



**October 2019**

# **Good News**

**God's Hope for our World (2)  
Readings, Reflections, Prayers**

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## Monday, October 7: Luke 5:12-16

The Good News of Jesus comes in just the way we need it.

*"Jesus enacted Good News wherever He found himself as He went along. To someone who was in need of forgiveness, He offered forgiveness; to someone who had been outcast, He invited them to eat with Him; to those who were marginalized because of life circumstances, He offered healing and restoration; to those who were hungry and thirsty, He offered food and drink; to those wracked by guilt, He took away their shame by restoring them to community; those who were lost, last, and least, He placed in places of found, first, and favoured."* (Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, *Engaging Gospel*, p.10)

This man with leprosy was an outcast from society. He could not live in town, but was considered unclean, forced to live outside the community. No one could be near him or touch him. He was isolated and alone.

Notice what Jesus does: He reaches out His hand and **touches** the fellow. It is exactly what he needed.

More than that, Jesus **heals** the man. It is exactly what he needed.

Jesus meets this person's deepest needs. With his leprosy removed, the man could come back into community, be welcomed back into town, and could be touched by those he loved.

Jesus gives him a new life. A new beginning.

What are the needs in your life? Bring them to Jesus.

What are the needs in the lives of those you care about? Bring them to Jesus.

*Give us, Lord, steadfast hearts,  
which no unworthy affection may drag down.  
Give us unconquered hearts,  
which no difficulty can wear out.  
Give us upright hearts,  
which no unworthy purpose may tempt into moving aside.  
Lord our God, help us understand how to know you,  
diligence to seek you,  
wisdom to find you,  
and faithfulness to embrace you,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

## Tuesday, October 8: Luke 5:17-26

I feel sorry for my doctor. I suffer from at least two kinds of chronic headaches. Headaches are challenging puzzles for doctors to deal with because they can't see what's actually causing the pain. It's not like treating a broken bone, where the problem shows up clearly on an x-ray. In my case, how can they prescribe the right medication or course of treatment when the root cause doesn't show up on any scan?

In this story, Jesus is dealing with a person who comes with an obvious problem: he's paralyzed. That's a real, genuine problem. And it's clear for all to see. Jesus can (and does) deal with that.

But Jesus is aware that this person has deeper problems than mobility. He is struggling with a load of guilt and sin as well. Note: Jesus does not make a direct causal link between the man's sin and his disability. They appear to be unrelated. Jesus does, however, recognize that simply giving the man back his ability to walk without dealing with the other BIG issue in his life – his sin – is only part of the solution.

The Good News is that God can help us deal with our physical health issues. He rarely miraculously heals us. Most often, Jesus works through His gifts of knowledge, medicine, and health care – doctors, nurses, hospitals, etc. – to bring healthy outcomes. (And, sometimes, God does not heal at all. We accept this as a mystery we cannot understand. He does give us the strength to persevere.)

The other Good News is that Jesus *always* can and *always* does forgive our sin when we confess our shortcomings to Him. We don't need to live with a sense of brokenness, failure, or guilt. Jesus forgives it all.

What do you need to pray about today?

*Blessed Lord,  
who has caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning:  
grant that we may in such wise hear them,  
read them, mark them, learn from them,  
and inwardly digest them,  
that by patience and the comfort of your holy Word,  
we may embrace,  
and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life,  
which you have given us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.  
Amen.*

Book of Common Prayer

### **Wednesday, October 9: Luke 5:27-32**

I wonder what it's like to work for Canada Revenue Agency? Is there a stigma as a "tax collector" in 2019? If you are a tax collector, today, is it hard to have friends who aren't also tax agents? What do you think?

In Jesus' day, tax collectors were genuinely despised. They were Jews who worked for the Roman government, considered traitors to their own people. They were allowed to charge exorbitant service charges on top of the required taxes; they gouged their countrymen. The only friends 1<sup>st</sup> Century tax collectors would have had would be other tax collectors or other despised outcasts. No respectable folks wanted anything to do with them.

What about Jesus? What is His attitude to tax collectors?

Notice Jesus does not excuse their greed or dishonesty. He does see past the present and the past in Levi's life. He also sees new possibilities for the future (Levi is also known as Matthew, the author of one of our gospels).

The Good News is that Jesus doesn't define us by who we have been in the past or even who we are now. He sees the potential within each of us to be something much more.

Confess the past to God. Pray to Him, asking Him to show you your future ...

*Lord, I am selfish,  
but you are all about serving others in the name of your Father.  
I am doubtful,  
but you trusted your heavenly Father  
to the very point of dying for him.  
When it comes to temptation, I am weak,  
but you were a perfect picture of strength  
when the devil came to tempt you.  
I am prone to anger when I feel someone is misjudging me,  
but you were our example of "turning the other cheek."  
In all these things and others, Lord,  
make me more and more like you every day.  
Amen.*

Tracy Macon Sumner

## Thursday, October 10: Luke 7:36-50

Do you know someone who is "broken"? Their life is a mess. There doesn't seem to be much hope?

This "sinful woman" is such a person. Most likely she is a prostitute. No wonder the self-respecting Pharisee is aghast that (1) she is in his house, and (2) Jesus is allowing her to be near him. (How would you react if a prostitute came into your house and began rubbing oil on your feet or the feet of your honoured guest???)

How does Jesus react to the woman?

How does Jesus respond to the Pharisee who had invited him for dinner?

What does Jesus' parable teach about God's love, mercy, and forgiveness?

Many of us are "good people" – like the Pharisee. What is Jesus' message to us?

Many people in society would argue they don't need Jesus because they are "good people." How can we communicate their need for God's mercy and forgiveness despite their "goodness"?

*Lord, help us not to forget that we are in a battle  
with enemies in the heavenly places.  
We don't wage war with human weapons  
but with the weapons of the Spirit.  
Let us put on the armor of light,  
depending on your mighty power to make the enemy flee from us.  
We thank you that you have given us this authority  
through the precious blood of the Lamb.  
In the powerful name of Jesus we can overcome all spiritual opposition.  
We have your promise that if we resist the devil he will flee from us.  
Keep us from opening ourselves to his influence  
by allowing temptation to turn into sin.  
Help us to repent of any sinful habits  
that create strongholds for the enemy.  
May we examine our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit.  
Amen.*

James S. Bell Jr.

