

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Welcome & Announcements See all announcements in the weekly bulletin

Today we welcome Rev. Jack Lovering who is leading us in worship this morning. He is a retired ordained minister living in Leamington, ON. He was ordained in 2000 and has focused on rural ministry charges in Manitoba and Ontario since 1988. His wife, Melodee, is currently serving at Leamington United Church.

Call to Worship

All: We've come to worship God, who loved us before we were yet born, who knows us even better than we know ourselves, whose presence never leaves us, and whose love for us never ceases. This is our God. Let's worship together!

Ministry of Music Sing a Simple Alleluia

Gathering Prayer Dear Heavenly Father, We invite you into our presence. You are welcome in this place. Jesus said in Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them." As we begin our time of worship, we release our cares and anything else that would hinder us from experiencing more of you in this service today. We focus our hearts and minds on you. Lord, you are worthy of our praise. Forgive us for having our minds set on other things and not giving you the honor you deserve. We gather together to lift up the name of your son Jesus, the name that is above every name. All glory belongs to you. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Gathering Hymn Seek Ye First, VU # 356

Seek ye first the kingdom of God
and God's righteousness
and all these things
shall be added unto you.
hallelu, hallelujah.

Ask and it shall be given unto you
seek and you shall find;
Knock and the door
shall be opened unto you
hallelu, hallelujah

We do not live by bread alone,
but by every word
that proceeds
from the mouth of God.
hallelu, hallelujah.

Prayer of Confession Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart, and we have not loved our neighbours as ourselves. We are truly sorry, and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us, that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.

Words of Assurance Hear the good news: Christ died for us and rose again that we may be freed from the burden of our faults. Friends, believe the promise of the Gospel: in Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!

Offering Invitation & Prayer We come into God's presence with thanksgiving in our hearts. With joy we present our offerings to God.

Almighty God, you know all things. You know our joy in giving, you know our hesitations. Bless these gifts and the lives of those who give, that all may proclaim your Kingdom. We through this in the name of Jesus, Christ our Lord. AMEN

Hymn O Master, Let Me Walk, VU # 560

O Master, let me walk with
thee
in lowly paths of service free;
teach me thy secret, help me
bear
the strain of toil, the fret of
care.

Help me the slow of heart to
move
with some clear, winning word
of love;
teach me the wayward feet to
stay,
and guide them in the
homeward way.

Teach me thy patience; still
with thee,
in closer, dearer company,
in work that keeps faith sure
and strong,
in trust that triumphs over
wrong.

In hope that sends a shining
ray
far down the future's
broadening way,
in peace that only thou canst
give,
with thee, O Master, let me
live.

Children's Ministry Chippie's Bad Day

Max Lucado tells the story of a woman who had a parakeet named Chippie. She loved Chippie because he was such a happy little songbird. Chippie's constant chirping just seemed to brighten her day. One day, the woman was cleaning the bottom of Chippie's cage with a vacuum cleaner when the telephone rang. She reached for the telephone without removing the nozzle of the vacuum cleaner from the cage, which was a mistake. The vacuum cleaner nozzle got pointed in the direction of poor little Chippie, and he was suddenly sucked up into the machine. When the woman looked back at the cage and realized what had happened, she was horrified. She dropped the telephone, turned off the vacuum cleaner and ripped open the dust bag to get to her little bird. Chippie was a real mess, but he was still alive. She raced to the kitchen sink and turned the water on full force on Chippie. The more she tried to wash him, the worse he looked, so she took him to the bathroom and started trying to dry Chippie with her hair dryer - full force and high heat. Finally, she got the bird dry and put him back in his cage. Several days later, a friend called and

asked how Chippie was doing. "He's alive," she said, "but he just sits in his cage and stares out into space. And," she added thoughtfully, "Chippie doesn't sing much anymore."

We all know people who are a lot like Chippie. We know young people who once had a song in their hearts. But due to circumstances out of their control, they discovered that "life stinks." As a result, they aren't singing much anymore. Have you ever felt a little like Chippie? Have you been abused by people you loved? Has your world been turned upside down? Have you lost your desire to sing? As Chippie found out, there are no "quick fixes." Healing takes time. But there is someone who can give you back your song and restore your joy. His name is Jesus. "Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things" (Psalm 98:1).

The Lord's Prayer

Scripture Readings

Romans 8:1-11, Life in the Spirit, NRSV

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and to deal with sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, so that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For this reason, the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law - indeed, it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23, The Parable of the Sower, NRSV

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the lake. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: 'Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!'

