

# **Worship for Sunday November 7, 2021**

## **Welcome and Announcements**

A very warm welcome to each and everyone of you. So glad you are taking care of your spirit through worship today.

This week we move toward Remembrance Day and so we take time in this worship to Remember – remember the horrors of war, to remember lives lost and forever altered and we take time to recommit ourselves to be people of peace. I pray that what Laura and I have prepared for you is a gift that connects you with the holy.

I mentioned last week that we are moving toward “In building” worship - and indeed we are. November 28 – will be our first Sunday back in the building - we will have two services one at 9:15 and the other at 11am with a capacity of 75 people at each. You will need to register the week before the worship – sort of like making reservations at a restaurant. We will need proof of vaccination, and everyone will be required to wear masks at all times. There will be a detailed explanation and process released soon so keep an eye on your email for that or check the Website. So, friends dust off your name tag if you have one and start singing in the shower to warm up you hymn singing pipes.

Laura and I had a great time handing out candy in the church parking lot last Sunday – Halloween and we want to thank everyone for coming – it was wonderful to see our kids and neighbourhood kids out having fun.

Bee the Church” honey fundraiser is on going. We are selling jars of locally produced Honey for \$5. \$2.50 from each jar sold will goes to the Global Gathering Place... a vital organization that supports immigrants and refugee people

The newsletter came out this week and I encourage you to have a good read of that – lots of good information there.

There is news about the next Outreach initiative which is Socks of the Homeless -

We ask you to fill warm socks and bring them to the church either on Saturday, November 13th or November 20th, from 10 am – 12 noon.

This will give us plenty of time to get them to the appropriate people for distribution in time for Christmas. The items will be handed out to those living on the street of Saskatoon by Community Support Officers during the weeks before Christmas

So buy some good warm socks and start filling them with new Toiletries such as a bar of soap in a container Travel size – shampoo, hand lotion, Kleenex, bandaids, toothpaste, toothbrush, shaving cream. Brush and comb Razor - Hand sanitizer  
Survival Items: Gloves, toque, hand warmers, shoe warmers, silver thermal blanket or poncho. Other items to consider are Nail clippers, deck of cards, flashlight, dice, notepad and pen, wrapped candy, candy canes, hot chocolate packages, cup of soup packages, masks, etc. Gift Certificates from any place like Tim Horton's, McDonald's that are open 24 hours (places of refuge in -40 degree weather). Remember November 13 and 20 drop off. /////

Egadz bags for at risk youth will be our next project once the Socks are done.

Phoning Tree: Needs some phoners contact the office if you can help with making calls.

Lots of other things going on but if I keep telling you about what we are doing there will be no time for worship which reminds us of our call to do these things and gives us the energy to do our best to love our neighbour. So please have a good read of the newsletter for more details or check out the website or Facebook.

And... that's it. It is now time for us to move more fully into worship.

As we do, I invite to listen with an open heart particularly to the anthem "Peace for the Children" and in the hearing commit yourselves once again to be a person of peace.

### **Candle Lighting**

Jesus said: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

Let us hear these words and reflect together on their meaning as I light our Christ candle.

May this flickering light remind us of the peace that is ours.... ours to have and ours to share.

Troubled and fearful hearts – may the light of Christ fill you with peace.

### **Anthem: Peace for the Children by United Church Singers**

#### **Opening Prayer**

Let us join our hearts together now as we offer ourselves to God in prayer...

Holy God, we give thanks that you have gathered us together for this time of worship. We give thanks that you welcome us just as we are... with our fears and our dreams and embrace us with your peace-filled love.

Open our hearts and minds that we may hear your word for us today...

Open us to your spirit of peace... preparing us to be instruments of your peace.

So be with us now God and bless our time together so that we may be a blessing to your world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

#### **Hymn: God Weeps**

#### **Scripture: Philippians 4:4-9**

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup>Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. <sup>9</sup>Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

## **Reflection**

Prayer: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable to you O God our strength and our redeemer. Amen.

