

“Home Church Worship” for Sunday June 21, 2020
3rd Sunday after Pentecost
Written and prepared by Pastor Joanna Miller

Gathering:

We worship as we live – in the name of the Father, and the + Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Conversation with Kids:

Today is an important day – for three reasons!

First, it's National Indigenous Peoples Day here in Canada, which is celebrated on the summer solstice – the longest day of the year. (That's #1 & #2 important days). The solstice is a day when lots of people gather to give thanks for all of God's gifts and the warmth and sunlight that will bring the harvest. Today is a day to stop, give thanks for God's blessings, and also to orient ourselves toward history and understanding. It is important for us to be mindful that the land we live on was once cared for by the First Peoples and that we came to live on it through a series of treaties (that the people who signed didn't live up to). Today is a day to give thanks for our land, and to give thanks for the people who have cared for it for many, many years before we came to live on it.

The #3 reason why it's an important day is because it's Father's Day today! Father is quite possibly the most popular image that people have for God. So, on Father's Day, it's a good time to think about how our own dads teach us about God and how God loves us. So, today, give thanks if your dad has taught you that Dads love fiercely, dads make sure we have food to eat, and a place to live... and, dads can be a lot of fun too! Today, give thanks to God for your dad, and give thanks that God loves us even more than our Dads do!

Scripture:

Matthew 10:24-39

[Jesus said to the twelve:] ²⁴“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; ²⁵it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

²⁶“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. ²⁷What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. ²⁸Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰And even the hairs of your head are all counted. ³¹So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

³²“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before

my Father in heaven; ³³but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

³⁴“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

³⁵For I have come to set a man against his father,
and a daughter against her mother,
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

³⁶and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

³⁷Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; ³⁸and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. ³⁹Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

The Good News

Can I be honest with you? After three pretty tough weeks in the world and news, after three plus months of staying home because of the coronavirus, and after some tough work done by our council to come to a decision about our church building, I was really hoping for an easy sermon this week. I was hoping for a simple reading, with a straightforward message. I was hoping for the sermon that writes itself, you know? Then I read through today’s Gospel reading... and sighed.

Almost every sentence in this piece of text could instigate a sermon, or two, by themselves. There’s the slave and master stuff, there’s the ‘everything will come to light’ stuff, there’s the ‘hairs on your head are counted’ stuff, then the families splitting apart, rounded out with those who lose their life will find it. On one hand, it seems ridiculous that this string of thoughts can even fit into one reading. To the untrained eye, it might even look like Jesus is just stringing random thoughts together. But I don’t think that’s what’s happening...

I think that there is one thing that weaves all of these pieces together. To put it succinctly, the good news is so good, it hurts.

The good news is so good that no one is better than anyone else. And this is so good that it’s always going to make someone angry. Because there’s always going to be people who want to believe they’re better than others. Often, people want inequality so the rich can get richer. So they can buy a cheap t-shirt. So they can sleep well at night, even in the knowing that there are many who go to sleep after having worked all day and barely made enough to feed or house their families. But the good news says that this is a broken system – that all are equal, valued, made-in-the-image-of-God beautiful.

The good news is that, in time, all of these broken systems will be brought out of the shadows and into the light. The way that capitalism was built on the backs of slaves, and continues to thrive through exploiting cheap labour. The way that our systems and institutions

tend to disadvantage People of Colour and Indigenous Peoples. In time, it will all come into the light that the Kin-dom of God includes all God's children – big, small, black, white, brown, Indigenous, gay, straight, bisexual, transgendered, differently abled, young, and old. The Gospel is beautiful, but there will always be some who don't want to live in that truth, because they want to be better than someone else, because (even though they'd never say it out loud), they don't want to give up the little advantages they get for being the privileged one in the system. But none of that can stop the good news from being good.

The good news is that each one of those people included in the kin-dom of God – the old and young, the LGBTQ2IA+ folk, the People of Colour, the Indigenous Peoples, the differently abled people – are ALL, each and every one of them, made in the image of our God and each one bears Christ inside of them. They are, every single one of them, precious. Beloved. Children of God. God delights in each one to the point that God knows the hairs on their head. And not one of them, not a single one, takes their last breath outside of God's presence. Not George Floyd, or Chantel Moore, or Rodney Levi, or any one of us. The good news is that we are enough, each one of us, enough to be deeply loved by God.

