

AUGUST 30th – Thirteenth Sunday After Pentecost

DIGITAL PRINT SERVICE: FIRST SACKVILLE PRESBYTERIAN

Call to Worship

One: Trust in the Lord.

People: Faith can lead to strength.

One: Honor the Lord.

People: Obedience can lead to wisdom.

One: Serve the Lord.

People: Duty can lead to fulfillment.

One: Praise the Lord.

People: Worship can lead to a joyful heart.

All: Lord, lead our worship to maturity and our faith to fruition, in the Spirit of this time together.

Prayer of Adoration

Lord, it is from a world divided against itself that we take time today to worship you in Spirit and in truth. We, too, would be healers, reconcilers, redeemers, as was your Son, Jesus Christ. Help us in this time of worship to catch the light of the calling to serve. Help us in accepting that calling to spread it wherever we go, because of your love for us and our love for you. Amen.

Hymn 39 God of mercy, God of grace

Prayer of Confession

O God, for hearts too seldom in rhythm with your compassion; for hands too seldom content with their portion; for ambitions too seldom in line with your will; for attitudes too seldom shaped by your love; for tongues so seldom accustomed to confession...for all this, we confess and ask forgiveness through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Mission Capsule – Sharing the Good News with Each Other

In only three years, the Presbyterian Connection newspaper has become a much loved resource for the national denomination. The newspaper is distributed four times a year to churches and individuals across Canada. The mission of Presbyterian Connection is to equip leaders, connect congregations and missions, facilitate communication, and highlight denominational work. Sharing our successes and celebrating our ministries through stories, reflections, interviews and articles not only keeps congregations and Presbyterians continually informed and connected, but also strengthens our denominational ties across the country. Support from Presbyterian

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“Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and intelligence and energy, and love others as well as you love yourself.” Mark 12: 29-31

Sharing helps to ensure this important ministry continues. **Presbyterian Sharing shares the good news.**

Hymn 348 Tell me the stories of Jesus

READINGS for August 30 – God speaks through the Scriptures

READING	VERSE	Minister's Message of Reflection
<i>Old Testament</i>	Exodus 3: 1-15	Moses encounters the burning bush.
<i>Psalm</i>	105: 1-6, 23-26,45	Remembering Jacob and Moses.
<i>Epistle</i>	Romans 12: 9-21	Let love be genuine; overcome evil with good.
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 16: 21-28	Take up the cross and follow me.

Hymn 371 Love divine, all loves excelling

SERMON: But Why Me?

Moses as a baby was rescued from the Nile River by the daughter of Pharaoh, the most powerful person in all of Egypt. He was then adopted and given the name Moses, meaning “pulled out,” since he was pulled from the river.

Moses grew up in the confines of the Egyptian court, living a life of extraordinary privilege and unaware of what was really going on outside the court. When Moses got older, he was able to get out and see the world beyond the court. Moses, knowing he was a Hebrew adopted by Pharaoh’s daughter, began to see other Hebrew men working as slaves.

One day, Moses saw an Egyptian overseer beating a Hebrew slave, and anger rose up within him. He looked around to see if the coast was clear, and quickly killed the overseer and then buried him in the sand.

The next day Moses was in the same area and saw two Hebrew men fighting. Moses went up to the man who apparently started the fight and asked him why he was beating up his neighbor. The man, knowing what took place the previous day, said to Moses:

“Who do you think you are, telling us what to do? Are you going to kill me the way you killed that Egyptian?”

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With that Moses began to panic, for he was sure word of this would get back to Pharaoh and he would be in deep trouble. Moses decided to head east to the land of Midian. In that desert place he came upon a well, and while there ended up defending a group of women who were being harassed by some local shepherds.

The women in their gratitude invited Moses to their father's house where the father gave one of his daughters to Moses in marriage. Moses was given a position in the family business, sheep herding.

Moses settles into this new life and achieves a measure of peace and contentment even though he is no longer a prince in Egypt. Now a member of the working class and raising a family, Moses is putting Egypt behind him.

Time passes as Moses attends to the responsibilities of caring for his family, and the former prince in the Egyptian court is now simply Mr. Moses, tender of sheep. One day he was leading sheep west to Mount Horeb, that place where it was believed God hung out. It was an ordinary day for Moses who was leading an ordinary life.

Then it happened. The last thing Moses expected was an encounter with God – in fact, God and Moses didn't seem to have all that much to do with each other. In his 80 odd years on this earth, there was no indication that he ever talked with God, or even about God. This should not be surprising for a Hebrew who spent his childhood and much of his adult life as an immigrant in Midian.

