

Welcome, Announcements, and Land Acknowledgement

For most settler Canadians — me included — yesterday was a day to celebrate the rights, freedoms, and privileges that come with being Canadian. Privileges, however, come with responsibilities. A crucial one is to build meaningful relationships with Indigenous people and nations. Those relationships need to be based on an honest understanding of our history and ongoing internal issues among Indigenous communities in Canada such as no access to education, no clean drinking water, and the MMIWG2S (**Missing and Murdered Women, Girls and 2-Spirit People**) epidemic so that we don't become blinded by the reality of the treatment of Indigenous peoples and believe it was along time ago, and that it's not prevalent today when it very much is.

I hope and pray that as we gather for worship in Jesus' name, we continue to remember that we are here as guests on the traditional and unceded territory of the ləkʷəŋən and the WSÁNEĆ. May we continue asking God to forgive us for injustices we are directly or indirectly part of and may we be led along paths of reconciliation and solidarity.

Please come forward to receive Holy Communion – everyone is welcome at this table. If you are unable to come to the front, please signal an elder who will come and serve you. We use gluten and dairy-free bread. Both juice and wine are available. Pre-packaged elements are provided on request.

Celebrations / Joys and Concerns ***God's blessing on you. God's blessing on you.
God's blessing, dear friends. God's blessing on you.***

We pray for our sister congregations involved in collaboration: Trinity, Knox-Sooke, St. Andrew's, and Chinese Church. May we all be open to God's call upon us as we imagine possibilities for future ministry together.

We pray that the nation known as Canada will be a just, equitable and welcoming country and we pray for all those who form and keep our laws, that they carry out their responsibilities with wisdom, courage and mercy.

➤ ***O let the power fall on me***

Call to Worship

Let us sing of God's steadfast love.

We will offer our praise in songs of joy.

God's faithfulness is as vast as the heavens.

We will proclaim God's faithfulness to all generations.

Let us worship God in our prayers and our praise.

We will give God glory now and always!

† Gathering Prayer and Words of Hope

Loving God, how majestic is your name in all the earth. From north and south – from east and west – drawn by your majesty, we come to worship you. For the gift of this new day, fresh from your hand, we rejoice. For the renewal we know through friendship with Christ, we praise you. For the Spirit's energy, blessing us in each moment, we honour you. Loving God, all of life is your gift, so give us glimpses of your splendor and love in this time of worship. Accept our praise offered in word and action, Creator, Redeemer and Holy Spirit, here and everywhere, now and always.

Lord of all life and each life, we confess that we can forget that life is your gift, especially when we face struggles or feel hard done by. We confuse our own desires for your will and stop listening for your guidance. Forgive any hurt we have caused by action or inaction and show us how to make amends. May we live with you and with each other in reconciling grace through the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen**

Friends, Jesus knows we have fallen short of his intentions for us, yet in his great mercy, he welcomes us back into his embrace. Thanks be to God that we are forgiven, refreshed and restored for ministry by God's grace.

➤ *God forgave my sin / Freely, freely*

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† Prayer for Understanding

God of wisdom, sometimes your Word seems so clear to us, yet at other times it is a puzzle or a challenge. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us as we listen to the Scriptures today. Help us hear your Word for our times and our lives through the grace of Christ, your Living Word. Amen

Scripture **Psalm 13**

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me?

How long must I bear pain in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all day long?

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me?

Consider and answer me, O Lord my God!

Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death, and my enemy

will say, "I have prevailed"; my foes will rejoice because I am shaken.

But I trusted in your steadfast love; my heart shall rejoice in your salvation.

I will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with me.

Romans 6: 12-23 [NT 156]

Therefore, do not let sin exercise dominion in your mortal bodies, to make you obey their passions. No longer present your members to sin as instruments of wickedness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and present your members to God as instruments of righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you since you are not under law but under grace.

What then? Should we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!

Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that you, having once been slaves of sin, have become obedient from the heart to the form of teaching to which you were entrusted, and that you, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

I am speaking in human terms because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to greater and greater iniquity, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness for sanctification. When you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. So, what advantage did you then get from the things of which you now are ashamed? The end of those things is death. But now that you have been freed from sin and enslaved to God, the advantage you get is sanctification. The end is eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Matthew 10: 40-42 [NT 11]

Whoever welcomes you welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. Whoever welcomes a prophet in the name of a prophet will receive a prophet's reward; and whoever welcomes a righteous person in the name of a righteous person will receive the reward of the righteous; and whoever gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple – truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Message

'Tis the season for graduations – from university or high school – even grade eight or kindergarten. A few weeks ago, Artemis Place borrowed some of our chairs when they held their grad in the outdoor space between their building and ours – a lovely venue that we are blessed to be able to use for one of our services in August. On Wednesday, Lansdowne students in grade eight had their grad ceremony. I know this because our parking lot was suddenly full of cars! It created an opportunity for me to connect with the office administration at Lansdowne to discuss how we can ensure that their guests are invited to use our space for special events and also that no one at Knox is inconvenienced when the space is already needed by the congregations and user groups here. I am glad we made the connection.

'Tis the season when, during my years of teaching, I would often turn to the picture book, *Oh, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss. In this classic end of term poem, *the Great Balancing Act* is addressed – life itself – and the many ups and downs each person faces on that journey. Seuss encourages the reader to find the success that lies within – to explore the possibilities and potential of life while acknowledging the problems that may be encountered as well. These are the things we think about at pivotal moments in life – when we make career shifts or move to a new city – when we choose a life partner or enter a field of study – when we move from childhood to adulthood. Another pivotal moment in life is our confession of faith in Christ Jesus.

Imagine that you have encountered one of those pivotal moments in life such as a career shift. Maybe you quit a job, and then you keep going back to work there. You return to your locker, or your parking space, your cubicle. You log onto your computer. You begin answering email and managing projects.

But wait. That wouldn't work, would it? Your coworkers would be confused. Your password wouldn't work anymore. Your boss would wonder if she should engage you in conversation before or after she called security. It makes no sense to go back to a job you don't have anymore. Likewise, it makes no sense to go back to a slavery you are not subject to anymore.

In Paul's letters, sin is an enslaving power. Paul does not imagine sin as separation, or brokenness, or as moral imperfection. Sin is that power that vies with the Creator for control of creation to such an extent that Paul can speak of humanity's having been "enslaved to sin". In his message to the Roman church, he is trying to address the balance of obedience and freedom – life and death – sin and grace. This is life itself to the Christian – we are on a journey filled with ups and downs – brimming with possibility yet equally overflowing with questions.

In the previous chapter and in our reading from last week Paul has told the people that *where sin increased, grace abounded all the more* so the question posed is, *should we continue in sin so that grace may abound?* And some verses later he asks the rhetorical question, *should we sin because we are not under law but under grace?*

In both cases his response is a resounding “no” – *by no means!*– Hell no!

Again, when Paul mentions sin, he is not talking so much about sin as an individual act of disobedience or bad behavior. He is talking about sin as a cosmic power – a tyrant that rules over the believer like a despotic monarch – sin as a force that drives a person toward an almost unavoidable proneness to failure or to committing an evil deed. In the understanding of Paul’s culture, nature includes an invisible world of powers and forces that interfere in human life and cause human beings to behave in ways that displease God. It is within this world of power and forces that Paul understands sin.

Paul declares that there is a dark side to the world. Everyone has experienced the dark side. It whispers in your ear and tells you to lie to your spouse or your parent. It’s that internal voice that makes you jealous when God blesses other people in a different and seemingly better way than God blesses you. It’s that voice that tells you that you are not gossiping when you talk about other people’s business; you’re not stealing if you take more than your share. It’s that insidious message that doing nothing wrong is the same as doing nothing. There is a dark side out there, and Paul names it “sin”.

Grace embraces and transforms. Grace takes us beyond legalism and following without question – and fear of punishment – a rule book of “do’s” and “don’ts.” Still even in grace, the works of sin draw us away from God and one another and are deathward in orientation. The works of grace build community and restore the soul and awaken us to eternal life. Is our personal and corporate lifestyle reflective of God’s pathway of salvation or self-interest, hedonism, and consumerism? What guides our personal, professional, and political decision-making? Do we sell our souls and planet for a lump of fossil fuels or idolatry of a prevaricating politician? Does our privilege drown out the cries of the poor and marginalized?

Paul is speaking of more than relational and behavioral sins. He is hoping to address the underlying sin of those righteous folks – perhaps like any one of us – who may abstain from alcohol, pornography, and infidelity – thinking themselves morally upright – but promote racism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, economic inequality, and divisiveness in their citizenship and politics. I suspect these sins are far more destructive to community and spiritual growth than private and easily condemned sins.

