

Worship on February 28, 2021 – Second Sunday in Lent

Order of worship

We Gather

- Prelude (Paul T.)
- Welcome and Announcements
- Responsive Call to worship
- Praise song – BOP# 625 – Seek Ye First
- Prayer for worship + Lord's Prayer
- Words of Assurance

We Listen

- Prayer for illumination
- Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30
- Sermon: Life is a test and a trust / Growing in Christ

We Respond

- Prayer for the people of God
- Offering (invitation and prayer first)
- Offertory Hymn – BOP#634 – Will you come and follow me

We Serve

- Benediction
- Postlude (Paul T.)

Ponder Upon Questions

Announcements:

. Welcome! Grace and peace to you all who are worshipping God with us live right now and those who are worshipping God through this video. This is Feb. 28 2021. Second Sunday in Lent. As we are going through these hard times, let us remember the love of our Lord Jesus Christ for us. He had to walk the narrow path for us.

. As a means of honouring God, Robert Hayashi, who is now leading worship at St. Andrew's Maple suggested me to join Lenten prayer challenge. During Lent, we are praying for one person a day, every day, different person. This is the form you can use. "Who is God placing on my heart? Why am I praying for this person or group? This could be a person, a church, a city, a community, and a country. And lastly, What God said or did. In this way, we are pray for one another and focus on the Bible as well. If you can join, please do so. Fill out this form and we will collect it at the end of Lent. Our goal of the two churches is to pray for 1000 different individuals. Let us use this time to come close to God and inflame our passion for God and love for one another.

. For Bible study or sharing thoughts with discussion questions, please stay after the worship.

. Next week is the First week of the month. So, there will be The Lord's Table. And from next month, we will have Communion on the first week and the third week of the month. I will let you know beforehand. Next week, please prepare your own elements

. Thank you for your offerings. We are still collecting offerings to support PWS&D. Through our gifts, may God light up the world and spread his love to the world.

As we come into the presence of our God, let us calm down our hearts and minds, and focus on our Lord.

Responsive Call to Worship (Carol Runstedler)

One: We are not the first to make the journey to Jerusalem; many have gone before us and many will come after us. From near and far, God's people gathered to celebrate God's goodness on the holy mountain.

All: We are pilgrims on a journey. We are travelers on the road.

One: Jesus often went to Jerusalem as a child to celebrate Passover. Now he has set his face toward Jerusalem again, knowing this time will be different.

All: We are pilgrims on a journey. We are travelers on the road.

One: Jesus' last journey to Jerusalem is sombre. He has no illusions about what is to come. Still, he goes ahead, doing God's will.

All: We are pilgrims on a journey. We are travelers on the road.

One: Let us pray.

All: God of light, we want to follow in Jesus' footsteps, but we have our fears and doubts.

We would rather avoid the pain and darkness on our journey. Give us courage and perseverance when the journey is difficult and the grace to help others on the road. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Praise song – BOP# 625 – Seek Ye First

Prayer For Adoration and Confession

Loving and holy God, Our Creator, Christ, and Guide, you speak the words of life to us. In you we find our hearts' desire; by your grace we are saved. When the way forward is unclear, you shed light. When we are troubled, you give peace. When times are difficult, you stir courage and hope. Our deepest longing is to know you, and to be known by you. In these difficult days, we praise you for your faithfulness to us. Draw near to us in our time of worship, O God, and open the way before us, so that we may follow Jesus without wavering, trusting him to lead us.

Although following you brings joy, O God, we confess the way is sometimes hard for us. There are times we get tired and would eagerly settle for an easier road. Some days we find the task of loving others hard. Sometimes we choose anger over forgiveness, or ignore the needs of our neighbours. Forgive us when our commitment to you wavers. Forgive us when we take that easier path. Stir the embers of our devotion and kindle a brighter flame. Strengthen our determination to follow where you lead and renew our energy to serve you.

This time, we come to you in prayer that you taught us how to pray: (The Lord's Prayer:)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Sisters and brothers in Christ at St. Andrew's, believe the good news of the gospel. We are justified by God's grace which has come to us through Jesus Christ. By grace, we are forgiven and set free to find new life in Christ. Thanks be to God!

