

Worship at home
May 15, 2022
5th Sunday of Easter



“Love, worship, minister”

God calls us to worship:

(Congregational response in bold type)

The Lord is risen!

He is risen indeed!

Psalm 148:1-6

Hymn: #260 “Alleluia, alleluia, give thanks to the Lord”

We offer our prayers:

Prayer of Praise and Supplication:

Holy God,

the first and the last, beginning and end of all things,
you are worthy of praise from all your creation.

Sun, moon, and stars praise you.

Earth, sea, and sky praise you.

Every living thing praises you in its own way.

And so, we praise you in our human diversity,
joining our varied voices with all your creatures in heaven and on earth.

You fill our lives with the wonder of your love in Christ Jesus.

Your Spirit moves throughout the world
to reveal your purposes for every living thing.

Receive our prayers and praise this day,
for you are the Source of our life and our hope,
Holy God, ever Three and Ever One.

Prayer of Confession (Unison):

**God of mercy:
you have called us to be thankful
for your good gifts to us,
but too often we have taken them for granted
as if we deserved them.**

**You have called us to be hopeful
through the gospel of Jesus Christ,
but too often despair has come upon us,
and the cares of the world
have weighed us down.**

**You have called us to be joyful
in the wonder of your presence among us,
but too often we become mired in the mundane
and lose the gift of reverence.**

**By your saving power, O God,
enable us to celebrate your love for us
with joy and thanksgiving.**

God offers the assurance of grace:

Jesus taught us that no one has greater love than this,
to lay down one's life for one's friends.
Christ has laid down his life for us.
Accept the grace God gives,
let us rejoice in his forgiving love and share it with each other day by day.

And give thanks to the Lord,
For He is good,
His love endures forever.

We offer our lives and resources:

Offering plates are positioned as you enter and leave the sanctuary. If you'd prefer to use e-transfers, please speak with Rev. Ian, Judy Armstrong (St. Andrew's), or Howard McKellar (Knox)

God speaks to us:

Readings: John 21:15-25

Sermon:

Love, worship, minister

1. On the night of Jesus' arrest and trial, Simon Peter denied any relationship with Jesus, as Jesus knew that he would. Three times, Simon Peter claimed that he was not a disciple of Jesus. Now, at the end of the gospel, after Jesus was resurrected from the dead, after he had commissioned his disciples to go into the world as the Father sent him: forgiving sin in the power of the Holy Spirit and speaking words of Christ's peace to others, Jesus reinstated Simon Peter. Upon his three-fold profession of love, Jesus thrice commissioned Simon Peter to look after his church: "Feed my lambs", "Tend my sheep", "Feed my sheep."

2. This is a holistic commission. Feeding Christ's sheep involves looking after all of each other's needs: food, shelter, money, health, security, justice. However, in a particular way, it is inextricably linked to encouraging Christians in their ever expanding and deepening *faith*. John's primary concern in writing this gospel, was faith. In chapter 20:31 he wrote: "...these are written so that you may come to *believe* that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through *believing* you may have life in his name."

Our outward actions, our thought processes, our body language, our patterns of speech are all connected to what we believe to be true and of value. And John's key proclamation is that an experience of life that is of eternal quality; that is, an experience of life that is joy, hope, and peace that transcends our momentary struggles depends on what we believe about God, about Jesus, and our relationship with Him.

Feeding Christ's sheep involves helping each other believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, so that through believing all may have life in his name.

Christian ministry is not unlike matchmaking. We position others before Christ so that He can speak into their lives the forgiveness, the healing, the grace, the mercy, the peace they need. To borrow from last Sunday's sermon, pastoral care involves inviting others to the fire to meet Jesus and encounter the Father through him.

Three times Jesus commissioned Simon Peter to a life of pastoral care - to shepherding his flock; to feeding and tending his sheep.

Despite his earlier denial of Jesus, Simon Peter would take that commission extremely seriously. After Jesus' ascension (which we'll celebrate next Sunday, although properly it should be celebrated on Thursday May 26th), Simon Peter would go on to become one of the primary leaders of the early church. Eventually he would make his way to Rome where he would become known as the "Apostle to Rome." It was in Rome that Simon Peter would die. As Jesus predicted, he would die a similar death as Christ's own. He would stretch out his hands in defiant submission, someone would fasten a tether around him, and he would be led to his martyrdom. He was crucified. But, not deeming himself worthy to suffer in the same manner as Jesus, he asked to be crucified upside down! You may sometimes see crosses that look like they've been hung upside down. They're "Peter crosses."

Simon Peter became the lead shepherd/lead pastor of the Christian movement in Rome. This community would grow and eventually come to be known as the Roman Catholic Church. It would become the primary expression of Christ's flock in the western world for many centuries. All leaders of the Roman Church claim Simon Peter as their spiritual ancestor.

As the head shepherd of Jesus' flock, as the original pastor of the Roman Church, Peter became the ancestor of all Roman Catholic popes.

Of course, the Roman Catholic Church is not the only expression of Christianity in the world. This has been true from the very beginning. Our New Testament is a library of books and letters written by various pastors to their various congregations. And they are not all identical. John emphasized themes which Paul did not. Paul emphasized themes which Mark did not. In the centuries after the closure of the New Testament there continued to be many expressions of Christianity, some of which were absorbed into the RCC, some of which existed alongside, and some of which were deemed heresies – even before the Protestant Reformation. Just as some examples: there were churches in the far east, there was what came to be known as the Eastern Orthodox Church, there were expressions of Christianity in what is now known as

Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and northern England – these were subsequently absorbed into the RCC.