We know that sin has left its mark on every life, but the good news is that the death and resurrection of Jesus has destroyed the effectiveness of sin's power. Does this mean we never sin? Sadly – no. Does this mean that when we sin it is because we do not want to do good? Again – no. Even if we choose what is good, we may have a problem doing it if we allow ourselves to be enslaved by sin. Because of Christ we believe that sin need not control us. We can turn away from sin because of God's grace – we can renounce the power of sin and evil as we are drawn into new life with God. This is what we believe – what we affirm in baptism – what we are continually challenged to live, by the power of the Holy Spirit within us.

Paul wants us to realize that a relationship with Christ is life changing. Old patterns can't just continue – how could they? We can't go back to that old job and pretend everything is as it was. Paul says that we must be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. We are to walk in the newness of life that God offers – to embrace the abundant life made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Paul emphasises the gift of the grace of God, which offers forgiveness and life eternal – something we cannot attain through our own merit or efforts. However, given the waywardness of human nature and the cosmic power of sin, this gift was being misunderstood and abused by the Romans – being used as an excuse for licence and a moral free-for-all. Paul highlights that grace brings us into a special relationship with the giver of life – we are servants – slaves to the giver – and this demands a particular way of living. A way of living that is only possible because of grace.

In case this should be misunderstood as God being a self-serving slave owner – not an image of God we can see ourselves embracing, Paul emphasises two points. First, Paul reminds his readers – and us – that because of their/our limitations and immaturity he has to speak in *human terms* – using basic images that can be easily understood. Now, while we could argue that Paul is never easily understood, we can perhaps accept that his language here is not particularly nuanced – it is stark, even provoking. Secondly, he reminds them – and us – that autonomy is an illusion. we are always in the service of someone or something. (Do I hear Bob Dylan's "Gotta Serve Somebody" echoing in my head?) We can choose righteousness or sin, God or the Satan, life or death.

Those who are dead to sin and alive to Christ don't do the same old stuff – don't talk the same old nonsense, don't think the same ungodly thoughts, and sink into evil ways. When we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ, we show forth what has been hidden, unrevealed until it is made new by God's grace.

This then is to my mind the great balancing act – the pivot point of our reality as God’s creation made whole in Christ. Hanging in the balance is our desire for freedom – from the constraints of childhood, school, society, marriage, work – whatever it is, no control is as limiting as the slavery of sin from which we are set free by God’s grace. However, that freedom is not absolute – we are called to obedient freedom – joyful freedom under the discipline of God.

How can we who died to sin go on living in it? Well, the truth is that we can’t. We must be both dead to one way of being and alive to a new way. By embracing what God desires we become the changed people we are meant to be – we find the success that lies within.

*You’re saved by God’s grace!
Today is your day!
You’re given great freedom to live in God’s way.*

*You have Christ in our heart – and gifts of the spirit!
You can journey the path you’ve been blessed to receive.
You’re not on our own for with God you go.
Yes, YOU are the one who’ll decide, “sin, or no?”*

*You’ll look all around you and examine God’s way.
You’ll make some tough choices and be thankful quite often.
For gifts of the spirit and Christ in your heart
As decisions are faced and you live in God’s grace.*

*You’ll get mixed up, of course, as most all of us do.
You’ll be confused – continue in sin? Hell no!
Step with care and great tact
And remember to pray for God’s will when you act.
Just never forget that you’re blessed by God’s love –
That must always affect the way that you live.*

*And living in sin – well that just won’t do!
We’re made new in Christ Jesus – become who you are.
A child of God – a disciple – a star.*

*So, whoever you are and whatever your age...
You’re saved by God’s grace!
Today is your day!
You’re given great freedom to live in God’s way.*

† Offering and Prayer *Praise God from whom all blessings flow 306*

Jesus teaches that the gift of a simple cup of water is a gift worthy of his disciples. Friends, whatever we give to God this day can bless the world in Jesus' name. So, give with confidence that your gift matters.

Generous God, what we return to you today has first come to us from you. Bless what we offer so that those in need may taste your abundance which we know already in Christ, our Living Lord. Amen

Vine and Branches¹ - an affirmation of faith

We believe in God, the Root of all living, Creator of all things.

We live in Christ Jesus, God's Son, who loved all people and who makes us one in his love. He suffered, died and was raised to new life. In his death and resurrection, we are also raised to life that is transformed. Christ is our Vine, and we are his branches; and without him we cannot live.

We live by the Holy Spirit, flowing through us so that we may bear fruit for God, the fruit of love. In the Spirit we are one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world.

