

**Full Service Text:  
Sunday September 27, 2020  
Seventeenth Sunday After Pentecost  
Music: Yuki**

**Gathering**

Introit

Words of Welcome

Announcements

- Today is a day of thanksgiving. We celebrate the return of in-person worship here at Grace United Church. We give thanks to God for all who have worked hard to make this possible. God has blessed us with the care, wisdom, and skill you have shared. While we know that some are back in the sanctuary to share in worship, many of you continue to worship from home. Although we cannot be physically together we know that where distance divides us God unites us.
- A copy of our full COVID-19 Policy is available on our website. Also there you will find an abridged version for those who are attending in-person worship.
- A printed copy of each week's sermon and prayers are available on our website or are available upon request.
- If you are planning on joining us for in-person worship please watch after the service for a special recorded announcement to help you know what to expect when you arrive.
- For all who are worshiping in person, please remember that following local health unit guidelines we will not be singing our hymns today. I invite you to join me in the spiritual practice of silence or to sing internally, as we rest in the hymns, allowing the music and the words to hold us, bless us, and draw us together in praise.
- Our Fall newsletter has been released and e-mailed. It can also be found on our website. If you would like to be added to our e-mail list or if you would like a printed copy of our newsletter please contact the church office.

- Our Church's Book Club and Walk and Talk have resumed. For more information please see our newsletter, talk with Sally, or phone the church office.

### Recognition of Traditional Territory

- As we gather for worship we remember that for thousands of years, Indigenous people have walked on this land; their relationship with the land is at the centre of their lives and spirituality. As we worship today, we recognize that we are all treaty people. We are part of Saugeen Treaty 45 ½ and we are gathered on the traditional territory of the Haudensaunee, Ojibway, Anishnabek, and Metis people. We acknowledge the ongoing pain and broken relationship that has come with colonization. We pray that God may lead us in working towards building right relationships.

Friends, come let us worship.

### Lighting of the Christ Candle

Centring Prayer – Micol (words not on screen, copyright information on PowerPoint)

Let us join in prayer, as we centre ourselves in this holy time.

You are the unseen guest at every table;  
you are the unknown goal to which all strive;  
you are the unnamed source of inspiration;  
you are the untamed grace on which we thrive;  
you are our Saviour,  
we are your people.

Welling up in the song of children,  
willing laughter in a friendly room,  
crossing paths coincidentally,  
smiling in the face of doom,  
you are our Saviour,  
we are your people.

Taking time to weave tomorrow,  
taking care to mend today,

taking thought where we were thoughtless,  
noting what we meant to pray,  
you are our Saviour,  
we are your people.

For this, our gratitude,  
for you, our yes.  
Amen.

( "You Are The Unseen Guest"  
From Present On Earth: Worship Resources On The Life of Jesus  
by Iona Community – Wild Goose Worship Group.)

May God bless our lives and our worship.

**Hymn:** MV 8, And On This Path

### **Reflecting**

Minute for Mission: Kathryn Dankel  
Today's Minute for Mission can be found at:  
[https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/  
minutes\\_for\\_mission\\_2020\\_pdf.pdf](https://www.united-church.ca/sites/default/files/minutes_for_mission_2020_pdf.pdf)

Gift of Music Beth Cruickshank

Scripture: Matthew 21:33-46 Kathryn Dankel

Sermon: Empowered for Grace Rev. Micol Cottrell

Her eyes were transfixed on the floor of the old church. "What are you looking at?" Her father asked. "Look!" She pointed down to the floor. There purple, red, yellow, brown, and blue, shimmered and danced like colourful water. "Where is that coming from?" She asked her father. He pointed behind them to a large stained glass window that the sun was shining through. "It's from the stained glass." The stained glass was the image of a saint. Her father told her the story of this saint and when the

service started she was staring down at the floor. Purple, red, yellow, brown, blue, all the beauty of colours dancing.

When young girl went down to Sunday School with the other children and they were talking together the teacher asked the group, “does anyone know what a saint is?” The young girl eagerly responded: “A saint is someone in whom the light of God shines through filling the world with beauty.”<sup>1</sup>

--

“Which of the two children did the will of the parent?” Jesus asks the chief priests and elders. Jesus is back, once again occupying the temple grounds and drawing crowds. On the previous day he had arrived in Jerusalem on a donkey. On the previous day he had entered the temple grounds marching right up to those who were selling and buying driving them out and flipped over the table of the money changers. On the previous day with tables flying he was yelling “my house shall be called a house of prayer; but you have made it a hideout for robbers.”

Now Jesus is back in the temple complex teaching and before he can cause another scene the chief priests and the elders of the people go out to confront him. “By whose authority are you doing all of this,” they ask him. “By whose authority are you holding a protest, overturning tables and condemning the leaders. By whose authority are you holding this occupation by teaching and healing inside the temple grounds and refusing to leave. By whose authority are you doing all of this?”