## Friday, October 11: Luke 8:26-39

What "Good News" does this demon-possessed man need?

The way we sometimes present the gospel – "Your sins are forgiven and you'll go to heaven when you die" – is just not BIG enough for what this man needs. He needs real, practical help, **right now** to deal with the issues in His life. Right here, right now, he needs to experience God's love.

What Good News does Jesus bring to him?

The Good News Jesus embodies is about more than just being with Him after death. It's about living with Him this moment, and every moment, through our lives. Jesus is just as concerned with how I can live today in His presence, as He is with how I will live eternally in His presence one day, some day. Jesus' presence brings hope and healing into our present circumstances, whatever those may be.

Notice at the end of the story, the man wants to become one of Jesus' disciples, following Him on His travels (8:38). What is Jesus' response? "*Jesus sent him home, saying, 'No, go back to your family, and tell them everything God has done for you.'*" Jesus wants his to be a witness to the Good News he has experienced.

The Good News for us is that, through the Holy Spirit, Jesus is always with us. He doesn't send us away. He does, however, want us to share the Good News of His love with the people in our lives.

Who can we share our faith with? Who needs to know the Good News?

*This morning, as I kindle the fire upon my hearth,  
I pray that the flame of God's love may burn in my heart,  
and the hearts of all I meet today.  
I pray that no envy or malice, hatred or fear may smother the flame.  
I pray that indifference and apathy,  
contempt and pride may not pour like cold water on the fire.  
Instead, may the spark of God's love light the love in my heart,  
that it may burn brightly through the day.  
And may I warm those that are lonely,  
whose hearts are cold and lifeless,  
so that all may know the comfort of God's love.  
Burn in me, glorious Father; burn in me, beautiful Jesus;  
burn in me, Holy Spirit of power.  
Amen.*

Celtic prayer

### **Saturday, October 12: Luke 8:40-56**

Whose problem is bigger? The woman who has been bleeding constantly for twelve years? Or the man whose daughter is dying? If you were in charge of triage, who do you think should be Jesus' priority?

- If you were Jairus, what would you think should be Jesus' top priority?
- If you were the woman, who do you think Jesus should spend time with first?

Who does Jesus choose to spend time with and minister to? Both of them.

The Good News is that Jesus is not limited by time or space to only care for one person at a time. He is more than able to handle all of our needs. That's great news.

God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness is for you. And for everyone in your life who needs to know Him. Pray for those you know who need His healing touch.

*Sweet Saviour Christ, in your undeserved love for us  
you were prepared to suffer the painful death of the cross.  
Let me not be cold or even lukewarm in my love for you.  
Lord, help me to face the truth about myself.  
Help me to hear my words as others hear them,  
to see my face as others see me.  
Let me be honest enough to recognize my impatience and conceit.  
Let me recognize my anger and selfishness.  
Give me sufficient humility to accept my own weaknesses for what they are.  
Give me the grace – at least in your presence – to say,  
"I was wrong – forgive me."  
God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
increase in us faith and truth and gentleness.  
Amen.*

Polycarp (69-martyred in 155)

### **Thanksgiving Sunday, October 13: Ephesians 2:1-10**

This weekend we celebrate Thanksgiving. What are you thankful for?

Ephesians 2:1-10 remind us of God's amazing grace. We don't earn our salvation. We don't deserve God's love.

It's through no merit of our own, but through God's grace that we are blessed by God. God's love is His gift.

Grace – undeserved, unearned, unmerited favour – characterizes God's love for us.

John Newton was a rough and tumble, rude, crude slave trader, who's heart was softened by the love and grace of God. Once known as a most despicable and obnoxious shipmate, he became a soft-hearted pastor. The transition in his life from his early years as foul-mouthed, rough-living slave-trader to someone who's life had been transformed by God, is one of the most challenging and inspiring stories in Christian history. Newton is most famous for writing the familiar hymn that celebrates God's mercy, *Amazing Grace*:

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,  
That saved a wretch; like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!*

*The Lord hath promised good to me,  
His word my hope secures;  
He will my shield and portion be  
As long as life endures.*

*When we've been there ten thousand years,  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we first begun.*

Thank God for His amazing grace in your life.

*Almighty and most merciful Father,  
in you we live and move and have our being.  
From you we have received tender mercy and compassion.  
To you we owe our safety in days past,  
together with all the comforts of this present life,  
and the hopes of the life to come.  
We praise you, O God, our Creator.  
To you we give our thanks, for you are our joy and crown.  
You daily pour out your good gifts upon us.  
We humbly pray that Jesus, our Lord, the hope of glory,  
may be more fully formed in us,  
that we may grow in humility, meekness, patience,  
contentment and absolute surrender of our whole lives  
- body, soul, and spirit - to your will and pleasure.  
Do not leave us or forsake us, our Father, but lead us safely  
through all the changes of this present world,  
with an unchanging love for you,  
and with a holy peace of mind  
which comes from an assurance of your steadfast love for us,  
until we come at last to see you face-to-face,  
be with you where you are, behold your glory  
and worship you forever, through Jesus Christ, our Lord,  
Amen.*

Simon Patrick (1626-1707)

## Monday, October 14: John 8:1-11

I have a lot of questions about this incident:

- Who is this woman?
- What is her backstory? What led to this poor decision?
- Where is the man involved (adultery is not a this-woman-only issue; it takes two to tango)?
- How do you account for the blood lust of the Pharisees?
- What does Jesus write on the ground?
- Isn't it a risk to answer their question as He does?

What does this story have to say to the "good people" of the world – the Pharisees? Us?

What does this story have to say to the "sinful people" of this world – the woman?

Jesus is more than able to forgive any sin. That's Good News. But He loves people too much to leave them unchanged. If this woman were simply to go back to the same lifestyle, she would find herself in the same situation time and time again. Her life would continue to be a tangled mess. Jesus forgives her, but then challenges her to change: *"Go and sin no more."*

This Thanksgiving, rejoice in the fact that Jesus can and will forgive any and every sin from your past or present. For those you love, God can forgive them, too. That is Good News.

Give thanks, as well, that He wants us to become more and more like Jesus. Through the Spirit, He can help us become more and more the people God created us to be. He loves us too much to leave us as we are.