Passing the Peace

Prayer for Illumination: Before we read today's scripture, let us pray for the wisdom of God. Gracious God, send your Holy Spirit to move in us and among us, so that we may hear your voice speaking in the scriptures. Open our minds and hearts to encounter your Living Word, and give us the courage to follow, no matter the cost. Amen.

Scripture: Matthew 25:14-30

"This is the word of the Lord / Thanks be to God."

SERMON: Life is a test and a trust. // Growing in Christ

A long passage. Today's title is **"Life is a test and a trust. !" OR "Growing in Christ"**
If I ask you how you see your life? What would you answer?
By how you perceive your life, it shapes your life.

Our perspective will influence how we live our lives: how we invest our time, how we spend our money, how we use our talents, and how we value our relationships.

So, how do you see your life?

Some might answer that life is a circus, a minefield, a roller coaster, a puzzle, a symphony, a journey, or a dance. This is how we picture our lives. Everyone might have different picture and definition of life. It's called life-metaphor. Whether we are aware of how we perceive life or not, we express our views of life outwardly. This life-metaphors are expressed by our clothes, jewelry, cars, hairstyles, bumper stickers, and all kinds of different activities of our daily lives. For example, if we think life is a party, our primary value in life will be having fun. If we see life as a race, we will value speed. If we view life as a marathon, we will value endurance. That is how we are shaped by how we perceive life.

So, what is your view of life?

The entire Bible gives us 3 metaphors that teach us God's view of life.

Life is a **test**, life is a **trust**, and life is a **temporary assignment**.

If we know these 3 life metaphors, this will help us live our lives with God's purposes. We will talk about first two today, and we will talk about the last one next week.

First, life on earth is a test.

Why is there a test? What is the goal of a test? We need to know the difference between a test and a temptation. When you go to school and study, then your teachers will test you. We call it test, not temptation. Then, what is the difference? The goal is different.

The goal of a test is to benefit us. By having a test, we can improve our knowledge. We make sure what we learned and what we know and don't.

On the other hand, the goal of a temptation is to make us fall. It is to destroy us. It is to harm us.

It is important for us to know why there is a test in front of us. No one likes a test, but we all know, it is for our own good.

Through various tests, character is developed and our true character is revealed. Building character is not done in classroom only. Learning can happen anywhere and anytime. So, God's shaping us is always with us. In other words, all of life is God's test. We are always being tested by God. It sounds very bad, but in fact, it is a good thing. This, in other words, God's presence is always with us. God's rod and staff is always with us, guiding us and helping us and protecting us.

We will be tested by major events such as changes in life, problems, unanswered prayers, undeserved criticism, and tragedies. God tests our faith through problems, tests our hope by how we handle possessions, and tests our love through people.

Sometimes, we feel that we failed. That's okay. Why? God is with us. We fall, then God will raise us up. We reveal our weaknesses, but by the power of our loving God, we learn and we improve. Through a test, we grow up in God. We learn that God is helping us and with us.

Next life metaphor is Life is a Trust.

Today's scripture shows both life metaphors. The master called his slaves. He handed out money to them according to their abilities. They received 5, 2, and 1. **"Take good care of my money."** Then the master left.

The slave with 5 talents, managed well and made another 5. The slave with two talents did the same, double the money. However, the one with one talent, dig a hole and put the money in the ground.

Time passed. The master came back and called all three slaves.

The slave received five talents made another five. V21, **His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'**

The slave with two talents did the same. **23 His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'**

We will only focus on those two slaves today. As good stewards, they did great. Through V21 and 23, God promises three rewards in eternity.

First, we will be given God's affirmation. He will say to us, "Good job! Well done!"

Second, we will receive a promotion and be given greater responsibility in eternity. "I will put you in charge of more things."

Third, we will be honoured with a celebration with the Master, "Come and share your Master's happiness."

When we think about entrust, usually, first thing comes to our mind is money. How is your relationship with money? How do you balance your money and your spirituality and your God?

Money is both God's test and trust.

God uses money. Money is one of the tools God uses. God uses money to teach us to trust him. For many of us, money is one of the greatest tests. We love it too much. We have hard time between choosing God, faith, and hope and our immediate needs and our own desires, money. God sees how we are trustworthy by how we build our relationships with money. Through this process, God builds his character and image in us. **Luke 16:11, "if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?"**

Luke 16:11, “if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven?”

