

Sunday, August 31, 2025 - Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost

Welcome & Announcements

Creation Connection Too often we humans understand the world through an **anthropocentric lens** (regarding **humankind** as the central or most important element of existence, especially as opposed to God or animals,) and we miss both God's perspective and the perspective of our non-human relations. Even on a weekend that honours human labourers, let us consider how our work honours God and nature in addition to human workers.

Lighting of the Christ Candle

L: As we light this Christ candle, we remember that Jesus is the light of the world, and we are called to let our light shine before others, bringing hope and love into the darkness."

All: We will let Christ's light shine through us in all that we say and all that we do. Amen

Gathering Hymn Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life, VU # 681

Where cross the crowded ways of life,	In haunts of wretchedness and need,	The cup of water given for you Still holds the freshness of your grace;	O Jesus, from the mountain side, Make haste to heal these hearts of pain;	'til all the world shall learn your love And follow where your feet have trod,
Where sound the cries of race and clan,	On shadowed thresholds, dark with fears,	Yet long these multitudes to view The strong compassion of your face.	Among these restless throngs abide, And tread the city's streets again,	'til glorious from your heaven above Shall come the city of our God.
Above the noise of selfish strife, We hear your words of life again.	From paths where hide the lures of greed, We catch the vision of your tears.			

Call to Worship

L: We come to worship this amazing day,

P: As this summer of tremendous heat and blue skies

L: Draws to its close and most of our thoughts of holidays and rest

P: And our thoughts turn to the return of school for our children, the resumption of clubs, meetings, and annual responsibilities takes hold, on our days and in our minds,

L: We pause on this Labour Day weekend, and consider the gift of work, and the ability to undertake labour as a means of being productive in one of so very many ways,

P: To use our minds and hearts and bodies to earn a living, and to now, in retirement, celebrate all of the good work that we have been able to complete in our lives, contributing to our local economy, the economy of our individual households, and to the lives of ourselves, our families and our community.

ALL: We celebrate and honour all who do and who have done work, to make our country and community strong, to have been able to raise, clothe and feed our families. For this life of being able to contribute, we give you thanks, O Lord. We now have come to worship you, shouting hallelujah for giving our lives many purposes, one of which is to labour, as well as loving and worshipping you, and serving our fellow human beings.

Gathering Prayer Loving creator God, as we enter into the month of September, which is part of the larger rhythm of our years, embolden us to truly serve you in all that we say, think, and do. As the harvest of the bounty of nature and our farmers' and gardeners' efforts continues, inspire us to realize the true abundance of our planet, and our role as caretakers and healers, setting aside and our misconception that we hold dominion and are the dominant species in the animal kingdom because of merely our brains. Let us think with our hearts, feeling the pains which we have inflicted in this realm, and empowering and rousing us to make a difference as wiser, more caring custodians, doing our part to heal and nourish the world around us, our physical world, and the world of animals and humans, all of whom need more tender and enriching

treatment, as we are called by You to give. In Jesus' name we pray for this realignment of our species' thinking. Amen.

Ministry of Music

Children's Ministry What is labour? Is it just 'work?'

The Lord's Prayer (*sung*)

Hymn Draw the Circle Wide, MVU # 145

Refrain	God the still-point of the	Let our hearts touch far	Let the dreams we dream
Draw the circle wide,	circle,	horizons,	be larger,
draw it wider still	'round whom all creation	So encompass great and	Than we've ever
No one stands alone,	turns;	small;	dreamed before;
standing side by side,	Nothing lost, but held	Let our loving know no	Let the dream of Christ
Draw the circle wide.	forever,	borders,	be in us,
	In God's gracious arms.	Faithful to God's call.	Open every door.
	Refrain	Refrain	Refrain

Offering Invitation & Prayer I invite you today to consider the times you have seen a need for justice, for grace, for generosity, and decided it was someone else's problem. Here and now, there is a need for each of us to share God's abundance in any way that you feel called to do so. Giving is a way to offer justice, grace, and generosity to our community, and, through Mission and Service, to the world.

O God of Grace, take these gifts of ours and let them be blessed in your service. Take all the parts of our lives we hesitate to offer and let these too be sanctified and strengthened. May your love grow among us. May we share in your spirit of compassion. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Scripture Readings

Psalms 81

Sing out in praise of God our strength; acclaim the God of our ancestors! I am **YHWH**, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt! But my people did not listen to my voice and Israel would not obey me; so, I gave them over to their willful hearts, to follow their own devices. If only my people would listen to me, if Israel would follow my paths, I would subdue their enemies at once and turn my hand against their persecutors. Those who hate me will come cringing before me and will meet with everlasting punishment. And I will feed Israel with the finest wheat and satisfy you with honey from the rock.

Luke 14: 1, 7-14

One Sabbath, when Jesus came to eat at the house of one of the leading Pharisees, the guests watched him closely. Jesus addressed a parable to the guests, noticing how they were trying to get the place of honour at the table.

"When you are invited to a wedding party, do not sit in the place of honour, in case someone more distinguished has been invited. Otherwise, the hosts might come to you and say, 'Make room for this person,' and you would have to proceed shamefacedly to the lowest place. What you should do is to go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your hosts approach you and say, 'My friend, come up higher.' This will win you the esteem of the other guests. For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."

Then Jesus said to the host, "Whenever you give a lunch or a dinner, do not invite your friends or colleagues or relatives or wealthy neighbours. They might invite you in return and thus repay you. No, when you have a reception, invite those who are poor or who have physical infirmities or are blind. You should be pleased that they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

Hebrews 13: 1-8; 15-16

Continue to love each other as brothers and sisters. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing so some people have entertained angels without knowing it. Keep in mind those who are in prison, as

though you were in prison with them. And be mindful of those who are being treated badly, since you know what they are enduring. Let marriage be honoured by everyone, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled, for God will judge covenant-breakers and adulterers. Put the love of money out of your lives and be content with what you have, for God has said, 'I will never leave you or forsake you.' Thus, we may say with confidence, 'God is my helper, and I will not be afraid; what can mere humans do to me?' Remember your leaders, who preach the word of God to you, and as you reflect on the outcomes of their lives, imitate their faith. Jesus is the same today, yesterday, and forever.

Through Jesus let us perpetually offer God a sacrifice of praise – that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge God's name. Keep doing good works and sharing your resources. These are the sacrifices which please God.

Hymn **Go, Make a Difference**, MVU # 209

Refrain	We are the salt of the	We are the hands of	So let your love shine on,
Go, make a difference.	earth,	Christ	Let it shine for all to see.
We can make a difference	Called to let the people	Reaching out to those in	Go make a difference in
Go, make a difference in	see	need,	the world.
the world.	The love of God for you	The face of God for all to	And the spirit of Christ
Go, make a difference.	and me.	see.	will be with us as we go.
We can make a difference	We are the light of the	We are the spirit of hope;	Go make a difference in
Go, make a difference in	world,	We are the voice of	the world.
the world.	Not to be hidden but be	peace.	Refrain
	seen.	Go make a difference in	
	Go make a difference in	the world.	
	the world.	Refrain	
	Refrain		

Message *Perpetually offer God a sacrifice of praise*

When is a good time to acclaim God? Our Scripture readings today exhort us to praise God without ceasing, to sing His praises and to worship Him. So, one might ask, what does it mean to acclaim God? Acclaim means to praise enthusiastically and publicly. Let us consider the two different parts of this definition. I think that we can all come up with our own definition of 'to praise.' So, let's try it now. What are some synonyms for the word praise? *Eg. Acclaim, pay tribute, to admire, to give approval, to share your admiration for someone, to worship, honour, adore, celebrate, bless, give thanks for.*

More importantly, how can we go about doing this? Where and when can we praise God, how do we go about it? It is extremely important to note the second half of the definition, that we must do this praising of God in public, by serving WITNESS to God's awesome nature and character, as revealed to us by the Bible, and Jesus, through our studies of these Words, and by praying for a deeper understanding of God and God's role in our lives, assisted by the interpretations provided for us by Biblical commentators, of whom there are a great many, or by listening to or reading the messages provided by your minister and others who speak in the church.

How do you feel about publicly proclaiming God as your Saviour and Lord? Is it something that comes to you, comes to us, easily? Do we practice praising God on a regular or daily basis? If not, what holds us back? Is it just our usual Canadian shyness and humility, or do we feel shame in doing so, boldly and loudly?

Of course, we know that our actions can often speak louder than our words, so how can and should we act in public, and in our homes and with our families, to exhibit to all what being Christian means to us as we live out our lives?

'For they will know we are Christians by our love.' Jesus said, "By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35.) The way we love demonstrates who we are. So, I guess that the Scriptures and God challenge and command us to continuously demonstrate on behalf of God, the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Trinity, our Trinity. The foundation for our very beings and souls. I wholeheartedly believe that if you wish your life to be fulfilled it must be lived in community with others, with non-judgmental, unconditional love. God's love, or agape.

Agape is a Greek word representing the highest form of love, characterized by a selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial commitment to the well-being of others, even enemies, reflecting God's nature and love for humanity. It is an action of the will, a choice to seek the best for another, rather than a mere feeling. God's divine agape love is often seen as the source from which humans are empowered, through the Holy Spirit, to extend this reciprocal love to one another.

So let us praise God unceasingly, boldly, and confidently. Doing so will uplift our very souls, and draw us into closer communion with people, and therefore God, giving us the ultimate meaning in our lives which God wills for us. Amen.

Prayers of the People Oh, sweet Lord, today in our readings you have urged us to, "Sing out in praise of God our strength; acclaim the God of our ancestors!" ; that we should always sit in the lowest place, to lower ourselves in others' eyes, rather than building ourselves up; and that "Through Jesus let us perpetually offer God a sacrifice of praise – that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge God's name. Keep doing good works and sharing your resources." You command us to adopt a stance of humility, and even more, to feel that humility within, so that we realize deeply that we are but one member of your flock, your people, your tribe. As we enter the season of autumn and thanksgiving, we will continually express our gratitude for all who have faithfully served in your church, here at home, and abroad. As we have recently lost a number of these faithful servants, let us pause now to pray for them: Gerald Atkinson, Jack Page, Evelyn Paterson (WLUC), and for continued healing and recuperation for those who have been ill or hospitalized: Mary Bol, Lois Martin, Don Miller, and all others who have suffered illness over the summer months. In addition, I ask for prayers for two of my sisters, Nancy and Barbara, who are suffering chronic and debilitating illnesses.

Dear Lord, help us all to focus our thoughts and prayers upon these persons, and let us each day set aside our worries and cares for our own selves to think of and express hope and support to all who suffer, those who have suffered loss through fires or floods, and those many families in our communities who have lost a loved one. We also pray in gratitude and joy for the health care workers, the law enforcement personnel, all firefighters and emergency care providers who strive to keep us safe at home, on the roads, on the water, in our hospitals and care homes. We pray for the Corneil family and all who work at Cotrac, who have suffered such a traumatic, sudden loss, and send our support to all there, and all who have suffered job insecurity, food insecurity, and loneliness. There is so much suffering and pain in our world, and only You can truly and permanently heal all wounds and provide peace and healing in losses of the things and people whom we love.

Your love for all of us is timeless, ever-present, here, there, and everywhere, and will strengthen us if we but turn to you and let You into our hearts, minds, and lives. We thank you for the awesome and undeserved grace of the love and sacrifice of Jesus, our Christ, our Saviour and Redeemer, our shepherd and carer, who shows us the way, the truth, and the life.

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow. Amen, and Amen.

Parting Hymn Lord, You Give the Great Commission, VU # 512

Lord, you give the great commission: "heal the sick and preach the word.: lest the church neglect its mission, and the gospel go unheard, help us witness to your purpose with renewed integrity; with the Spirit's gifts empow'r us for the work of ministry.	Lord, you call us to your service: "In my name baptize and teach." That the world may trust your promise, Life abundant meant for each, Give us all new fervour, draw us closer in community; with the Spirit's gifts empow'r us for the work of ministry.	Lord, you make the common holy: "This my body, this my blood." Let us all, for earth's true glory, Daily lift life heavenward, Asking that the world around us Share your children's liberty; with the Spirit's gifts empow'r us for the work of ministry.	Lord, you show us love's true measure: "Father, what they do, forgive," Yet we hoard as private treasure All that you so freely give. May your care and mercy lead us To a just society; with the Spirit's gifts empow'r us for the work of ministry.	Lord, you bless with words assuring: "I am with you to the end." Faith and hope and love restoring, May we serve as you intend, And, amid the cares that claim us, Hold in mind eternity; with the Spirit's gifts empow'r us for the work of ministry.
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Commissioning & Benediction We are blessed to receive the gifts of God, through God's good Grace, and our lives are filled with His love from our conception through to our conclusion on this earthly plane, and beyond, through the everlasting ages. God calls us to be deeply grateful for God's mercy and love, and to sing praises of thanksgiving always. Our great commission, our commandment, and it is indeed a powerful and momentous endowment and ability to have the drive to do so, praising God's name and honouring His and Jesus' gifts and sacrifice all the while. Go now in peace, emboldened to live out your faith in all that you say and do. Amen.

Sung Benediction God Says, MV # 172

God says, "Be still to you may hear
The words I whisper in your ear.
If you will listen, you will know
I'm with you always where you go."

Choral Amen