*Hands who touched the leper, touch my wounded heart;  
Hands who healed the blind man, heal my aching soul;  
Hands who cured the lame, mend my disjointed life;  
Hands who embraced all life, enfold me in your peace.  
This is my prayer to you, my Lord:  
Give me strength lightly to bear my joys and sorrows.  
Give me the strength to make my love fruitful in service.  
Give me the strength never to disown the poor  
or bend my knees before insolent might.  
Give me the strength to raise my mind high above daily trifles.  
And give me the strength to surrender my strength to your will with love.  
Amen.*

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941)

## Tuesday, October 15: Luke 9:10-17

There's no such thing as a free lunch, right?

Actually, that's not true. It wasn't true in Luke 9. (And it's not true during the season of Lent when the various downtown churches in Lethbridge host free soup and bun lunches 😊)

In our society we're used to the mantra that you earn everything: you earn a living, earn approval, earn respect, earn a place in college/university, earn social standing, earn a certain lifestyle ... nothing is free.

As well, our society is not a place of grace. In a world of social media, every slip up is recorded and shared on Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, or Snapchat for all to see. People "fall from grace" every day.

God, however, is characterized by unconditional love and grace. As we read in Ephesians 2 (yesterday), *"God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it"* (2:8-9). God's grace is free.

An old song encourages us:

*When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,  
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,  
Count your many blessings name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

*Count your blessings, name them one by one;  
Count your blessings, see what God hath done;  
Count your blessings, name them one by one,  
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done.*

*Are you ever burdened with a load of care?  
Does the cross seem heavy you are called to bear?  
Count your many blessings, every doubt will fly,  
And you will be singing as the days go by.*

*When you look at others with their lands and gold,  
Think that Christ has promised you His wealth untold.  
Count your many blessings, money cannot buy  
Your reward in heaven, nor your Lord on high.*

*So amid the conflict, whether great or small,  
Do not be discouraged, God is over all;  
Count your many blessings, angels will attend,  
Help and comfort give you to your journey's end.*

What are you thankful for?

*How poorly we repay you, my Lord,  
for all the good things you have given us!  
In your majesty you seek all kinds of ways and means  
by which to show us the love you have for us.  
Yet we hold this in low esteem because we are so inexperienced in loving you.  
Because we haven't practiced loving you as we should,  
our thoughts follow their usual pattern  
and we do not bother to ponder  
the great mystery of the ways the Holy Spirit speaks to us.  
Majestic King, forever wise,  
you melt my heart, which once was cold,  
and when your beauty fills my eyes,  
it makes them young, which once were old.  
Christ, my Creator, hear my cry; I am yours, you can I hear,  
my Savior, Master, yours am I; my heart to yours be ever near.  
Whether in life or death's last hour, if sickness, pain or health you give,  
or shame, or honor, weakness, power – thankful is the life I live.  
Amen.*

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582)

**Wednesday, October 16: Luke 10:25-37**

*"What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (10:25)*

How would answer that question?

What does Jesus say is the correct answer to the question?

*'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'*"(10:27). Does that surprise you? Why? Why not?

The expert in the law wanted to "justify his actions" – to prove how smart, worthy, and wise he was – so he asks a deep question, *"And who is my neighbour?"*

The story Jesus tells is significant. A **Jewish** man is mugged. His fellow **Jews** – good, respectable, God-fearing people – ignore him (Are they neighbours to the man? Do they show him any grace?)

A Samaritan – a foreigner, an outcast, someone the Jews despised (Jews would have nothing to do with Samaritans (John 4:9))– has compassion on the injured man. He shows the Jewish man grace.

What is Jesus' message to us?

To whom are we called to be gracious? To whom do we find it hard to be gracious? Why?

Encouraging us to think through what the Good News means in our lives, Augustine (354-430 AD) writes, *"A Christian is:*

- *a mind through which Christ thinks*
- *a heart through which Christ loves*
- *a voice through which Christ speaks*
- *and a hand through which Christ helps."*

How can I be gracious today?

*Forgive them all, Lord:  
our sins of omission and our sins of commission,  
the sins of our youth, and the sins of our riper years,  
the sins of our souls and the sins of our bodies,  
our secret and our more open sins,  
our sins of ignorance and surprise,  
and our more deliberate and presumptuous sins.  
Forgive the sins we have done to please ourselves  
and the sins we have done to please others,  
the sins we know and remember,  
and the sins we have forgotten.  
Forgive the sins we have tried to hide from others  
and the sins by which we have made others offend.  
Forgive them, Lord, forgive them all  
for the sake of the one who died for our sins, rose for our justification,  
and now stands at your right hand to make intercession for us,  
Jesus Christ, our Saviour.  
Amen.*

John Wesley (1707-1788)

#### **Thursday, October 17: Luke 10:38-42**

I am a do-er. I like to be busy. I'm not good at sitting still.

Other people are more contemplative. They enjoy sitting, reflecting, thinking, praying, meditating, mulling ...

Who is the "do-er" in this story? What does Jesus say about her?

Who is the contemplative? What does Jesus say about her?

Those of us who are do-ers can evaluate our self-worth by how much we accomplish. At the end of the day, if we can look back and see tangible things we have done/made/created/cleaned/built/ticked off our to-do list, we

feel good about ourselves. If we can't identify several key accomplishments in a day, we can be depressed. What is Jesus saying to us?

A key component of God's grace is that He simply loves us for who we are, as we are, where we are. He desires to know us and be known by us. So time, spent in prayer and reflection, have incredible value. It's time through which our relationship with Jesus grows. He loves us regardless of what we **do**.

If we do some things for His Kingdom, great. He does desire that we live faithfully. We can be alert to practical opportunities to "love our neighbour as ourselves" (yesterday's reading about the Good Samaritan). God does not call us to be passive. But our status and worth in His sight are not based on what we accomplish.

If you are a do-er, how can you spend some quality time, praying and meditating with Jesus?

If you are a contemplative, what might Jesus be inspiring you to actually do today?

