

OCTOBER 4th – World Wide Communion Sunday

DIGITAL PRINT SERVICE: FIRST SACKVILLE PRESBYTERIAN

Call to Worship

Leader: The table is prepared as God calls us to the feast.

People: We have come from east and west, from north and south, to sit at Christ's table.

Leader: Compassion, love and grace pour out like fine wine.

People: We taste the bread of life, bread for our journey.

Leader: These are gifts from God for the people of God.

People: Let us see that the Lord is good!

Prayer of Adoration

In the presence of bread on this table, and in the company of all the saints in light, we come here in this Holy Place, O God, to share in this feast. The bread of faith rises here among us. O God, bring us close to the table and touch each heart with the love of Christ, the Son, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Hymn 677 My faith looks up to thee

Prayer of Confession

God of all worlds, you gather your people to cultivate in them the fruits of justice and goodness. Too often we neglect our relationships in the community, so that it looks like an untended vineyard. We fail to sense the decline of faith that comes without the pruning disciplines of self-examination through the hearing of your word. Forgive our laxity that results in lack of spiritual fruitfulness that we should manifest in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

L: Friends, hear the Good News! God calls us to the way of life in Jesus Christ.

P: We hear God's call to the way of life in Jesus Christ.

L: Friends, believe the Good News!

P: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Mission Capsule – Making a Difference in the Lives of Women and Girls

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – October 4, 2020

“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

Mistawasis Memorial Presbyterian Church in Mistawasis Nehiyawak First Nation, Saskatchewan, holds a unique place within the history of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. Not only is this church one of the oldest within our denomination, it is also the only PCC church located on a reserve. Gifts to Presbyterian Sharing have enabled this congregation to faithfully provide ministry in the Mistawasis community. In addition to a yearly Vacation Bible School program and a women’s craft club, Mistawasis Memorial PC has launched a new girl’s empowerment program. After school, girls in grades 1-8 gather to learn about fitness and life skills. The prayer of this program is that these skills will help the girls live fulfilling lives.

Hymn 373 *Jesus loves me this I know*

Prayer of Illumination

God, your word is a light for our path. Your word is breath in our stillness. Your word is water to our thirst. Refresh us now, and speak through your word. Amen.

READINGS for October 4 – God speaks through the Scriptures

READING	VERSE	Minister’s Message of Reflection
<i>Old Testament</i>	Isaiah 5:1-7	The song of the unfruitful vineyard
<i>Psalms</i>	Psalms 80: 7-15	A prayer for Israel’s restoration
<i>Epistle</i>	Philippians 3: 4-14	Pressing on toward the goal of Christ’s calling
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew 21: 33-46	The unscrupulous workers of the vineyard

Hymn 482 *Christ is made the sure foundation*

SERMON: Booted from the vineyard!

We hear Jesus again today speaking a parable in the presence of Jewish leaders, the chief priests and elders of the people, in his final week in Jerusalem.

Matthew’s gospel often seems to be asking the question: **“How should we human beings live so that we reflect the greatness of God our creator?”**

That is central to this parable for it is a parable about losing a vineyard. When Jesus told this parable the leaders of the Temple in Jerusalem felt he was pointing to them, a kind of ‘if the shoe fits wear it’ time.

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – October 4, 2020

“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

But they really should not have been at all surprised because for some seven hundred years a poem from Isaiah circulated in Jewish communities. It was called: **“The Song of the Unfruitful Vineyard.”**

It begins something like Jesus’ parable and we heard the words a moment ago from Isaiah: **“My beloved had a vineyard on a fertile hill.”**

It goes on to tell how much he loved the vineyard, clearing it of stones, planting the best vines, carving out a wine vat, building a watch tower in the center of the vineyard. The problem is that it produced wild grapes, sour grapes, after all that work to make the vineyard flourish. It was a big disappointment and was abandoned until it fell apart.