I read it twice because it's a striking and painful truth. If we are driven by the hope for God's kingdom, what's more important between worldly wealth and true riches of heaven?

We tend to become short-sighted. God says there is a direct relationship between how I use my money and the quality of my spiritual life. How I manage my money determines how much God can trust me with spiritual blessings.

Is the way we manage our money preparing God to do more in our lives?
Can we be trusted with spiritual riches?

Our life is beyond what we can understand. It's only the cover page of the real story. Let us hope for our true home. Through tests, let us learn how to trust God. Like the slaves with five and two talents, let us be good stewards of what we are given by God.

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving Father God, thank you for your lesson today. Our life is a test from you and our life is a trust in you. Test is not very pleasant for many of us. Because it is hard. But, after tests, we know that we get better. We learn. We learn to grow in you and we learn to trust in you. So, God, open our eyes and hearts, so we actively welcome your tests in our lives, so we grow more and get closer to you. As we come and talk about this book on our life's purposes, we want to align our life's focus on you. We want to praise you. Reveal your wills for each of our lives. Give us courage to follow. In Jesus' precious and beautiful name, we pray. Amen.

Prayer for the people of God

Precious God, glorious Father, almighty God, thank you for calling us into your presence. We are here before you laying down our desires and hopes. Give us wisdom so we can discern and give us courage so we can obey your voice.

We thank you for our church community. We are going to participate in the Lent Prayer Challenge. We will try to think of a new person to pray each day and we will try to focus on you trying to listen to your voice. We are excited to come to you. Daily, we will focus on you to listen to your voice telling us for whom we pray for. At this difficult time, this is a great spiritual activity to maintain our spirituality clear and sharp. Help our congregants to join and enjoy the time with you. We remember those who are suffering this time. Physically, emotionally, financially, with difficult situations and relationships, people are suffering. Lord, powerful God, come into their lives, come into their hearts and be the wisdom and healing power. Be the light, so they can find the light. With hope and courage, strengthen them to overcome.

As we pray for one another, give us understanding hearts, so we may love one another more and accept one another more, and care for one another more. Make us connected spiritually.

In this season of Lent, we look up to you. Thank you for coming to us. Thank you for living on this earth for us. Thank you for suffering for us. Thank you for dying on the cross for us. And

thank you for rising up overcoming the power of death and sin for us. Heavenly Father, Lord Jesus, Holy Spirit, thank you for calling us and being with us.

We have you in our hearts. What shall we be afraid! We will live with confidence because of you. In Jesus' precious and powerful name, we pray. Amen.

Invitation to the offering: This is the time for offering. Jesus challenged his followers to deny themselves in order to follow him. Our offerings express to God our willingness to give not just a little something, but to commit resources we could have used in other ways for God's purposes instead. We are blessed to be able to give. Let us pray for the offering.

Offering prayer:

Lord Jesus, you challenge all your followers to give to God like you did, without counting the cost. Receive our gifts and bless them so that they may continue your ministry of healing in this hurting world. Bless us with your courage so our lives speak to others of our love for you and for them. In Jesus' name, Amen. // Let the Lord's offering be received as we sing our hymn.

Offering – BOP# 634 – Will you come and follow me

Now, it is the time for us to be sent to the world. Following Jesus is not an even we are participating on Sundays only. Following Jesus is our lifestyle. There is a test and there is a trust. And it is a daily event. Every day, God is present with you. Open your eyes and hearts, and live with him.

Benediction

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, And the Love of God, And the intimate fellowship of the Holy Spirit, Be with us all, now and always. Amen.

Ponder Upon Questions:

1. Up to this point, what image or metaphor has best described my life? A race, a circus, something else? And what is the reason why I think that way?
2. What do I do when I am facing a challenge? How does my relationship with God factor into the choices I make?
3. Does my faith in Christ help me to feel courageous when facing something new, challenging, uncomfortable, or intimidating? Why or why not?
4. What has happened to me recently that I now realize was a test from God? What are the greatest matters God has entrusted to me?