

Sixth Sunday of Easter

May 17, 2020

St. Stephen's is a Christian community in the making.

At the intersection of what was and what will be, we invite you to gather with us around prayer, food, and the simple conviction that nothing is wasted in God's economy.

All are welcome at St. Stephen's.

Whether you come with great faith or great doubt,
regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation or marital status,
whatever your financial status or housing situation –
we hope you can find a home with us
as we explore together what it means to follow Jesus.

Ministry Team

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ST. STEPHEN'S

ANGLICAN CHURCH, MAPLE

Preparation

*Whether you participate in worship in a small group or alone,
know that you are joined together with the whole St. Stephen's community
and the wider church as we offer our prayers and praise to God.*

*Consider setting a candle or two out in the space you're using for worship,
as a reminder of God's presence. Light the candles, and say:*

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

The Lord is risen indeed. Alleluia!

May his grace and peace be with us.

May he fill our hearts with joy.

Almighty God,
to you all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from you no secrets are hidden.
Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Glory to God

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to his people on earth.
Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father,
we worship you, we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.
Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world: have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father: receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Collect of the Day

Merciful God,
you have prepared for those who love you
riches beyond imagination.
Pour into our hearts such love toward you,
that we, loving you above all things,
may obtain your promises,
which exceed all that we can desire;
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen.

First Reading

Acts 17:22-31

Paul stood in front of the Areopagus and said, “Athenians, I see how extremely religious you are in every way. For as I went through the city and looked carefully at the objects of your worship, I found among them an altar with the inscription, ‘To an unknown god.’ What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in shrines made by human hands, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mortals life and breath and all things. From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth, and he allotted the times of their existence and the boundaries of the places where they would live, so that they would search for God and perhaps grope for him and find him—though indeed he is not far from each one of us. For ‘In him we live and move and have our being’; as even some of your own poets have said, ‘For we too are his offspring.’

Since we are God’s offspring, we ought not to think that the deity is like gold, or silver, or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of mortals. While God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

Psalm 66:8-20

Bless our God, you peoples;
let the sound of praise be heard.

**Our God has kept us among the living
and has not allowed our feet to slip.**

For you, O God, have tested us;
you have tried us just as silver is tried.

**You brought us into the net;
you laid heavy burdens upon our backs.**

You let people ride over our heads; we went through fire and water,
but you brought us out into a place of refreshment.

**I will enter your house with burnt offerings
and will pay you my vows—**

those that I promised with my lips
and spoke with my mouth when I was in trouble.

**I will offer you burnt offerings of fatlings with the smoke of rams;
I will give you oxen and goats.**

Come and listen, all you who believe,
and I will tell you what God has done for me.

**I called out to God with my mouth,
and praised the Lord with my tongue.**

If I had cherished evil in my heart,
the Lord would not have heard me;

**but in truth God has heard me
and has attended to the sound of my prayer.**

Blessed be God, who has not rejected my prayer,
nor withheld unfailing love from me.

Second Reading

1 Peter 3:13-22

Who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right, you are blessed. Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated, but in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence. Keep your conscience clear, so that, when you are maligned, those who abuse you for your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if suffering should be God's will, than to suffer for doing evil. For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

Gospel

John 14:15-21

Jesus said to the disciples: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.

"I will not leave you orphaned; I am coming to you. In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you also will live. On that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. They who have my commandments and keep them are those who love me; and those who love me will be loved by my Father, and I will love them and reveal myself to them."

Reflection – Karen

*The following reflection can be watched online by [clicking here](#)
or can be read in full below.*

*Please feel free to engage with either or both options,
and know that whatever you choose
will enable you to fully participate in the worship of our community.*

My daughter, Josie, is nearly three – though Becky and I often joke that she acts like a threenager – and she enjoys reading that old Robert Munsch book about the boy named Thomas who refuses to put on his snowsuit. Asked over and over again, his answer is always a defiant 'No!' The book hasn't really aged all that well, and there's some awkwardness about gender roles and swapping clothes, but on the whole the book is lots of fun.