*Let us go forth  
in the goodness of our merciful Father,  
in the gentleness of our brother Jesus,  
in the radiance of his Holy Spirit,  
in the faith of the apostles,  
in the joyful praise of the angels,  
in the holiness of the saints,  
in the courage of the martyrs,  
Let us go forth  
in the wisdom of our all-seeing Father,  
in the patience of our all-loving Brother,  
in the learning of the apostles,  
in the gracious guidance of the angels,  
in the patience of the saints,  
in the self-control of the martyrs.  
Such is the path for all servants of Christ,  
the path from death to eternal life.  
Amen.*

Celtic prayer

### **Friday, October 18: Luke 13:10-17**

For some people, being a Christian means following the rules:

- You have to dress for church in a certain way
- You have to follow a set daily quiet time schedule
- You have to go to the right church
- You should (or shouldn't) listen to certain types of Christian music
- You have to read the right Bible translation (and not read the wrong one)
- You have to subscribe to the right theory of end times
- You have to follow (or not follow) specific spiritual disciplines
- You should (or shouldn't) read certain Christian authors
- And so forth ...

The Pharisees and experts in the law in Jesus' day had created hundreds of picayune rules and regulations that people were expected to follow. They were masters of taking general principles, like "*Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy*" (Exodus 20:8), and defining what that did and did not mean to the n<sup>th</sup> degree. They created an elaborate checklist of things that constituted breaking the Sabbath law.

Jesus chooses to practice God's grace, even on the Sabbath. Why?

The purpose of God's law/principles is not to make our lives miserable. His goal in giving us His law is to set us free to be able to enjoy His blessing and His goodness. For instance, the purpose of the commandment on the Sabbath is to create time and space to love, enjoy, and worship God: "You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the Lord your God" (Exodus 20:9-10). God is not trying to squelch our joy and freedom, but give us the opportunity to enjoy Him and His blessings.

How are Jesus' actions really expressions of the true purpose of Sabbath?

How is His action an expression of God's grace? How is this Good News?

What rules/regulations/expectations do we have in our church that are simply rules/regulations/expectations, NOT biblical expressions of God's grace?

How can we be a church that is strong and faithful in the essentials of the faith, but is also genuinely expresses God's amazing grace?

*Lord God who is all in all to me,  
Life of my life and Spirit of my spirit,  
have mercy on me and fill me with your Holy Spirit  
and fill me with love that there may be no room for anything else in my heart.  
I ask not for any blessing,  
but for you, who is the giver of all blessings and of all life.  
I ask not for the world and its pomp and glory, nor for heaven,  
but I need you yourself, for where you are, there is heaven.  
In you alone is satisfaction and abundance for my heart.  
You yourself, my Creator, have created my heart for yourself,  
and not for any other created thing.  
Therefore my heart cannot find rest in anything but you.  
Only in you, Father, who has made this longing for peace in my soul.  
So now take out of this heart whatever is opposed to you  
and abide and rule in it yourself.  
Amen.*

Sadhu Sundar Singh (1889-1929)

### **Saturday, October 19: Luke 15:1-7**

Yesterday I was at lunch with some friends from the church. We were each asked to name a biblical character we most identified with, and to say why.

- One person chose Martha, always wanting to be doing things for God.
- Two people chose David, an imperfect person, who desired to know God's own heart.
- One person chose Thomas, a skeptic who struggled to believe.
- One person chose Esther, who stayed faithful to God even in hard times.
- One person chose Joseph, because despite the challenges he obeyed God.

I said I chose the lost sheep in this parable in John 15. I have a habit of putting my head down, plowing ahead, and – sometimes – ending up wandering far from God. Then Jesus needs to grab me by the scruff of the neck and bring me back into the fold, again. It happens more often than I care to admit.

The good news of God's grace is that He cares about us lost sheep. And He comes after us time and time again. He never gives up on us.

What biblical character do you identify with? Why?

How have you experienced God's grace?

How might the parable of the lost sheep speak into your life?

*May the strength of God pilot us,  
May the power of God preserve us,  
May the wisdom of God instruct us,  
May the hand of God protect us,  
May the way of God direct us,  
May the shield of God defend us,  
May the host of God guard us against the snares of evil  
and the temptations of the world.  
Amen.*

Patrick, c.389-c.461

**Sunday, October 20: Luke 15:8-10**

Yesterday we read about a sheep who wandered away from its flock. The good shepherd, Jesus, left the other 99 behind to go looking for it. In that case, the sheep either deliberately or accidentally wandered away from God. The sheep, intentionally or unintentionally, made choices that led to their being lost.

In today's parable, the coin doesn't choose to be lost. The woman doesn't purposely lose the coin. It just gets lost. Bad things happen to good coins. Bad things happen to good people. It's no one's fault.

One of the big theological/philosophical/social challenges is the problem of evil. Why do bad things just happen? In particular, why do bad things happen to good people? If there is a God, and God is good, why is there evil in the world?

There are no easy answers to those questions. We can blame "sin," the devil, fallen human nature, our parents, and a host of other things. There may be truth to some of this blame. Sometimes we can identify specific reasons for suffering and evil. But playing the blame game is cold comfort for someone who is actually going through tough times. An "explanation" is not what is needed: what they need is God's presence, comfort, strength, and ultimately, His deliverance. They need God's love.

Notice in this parable, no explanation is given for why the coin is lost. The reason doesn't matter. The "why" is irrelevant. What matters is that the coin **IS** lost. The reality of its lostness is what's important.

What does the woman do?

What is the message for us about God's character? What does this mean to you?

*Lord, You love all people –  
regardless of race, economic condition, or creed –  
And you desire ALL to know you as their Saviour and Lord.  
Today I pray especially for those with other faiths,  
who need to know You as Saviour:  
May Your Spirit work a miracle of transformation in their hearts.  
And I pray for those who live and share Your love  
in difficult places, facing persecution.  
Protect them.  
Encourage them.  
Empower them.  
Inspire them.  
May their lives and their words bring a rich harvest into Your Kingdom.  
Amen.*

**Monday, October 21: Luke 15:11-32**

Sometimes bad things just happen. Other times, if we're honest, we get ourselves into trouble.

The younger son finds himself in a tough spot. Bad things are happening to him. Whose fault is it?

We may want to blame God for all the bad things that happen to us, when, sometimes, the fault is our own. Each of us, on occasion, makes bad choices. There is a lot of truth in Theodore Roosevelt's observation, "*If you could kick the person in the pants responsible for most of your troubles, you wouldn't sit for a month.*"

When the young man comes to his senses and decides to come home, what is the father's response? (Note, in that culture, an older man would normally NEVER run anywhere – to do so would be incredibly undignified, yet this distinguished gent chooses to break all social conventions by **running** to welcome his miscreant of a boy home). What does that tell us about his love for his son? What does it tell us about God's love for us?