It is no wonder that God needs to ignite a fire to get Moses' attention. An angel of God appears in a burning bush, but all Moses sees is a bush burning but not going out. He is fascinated by this sight out here in the desert. Then a voice from the flame of the burning bush speaks to Moses. The voice is the voice of God – the God of the Hebrew people.

Moses no doubt is wondering why this God is speaking to him. As God tells Moses that he is the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, Moses hides his face, afraid to look. Then God says:

“I've heard my people's cries for deliverance from their slave masters..”

One can imagine Moses nodding in agreement, for he has seen this as a young man. God continues:

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“Now, I have come down to help them, pry them loose from the grip of Egypt, get them out of that country..”

As Moses hears this he is in total agreement with what God is saying. God continues:

“I will bring them to a good land with wide open spaces, a land lush with milk and honey. It’s time for you to go back: I’m sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the people of Israel, out of Egypt.”

Moses can’t believe his ears and his response is quick. **“But why me? What makes you think I could ever go to Pharaoh and lead the children of Israel out of Egypt?”**

Here is a man 80 years of age who is a simple shepherd, with a price on his head in Egypt, being asked to go back to that country and lead the Israelites out of that place. He has a speech problem and is a fugitive. In most employment offices, he couldn’t even get an interview, much less be selected for such an undertaking.

We, like Moses, know why we shouldn’t be called but, like Moses, we are wrong. We may feel inadequate or believe we don’t have enough knowledge or skill or time, not to mention the risks we might face. As with Moses so with us, we can debate the reasons why we can’t serve in whatever manner it is that God is calling us to serve. In the end, we will hear the word of God say to us:

“I’ll be with you!”

In our gospel today, Jesus tells his disciples what it means to follow him. **“Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”**

For my sake essentially means that we are called to be witnesses, which might require sacrifice, but if the sacrifice is to be true, it must not point to itself but to Jesus. The cross is the sacrifice that has ended all sacrifices.

God calls us into his church to witness to the world. This witness happens not only by speaking but by acting, not simply by talking, but by walking. Moses’ response could not simply be to believe or to speak. He is called to do some work in Egypt.

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As Frederick Buechner says,

“The place God calls you to is where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.

Christ has no body but ours, no hands but ours, no feet but ours, and we are the eyes through which Christ looks with compassion on this world. We say, but why me? God’s response is, “Because I want you and I will be with you.” God calls you and me to do his work and it is work that is impossible to sustain if we do not trust God’s love for us. God is a God of abundance who has given us all we need. Our lives will not be wasted because we have been made part of God’s abundance. Amen.

Prayers:

O God, you love us more than we can comprehend and care for us beyond what we can understand; calm our anxious cares and quiet our minds. Open to us your strength born of stillness, your wisdom born of meditation, and your courage born of the Word made flesh, even Jesus Christ.

We remember in our prayers this day those for whom the summer has been difficult: those who are still isolated by Covid-19 restrictions; those who face hunger or violence in a world that is often prone to act as if it is everyone for himself or herself.

We pray for people who have lost businesses in this pandemic, and for those who are struggling to keep their business alive. We pray for governments who decide how much and where to support the people financially.

O God, in Jesus you walk the road of suffering and today we pray for those whose lives have been overturned: those who have lost a loved one through unexpected tragedy, those who are awaiting surgery, or are now in hospital recovering.

O God, for parents who worry about their children returning to school at this time, we ask that you give them the hope, trust and strength to move forward in this time of uncertainty. O God, call us to serious self-examination that brings maturity of insight and a Christian sense of priorities. Permit us to live with ourselves and all others so as to return good for evil, kindness for bitterness, gentleness for intransigence, and love for hate, where such responses seem both wise and good.

O God, your son Jesus is the resurrection and the life. Assure all who believe and serve him that even though they die, they will live. We remember with thanksgiving those most dear to us who have already passed through death into new life. And now we offer these prayers with the words Jesus taught us saying.....the Lord’s Prayer...

Hymn 673 *A bush bursts into flame*

BENEDICTION / COMMISSIONING

As the spirit of God moved over the face of the waters to create order out of the chaos when the world was born, let us go into the world knowing that the Spirit of God still moves over the chaos of our lives and our world, to reveal the beating heart of a God who surrounds us with love and desires fairness for all that God has made.

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