Isaiah then says, **“The vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the country of Israel, all the men and women of Judah.”**

In the story Jesus tells, the vineyard is also loved and cared for but the vineyard workers didn’t take care of business, because they refused to pay the rent. Their negligence turned to abuse as they turned on the rent collectors, beating one up, killing another and stoning a third. The owner kept sending collectors but with no success. Finally the owner sends his son, believing they will treat him differently.

The workers however responded to the arrival of the son by crucifying him. The workers were so twisted that they believed they could inherit what only belonged to the son, if only they got rid of him. The vineyard owner was willing to try anything to reach out to the workers, acting more like a parent than a business person. In this story the Pharisees and chief priests are the ones with special rights and power to make decisions affecting everyone else.

So who controls the power today? Who makes decisions that affect the global community? On worldwide communion Sunday do we function as a community?

In the story Jesus asks this question: **“When the owner of the vineyard returns, what will he do to those workers?”** **“He will kill those scoundrels without mercy,”** they replied.

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – October 4, 2020

“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

On this world wide communion Sunday, we celebrate in a world of power and powerlessness, extreme wealth and extreme poverty, great suffering and great rejoicing.

Here we take the wine of Jesus, to drink Jesus into our bloodstream and digest the gospel; then turn it into raw energy by living together a life that matters to a hurting world. That is yielding grapes in the vineyard!

We are here because the Son they thought they got rid of is the one who came back to choose people like us. Our obligation is the same as that of the workers in the parable, to bring forth good fruit in the vineyard. God doesn't have to give this vineyard to us, in fact, he could take it from us and give it to somebody else, because it is his vineyard.

We are the tenants, the stewards of someone else's beloved land. We are expected to come up with the rent. We are expected to grow the best harvest we can.

The Canadian folk singer, Joni Mitchell, in her song, **Big Yellow Taxi**, says,

They paved paradise and put up a parking lot with a pink hotel, a boutique and a swinging hot spot.

*Don't it always seem to go that you don't know what you've got till it's gone
They paved paradise and put up a parking lot. They took all the trees and put 'em in a tree museum and they charged the people a dollar and a half to see em.*

Hey farmer farmer, put away the DDT, I don't care about spots on my apples

Leave me the birds and the bees

Please.

Don't it always seem to go

That you don't know what you've got til it's gone.

Offertory Prayer

O God, the gifts we offer today join the gifts of all who came before us; this building, this community, and this faith. Let our gifts be a blessing to others, as the gifts we inherited have become a blessing to us. We ask this in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – October 4, 2020

“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

Invitation

Brothers and sisters, the table that is set, is set for all; around it there are no divisions. Just as bread is not made from one grain, but from many, and wine is not made from one grape, but from a full harvest, so too, we, who are many, are made one in Christ. This is a sacrament of unity. Come all of you, to join with others and celebrate Christ, present with us. Taste and see that the Lord is good.

Hymn 528 *Jesus calls us here to meet him*

Prayers:

Eternal God, maker of heaven and earth, we join with all your people to give you thanks. You formed the universe in your wisdom and created all things by your grace. We praise you for all your good gifts: the witness of the saints and prophets; the work of faithful men and women; this earth in all its blessing and promise; and the bread once scattered, now brought together and made one, in the hope that your people may be brought together from the ends of the earth into your reign of justice and compassion.

We remember together O God, the vision of your reign shown to us in Jesus at the table. He shared food with followers and friends, with saints and sinners, with thousands on a hillside and a few in an upper room.

Send, O God, your Holy Spirit upon these gifts, that all who share in this bread and cup may be the body of Christ to live the resurrected life of Christ in the world.

We remember those with whom you would have us share your feast. We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain, all who are ill or alone, all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger.

Remember your church, O God, redeemed by Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit. Remember all who have died in Christ and live with all the saints. (Lord's Prayer)

Hymn 275 *Jesus shall reign wher'er the sun*

BENEDICTION / COMMISSIONING

In responding to God's call there is fear of what is required of us. In responding to God's call there is a willingness to venture into the unknown. In responding to God's call there is a belief that God will be with us. In responding to God's call we know we will go faithfully forward.

First Sackville Presbyterian Church – October 4, 2020

“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