Fairly recently, Josie decided that it is funny to imitate Thomas. We might ask her to do something, even something that she really wants to do, and she'll smirk and let out an exaggerated 'No!' Or we might ask her a question, and she'll get the same smirk. And even though she knows the answer, she'll respond with the most ridiculous thing she can think of.

She thinks all of this is hilarious.

Especially as the second month of pandemic lockdown comes to an end, Becky and I often find it to be a little less funny.

The point is, my delightful nearly-three-year-old daughter has already learned something about disobedience. And not always in such a playful way.

If you love me, you will keep my commandments, Jesus says.

Those who keep my commandments are the ones who love me, and they are loved by my father, and I will love them.

This sounds an awful lot like conditional love. Almost transactional. Do the things I ask, and be rewarded. And if you don't...

At a minimum, Jesus seems to present a strange contrast between love and obedience.

I'll confess to not having read all of the most current books on parenting and child psychology, but this tactic doesn't seem like it would work very well – at least not in my household. Surely Jesus knows this. So what are we to do with this passage?

First, we should remember that in the whole of John's Gospel Jesus only offers a single commandment. He gives it after he humbles himself, taking the posture of a slave, tying a towel around his waist, and washing his disciples' feet. He gives it with his eyes firmly set on the cross, well aware of the self-offering he is about to enter into. Aware of his betrayer, whose feet Jesus also washes. In the midst of all of that, Jesus gives a single command – to love one another as he has loved them.

When Jesus speaks of obedience, of keeping his commandments, he's speaking of participating in love. He's speaking of relationship. The opposite of keeping Jesus commandment isn't disobedience, it's choosing to be cut off from relationship, choosing to turn away from love.

The kind of love Jesus speaks of isn't just a feeling – it's a verb. It includes within it all of the beautiful, life-giving desires that God has for us and for all people. It's a call to serve those around us, to give ourselves away, and to put others first. Even those who betray us.

At times, it feels like it's hard to participate in this kind of love while we're in lockdown and quarantine. Some days, I wonder what the point of it all is – if my prayers or my reflections or my efforts amount to anything in these strange days.

But then I remember the members of our community who have tirelessly knit prayer shawls and sent them to people in the midst of pain, loss, and misery. By doing so, they have helped to remind others of the abiding, present love of God. They help to make real the promise that God will shelter us under the shadow of his wings. Or I think of the members of our community that have gone out of their way to care for others. To call those who feel isolated. To drop off groceries. To share medicine, hard-to-find household items, or to send a thoughtful card. These things remind me of the real, valuable, effectual ways that we can – and do – participate in love. The thing to remember is that as we strive to do these things, in efforts big and small, we tap into something bigger than ourselves. Something divine.

And in those moments God meets us, and the love of God is united with the love we offer each other, and we're all enriched. In a very real sense, it is this kind of love that brings us face to face with Jesus, and reminds us of the abiding love that he offers.

That love is constant. It is unconditional. It's an open invitation to all – to enter into relationship, and to practice love. May we not only strive to keep the commandments of Jesus, but to participate in them. May we know the love of God, and may we always seek to share it with those around us. Amen.

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ,
his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again**

to judge the living and the dead.

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of the People

*As a community of people made one in Christ, we offer our prayers to God for ourselves,
our community, and the world. Feel free to adapt these prayers as you like,
and to make use of the spaces indicated to add your own prayers and petitions.*

Almighty God, you have promised to hear when we pray in the name of your Son.
Therefore in confidence and trust we pray for the Church and for the world.

Loving God, enliven the Church for its mission.

That we may be salt of the earth and light to the world.

Breathe fresh life into your people.

Give us power to reveal Christ in word and action.

Creator of all, lead us and every people into the ways of justice and peace.

That we may respect one another in freedom and truth.

Awaken in us a sense of wonder for the earth and all that is in it.

Teach us to care creatively for its resources.

God of truth, inspire with your wisdom
those whose decisions affect the lives of others.

That all may act with integrity and courage.

Give grace to all those whose lives are linked with ours.

May we serve Christ in one another, and love as he loves us.

Let us now name before God those for whom we offer our personal prayers.