---

<sup>1</sup> Story written from memory and adapted. Originally from [100 Wisdom Stories From Around the World](#) by Margaret Silf.

Jesus turns the conversation back on the chief priests and elders by asking if they think John's baptism was of heavenly or human origin. He turns the criticism back on them telling a parable and calling them out as the disobedient son who is charged with caring for the vineyard – for Israel but fails to do so. Jesus calls out the chief priests and elders and tells them to repent.

At this point it is really important to know that Jesus' is not criticising or condemning Judaism, or the temple, or the religious rituals and structures. What Jesus is criticising is faith that becomes intentionally or passively complicit with oppression. He is calling out faith that seeks comfort and safety over healing and transformation. The people are suffering. They are crying out to God for salvation. They are hurting, they are over taxed, oppressed, and hungry for justice. The people are facing injustice and suffering from those who hold power and from the Roman occupation of their country. These leaders of faith and leaders of the people are remaining silent. They know that there could be dire consequences if they speak up, or if they are seen as supporting rebellion. They could be replaced by the Roman Authorities if they do anything to displease them, or if they are seen as leading a rebellion they could be killed or crucified – it happens all of the time. If the temple and the people's faith are seen as challenging authority or the structures of the day the temple could be destroyed – it will happen. Out of fear the chief priests and elders stand in the courtyard trying to get Jesus to leave.

Jesus tells the chief priests and elders a parable of the two sons in order to invite them to repentance – to change their ways, in order to take their place in the work of God’s healing and renewal. Jesus calls them to allow the light of God to shine through them so the world can dance with beauty and colour once again.

--

Our faith reminds us that love is not about easy acceptance of all things. Love meets us where we are. Love draws out the best in us. Love leads to renewal, and transformation. Today our scripture invites us to ask the painful and difficult question – where and when are we complicit in suffering and injustice? It’s a difficult question, but it is a question born out of Divine love not shame. It is a question inviting growth and healing.

The difficult truth that as people of faith we must come face to face with is that our faith has been used throughout the ages to justify oppression. Christianity has actively and passively been complicit in injustice and suffering. The church and our world are wounded and out of these wounds things like racism and discrimination continue to lurk and distort the way we live and the way the structures of this world work. Faith has been used to justify war, slavery, discrimination, and many forms of oppression. Faith has been used to lift up individuals and groups over others. The church has been silent at times in the face of violence and injustice. It is a heartbreaking reality especially for those of us who love our faith.

Out of love Christ calls us to come face to face with this painful side of our faith, our history and our present moment. Out of love Christ calls us

to repentance, to name the brokenness and suffering, to turn away from it, to work on healing and reconciliation. Christ calls to us to allow the light of God to shine through us bringing beauty into this world.

--

The scripture reading today is pretty heavy. Jesus' criticism of the leaders is very sharp and it's setting within the last week of Jesus' life gives it a sense of urgency and lifts up the dire consequences of being actively or silently complicit in the face of oppression and injustice.

But this scripture reading is a story of love. Nothing Jesus says or does in his protest, his occupation of the temple grounds, his confronting of those in power, is an attempt to destroy either faith the temple, them, or their shared faith. This is a love story. Love is transformative. Love is healing. Love is empowering. Love is restorative. Jesus is calling the chief priests and the elders to repent. He is calling them to let go of their fears in order to let their faith flow freely. He is calling them to take their place leading the people to stand up against oppression so that God's healing and justice can be made known. Jesus is calling the chief priests and elders to allow God's presence to shine through them in order to bring beauty to this world.

--

It is hard to confront the places of oppression and injustice that exist in our lives, in our faith, and in our world. It is hard to hear the stories of people who are being hurt or excluded by the church and by our faith. It is hard to bear witness to the ways in which silence at times means being complicit with injustice. It can be scary and it can be overwhelming. This is where God's grace, God's healing and transformative love steps in.

God calls and equips us to be a prophetic people who walk alongside Jesus, working for healing and wholeness for all.

We take our place with Christ in the holy work of healing and transformation as we listen to the cries and protests of those who face oppression, discrimination, rejection, or injustice. We take our place with Christ in this holy work as we bear hard truths and as we learn, repent, and grow. We take our place with Christ in this holy work as we join together envisioning the Kin-dom of God on earth where love, justice, and fullness of life are a reality for all. We take our place with Christ as we tend the vineyard together with all people as we put this holy vision into action.

What is a saint? It is someone in whom the light of God shines through filling the world with beauty. God's presence shines through each of us as we take our place with Christ. Let us continue to join in the work for healing and justice in our homes, in our church, and in our world for we are all part of the amazing things that God is doing in this world. Amen.  
Thanks be to God.