We trust in the one holy church, the communing of saints, the forgiveness of sin, the mystery of resurrection, and the grace of eternal life.

Gathering at the Lord's Table

For those who need, the bread waits. For those who long, the wine lingers. For those seeking transformation, the table beckons. All are invited... not because we have faith, but because we trust – not because we understand, but because we long – not because we know, but because we are loved – not because we are well, but because we know our need. The table waits, and heaven's host calls. Our place is here. Come now to the table of our Lord.

➤ *I come with joy*

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God be with you.

And also, with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to God.

¹ Methodist – General Board of Discipleship

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is good to give God thanks and praise...

Gracious God, we praise your holy name, giving thanks with our lips and our lives...For the power and mystery of your Word by which you created us and called us to yourself, we give you thanks. For the power and mystery of your Word by which you took flesh and lived among us through your Son, Jesus Christ, we give you thanks. ...Therefore, with all your faithful people from every time and place we join with the whole creation to lift our hearts in joyful praise...

O holy, holy, holy God, O God of time and space. All earth and sea and sky above bear witness to your grace. Hosanna in the highest heav'n, creation sings your praise. And blessed is the one who comes and bears your name always!

Faithful God, we offer you our praise and thanks as we return to you these holy gifts of bread and wine...Remembering that on the night of his arrest Jesus sat down to eat with friends. During the meal, he took the bread, said a prayer, broke it and shared it with everyone at the table, saying: ***"This is my body which is for you. Do this to remember me."***

At the end of the meal, he took a cup of wine and raised it, saying: ***"This is God's new covenant, made possible because of my death. Drink this all of you, to remember me."***

We ponder, O God, the mystery of his promise that in this meal we are joined to him and to one another as a holy people. We offer you our praise and thanks for Jesus, who took flesh and lived among us, was baptized for our sins, taught us your way of truth, loved us in our lovelessness and died that we may have life. ...We celebrate with great joy the resurrection of Jesus, his presence with us in this feast, and his promise of a new creation as we affirm the mystery of faith:

Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again! Sing Christ has died and Christ is risen, Christ will come again!

God of grace and power, you invite us to share in mysteries that are beyond our understanding... ...in simple trust we seek the transforming power of your Spirit upon us and upon this bread and wine. By the miracle of your grace may they be for us your body – vibrant with your life, renewing and making us whole. And as the bread and wine which we now eat and drink are changed into us, may we be changed again into you – bone of your bone – flesh of your flesh, ...loving and caring in the world.

In Christ, with Christ, through Christ – by the power of the Holy Spirit – all glory is yours, now and forever and so we sing...

Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen! Amen, amen, O Holy One! Hosanna and amen!

Sharing Bread and Wine

The one who breathed on the first disciples is present for us in this bread. The one whose Spirit stirred the Church at Pentecost revives us in this cup. The bread of life – the cup of grace – we remember and share with thanksgiving these gifts in which God comes to us so that we may come to God. Receive what you are. Be what you receive.

Please come forward to receive Holy Communion – everyone is welcome at this table. If you are unable to come to the front, please signal an elder who will come and serve you. We use gluten and dairy-free bread. Both juice and wine are available. Pre-packaged elements are provided on request.

† Prayer after Communion

Holy One of heaven and earth, with joy and thanksgiving we praise you for you create, sustain, and redeem all things. For making us in your image to love one another and to care for your creation – we give you thanks. For the gift of Jesus whose life is the pattern for our lives and learning – we give you thanks. For the energy of your Spirit to inspire us in times of challenge and change – we give you thanks. For gathering us at your table of grace to share in your divine gifts and be strengthened by them – we give you thanks.

We ask your blessing as we seek to serve you willingly and cheerfully, affirming your desire that we love one another in Jesus' name. During this time of silence, we name in our hearts those for whom we crave your restoring touch...

Eternal God, thank you for listening to us in every situation. Keep our eyes open for your Spirit at work among us. Equip us to respond to someone else's prayer as your servants, for we offer ourselves to you in the name of Jesus who encourages us to sing in prayer...

➤ ***Our Father in heaven (The Lord's Prayer – no repeats)*** **469**

➤ ***We will go out with joy***

Blessing

Keep your eyes open as you walk in God's world, alert for occasions to share God's love. And may the God who made us – the Christ who mends us – and the Spirit who gives us life, walk with us each and every day. Amen

➤ ***Jump with joy*** **406**