What is the Good News in this story? What are we learning about God's grace?

Notice the older son's response. He has remained faithful to his father, has not squandered his inheritance, and has not indulged in wild living. He is a good person. Why do you think he reacts as he does?

What is the father's lesson for the older son?

Who do you identify with in the story? The younger son? The older son? The father? Why?

What is God's message to you?

*Come, Lord Jesus, and remain in my heart.  
How grateful I am to realize that the answer to my prayer  
does not depend on me at all.  
As I quietly remain in you and let your life flow in me,  
what freedom it is to know that the Father  
does not see my frayed patience or insufficient trust,  
rather only your patience, Lord,  
and your confidence that the Father has everything in hand.  
In your faith I thank you right now  
for a more glorious answer to my prayer  
than I can imagine.  
Amen*

Catharine Marshall (1914-1983)

## **Tuesday, October 22: Amos 5:7-15**

We would like to think everything is sweet and wonderful in the world today. But when we read the news, we know there are deep social and ethical problems in the world – in our own city. Sometimes our problems come from our own personal poor choices (yesterday's reading). Other times the problems are much bigger than us.

Amos is one of the prophets. The prophets more often spoke truth **into the present situation** than they foretold the future. Amos is speaking hard truth to his people, right here, right now.

Times are tough. People are victims of lies and fake news (5:10). The poor suffer (5:11). The righteous are oppressed (5:12). People accept bribes (5:12). The poor do not receive fair justice (5:12). Honest people keep quiet out of fear (5:13). There doesn't seem to be much Good News. Sound eerily familiar?

Whose fault is it? Is God to blame? Is it the fault of the people who are suffering (the poor, the righteous)? Or is it the fault of other people, evil people, who make poor choices?

Sometimes we blame God for all the evil and suffering in the world when the blame really rests on people who are making wrong choices. Very often the bad things that happen in the world are caused by people, governments, or corporations who make decisions that negatively affect others. Politicians, business leaders, pop culture icons, and other influencers shape the world in spite of God. It's their fault, not God's.

The message of the prophets is a call to holy living in the face of grave evil. We cannot change the behaviour of

international corporations, politicians, world governments, the media, or the general values of society.

We can, however, choose how we live, personally. We can live ethically in our own lives. We can work for justice in our small corner of the world. We can make choices that value and model what is right and good in our own schools. We can pray for people who suffer injustice. We can pray for government leaders.

We can choose to live with the same twisted values of the culture around us. Or we can choose to live for God, by His principles. How will you live? What will that mean, practically, in your life?

*"Let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" (Amos 5:24).*

*Stay with me, Lord, and then I shall begin to shine as you shine,  
to be a light to others.  
The light, Jesus, will be all from you.  
None of it will be mine.  
No merit belongs to me.  
It will be you who shines through me upon others.  
Let me praise you, in the way which you love best,  
by shining on all those around me.  
Give light to them as well as to me;  
bring light to them through me.  
Teach me to show forth your praise, your truth, your will.  
Make me preach you without preaching  
– not by words but by my example and by the sympathetic influence of what I do –  
by my visible resemblance to your saints,  
and the evident fullness of love which my heart bears to you.  
Fill my heart, Lord, with overwhelming love for you.  
Amen.*

John Henry Newman (1801-1890)

### **Wednesday, October 23: Micah 6:1-8**

The Good News is that God has provided for us again and again and again.

In Micah 6, God is reminding the Israelites of how He has loved them, saved them, and provided for them time after time. That doesn't mean people necessarily stay faithful to God. In Micah 1-5, Micah describes in grisly detail how evil the leaders and powers-that-be in Israel had become. As in Amos, the rich got richer while the poor got poorer, foreigners were not welcome, justice was twisted to favour the rich, dishonesty and lies were rampant, widows and orphans suffered, government leaders lacked integrity, compassion, and godliness.

Is all of this evil God's fault? Not at all. It is the result of people making selfish, evil choices. We cannot blame God for the unjust, greedy, or amoral decisions business leaders and politicians make.

We can, however, choose to make good decisions for ourselves.

What does God expect of us (6:8)?

- What does it mean for you to do what is right/to act justly?
- What does it mean for you to love mercy?
- What does it mean for you to walk humbly with your God?

You are not responsible for the sins of the corporation taking bribes in sub-Saharan Africa. You are not responsible for the politician who lies to the people (other than, don't vote for them!). You are responsible, in your own life, to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.

What is God saying to you?

*Father, I abandon myself into your hands:  
do with me what you will.  
Whatever you may do with me, I thank you.  
I am ready for all, I accept all.  
Let only your will be done in me, and in all your creatures –  
I wish no more than this, Lord.  
Into your hands I entrust my soul.  
I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you, Lord,  
and so I need to give myself and to surrender myself into your hands,  
without reserve, and with unlimited confidence, for you are my Father.  
Amen.*

Charles de Foucauld (1856-1916)

#### **Thursday, October 24: John 15:18-25**

We often read other verses in John 15: *"I have loved you even as the Father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey my commandments, you remain in my love, just as I obey my Father's commandments and remain in his love. I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!*

*"This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you slaves, because a master doesn't confide in his slaves. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me ... This is my command: Love each other"(15:9-17).*

- We don't often read 15:18-25. Why not?
- What is the message in these verses?

Jesus' words run against the grain of much contemporary Christianity that teaches health, wealth, and prosperity. How do you feel about His message?

In the midst of this discourse, Jesus teaches us about the Holy Spirit. He is God's Good News to help us face, endure, and overcome the challenges we may face for our faith. *"I will ask the Father," says Jesus, "and he will give you another Advocate, who will never leave you. He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. The world cannot receive him, because it isn't looking for him and doesn't recognize him. But you know him, because he lives with you now and later will be in you. No, I will not abandon you as orphans—I will come to you.*

*"Soon the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Since I live, you also will live. When I am raised to life again, you will know that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Those who accept my commandments and obey them are the ones who love me. And because they love me, my Father will love them. And I will love them and reveal myself to each of them"(14:16-21).*

How is this Good News for us as we face challenges in life?