"Hear, then, the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet such a person has no root but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of this age and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

Hymn **Come Now, Almighty King**, VU # 314,

Come now, almighty King,	Come now, incarnate Son,	Come Holy Comforter,	To the great One in Three,
Help us your name to sing,	Your life in us begun,	your sacred witness bear	Eternal praises be
Help us to praise,	Our prayer attend,	In this glad hour,	Forevermore,
One God all glorious,	Come and your people bless,	Your grace to us impart,	Your sovereign majesty
Ever victorious,	Come, give your word	Now rule in every heart,	May we in glory see,
Come and reign over us,	success,	Never from us depart,	And to eternity
Ancient of Days.	Stablish your righteousness,	Spirit of power!	Love and adore!
	Saviour and friend!		

Message **Mary and Martha, based on Luke 10: 38-42**

A farmer walked into an attorney's office wanting to file for a divorce. The attorney asked, "May I help you?" The farmer said, "Yea, I want to get one of those dayvorcees." The attorney said, "Well, do you have any grounds?" The farmer said, "Yea, I got about 140 acres." The attorney said, "No, you don't understand, do you have a case?" The farmer said, "No, I don't have a Case, but I have a John Deere." The attorney said, "No, you don't understand. I mean do you have a grudge?" The farmer said, "Yea, I got a grudge. That's where I park my John Deere." The attorney said, "No sir, I mean do you have a suit?" The farmer said, "Yes sir, I got a suit. I wear it to church on Sundays." The exasperated attorney said, "Well, sir, does your wife beat you up or anything?" The farmer said, "No sir, we both get up about 4:30."

Finally, the attorney says, "Okay, let me put it this way. WHY DO YOU WANT A DIVORCE?" And the farmer says, "Well, it really comes down to this. I can never have a meaningful conversation with her."

I wanted to spend some time this morning thinking about some meaningful conversations. The Mary and Martha story has some remarkable aspects. And no, I am not referring to Martha Stewart. Here is a tale of a woman coming to Jesus, trying to get him to do her will. In a culture where women often are thought of as having no voice, Martha comes to Jesus with a request. If that were not strange enough, look at Mary. In Luke 10:39, we are told that Mary "listened to his teaching". We don't appreciate how

strange that phrase is. This is my wife and my 40th anniversary weekend. Around the time we were married, Barbra Streisand was filming *Yentl*, the story of a young Jewish girl who disguised herself as a boy, in order to learn about the Talmud. That was set in 1904. Woman students just wasn't a thing in Jesus' time. Sadly, we don't have to look back in history, as the political climate in Afghanistan is once again closing education options for women even today.

The story of Mary and Martha clearly shows Jesus' willingness to consider women as worthy students. This story is often shown as one that divides sisters. Some commentators even write as though Martha and Mary are different parts of everyone's personality. Listen to this poem:

I cannot choose: I should like so much
To sit at Jesus' feet, to feel the touch
Of His kind, gentle hand upon my head
While drinking in the gracious words He said.
And yet to serve Him! O divine employ,
To minister and give the Master joy!
To bathe in cool springs his weary feet
And wait upon Him while He sat at meat.
Worship or Service: Which? Yes, that is best
To which He calls us; be it toil or rest
To labor for Him in life's busy stir;
Or sit at His feet, a silent worshipper.

It would be nice to see this poem as a delightful compromise for these two sisters. However, Jesus chose sides. John Rodman makes this point in the Martha and Mary story. Listen to what he wrote: "Martha chose hospitality to offer the traveller. Her tasks must have been lovingly intended, but she was not willing to prepare and serve the food without her sister's help. She was distracted from the one important element, the presence of Jesus. It is possible to be so engaged in a program of good deeds and constructive accomplishment that one's soul is lost."

I have heard people speaking on this gospel passage, wanting to side with Martha. Who is going to get the food out anyway, if Martha doesn't take charge? But Jesus wasn't putting down food. He was stressing that one thing is needed. The importance of things and the concerns of day-to-day living cannot be compared with the greatness of knowing Christ.

Have you ever seen the movie, *The Last Samurai*? Tom Cruise's character is taken aside by a friend who helps him to train as a fighter. The reason you are being defeated, he says, is that you take in too many things. Concentrate only on fighting in battle.

As followers of Jesus, it is easy to get distracted. A former Japanese Prime Minister gets killed. 15 young people in South Africa are murdered while out at a club. The price of gas varies wildly, mostly going up. The Ukraine faces daily bombing from a Russia who stills lies about liberation. We need to remember that God is bigger than we are. You and I can be like Martha. We can get caught up in our plans and ideas about what God should want. We have our lives all mapped out to our own satisfaction. Sometimes you need to sit at Jesus' feet and remember that God is bigger than you are. God's plan for your life is the true foundation on which to build.

