

Worship Service Outline
Sunday, August 28th, 2011
11th Sunday after Pentecost

Prepared by: Joan Kennedy, Edson Trail Pastoral Charge
Valleyview, AB

WE GATHER IN PRAYER AND PROMISE

Welcome and Announcements:

Leader: As we gather to Worship this morning, we light this candle
to remind of us God's presence with us and within us.

People: Thanks be to God!

CALL TO WORSHIP*:

One: How shall we get along with one another in this world?

**All: The Apostle Paul said that our love should be genuine.
We should hate what is evil and hold fast to what is
good.**

One: We should honour one other with kindness and
compassion.

**All: We should always be strong in our enthusiasm to serve
God.**

One: Come, let us joyfully worship God in all that we do.

**All: Let us praise God in our words, our thoughts, and our
actions. Amen.**

(www.ministrymatters.com)

GATHERING HYMN: Spirit, Open My Heart MV79

PRAYER FOR GRACE: (together)

Loving God, we've come to this place this morning because of your call on our lives. But we confess that our living, the days in between Sundays, does not always reflect our love for You. Forgive us, gracious God, for the times when we hold so tightly to the life that we know, we deny your invitation to take up a cross and follow You. Grant us your grace so that we might put down what holds us back in order that we might pick up what You would have us carry. Help us to die to our old ways of living so that we might enter into new life with You, through your Son, Jesus Christ. AMEN.

ASSURANCE OF GOD'S GRACE:

SUNG RESPONSE: Spirit of Life VU# 381

Congregational Story

HYMN: One More Step Along the World I Go VU639

WE CHANGE THE WORLD

Minute for mission

Invitation to the Offering

OFFERATORY HYMN: Praise God from Whom All VU541

Dedication of the offering: (in unison):

Gracious God, we bring our gifts to You with faithfulness and joy. May these offerings be used to continue the work of building a church that extends care and concern to others in our community and in places that we will never go. In the name of the Risen One, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen

WE LISTEN TO GOD'S WORD

Exodus 3:1-15 Moses encounters the Burning Bush

Romans 12:9-21 Commit to a life of love

Matthew 16:21-28 Take up the cross and follow me

Message:

HYMN: Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah VU651

SENDING FORTH

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

CLOSING HYMN: I, the Lord of Sea and Sky VU509

COMMISSIONING and BENEDICTION

Worship Leader Notes:

Assurance of Grace:

God does not need our response to love us, forgive us, or save us. May the gift of this grace draw us into the life-giving work of God and create in us a faithful response to the realities we encounter. Amen.

Invitation to the Offering:

As we have been blessed this day, we are invited to respond with our gifts to reflect God's abundant love and caring. Our gifts enable the ministry of this congregation, and also support mission projects in this country and around the world through the United Church Mission and Service Fund.

Children's/Congregational Story: Our Words for God (based on Exodus 3:1-15)

Ask children/congregation of what words they use to describe God.

Optional: read the first part of children's picture book "Old Turtle" to where Old Turtle concludes her description of God by saying "God Is". Note: this book is a classic and is widely found through a public library.

Paraphrase Moses' encounter with the Burning Bush, talk about Moses' call and how he needs to know what God's name in case the Israelites ask.

Conclude with our description of God is limitless, bigger than we can capture with words.

Echo Prayer: God of the Burning Bush, thank you for all the ways You make Yourself known to me. May the words I choose in my daily living, always show my love for You. Amen.

Source: (www.worshippingwithchildren.blogspot.com) see August 28/11

Commissioning & Benediction:

As we leave this place as followers of the Risen Christ, ready and willing to take up our crosses, may

The grace of Christ attend you

The love of God surround you

And the Holy Spirit keep you

This day and always...Amen.

Matthew 16:21-28
Cross carrying

In just a few weeks' time, the world will commemorate the 10th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy in New York City. I was reminded this week of a predominant image from that time of grief and unspeakable loss and devastation as nearly 3000 souls perished that fateful day in September. That image was one of a cross, made from the twisted and charred remains of iron-girder from the twin towers of the World Trade Centre that crumbled to a heap of rubble. While it seems entirely fitting to have a cross erected on this special site, it is interesting to consider that prior to the events of that day, one would never have expected to see such a religious symbol placed in this location. The World Trade Centre was a symbol to the world of economic power. A cross would have surely have been interpreted as trying to make some sort of political statement, perhaps a marrying of church and state. A cross certainly would not have made any sense in that context where the wheels of commerce were turning just fine without it. We don't typically sink crosses into places of life, liveliness, or anything else that has to do with our everyday business.

But following the loss of life that day ten years ago, a cross did appear. Its purpose was to honor the loss of life in that spot and it became a symbol of much-needed hope. Its intent and purpose was to point beyond the events of that day towards something better.