*I praise you for the life that stirs within me.  
I praise you for the bright and beautiful world into which I go.  
I praise you for earth and sea and sky,  
for scudding cloud and singing bird.  
I praise you for the work you have given me to do.  
I praise you for all that you have given me to fill my leisure hours.  
I praise you for family.  
I praise you for my friends.  
I praise you for music and books and good company  
and all pure pleasures.  
I praise you for the mission you give me  
to be good news in the world.  
Amen.*

John Baillie (1886-1960)

## Friday, October 25: John 16:1-15

Why is there evil in the world?

The Bible rarely gives us a clear answer. Rather, there is the acceptance that, this side of Jesus' return, evil exists. Part of living in a fallen world, with fallen people, fallen economic systems, and fallen governments, is the reality that evil happens. Innocent people suffer. Good people experience bad things. That's reality.

What the Bible does promise is that

1. God is with us, in and through the tough times. Through the Holy Spirit, God is always in us, with us, and working through us.
2. One day, some day, the evil people, powers, and corrupt systems will face God's judgment. All will be put right. In the end, God wins.

We live in an awkward in-between time. On the one hand, Jesus has come and begun to establish His Kingdom (Mark 1:15). He came to proclaim and inaugurate the reign of God. Through how Jesus taught and lived He showed how God and His Spirit are dramatically breaking into world: challenging the oppressors, healing the sick, caring for the poor, casting out demons, having compassion on foreigners, embracing the outcasts.

On the other hand, given human sinfulness, we will never succeed in making things perfect this side of eternity. Only when Jesus returns will all things be made good and right.

However, we keep plodding away at doing what is right, just, and good. As God's people, the church, we are called to continue His work. Even when it's tough. We pray "*Your Kingdom come and Your will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven*" and we do our best to see that prayer come to pass. We don't throw up our hands in resignation and despair. We don't make excuses for complacency.

In big and small ways, we change the world.

Remember the call in Micah 6:8: "*This is what the Lord requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*" We are called to keep on living rightly, mercifully, and humbly.

What is God saying to you?

*We give you honour and praise, Lord our God,  
for all the tender mercies you so freely give us  
throughout the week.*

*Endless praise to you for creating us in your image,  
for redeeming us by the precious blood of your dear Son  
when we were lost,  
and for setting us apart through your Holy Spirit.*

*We thank you for your help and support in our times of need,  
for your protection in the many dangers to body and soul,  
for your comfort in our sorrows,  
for granting us the continued gift of life,  
and for being so patient with us  
and giving us so much time to repent of our sins.*

*For these and all your blessings we have received,  
only because of your goodness, we thank you  
and ask you to fill us continually with the Holy Spirit  
so that we can grow in your unmerited favour,  
remain sure in our faith, and continue on in doing good.  
Amen.*

John Knox (1513-1572)

**Saturday, October 26: James 1:1-7, 12**

If there is a God and God is good, why is there so much evil in the world?

Over the past few days we have noted that

1. Sometimes the evil comes from our own poor decisions (the lost sheep and lost son)
2. Sometimes "trials," "testing," and suffering just happen (the lost coin)
3. Sometimes the evil comes from the decisions of others, including corporate and government leaders

The Bible doesn't speculate on WHY every evil exists or why bad things happen to good people. There are no verses that explain breast cancer, the cause of random accidents, the reasons for childhood illness, or why my neighbour opposes my faith. Scripture simply accepts that in a fallen world with fallen people, fallen systems, and fallen powers-that-be, problems just happen.

One day, some day, when Jesus returns, all things will be put to right. But in the meantime, we can expect difficulties. Suffering happens. God does not cause these. They just are.

However, God can bring blessings even out of the challenges of life.

Eugene Peterson translates James 1:2-4 and 12 like this: *"Consider it a sheer gift, friends, when tests and challenges come at you from all sides. You know that under pressure, your faith-life is forced into the open and shows its true colors. So don't try to get out of anything prematurely. Let it do its work so you become mature and well-developed, not deficient in any way ..."*

*"Anyone who meets a testing challenge head-on and manages to stick it out is mighty fortunate. For such persons loyally in love with God, the reward is life and more life."*

What is God saying to you?

*We humbly beg you, Lord, for the gifts  
and for the grace of the Holy Spirit.  
Give us more love for you and for our neighbors.  
Give us more joy in worship,  
more peace at all times,  
more long-suffering, gentleness,  
and kindness of heart and manner.  
May we know something of what it means to be filled with Holy Spirit.  
For the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.*

**Sunday, October 27: James 1:19-27**

How would you finish the sentence *"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: \_\_\_\_\_"?* Or *"Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means \_\_\_\_\_"?*

How does James finish the sentence? James 1:27: *"Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you."*

Does his answer surprise you?

We probably have no problem agreeing with the last part or that answer: refusing to let the world corrupt you/keeping yourself from being polluted by the world. We agree that following Jesus guides us into a holy lifestyle which resists the temptation to sin and do evil.

We may be more surprised at the first part of James' answer. God loves people who look after orphans and widows – people in need. An essential component of the Good News is that we have a purpose – bigger than just going to heaven when we die. We are called to live as the people of God, with the love of God, living out the grace of God in practical ways, moment-by-moment, day-by-day. We have purpose in our lives.

James challenges us to appreciate that living as a believer in Jesus is more than just *"getting rid of all the filth and evil in your lives"* (1:21), it is also a matter of *"humbly accepting the word God has planted in your hearts."*

What does it mean to accept the word of God? *"Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says"* (1:22-25). We are called to be people who believe the truth and to live the truth.

"Living the truth" is more than just living a good, moral life. It involves practical care for those in need (like orphans and widows). Historically this has meant that Christians were in the forefront of establishing hostels, schools, hospitals, orphanages, social programs, anti-slavery movements, environmental care initiatives, racial and gender equality movements, refugee programmes, food banks, and much, much more. Of course, our legacy is not perfect (the church is still made up of people – people who occasionally sin). In general, however, Christians have been, and continue to be, a practical blessing to the world and in our community.

How can we live the Good News today?

*Loving heavenly Father, thank you for your Holy Spirit  
who fills our hearts with a serene assurance that we belong to you forever.  
How wonderful to be a child of the great King over all the earth,  
a God of love who does not desire that any should perish.  
Take away doubts and fears when we become estranged to you  
or experience a dark night of the soul.  
When suffering strikes or injustice happens,  
let us not blame you but understand that all things  
inevitably work for the good for those who love God  
and are called according to his purpose.  
Grant us the things that lead to assurance –  
greater faith, greater trust, and greater hope.  
As we grow in assurance, than lead us to endurance,  
knowing that we can overcome any obstacle, even death itself.  
Amen.*

James S. Bell Jr.