You don't need to read the story of Martha and Mary as a condemnation of one over the other. If you move prayerfully into this passage, you can see how Martha and Mary can be a part of all of us. Martha needs to be with us, getting life's chores done. But, inside us all, as well, Mary needs to sit at the master's feet. Jesus didn't say that hospitality is unimportant. He said, "you are worried and upset about many things but only one is needed." When Jesus is in our midst, he holds all things together.

In Colossians, Paul makes it sound almost impossible to miss God. He calls Christ the image of the invisible God. Christ was before all creation, co-creating with the Father. That's great Paul, but what if I can't see Christ? Did you notice that in this passage Paul doesn't even consider *not* knowing Christ? He just assumes that the knowledge is there. Remember, these epistles were written before anyone had access to the four gospels.

Paul goes on to say that God had commissioned him to present to the Colossians the word of God in its fullness. Perhaps, we may think, Paul has been blessed with the ability to make sense of those passages of scripture which make no sense to us. For Paul, those books are the Old Testament, the books we share with Judaism. That would be no small gift as we still have many passages that puzzle us to this day. But Paul is talking about living word. He has already proclaimed Christ as the word. He calls this a mystery. Mysteries don't get explained. We have to wrestle with them.

Paul understands that people have questions. I believe that is why he has created such a description of Christ's glory. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers - all things have been created through him and for him. He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell.

In Paul's case, there is a key to the mystery. "God has chosen to make known the glorious riches of this mystery *which is Christ in you*. If this seems like so much gobbledee goop, consider this: relationships are filled with mysteries. Sometimes it is little things. "How could someone who loves me be so adept at hiding the remote control?" Other times it is hard fought battles. "The very person I was able to let my guard down to, became the source of my biggest betrayal." When we hurt the most, it becomes most important to be able to believe that Christ can indeed hold all things together. As a human, you are fallible, but the love of God in the person of Jesus will not fail you. For all you may strive after the things of this world: Money, power, time - you know that they are as nothing compared to the foundation of God's love living within your heart. As you build your relationship with God, mysteries become less important, because you trust God who has chosen to relate to you.

One of the people I trusted most in my life was my Dad. He had a love of finding just the right words to explain to people their relationship with God. He used to clip out little sayings in order to remember little gems. One note I remember clipped years ago

was a simple Chinese proverb: "He who deliberates fully before taking a step will spend his entire life on one leg." There are times in your life when you have to make a choice.

Do you remember the old story of the students at the U.S. Army's Airborne School? On the day of their first jump, the instructors went through all the possible malfunctions that could occur. After watching an example of a parachute failing to open, one of the recruits asked, "If we have a complete malfunction, how much time do we have to deploy our reserve parachutes?" With a sly smile the instructor responded "Airborne, you have the REST of your life to deploy that reserve!"

This morning is a time of decision. You can walk out of here without remembering a word. You can choose to believe that the words from Colossians are still true today. Christ is your true foundation. If you quiet your heart and listen in God's time, Christ will be found in you. You are reconciled to God through Christ, who made peace through his blood, shed on the cross. This mystery of mysteries becomes for you the hope of glory. Dear friends, trust Christ to hold all things together.

Prayers of the People Almighty and most merciful God, we treasure these moments when we can sit at your feet and listen for your word for our lives. We are thankful for all the wonders of creation which show your creative genius. During these summer days, our attention is often drawn to the growing gardens and traveling friends. Help us to be aware of your call on our lives in all that we do. Cares and worries enter into our lives. As we come before you, we want to present these concerns as a testament to your saving powers. In this quiet moment, you offer us our private concerns. Again this week, we have lost friends. We ask for your healing touch for all those dealing with loss in their lives. We know that you desire life amongst your people and in the church. Help us to be open to the life that is around us. May our serving hearts be made plain to those who need your healing touch. We pray these things in Jesus' name. AMEN

Parting Hymn Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah, VU # 651

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty,
Hold me with Thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, Bread of heaven,
Feed me 'til I want no more;
Feed me 'til I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,
Whence the healing stream doth flow;
Let the fire and cloudy pillar
Lead me all my journey through.
Strong Deliverer, strong Deliverer,
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield;
Be Thou still my Strength and Shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,
Bid my anxious fears subside;
Death of death and hell's destruction,
Land me safe on Canaan's side.
Songs of praises, songs of praises,
I will ever give to Thee;
I will ever give to Thee.

Benediction

Choral Amen

Extinguish the Christ Candle