## **Responding**

Prayers of the People

Let us join together in prayer:

Thanksgiving:

- this fall day
- Harvest
- Chance to open the doors of this sanctuary and welcome people in and to join together for worship from home
- For your love that brings us strength and renewal

- For the many gifts of time, talent, and treasure shared with this Church and with the world. Bless the, and guide their use

-

Concern:

- all who are suffering from oppression, violence, fear, and injustice
- Those who are left vulnerable and needing
- All who struggle to feel loved, embraced, seen, heard, and a sense of belonging
- All of us and your global family as we continue to navigate through this pandemic
- Those who are afraid or unsettled
- Those who are lonely and isolated
- Those who are ill and those have lost loved ones
- All who work in education, caregivers, family, and students
- For all who work in healthcare
- For Dr. Ian Arra and all who work with our local health unit
  
- for Allan and Marjorie
- Art and Annabelle
  
- for all we names and situations we bring to you this day in our silent prayers.

We pour out these prayers to you, joining them with the prayers of all creation,  
as together we hold in our hearts the words of the Lord's Prayer

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,  
forever and ever. Amen.

**Hymn:** VU 664, What a Friend We Have In Jesus

Following our blessing and musical benediction our ushers will help lead you out of the sanctuary. They will invite those at the back of the sanctuary to exit first. We ask that as you leave you are mindful of not blocking doors, sidewalks, or access to the parking lot and that you continue to keep safe distance of 2 meters.

**Blessing**

As we go from here,  
Blessings to you,  
May the love of God shine through our lives,  
bringing colour to this world,  
filling it with dancing wondrous signs  
of God's unending love  
and God's leading us ever towards healing and justice for all.  
Friends, go in love, go in peace, and go with God.  
Amen.

**Musical Benediction:  
Postlude**

---

Centring Prayer: "You Are The Unseen Guest" From Present On Earth: Worship Resources On The Life of Jesus by Iona Community – Wild Goose Worship Group.

"And on This Path." Words: Lynn Bauman, 2000. Music: Linnea Good, 2003. Words: (c) 2000, Lynn Bauman. Music: (c) 2003, Linnea Good. Reprinted with Permission under One Licence # A-620773.

"What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Words: Joseph Medlicott Sciven, ca. 1855. Music: Charles Crozat Converse, 1868. Public Domain.

Permission to podcast the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License #A-620773. All rights reserved.

Note: All hymns have been entered on One Licence website.

---

**Text of recorded piece after Worship  
re: resuming in-person worship**

As we continue to find ways of living, worshipping, and connecting during this pandemic we continue to offer several different ways of worshipping with us at Grace. At home you can join us for worship on both Wightman TV and Eastlink TV or on Youtube. Printed copies of the sermon and prayers can be found on our website or can be e-mailed by request. Beginning September 27<sup>th</sup> you will also be able to join us once again for in-person worship.

For those who are joining us for in-person worship things will look a little different.

Before attending in-person worship we ask that you RSVP by phoning or e-mailing the church office by Thursday at 4PM for that Sunday's service.

Before arriving for worship we ask that you do a self-screening to ensure that you are feeling well and that you have not been in contact with anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days. When you arrive at Grace you will be to enter our sanctuary through the main doors near the sidewalk or the door with the ramp that enters near our elevator.

Masks or face coverings will be required while inside the building as per the local health guidelines. If you need a mask we have disposable ones available from the greeters and the ushers.

Hand sanitizer is available throughout the building and we ask that you please sanitize your hands when entering the building.

Greeters will be present who will welcome you, sign you in, and along with our ushers will be able to answer any questions you might have.

Our elevator is available and following local health unit guidelines we will be transporting only individuals in the same social bubble at the same time. Please keep your mask on and face the walls while in the elevator. Our operator will run the elevator as usual. An usher at the top of the stairs will help you off the elevator and into the sanctuary.

Our hearing assistance devices are available for the service and are cleaned between services. If you require one please ask an usher.

If you need to use a washroom during the washroom in the basement is available. Our ushers can help direct and our elevator can take you to that floor if needed.

After you arrive for worship our ushers will help you find a seat. We have spaced out our seats and we will be seating people from the front of the sanctuary to the back of the sanctuary. If you have physical needs that restrict where you can sit please let our usher know and they will help accommodate you.

Following local health unit guidelines during our service you will need to keep your mask or face covering on, there will be no singing, choir, or responsive prayers.

Following worship our ushers will help direct people out of the sanctuary from the back of the church to the front. We ask that you are mindful when leaving of not blocking doorways, our sidewalk, or access to the parking lot and we ask that you continue to keep safe social distance of two meters.

This and more information is available on our website on our COVID-19 updates page or can be e-mailed or delivered to you upon request.

We look forward to worshipping with you whether you chose to continue to worship at home or in-person.