### **Monday, October 28: James 2:1-13**

Back in July, Donald Trump tweeted what were universally acknowledged as racist tweets about four female legislators of colour. In response, John Blake wrote a soul-searching editorial: *"We can't forever be a country (the U.S.) that prides itself for welcoming immigrants and religious diversity while also being one that puts immigrant children in cages and shrugs when our President makes racist statements. To paraphrase another President – Abraham Lincoln – we eventually 'will become all one thing or all the other.' We can become what one scholar called a 'compassionate, multireligious, multiracial democracy.' Or we can become what another called a 'hollowed out' democracy, where one ethnic group rules the rest."*

What about us? What is our attitude toward people from other ethnic backgrounds? Other religious traditions?

Do we prefer people who look "just like us"? Would we rather keep "other" people out of our country? Do we treat people from other ethnic groups differently? Do we discriminate among people based on race or religion?

What might James say to us?

The Good News of Jesus calls us to love our neighbour as ourselves (2:8). Our "neighbour" may well be someone from a different cultural or religious group. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus is answering the question, *"Who is my neighbour?"* (Luke 10:25-37). In the parable, the Samaritan – a person from a

different culture/religion than the Jews – is the one who loves his neighbour, while the Jewish people don't even help one of their own. Today, Jesus might tell the story of the "Good Syrian" or the "Good First Nations Person." A neighbour cares for someone in need, regardless of their ethnic or religious background. Christians **ought** to be the most caring – the best neighbours – of all. Are we? Why? Why not?

What might Jesus be saying to you?

*Lord, when I read your word, I can't help but see  
how unable I am to live out what it says.  
Remind me every day that, in my own power, living and talking  
the way you call me to live and talk is utterly impossible.  
Remind me that it is only through the power of your Holy Spirit  
that I can even come close to being all that I can be in you.  
Show me every day areas in my life that I haven't given over to you,  
areas where I am not relying on you  
to do through me what I can't do for myself.  
Amen.*

Tracy Macon Sumner

## **Tuesday, October 29: James 2:14-26**

The Good News of Jesus' love and grace changes us.

In us, and through us, the Good News of Jesus' love should change the world.

James is pretty blunt: if our faith is real, we will live lives of compassion, care, and practical love. If we aren't living compassionately, we ought to question the sincerity of our faith.

James is NOT saying we are saved by what we do. Our works do not save us. We are saved through God's grace as we put our faith in Him. We are saved by faith not by works.

He is saying that **if** the love of Jesus has genuinely impacted our lives, **then** it will naturally overflow in love to those whom God loves: all people. Our salvation has practical implications for how we live our lives.

Read through James' words a couple of times. How does this passage give you a sense of purpose in life?

What is God saying to you?

*You, eternal Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are a deep sea,  
and the more I enter into you the more I find,  
and the more I find the more I seek.  
My soul cannot be satisfied without you,  
for it continually hungers for you, the eternal Trinity,  
desiring to see you with the light of your light.  
As the heart desires springs of living water,  
so my soul desires to leave the prison of this dark body and see you in truth.  
Eternal God, what more could you give me than yourself?  
You are the fire that burns without being consumed.  
You consume in your heart all my soul's self-love and sin.  
You are the fire that takes away the cold and darkness in my soul.  
With your light, I pray that you might illuminate me  
so that I may know all your truth.  
Clothe me with yourself, eternal truth,  
so I may run this mortal life in true obedience,  
guided by the light of your most holy love and truth.  
Amen.*

Catherine of Siena (1347-1386)

### Wednesday, October 30: James 3:1-12

The Good News gives us a purpose in life. We are called to live and love the world in the name of Jesus. Jesus has loved us, then we overflow with love for others. *"Faith by itself isn't enough. Unless it produces good deeds, it is dead and useless ... Faith without good deeds is useless ..."* (2:17, 20).

One of the deeds/works we often do is to talk. Most of us talk – a lot.

- Is our talk "good" – uplifting, building-up, encouraging, helpful, kind, gracious, and loving?
- Or is our talk "not so good" – unkind, critical, judgmental, hurtful, tearing-down, and unloving?

James is encouraging us to speak in ways that reflect the fruit of Spirit of God, reflecting God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). How are you doing with that? Ask God to help you recognize any not-so-good things you might say ...

In our speech we always walk a fine line between speaking the truth and speaking in love. In Ephesians 4, Paul empathizes a concern for unity/grace/love and truth/maturity/holiness: *"Speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church"* (Ephesians 4:15).

How do I put that into practice? How can I speak the truth? How can I speak the truth in love?

*A Workday Prayer* (adapt to your own circumstances ...):

*Lord Jesus, as I enter this workplace,  
I bring your presence with me.  
I speak your peace, your grace, and your perfect order  
into the atmosphere of this office.  
I acknowledge your lordship over all that will be spoken,  
thought, decided and accomplished within these walls.  
Lord Jesus, I thank you for the gifts you have deposited in me.  
I do not take them lightly,  
but commit to use them responsibly and well.  
  
Give me a fresh supply of truth and love on which to draw as I do my job.  
Anoint my creativity, my ideas, my energy  
so that even my smallest task may bring you honor.  
Lord, when I am confused, guide me.  
When I am weary, energize me.  
Lord, when I am burned out,  
infuse me with the light of your Holy Spirit.  
May the work that I do and the way I do it bring  
hope, life, and courage to all I come in contact with today.  
And, Lord, even in this day's most stressful moment, may I rest in you.  
Amen.*

Author unknown

### Thursday, October 31: James 3:13-18

The Good News is that we are called to live out our faith in practical ways. It's not just a matter of believing the right things (although sound doctrine/truth is very important), it is also about allowing God's grace to change us and flow through us (love). We live our faith as the people of God with integrity. We live the truth in love.

What does that mean in practice?

