



St. John the Evangelist Church
3428 Portage Road, Niagara Falls, Ontario Phone: 905-354-1227

**Sunday Evening Worship
for Harvest Thanksgiving**

Call to Worship

Creator God,
We rest in you.
Jesus the Son,
We rest in you.
Holy Spirit,
We rest in you.

Silence



Loving God,
for the things this day that have
brought us joy,
We give you thanks.

Healing Lord, for the things this day that have brought us sorrow,
Bring peace.

Spirit of life, in the closing of this day,
Give us rest.

O God, you create all things, drawing them to yourself.
You made time, space, and matter from nothing,
and yet through you they are given life and meaning.
May the words of these prayers, brought from nothing,
rise to you as a sufficient offering of praise and thanksgiving. **Amen**

*~ written by Josh Walker, in "Sunday Evening Prayer,"
posted on **Lighting Beacons.** <http://lighting-beacons-liturgy.com/>*

Collect of the Day

O God, in your Son Jesus Christ you richly bless us with all that we need, bread from the earth and the bread of heaven, which gives life to the world. Give us one thing more: grateful hearts to sing your praise, in this world and the world to come. Amen.



Deuteronomy Chapter 8, Verses:7-18

For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper.

You shall eat your fill and bless the LORD your God for the good land that he has given you. Take care that you do not forget the LORD your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good.

Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.

Psalm 65

Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed,
O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come.

When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions.

Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.

You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.

You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,

the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

Glory be to God our Maker, to Jesus the Christ, and to the Holy Spirit who dwells in our midst, both now and for ever. Amen.

2 Corinthians Chapter 9, Verses:6-15

The point is this: the one who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and the one who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work. As it is written, "He scatters abroad, he gives to the poor; his righteousness endures forever." He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. You will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us; for the rendering of this ministry not only supplies the needs of the saints but also overflows with many thanksgivings to God. Through the testing of this ministry you glorify God by your obedience to the confession of the gospel of Christ and by the generosity of your sharing with them and with all others, while they long for you and pray for you because of the surpassing grace of God that he has given you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Luke Chapter 17, Verses:11-19

On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, saying, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!"

When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan.

Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

A Sermon for Harvest Thanksgiving

Harvest Thanksgiving. A wonderful feast day in the church that is a "left over" of sorts from another era. Harvest Thanksgiving was once a day to thank God that there was enough food in the cellar to make it to spring, or if it had been a bad year to pray that God would provide what the cellar wasn't going to be able to. Clearly, an important day in the life of the 19th century Church but what is this day about in our day? With food as close as the refrigerator door - what are we doing; still celebrating Harvest Thanksgiving? What have we to be truly thankful for?

My fear is that what we're doing is reminding ourselves of just how fortunate we are. That we have in popular terms "Made it" The North American dream - family home in the right neighbourhood, new car, fat retirement savings plan. Or maybe it's that we have a job to go to on Monday morning in an age of cutbacks. Maybe that's what we're thankful for.

St. Paul wrote a letter to some Christians like us it. He told them that he had all the things they had. He was from a nice neighbourhood, a good family, a member of the right church, he had a respectable job. By all accounts Paul had it made. And then he met Jesus. And all of a sudden the rest was in Paul's words - "rubbish". All these things that we are thankful for, that make us feel good, and give us a place in the world. Paul accounts the whole lot as worthless.

Now if I told you that Paul wasn't the most popular of preachers - I don't suppose you'd be surprised. The folks Paul wrote to were not much different than you and I. We want to be thankful for Volvos, stereos, stainless steel kitchens, marble floors and designer clothes. Paul and the Church want us to be thankful for Jesus. And unfortunately it's really no contest.

Our cause, the Christian message is absolutely hopeless. We are too few and the opposition is too great. A small parish verses the marketing department of General Motors, our little church verses the allure of the Niagara Outlet Mall. A preacher verses the marketing wizards of Bay Street. You don't need a Las Vegas bookie to figure out that the odds are against us. And so is it any wonder that we sit here in this church surrounded by the symbols of God's love being thankful for all the wrong things?