3. Simon Peter's pastorate is uniquely authoritative, yet is not solitary.

And here in John 21, we begin to see suggestions of this many-faceted Christian community.

There's an interesting exchange between Simon Peter, Jesus, and another, unnamed, yet beloved disciple.

Peter turned and saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following them; ...When Peter saw him, he said to Jesus, "Lord, what about him?"¹

"What about this other guy?" asked Simon Peter. "If I'm to spend my life looking after your church and ultimately be led away against my will to be crucified, what does he have to do?"

Jesus' response was to not worry about that which doesn't concern you. "I've given you your commission, I'll give him his."

This unnamed disciple whom Jesus loved lived out his natural life (in other words, he wasn't martyred) and is widely suspected to be the author of the gospel of John, which indicates he had his own Christian community. He was a pastor to those who took his gospel as their founding document.

Already, in these early days of the Christian church, we see the development of many different expressions of Christian ministry which continues to this day.

While this unnamed disciple was an actual person and he became the pastor for an actual Christian community, his anonymity allows him to become every Christian.

Who is the disciple whom Jesus loved?

*For God so loved **the world** that He gave his only Son that whoever **believes** in him would not perish but have eternal life.*

God has forgiven the sin of the world on the cross. In his resurrection, Jesus has foreshadowed what awaits all of God's beloved creation when he returns and heaven and

¹ John 21:20-21

earth are wed. Anyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, is adopted by the heavenly Father into the holy family and is a beloved disciple of Jesus.

4. Just as Jesus had a job for Simon Peter, he has a job for every Christian.

We're not all called to be the pope. We are all called to follow Jesus and to help one another come to believe so that in believing, they too may have life in Christ's name.

Whether the Lord has commissioned you to be the pope, or to be a martyr, or to live out an unremarkable middle-of-the-road life, as members of the church of Jesus Christ, we are all ministers of his gospel.

The qualification to be effective, faithful ministers is the same: Jesus said, "Do you love me?"

He asked this specifically of Simon Peter rather than the unnamed disciple, because Simon Peter was the one who had publicly denied him!

It was important that Simon Peter confirm in his own heart and mind where his loyalty lay and who was the focus of his devotion before he began his ministry in Christ's name.

Hope-filled, Christ-centered, Spirit-led, God-glorifying ministry that bears witness to the resurrection of Jesus and shapes the church to be the beacon of resurrection hope we are created to be, is rooted in the love of Christ.

It's rooted in our awareness of Christ's love for us.

And it's rooted in our individual expressions of love for Jesus.

Any service we do, if it's to be effective Christian ministry, comes from that love.

Faithful, effective Christian ministry is rooted in the love of Christ.

"Do you love me?"

Then, when we are rooted in the love of Christ, what we do, think, and speak, will bear fruit in the love of His sheep.

Just as with the first disciples and apostles, the resurrected Jesus commissions each one of us to be his presence in our daily realities. To speak his words of forgiveness and peace. To position others around the fire where they can encounter Christ and receive his healing mercies for themselves. To help one another live in communion with the Triune God in which fellowship is peace beyond understanding.

Faithful, effective Christian ministry is rooted in the love of Christ and bears fruit in love of his sheep.

Jesus asks each one of us: “Do you love me?”

And then commissions us to shepherd his flock.

Amen.

Hymn: #704 “Teach me, God, to wonder”

We respond in prayers of thanksgiving and intercession

Lord our God,
you have given us so many wonders in this world you created.
We thank you for spring sunshine and refreshing rain;
for colours exploding in blossoms opening,
grass greening, and gardens sprouting.
Thank you for all the signs of new life around us this Easter season.
Make the earth fruitful in this growing season,
so that food will be plentiful for the hungry.

God of new life,
We pray that we might learn to care for our planet as your gift
before it's too late.
We pray for scientists and all those who work tirelessly
to teach us how to look after the environment.
Renew their energy for the responsibilities they carry.
We pray for leaders in government, business and communities,
that they will make care for the earth a priority
for the sake of generations yet to come.
Inspire each of us to do all we can,
no matter how small or insignificant our efforts may seem,
to walk more respectfully on the face of your creation.

God of the small and insignificant as well as powerful and influential,
we thank you for our families and friends
who offer us love and encouragement as we move through life.
We pray for those families and communities
whose lives have been disrupted by war and conflict,
who worry about safety each day
and what the future will hold for them.

Keep a brief silence, adding more specific prayers as needed.

Guide all those with decision making power
to consider the lives of the vulnerable as very precious,
and make policies that protect the future for them.

God of the vulnerable,
we pray for all those whose future is uncertain:
for those are facing illness or waiting for treatment,
for those mourning the loss of someone dear,
and those who feel lonely or discouraged.

Keep a brief silence.

We pray for those who are homeless or unemployed,
for all who know hunger or despair,
and for those facing danger or discrimination every day.

Keep a brief silence.

Empower us with your Spirit to reach out to those in need,
in this community and in places distant from us,

so that we can make your love tangible in their lives
in Jesus' name.

God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
We thank you for this community that gathers in Jesus' name,
for the warmth and welcome offered here,
for friendship and faithfulness discovered,
for learning and leadership shared with each other.
Thank you for the hope that rises in us
through the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ.
Make us expressions of that hope to each other
and to the world you love for his sake,
as we join our voices with his followers around the world,
praying the words he taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with God's blessing:

Hymn: #757 Come sing, O church, in joy"

Blessing: