

Light the Christ Candle

Welcome Welcome everyone. No matter where in your spiritual journey you are, you are welcome here. Please look around and give blessing for the fact that we are surrounded here by a community of faith. Today we will be talking about the character traits God values. There is an old quote that has been attributed to Mahatma Gandhi and Lao Tzu:

Carefully watch your thoughts, for they become your words.

Manage and watch your words, for they will become your actions.

Consider and judge your actions, for they will become your habits.

Acknowledge and watch your habits, for they shall become your values.

Understand and embrace your values, for they become your character.

Concern yourself with your character, for it becomes your destiny.

Ministry of Music Take My Hand, Precious Lord

Hymn & Psalm Behold the Face of Christ, MVU # 114

Sung Refrain
Behold the face of Christ,
O Jesus Christ,
O Living Christ,
You rise among your people.

Spoken: But when, Lord?
When did we see you hungry
And give you food to eat?
When did we see you, Lord?
But when, Lord?
When did we see you thirsty
And give you water to drink?
When did we see you, Lord?
But when, Lord?
When did we see a stranger
And welcome you in?
When did we see you, Lord?
Refrain

Spoken: But when, Lord?
When did we see you ill
And come sit at your bedside?
When did we see you, Lord?
But when, Lord?
When did we see you ill
And come sit at your bedside?
When did we see you, Lord?
But when, Lord?
When did we see you in prison
And come to visit you?
When did we see you, Lord?
But when, Lord?
When did we see you
- The Christ,
- The son of Mary,
- Our brother,
- Our God?
When did we see you, Lord?
Refrain

Acknowledgement of the Land

Announcements

Introduction of Theme It is said that "The measure of a man's real character is what he would do if he knew he would never be found out." The problem is, God knows it all.

Call to Worship -by The Very Rev. Richard Bott, Grace UC, Burlington, ON

L: Why are we called to this place?

P: To be God's people.

L: What is required of us?

P: To seek justice, to love kindness, to live humbly with God.

L: And how shall we do this?

P: With our prayers, with our thoughts, with our actions, with our love.

L: Then, as people who are both blessed and blessing ...

P: Let us worship God!

Gathering Prayer -by Beth W. Johnston, Bridging Waters PC, Nipawin, SK

Gracious God, as fear tightens its grip on some, while others ignore all advice about caring for one another, as we fight an enemy we can't always recognize, open us to the needs of others. Even when, especially when, those others have a different way of life, a different creed, or different politics. Help us to understand the whole world as the community you ask us to love. May we receive the help we need from your Spirit to overcome barriers and embrace a common humanity for the healing of your beloved world. Amen.

Hymn O For a World, VU # 697

O for a world where everyone Respects each other's ways, Where love is lived and all is done With justice and with praise.	O for a world where goods are shared And misery relieved, Where truth is spoken, children spared, Equality achieved.	We welcome one world family And struggle with each choice That opens us to unity And gives our vision voice.	The poor are rich, the weak are strong, The foolish ones are wise. Tell all who mourn: outcasts belong, Who perishes will rise.	O for a world preparing for God's glorious reign of peace, Where time and tears will be no more, And all but love will cease.
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Offering Invitation & Prayer -from United Church of Canada

Friends, if any of us think that by giving money to this church we are buying our way closer to God, we are wrong. Our gifts here must be part of our larger living, daring to seek justice and resist evil. This is why we need to be generous today. Let us present our gifts.

Gracious and loving God, source of all justice and hope, we ask now that you bless our gifts and those given through PAR and online, so that our actions and your purpose are one. Thanks be to you. Amen.

Children's Ministry Truck Got Stuck

Wow, that's a lot of stuck trucks! I wonder why they didn't just call mom in the first place when they must have known it was the right thing to do. They called on mom, which was a good solution to their problem. But what about us? As Christians, when we have a problem, who do we depend on, who do we call upon, who do we think of first? It's God, through and through. He is there for us, always. Amen.

Let's pray:

Dear God, thank you for always being there for us. We know you are just a prayer away. Please help us to reach out to you in times of trouble, when we don't know what the right thing is to do, and of course, in times of happiness too. Thank you for our family and church who will also teach us that the right thing to do, while not always easy, is what we must do to be a good person. We love you, God. Thank you. Amen.

What does the word "Beatitudes" mean? We invite you to reflect on that as we watch this children's video.

Children's Video "The Beatitudes Songs for kids" <https://share.google/MDpDvNUnQOpCV5Uqe>

The Lord's Prayer-spoken

Children leave for Sunday School

Reflection

Will Rogers said, "Live in such a way that you would not be ashamed to sell your parrot to the town gossip."

T. Paine said, "Character is much easier kept than recovered."

Today, we've been talking about what character traits God most values.

Psalm 15 GNT, A psalm of David, provides a clue:

Lord, who may enter your Temple? Who may worship on Zion, your sacred hill? Those who obey God in everything and always do what is right, whose words are true and sincere, and who do not slander others. They do no wrong to their friends nor spread rumors about their neighbours. They despise those whom God rejects, but honour those who obey the Lord. They always do what they promise, no matter how much it may cost. They make loans without charging interest and cannot be bribed to testify against the innocent. Whoever does these things will always be secure.

That Psalm reinforces that God values honesty and following through on one's word, no matter the cost.

Micah 6:1-8 informs us of what character traits God requires of us. **Micah 6:1-8** reminds the people that God is not interested in hollow sacrifices or empty acts of worship:

The Requirement of the Lord: *With what should I come before the Lord, and bow down before God on high? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?*

And he sums everything up in verse 8 saying: *He has told you, O man, what is good and what does the Lord require of you, but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?*

There you go, just three things. That can't be so hard, can it? But there's that word humble again.

Walk Humbly: Live with humility, recognize the power of and our reliance on God.

Hymn God of Freedom, God of Justice, VU # 700

God of freedom, God of justice,
You, whose love is strong as death,
You, who saw the dark of prison,

You, who knew the price of faith:
Touch our world of sad oppression
With your Spirit's healing breath.

Kindness: Showing compassion, empathy, and love towards others, particularly to those in need.

Hymn God of Freedom, God of Justice, VU # 700

Rid the earth of torture's terror,
You, whose hands were nailed to wood;
Hear the cries of pain and protest,

You, who shed the tears and blood:
Move in us the power of pity
Restless for the common good.

Micah 6:1-8 calls for a way of life that focuses on inner character growth and genuine devotion to God. Besides the humble quality, I'm struck with the number of times fairness, empathy, and kindness comes up in the readings today.

Justice: Doing what is right, fair, and equitable, especially towards the weak and oppressed. **"Be careful how you live. You may be the only Bible some people will ever read."** Your character, it matters. Amen.

Hymn God of Freedom, God of Justice, VU # 700

Make in us a captive conscience
Quick to hear, to act, to plead;
Make us truly sisters, brothers

Of whatever race or creed:
Teach us to be fully human,
Open to each other's need.

Prayers of and for the People -by Robin Wardlaw, Toronto, ON

We are here, O Love, giving praise for the love that surrounds us. We are here together, giving thanks for the love that gathers us, includes us, unites us. We are here inside, where it's warm and dry and safe, giving praise and thanks for the love that shelters us, embraces us, protects us.

Where is love for so many that need it, we ask? Where is love for those of us sleeping in shelters or tents or on the streets? For those of us with no community, no safety, no embrace?

We experience your ancient cry, Holy One, to do justice, to live kindness, to be humble, the cry of prophets, the cry of the Christ, the cry of all those, here in our midst and everywhere, who echo the challenge. Loose the bonds, undo the thongs of the yoke, share bread, create homes for those without shelter. We pray that this will be our fast, our calling, our work as a community, not just to feed and clothe but to lift up the cries for help in our time, so that holy light will break forth like the dawn, healing spring up quickly, and ancient ruins be rebuilt.

Even as we respond to your ancient and ever-present call, we pause. Salt that has lost its zing is no good. Light hidden under a basket helps no one. Some of us fear we may have lost our zing, O Love, that our light is dim. Pour out your spirit on this community, O Love. Let all who have been producing harvest after harvest of mercy, harmony, grace, and beauty in this place have time to lie fallow for a season. Let each one shelter under your wings.

Gather in all who mourn, all who ache with loneliness, abuse, or sadness. Cradle each one in tenderness, O Spirit. Satisfy our needs in parched places, make us like a watered garden. Send the mind of Christ to us, again and again we pray, Great Spirit, that we may know when to provoke, when to soothe, when to wade into the crowd, and when to withdraw to the hills. Help us to recognize the mind of Christ in all peopled: partners in ministry, participants in programs, authors, poets, artists, healers, activists, teachers, and all who reach out in compassion even when we don't understand their ways...at first.

We pray for all people, near and far, and for this gorgeous planet, in all its power and frailty. And now we lift prayers for ourselves and all others, prayers of gratitude and concern, that a light shall arise in the midst of despair and gloom shall become like noonday. (a time of silent prayer)

And now give us one heart, O God, as we offer our worship here today, to you. Amen.

Parting Hymn Live Into Hope, VU # 699

Live into hope of captives
freed,
Of sight regained, the end of
greed.
Th' oppressed shall be the
first
To see the year of God's own
jubilee!

Live into hope the blind shall
see
With insight and with clarity,
Removing shades of pride
and fear,
A vision of our God brought
near.

Live into hope of liberty,
The right to speak, the right
to be,
The right to have one's daily
bread,
To hear God's word and thus
be fed.

Live into hope of captives
freed
From chains of fear or want
or greed.
God now proclaims our full
release
To faith and hope and joy
and peace.

Commissioning & Benediction -by David Sparks, Rossland, BC

L: The listening is over. We are done with self-serving. We are done with justification. We are done with denial. We are done with delaying. We are done with pride. And will you journey purposefully, sharing kindness and living humbly with your God?

P: We will!

Choral Amen

Extinguish of the Christ Candle