It seems every year that the push for the Christmas season to begin, comes earlier and earlier. It seems particularly true this year - perhaps because this year like last year has been such a struggle for so many of us and we are in desperate need of twinkling lights and warm traditions and a little something to look forward to. I think retailers try to hold off until after Remembrance Day before they put out the Christmas decorations and merchandise, but they often fail miserably, they struggle with what to put on all of those bare shelves after Halloween. Though I have not been in many stores lately I was lured into one of these early Christmas displays this week. I was lured to a display of Christmas cards. There were lots of pretty options; Santa cards dominated the choices - lots of "season greetings" but if you looked hard you can find the "Merry Christmas" kind. The Merry Christmas kind had lovely pastoral images on the front – many with a little baby lying quietly in a manger with two doting parents looking on in amazement with a particularly bright star shining over a little shed with less bright stars twinkling in the background - scenes clearly of peace and calm. It would seem to me that "hallmark" has never read the Christmas story. For if you read the biblical story of Jesus birth then you know that the setting of his birth was not at all peaceful and calm but rather it was place of sheer chaos.

It is true that Bethlehem was a sleepy, little, an out of the way community and Jerusalem was the big city - the centre of politics finance and religion. Jerusalem was a busy, vital city teeming with people and all the hustle and bustle, movement and energy that any big city can muster. But Bethlehem, as Micah put it, was small among the clans of Judah it was more Clavet - than Saskatoon. ///The people in Bethlehem didn't have much mischief to get into so how could there have been chaos in Bethlehem?

There was chaos at that particular moment in history, because the population of little Bethlehem had grown way past its capacity to house the people. Descendants from the house and lineage of David had been forced to return to Bethlehem, from all over the country, in order to be registered. It was somewhat like taking a census except the point of it was to make certain that no

one escaped paying taxes. And those taxes were paid to Caesar, to the occupying forces that had invaded their land and were not merely unwelcome but actually despised by the people. And with good reason, because the Roman soldiers liked to flex their muscles they dominated the lives of the people, who called Israel home - for the most part those Roman invaders were oppressive and often abusive. Now hordes of people had been forced to come to little Bethlehem to register so that Caesar could find them and force them to pay homage **and** to pay taxes to an insufferable enemy. Strangers were everywhere, soldiers were everywhere. there was chaos in Bethlehem.

Years before, during a similarly chaotic time of oppression and struggle, Jeremiah a Hebrew prophet said “how can we sing of peace when there is no peace” – it’s a good question but then isn’t that when a Prince of peace is needed most of all - when there is no peace? That's the kind of world the “Prince of peace” was born into **then** and the kind of world that he is born into **even** still.

Everyday we are bombarded with messages of chaos, threats, violence and fear. We hear news about ISIS and al Qaeda and North Korea, about Ethiopia and thousands of Syrian and Iraqi refugees seeking asylum from the terrors of their own nation. We see Russia taking giant strides backward towards its Cold War philosophy of oppression. In our own country we observe frightening gaps between the rich and the poor, indigenous and nonindigenous peoples. We see widespread abuse of the vulnerable – the mentally ill, the differently abled and the very old. How can we sing peace when there is no peace?

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he understood the kind of world I just described. Paul knew what his friends in Philippi would soon face and what they were already beginning to face - persecution and rejection because of their faith. Paul wrote the letter, that today’s passage was taken from, while he himself was confined to a Roman prison cell, under the sentence of death, because of his faith. He knew about bad times and chaos. In his dire situation writing to people in their own mess Paul said this: “the peace of God, which passes all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ.” Paul was not writing about a sense of peace that denied the painful realities of life but instead of a peace that existed in the midst of them. It was a sense of peace that was not based on logic but rather on relationship, not based on the environment around

you but rather in the God that dwells within and alongside - a peace that passes all understanding - in a God that was born to us, in the midst of chaos.