*A period of silence is kept as we offer silent prayer
and listen for the leading of the Spirit.*

Let us remember before God our selfish ways, the things we have done wrong,
the sorrows we have caused, the love we have not shown.

Most merciful God, forgive us our sins against you and against each other.

**Strengthen us to overcome our weaknesses,
that we may live in love as you would have us live,
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour.**

Amen.

Lord, you have called us to serve you.

**Grant that we may walk in your presence
and experience the present truth of resurrection:
your love in our hearts, your truth in our minds,
your strength in our wills, until, at the end of our journey,
we know the joy of our homecoming and the welcome of your embrace,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

And now, as our Saviour Christ has taught us, we are bold to say,
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, the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.

Blessing

May joy and nothing less find us on our way.
May we be blessed and be a blessing.
And may light guide us, and countless others, all the way home.
Amen.

The Lord has made a promise to love us faithfully forever.
May we live with joy and be led with Peace. Alleluia, Alleluia.
Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia.

MUSIC

Following are several hymns that you may want to sing and/or listen to.
Music and texts, as well as sample YouTube links, are provided.

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God

1 Seek ye first the kingdom of God
2 Ask and it shall be given unto you,
3 We do not live by bread alone,

and God's righteousness,
seek and you shall find;
but by every word

and all these things shall be added unto you.
knock and the door shall be opened unto you.
that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Al - le - lu, al - le - lu - ia.

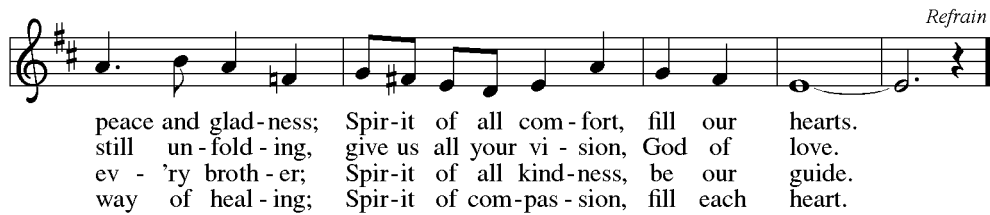
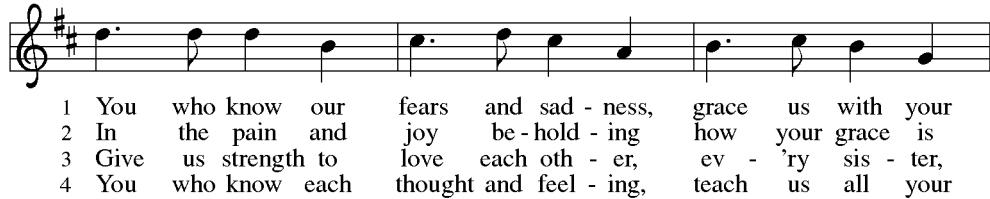
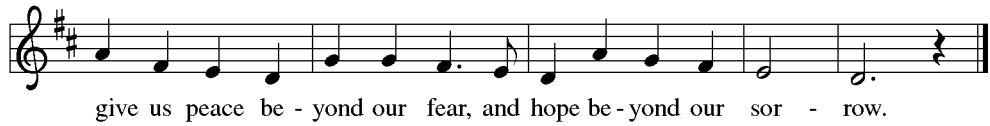
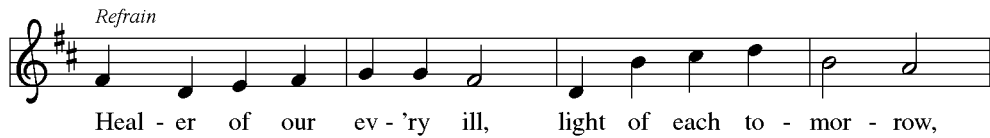
Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia.

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). It consists of six staves. The first three staves are vocal lines with lyrics. The fourth staff is a vocal line with lyrics. The fifth and sixth staves are instrumental accompaniment for the 'Alleluia' section.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9LMQfOp9w8k&list=PLt4VkFzWypFsV6GwbVnM3SyCKh3-G_CcD

Healer of Our Every Ill



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdlMxllvN4>

For other hymns, check out:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGLVPtOYRgM>



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