But... the good news is so good that it will naturally offend some. Some people will dwell in the good news, in the knowledge of their own beloved-ness, able to celebrate and embrace the beloved-ness of all. Some will be able to believe it, and hold onto it, even if they struggle from time to time believing that really all the people are that beloved. And others will just flat out reject it altogether. They will come up with reasons, they will draw lines in the sand, they will decide who is in and who is out, who has broken a rule, whose mistakes are unforgivable, who believes wrong... and they will, in their certainty, cause divisions – within families, within communities, and even between peoples. Instead of seeing the good news as something that frees all of us, the good news will become a threat, because some think that not everyone has *earned* their freedom. But even their offense will not take any of the goodness out of the good news.

And the good news is so good, that the ones who really dive in, realize that swimming in a pool of that much freedom and love and grace allows you to give up all the pretenses, all the fake indicators of success or goodness or worthiness. They will find that in giving up all the worldly expectations and gradations, they find the abundant life that Jesus promised. They will find that Jesus' words are spot on – in losing their life, they find a new, abundant, and love-filled life. On the other hand, those who hold on to that old life, the one filled with the spoils of their successes will, in the end, find that those things do not weather the test of time. In the end, all of those spoils are lost, either by moth or rust or just because those things can never be eternal. Those who hold on, will lose. Those who lose their life, will find it.

There it is, quite simply. The good news is so good that it hurts. Sometimes it hurts because we have to let go of things that make us feel powerful. Sometimes it hurts because we experience the divisions that happen between those who believe the good news is for all and those who believe that the good news comes with stipulations. Sometimes it hurts because we

realize that we have been the ones who have wounded others – whether through the system of capitalism, through the injustices that have been inflicted on our Indigenous siblings, or through injustices inflicted on our queer siblings (or, or, or)... and we have to reconcile that with God and find our way back to believing that we, too, continue to be beloved, even when we have made mistakes and wounded others. The good news is just so good, that sometimes, it breaks our hearts wide open – and in that is both the breaking and the openness – to live life as abundantly as Jesus intended.

Jesus says all these things to the disciples as he sends them out to do the work. He's preparing them, telling them that the good news is really good news, except that many won't hear it that way. They'll only hear the 'it hurts' part. But that doesn't change the goodness of it. No amount of discomfort, or arguing, or disbelief on our part will change anything about the good news. It's just that good.

So there you have it, the good news is just so good that it hurts. Because the good news is really, really good. I long for the day when we can all just bask in the goodness of it without all the rest of it. Won't that be a glorious day?

May it come. Soon.

Amen.

Song:

[Blest Be the Tie that Binds](#)

Prayers:

Creator and Redeemer, we pray first for your Community, the Church, The Body of Christ. We pray for all our relatives in the circle of life throughout all Creation; for those chosen to be our leaders and teachers. May each one rest in the goodness of the Gospel.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Providing God, your creation shows us that life comes from death. Renew the places where our land, air, and waterways have been ill for too long. Heal those who are affected by the environment, whether through lack of access to clean water, breathing issues from pollution, or illness due to viruses. Direct

the work of all who care for the environment and those who care for the people who live in it.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Protecting God, sustain and keep safe all who work to defend others across the world. Revive and strengthen organizations dedicated to caring for refugees and migrants while their homelands struggle for peace.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creator God, from you every family in heaven and earth takes its name. On this National Indigenous People's Day, we remember you have rooted and grounded us in your covenant love, and empowered us by your Spirit to speak the truth in love, and to walk in your way towards justice and wholeness. Mercifully grant that your people, journeying together in partnership, may be strengthened and guided to help one another to grow into the full stature of Christ, who is our light and our life.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, you are with us and we are never alone. Bless all fathers and father figures who strive to love and nurture as you do. Comfort all who long to be fathers and all for whom this day is difficult. We also pray for those who are in our hearts today . . . Adolf, Christie, Luke, Helen, Wally, Jan, Luke, Katelyn, and those we name before you... ..

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Reigning God, you bless us with guides and caretakers in the faith. As we give thanks for those who have died, increase our care for one another until we walk with them in newness of life.

In your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

All these things, Lord, we entrust to your care, knowing that you hear all of our prayers.

And we pray in the way that Jesus taught us to pray, saying:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.

Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us,
May God's face shine on us and be gracious to us,
May God look upon us with favour, and give us peace.
Amen.