The principles of our Christian faith have the potential, if embraced, to change the world. There is no doubt about that, since those principles replace hatred with grace and violence with – “this is my commandment that you love one another”. Until the world begins to hear and embrace this peace - perhaps we can be working on the peace that Paul talks about - the that passes understanding.

I remember a story that I read about a man who was in a cardiac ICU bed in hospital. The man had just undergone radical and experimental surgery designed to save his life. As he lay in the ICU he was in crisis, there was serious post surgical complications. Later he wrote about the night when he lay awake fearing that his life was about to end and reflecting on what, he had done, and on all the things he had gotten away with. He thought about all the things he had lost, all the pain he had suffered, and all the pain he had unfairly inflicted upon others. He was left there asking himself, amid all of his accomplishments and possessions - what had been the one thing in his life he had always sought but could never find. The answer he said was easy - the one thing he had never been able to locate was **peace**.

The next morning a chaplain visited his room, making rounds from patient to patient, she only stayed a few moments, chatting casually. Prior to leaving she asked him, “may I read you a brief passage from the Bible and then offer a prayer”? The man agreed, the chaplain preceded to open her Bible and almost randomly read these words, Jesus said: “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives.” The ill man said the words struck him like a spiritual hammer. That the chaplain did not know me - she did not know my story - she did not know what I had wrestled with all night long - without even knowing that she did so - she showed me how to find what I had needed and could not locate in my life. Suddenly I got it - if I could lean into the life and teachings of Jesus – I would find peace.

There are those who say that this is just too simple - too personal that it doesn't address the chaos that is the daily fare of our world. But then - maybe the path to public peace begins with individual peace -perhaps it begins with you

and I leaning into the life and teachings of Jesus who takes our hands and who guides us toward our neighbors. Maybe if we lean into the life and teachings of Jesus - in the midst of our chaos we will be able to share with one another grace instead of hatred and understanding instead of violence, share the commandment “that you love one another” until the world begins to hear and embrace the truth.

Maybe it makes sense that Christmas gets all caught up with Remembrance Day because at Christmas we celebrate and welcome - once again - the one who was born in Bethlehem chaos, and who brings and helps us find a peace that passes understanding and calls us to pass that peace along, little by little, person by person until, at last, this weary world becomes new and there is peace - peace for all.

Amen.

### **Hymn: Hands That Reach Across Divides by Sacred Sounds**

#### **Prayers of the People**

I invite us, as we begin our time of prayer, to take just a moment of quiet. On this Peace Sunday, as we prepare to pray for peace in our world, let's first allow ourselves to be held in God's love... a love that offers us internal peace...

Let us pray in silence...

And now from this silent place, let's hold the world and all its people in pray...

God of love, we dream of a world free of poverty and oppression, and we yearn for a world free of vengeance and violence. We pray for your peace.

When our hearts ache for the victims of war and oppression, help us to remember that you healed people simply by touching them..., and give us faith in our ability to comfort and heal bodies and minds and spirits that have been broken by violence.

When the injustice of this world seems too much for us to handle, help us to remember that you fed five thousand people with only five loaves of bread and two fish..., and give us hope that what we have to offer will turn out to be enough, too.

When fear of the power and opinions of others tempts us not to speak up for the least among us, help us to remember that you dared to turn over the tables of money changers..., and give us the courage to risk following you without counting the cost.

When we feel ourselves fill with anger at those who are violent and oppressive, help us remember that Jesus prayed for those who killed him..., and give us compassion for our enemies, too.

May we be feel your presence, God, as we answer your call to be peacemakers. Fill our hearts with compassion, generosity and hospitality for the least of your children. Give us the courage, the patience, the serenity, the self-honesty and the gentleness of spirit that are needed in a world filled with turmoil and terror.

May we, O God, truly be instruments of your peace.

Let's continue to pray together, singing the prayer that Jesus taught his friends and disciples....

### **Benediction**

May God bless you and keep you.

May God's face shine upon you  
and be gracious to you.

May God look upon you with kindness and give you peace.

**Sung Blessing: You Shall Go Out With Joy by Jim Gillis**