We're thankful for the things of this world instead of being thankful for the gift that God has promised us in the world to come. In St. Paul's words the "prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus." Eternal life. The word of God verses the powers and desires that be. It can all look so hopeless.

Except. Except that it happens to be God's cause. God isn't on the side of the Bay Street boys and girls and their campaigns to convince us that human life isn't worth living without the latest offering from Chrysler, Sony, or Great Gulf Homes. God is on the side of the poor, of pennies in a mission basket. God is on the side of those who long for freedom. And if we'd all spend more time reading the old family bible more often we'd have more confidence in the knowledge that God's causes always triumph- regardless of the odds!

Speaking of triumph. There is a wonderful story that comes out of Eastern Europe in the days of Communism. After the troops of the old Soviet Union had crushed a small uprising the local Communist Party scheduled a great parade - lumbering tanks, trucked in missiles, battalions of lock stepped soldiers. But suddenly, in the midst of the parade, there was a rusty little blue pickup truck weaving in and out, disrupting all the festivities, with a six foot sign on it reading, "For God's sake, why?"

Why are we thankful for our high standard of living when most of the world has a mighty high standard of dying? Why are we thankful for the fancy cars, stainless steel kitchens and designer clothes that promised to make us feel good and ultimately only disappointed? Why? The audacious Word of God questions our world and pierces our hearts.

Does all this shock you, does it make you just a little angry? Well listen to the words of another preacher, one with better credentials than mine:"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19). Those of course are the words of Jesus. God's most audacious Word.

We - you and I - are in one sense the poor, the oppressed and the captives. Our minds and imaginations have been captured by the concept that life's meaning and worth is wrapped up in the car we drive, the neighbourhood we live in, the size of our bank accounts, yearly income, and the respect the world does or does not give us. Ours is a poverty of spirit. And yet, God's audacious Word would free us from all that and re-orient us towards the riches of The Kingdom of God.

The newspapers reported that God's word was spoken not so long ago in a multi-million dollar mega church not so far from here. It was built in the North Eastern United States a "New England Colonial" style building that was most impressive. The day of dedication had been set, the Bishop was slatted to arrive, but not all the furnishings had shown up. The chancel was empty; no pulpit or altar, no expensive tapestry for the back wall. When worshippers gathered for the dedication, they found that someone had snuck into the building at night and, with a wide brush, had painted in big red letters on the bare wall, "Stop the killing, Feed the poor, Sincerely yours, Jesus Christ."

Do you sense our strange calling in this mixed up world, in this world that will go along with almost anything for a tank full of gas, a high credit limit, and a fat tax fee savings account? Somehow you and I are called to speak, to shake awake God's people with the strong audacious Word of Christ.

We have been called to be thankful not for what we have, as is the world around us, but, to be thankful for what God has allowed us to do with what we've so freely been given. By God's grace we live in the richest and most affluent society that this planet has ever known. Yet, we didn't choose to be born into it. We are here in this country, at this time, by God's grace alone. And set before us is the opportunity to choose Christ, and his dream for the world above all else. To count the riches of this world as "rubbish" and enter into the life and work of Christ.

We were not put on earth to shop, the mall isn't the natural habitat of humanity and no matter what Bay Street might wish you to believe we are not consumers first and humans second. We human beings simply are not the measure of our bank balance, job status, and neighbourhoods.

The audacious word of God is simply this - God loves all of humanity - rich and poor, short and fat, gay and so called straight, ugly and even the beautiful. And on this Harvest Thanksgiving that is what we Christians are thankful for - God's love shown for us in the person of Jesus Christ.