In our Gospel reading for this morning, we encounter Peter who is having some trouble with the meaning of the cross. Our passage opens with "From that time on..." (v.21)...Jesus begins to tell them of his forthcoming crucifixion and resurrection...and in the words of Ernest Hemmingway, "it was the best of times, it was the worst of times". When we look at what has been going on, leading up to this story, Jesus has just finished reminding the Disciples of the miracle of the feeding the 5000 and promises them the keys to the kingdom of Heaven. Jesus tells them flat out that he must go on to Jerusalem and undergo great sufferings, death on a cross, and on the third day be raised (v. 21). Peter, however, won't stand for this. Jesus, after all, was the Messiah, the one they had waited for to assume the leadership of Israel! And now, he is talking about leaving them?! Peter won't have any of this talk! He decides to take it upon himself to become the spokesman for the group and ushers Jesus aside for a little conversation and wants to set

Jesus straight. But Jesus is the one who ends up setting Peter straight. Jesus rebukes his disciple and calls him Satan and tells him to get out of his way. He is a scandal...a stumbling block to what Jesus has come into the world to do. Peter just doesn't get how God works at all. Jesus then addresses the whole group of Disciples and invites them to join him on his journey to Jerusalem, to take up a cross and follow him. Jesus is in the lead and self-sacrifice is what is being asked of them. But for the disciples, the cross was an instrument of torture and execution. Will Jesus' invitation to follow him end in their deaths as well? What would it mean to them when Jesus says anyone who wants to save their life, will lose it and those who lose their life for his sake will find it? Peter and the rest of the Disciples loved Jesus and were already giving their lives to him, but it must have been a confusing and troubling request.

Peter spoke for all the Disciples.... He still speaks for all of us today, because we too have our minds "set not on divine things but on human things" (v. 23). We have all had our share of receiving news we don't want to face and we try desperately to cling to the way life used to be, the way things feel comfortable and safe. Grief is a painful part of our living. We learn of our own or a loved one's diagnosis with Cancer; a relationship with a partner or friend that come to an end with little or no warning; being down-sized and out-sourced of one's employment and the loss of identity which came with such work. But we seem to find ourselves in a world that has no time for grief and sorrow...In a recent Observer magazine article, the trend of funerals being replaced by secular celebrations of life was discussed and raised the question of whether by casting aside the rituals related to death, are we denying our need to mourn (Observer, June 2011). A funeral director was interviewed for the story and he noted how his work has changed dramatically in the past 20 years. He observed that it seems as if many people almost want to skip mourning. Yet the article also highlighted people's need to mourn. Many line highway bridges in Ontario as caskets of young soldiers killed in Afghanistan pass below....The funeral processions for police officers killed on duty draw television cameras and throngs of mourners, while flower garlands on telephone poles mark the sites of fatal car accidents. So if our rituals are eroding, our in-born desire to mourn fellow humans has certainly not disappeared. Rituals and ceremonies give us the much needed chance to say goodbye.

End-of-life issues are not something we can talk about easily and often are not discussed until the need arises. Sometimes, our loved ones want to help

spare a family's grief and feel that foregoing a funeral or memorial will make things easier for those left to cope. But despite whatever choices are made when we are faced with life-changing events, grief cannot be denied or minimized in any way. It is what we must go through...and if we can't begin this conversation in our church, where will it take place? This difficult text from Matthew, is a good place to start.

Peter had little time to deal with his own grief that day. And Jesus' response to Peter's concern over his forthcoming death and departure was less than sympathetic. Instead, this passage from Matthew marks the first of many times Jesus shall discuss his fate as the Son of God. But with this news, Jesus offers the Disciples a new way to live...not an easy, carefree way, but one that is filled with hope and promise. The Disciples have been followers of Jesus for some time now, but what Jesus is offering them today is something new...it is perhaps their first real taste of what being a Disciple is exactly all about. The notion of carrying a cross and following Jesus may have represented death...but for Jesus, the cross he was offering them was the promise of a new life. It won't be easy, Jesus tells them. It is all about self-sacrifice...following Jesus was initially about leaving one's old life behind... carrying a cross means death to an old way of living. Those who choose to follow him will not lose their life but will find it.

Finding new life through grief can be an overwhelming task. How do we even begin to think of carrying a cross when maybe we can't even get out head off the pillow? But there is help available. Talking with a minister or faithful friend..journaling and reading books on the topic of grief are all good places to start. Grief and loss have the potential to transform our lives...a very big statement to make...but as believers, how do we doubt otherwise?

The cross for us today can mean two different things: it can symbolize death and loss or it can symbolize new life and hope. I would invite all of us this morning to examine our personal views of what the cross represents for each of us. What Jesus is challenging us with this morning is to let go of an old way of living and start taking small steps behind him. We're being called to love one another and then do it some more...bear one another's burdens...call or visit a friend or family member who you know may be struggling with life at the moment...The message this morning is more about our actions than our words. The Good News Jesus gives us today is the invitation to grab on to a cross, give of ourselves in self-less ways and follow him. This is the way to Discipleship we are all being called to. Carrying a

cross today will not likely take a life as it did for Jesus and some of the Disciples,...but it just might save one. Thanks be to God.