- *We do good works with the humility that comes from wisdom.*
- *We are not bitterly jealous*

- *There is no selfish ambition in our hearts*
- *We don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying.*
- *We are not jealous or selfish*
- *We try to live as purely as possible*
- *We are peace loving*
- *We are gentle at all times*
- *We are willing to yield to others.*
- *We are full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds.*
- *We show no favoritism.*
- *We are always sincere.*
- *We are peacemakers who plant seeds of peace*
- *As a result, we reap a harvest of righteousness.*

None of us is perfect yet. We never will be. Hopefully, however, we are open to God's Spirit challenging and changing us to being more and more like Jesus every day. When this happens, we become His Good News.

What is Jesus saying to you?

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace,  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much  
seek to be consoled as to console;  
to be understood as to understand;  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive;  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen*

Francis of Assisi (1181-1226)

### **Friday, November 1: Ephesians 4:16-5:20**

We are God's people. In each of us, God's Spirit is at work. If we are open to His work in our lives, He will guide us and change us. Hopefully each of us is becoming a bit more like Jesus day by day. Imperfect though we are, people can see a little bit of God's love and grace in and through our lives.

Together, in community, we are God's church. As a fellowship of people, all shaped (at least a little bit) by His Spirit, we model something of the possibility of who we can be as a community of His grace. We are (or should be) a little bit of a foretaste of heaven. We are all works-in-progress becoming a little bit more and more like Jesus. Of course none of us is there yet. Neither is our church perfect yet.

But God's Good News is that He doesn't leave us as we are, His Spirit actively wants to inform, form, and transform us to be more and more the people He created us to be. God's loves us too much to leave us unchanged.

In most of Paul's letters is a passage, like this, that contrasts who we were before God's Spirit came into our lives, and who we can be through the blessing of His Spirit in our lives. This passage in Ephesians 4-5 is one such passage: God's Spirit challenges and changes us.

What are the acts/desires of the "old self"/"old nature"?

What ought the "new self"/"new nature" be like?

*"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you" (4:31-32).*

What, specifically, can you do today to make a positive change in your life?

*Grant to us, O Lord,  
the royalty of inward happiness,  
and the serenity which comes from living close to you.  
Daily renew in us the sense of joy,  
and let the eternal Spirit of the Father dwell in our souls and bodies,  
filling every corner of our hearts with light and grace;  
so that, bearing about with us the infection of good courage,  
we may be diffusers of life,  
and we may meet all ills and accidents  
with gallant and high-hearted happiness,  
giving you thanks always for all things.  
Amen*

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850-94)

## **Saturday, November 2: Colossians 3:1-14 (Time change tonight ... clocks back one hour ☺)**

The Good News is God loves us too much to leave us as we are. He is constantly inviting and challenging us to allow His Spirit to help us become more and more the people He created us to be. He wants us to be more and more like Jesus so we can share His grace and love with people around us.

Like Ephesians 4-5, which we read yesterday, Colossians 3 is a passage where Paul contrasts our lives before the Spirit of God changes us with our lives after the Spirit begins to transform us.

Paul is very practical and pragmatic. What specific behaviours does he condemn (3:5-11)?

Specifically, what does he say about ethnic/racial prejudice (3:11)? All people of all ethnic and social groups are welcome in the Kingdom of God. There is no place for any kind of racial privilege or ethnic superiority complex.

How are we called to live, in the Spirit?

- *Living with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.*
- *Making allowance for each other's faults*
- *Forgiving anyone who offends you*
- *Clothing yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony*

Paul concludes with these words (3:15-17): *"Let the peace that comes from Christ rule in your hearts. For as members of one body you are called to live in peace. And always be thankful.*

*"Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father."*

How do you feel being described as a "representative of the Lord Jesus"? (Or "whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus"). How does that challenge you?

How can we be God's Good News today?

*O God listen to my prayer;  
my earnest petition to come to you  
for I know that you are hearing me  
as surely as though I saw you with my own eyes.*

*Anything that is amiss in my soul,  
anything that is wrong in my life  
may you, O God, sweep it from me  
and may you shield me in your love.*

*Let no thought come to my heart,  
let no sound come to my ear,  
let no temptation come to my eye,  
let no fragrance come to my nose,  
let no fancy come to my mind,  
let no ruffle come to my spirit,  
that is hurtful to my body or my soul this day or this night.*

*May you, yourself, O God of life,  
be in front of me, and behind me,  
may you be my guiding-star,  
may you be my Lord,  
from my life's beginning to my life's end.  
Amen*

Celtic prayer

### **Sunday, November 3: Psalm 100 (Time change last night ... clocks went back one hour ☺)**

God's Good News is for you and me in Canada in 2019. But the Good News is far bigger than you and me, our church, our city, or our country. The church of Jesus Christ is a global phenomenon that transcends every national border, every ethnic division, every social barrier, and unites all humanity – all of creation – in our common faith in Jesus.

Followers of Jesus around the world, from all sorts of traditions, share a common faith: *"There is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is over all, in all, and living through all"* (Ephesians 4:4-6).

This week we're celebrating the fact that the Good News is something that unites us with other believers in other countries and other communities.

**All the earth** shouts for joy to the Lord (Psalm 100:1). We are part of a chorus that includes people from every nation. As Revelation describes it, we are part of *"a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation and tribe and people and language, standing in front of the throne and before the Lamb. They were clothed in white robes and held palm branches in their hands. And they were shouting with a great roar, 'Salvation comes from our God who sits on the throne and from the Lamb!'"* (Revelation 7:9-10).

Since 2017 we have had a growing partnership with the Fraternity of Baptist Churches in Cuba. It is a rich reminder that God's Spirit is working all over the world. The vitality, life, and witness within these churches can be an inspiration – and a challenge – to us. This week we're celebrating that God's Good News invites us to praise God with believers all over the world.

Psalm 100 reminds us that we are called to be joyful, thankful, praise-full worshipers.

As we gather to worship today, may we do so in a spirit of joy, thanksgiving, and praise, in communion with believers all over the world (including Cuba).

*Lord, for tomorrow and its needs, I do not pray;  
keep me, my God, from the stain of sin, just for today.  
Let me both diligently work, and duly pray;  
let me be kind in word and deed, just for today.  
Let me be slow to do my will, prompt to obey;  
help me to sacrifice myself, just for today.  
And if today, my tide of life should ebb away,  
give me the assurance of your presence divine, sweet Lord, today.  
So for tomorrow and its needs, I do not pray;  
but keep me, guide me, love me, Lord, just for today.  
Amen.*

Augustine (354-430)