dare to be a Daniel

Verse 1: Standing by a purpose true
Heeding God's command
Honour them the faithful few
All hail to Daniel's band

Verse 3: Many giants great and tall
Stalking through the land
Headlong to the earth would fall
If met by Daniel's band

Refrain: Dare to be a Daniel
Dare to stand alone
Dare to have a purpose firm
Dare to make it known

Verse 4: Hold the Gospel banner high
On to vict'ry grand
Satan and his hosts defy
And shout for Daniel's band

Verse 2:
Many mighty men are lost
Daring not to stand
Who for God had been a host
By joining Daniel's band



Special Prayer and Fellowship Night – in Person



Date: Wednesday, June 22

Time: 7:30 p.m.

Format: 7:45 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. our regular prayer time and format. Followed by a time to visit and have a little refreshment.

Location: Social room at Pinecrest Condo at 313 MacDonald Ave, Susan Myers's place. Guest Parking area is immediately to the left when you turn in off of MacDonald Ave., above the residents parking garage - take stairs down, go to the front door.
Susan's cell is 705.987-2316.

Prayers – Wednesday June 15th, 2022

Mark 11:24 Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

Praise reports

Penny and Susan had a wonderful and safe trip to Ottawa, thank you Lord.

Melinda is having a great visit in B.C. with her sister, we do pray for her safe return on Sunday.

Birthdays this week

Thank you Lord for Matthew Buchan whose birthday was on Monday. We pray for your blessing to be on Matt and draw him near to you. Protect him as he grows into a fine young man who knows you are his Lord and Saviour.

Prayers

Lord we lift up John and Charlene, our ministers and we pray for a time of rest and refreshing for them. We are grateful for their ministry to us.

Lord we are mindful of the ongoing tragedy and horror of war going on in Ukraine and in other parts of the world where peace is simply not present. We know war comes about where evil abounds. Where human life is not valued and where tyranny and cruelty appear to be running rampant. Oh Lord please protect those who simply want to live life in peace and safety. Make us ever mindful and prayerful for all who are facing these horrors. Give these people hope and comfort Lord we ask. Please Lord, bring all war to an end.

We continue to pray for Josie who is still in the hospital from a series of issues but is improving. Lord be with her and may she heal and recuperate quickly. Be with her family who have been engaged with visiting and supporting Josie for many weeks. Strengthen them Lord and give them and Josie's care team wisdom in "next steps".

We lift up a fellow who is struggling with depression and feelings of negative self worth. Lord we pray he will seek you and know you are his advocate and that you love and care for him. Give this fellow hope Lord, bring people alongside to offer support and encouragement.

Lord we lift up those dealing with cancer. We think of Melinda's, Uncle Ronny in ARCH. We pray Lord for Ronny and his wife and family to know your comfort and peace on this journey. Lord please make this a precious time for their family, a time where their love for one another is evident and your love for them is revealed.

We pray for Charlotte, who was diagnosed with multiple cancers last year and is now on a maintenance program. We pray for her family travelling to London ON every month for her chemo treatments. We pray Lord for your ongoing watchcare and encouragement over Charlotte and her family.

We pray for Grayson, and for Peter's sister-in-law, as each have been battling cancer for some time. Lord, please help them to know your presence and please give them and their loved ones hope as treatment plans continue. We pray for the medical leaders overseeing their care, give them wisdom.

We pray for Sharon's friend, Patsy, who is recovering from cancer surgery. Lord, we pray for excellent recuperation and ask for your complete healing for Patsy.

Lord we lift up Susan's friend's husband who has terminal lung cancer. May he seek you Lord and know your peace. May you be with his wife and daughters and family as they journey with him.

Lord we lift up others who are facing a variety of medical issues.

We pray for Charity who had spinal surgery and ended up with a staph infection in the incision, which led to emergency surgery. She has a 4 inch wound on her back that must now heal. Lord please put your healing hand upon Charity and may she know that you are with her during this time of healing and restoration.

We pray for Mary Anne, whose husband has to have open heart surgery in Sudbury. Be with them as they continue to await this surgery.

We lift up Les Dool and pray for complete healing from shingles around his neck. It has been several months of extreme pain and is persisting. Help Les not to lose heart, to know your loving presence with him and assure him, healing will come.

We pray for Jackie in his ongoing health struggles.

We pray for Emily's friend who still needs an apartment. I thank you for the temporary place that she has but Lord, I pray for something more permanent.

We also pray for Gene and Leona as they look for a new apt. Help them to find something that will meet their needs and delight them.

We pray for Carol and Adam Lord. By the power of the Holy Spirit we ask for your intervention in this situation.

We pray for Beth's friend's son, who was in a bad accident. He came through surgery on his spine and awaits other surgeries on his head and face. Lord, we pray that you will heal Jakeb of his multiple injuries. We pray that you will be with his family. May they put their trust and hope in you as they wait for the outcomes. Lord we are grateful for promising signs for Jakeb.

We pray for Neal Mather's daughter, Irene, who has just been diagnosed with rapid onset MS. This would have been a difficult thing to hear during the same week that she graduated from university. Allow them to celebrate this wonderful event even as this diagnosis is in the background. May they know your presence and care, your strength and your love.

We pray for Carol Jean who broke her arm. May she have a speedy recovery.

Lastly Lord, we lift up our brothers and sisters at St. Paul's and Victoria churches as they face a time of change again. May they put their trust in you and experience your presence with them. May you give wisdom to John and Charlene as interim moderators who will lead the folks at St. Paul's through their plans going forward.

Amen.