God's love was shown to our forebears in the abundance of the harvest - In a world of abundance and excess - God's love is shown by our willingness to give freely - to live simply - and to love those whom the world would not. This is our ministry at St. Margaret's - and in this - as in all things we give thanks to God. Let the world give thanks for our standard of living - Let us give thanks for the standard of our giving - born in God's love for all people, and shown to us and the world in the person of Jesus Christ.

Today, let us give thanks for the gift of Jesus above all else. Amen.

A Testimony of Faith

Into the silence of the void the Creator spoke,
and the world came into being.
The Word of God in the vastness brought light from darkness,
matter from nothing,
flesh from dust,
life from lifelessness.

In the quiet of a small town in Palestine
the Word of God came to us.
Even though of one being with the Creator,
Jesus our Christ, taking on human form, was born,
lived and walked among us,
speaking the words of life.
He was crucified, died, and was buried.
He rose from the dead and speaks to us today.
He is the one who saves us from ourselves.

In the stillness of our souls the Spirit of God,
who is one with the Creator and the Christ,
whispers the Word,
and calls us back to the Creator,
back to the Christ,
back to the wholeness of everlasting life
in the unity of the Creator, Christ and Spirit.

*~ from Ash Wednesday (Silence) written by Lisa Frenz for
Mt. Carmel Evangelical Lutheran Church in Portland, Oregon.
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The Prayers of the People

In peace let us pray to the Lord, saying, "We pray to you, Lord."
That this evening may be holy, good, and peaceful,
We pray to you, Lord.

That the work we have done this day and the people we have met may bring us closer to you,

In the Anglican Cycle of Prayer, we pray for the Church of the Province of Uganda, The Most Revd Stephen Samuel Kaziimba - Archbishop of Uganda & and Bishop of Kampala;

For our Bishops Linda our Primate, Mark our National Indigenous Archbishop, Anne our Metropolitan, and Susan our Bishop;

In the Diocese of Niagara, we pray for Christ Church, McNab, The Reverend Dorothy Hewlett, Rector, and the people of that parish;

For all the clergy and people who share in the ministry of St. John's.

Today we pray for the following people and their families: Briar Rose, Katie Rose, Phil Ross, Wade Ruddle, Sandra Sagert & Tony Savoury-Knight.

And in our community we give thanks and pray for those who volunteer and offer leadership to Jump Start.

We remember those who are close to us, for those who need our prayers: Lucas, Maria, Kelly-Lynne, Jan, Aisling, Helen, Bev, Kathy, Adam, Wendy & Gary, Maryse, Gary, Cassandra & Max, Shirley, Lee, Mary, Barb, Mylee, Betty, Patti, David, the Guerin family the Sorley family, baby Parker, Betty, Margaret, Janice, Pat, Michael, Larry, Patti, Karen, for all affected by Covid-19, and for others, ...

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep.

Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, sustain the dying, calm the suffering, and pity the distressed; all for your love's sake, O Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

A Lord's Prayer

Eternal Spirit, Father and Mother of us all,
Holy is your name.

Let justice and mercy fill all Creation and let us recognize
that every thought and thing belongs to you.

Feed us with the bread we need for today.
Forgive our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Stand with us in trial and temptation.
Free us from the grip of all that is evil.

For you alone are creating our universe,
now and forever. **Amen.**

— from the ***Seekers Church***, a Christian community
in the tradition of the Church of the Saviour.

A Night Prayer

Lord,
it is night.

The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
what has not been done has not been done;
let it be.

The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world and of our own lives
rest in you.

The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
all dear to us,
and all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
new joys,
new possibilities.

In your name we pray. Amen.

A Blessing & Dismissal

Go now as those raised with Christ,
wondering at God's great love
and telling the story of your salvation.
Be on your guard against all kinds of greed
and set your minds on the ways of heaven.

And may God reach out to you and nourish you;
May Christ Jesus renew you in the image of your creator;
And may the Holy Spirit lead you with cords of kindness and love.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord,

...In the name of Christ. Amen.