**World Communion Sunday**

**Rev. Michael Webster**

**Guest Speaker and Presider from St. Martin’s United Church**

* When Patrick suggested that we could trade places and bring with us our own communion liturgies on this, World-Wide Communion Sunday, I thought it was a brilliant idea – good for him and for me, good for our respective congregations, good for ecumenical relations, good for our neighbourhood.
* And, I have to admit, selfishly I thought, it won’t be very hard to write a sermon along those lines. And then the lectionary gave us this passage from Luke’s gospel about trees jumping in lakes and not thanking servants.
* Of the four gospels, Luke is by far my favourite. I love Luke, but this passage … If you have a bare kernel of faith – about *this much* – you could say to this tree, Go jump in the lake, and it would.
* Years ago, early in my faith journey, I tried it – tested my faith to see if I could make a tree fly. Nope. Couldn’t even make it flap its branches. I was disappointed to learn I didn’t even have *that much* faith.
* Since then, I have realized that Pope Francis has never made a tree fly. Neither did Martin Luther. Or Menno Simons. Or Thomas Aquinas. Or the Apostle Paul. I have come to believe that faith isn’t about having supernatural powers. It isn’t about turning ordinary Christians into X-Men or some other kind of superhero. It isn’t about turning the church into Agents of Shield.
* As Mother Teresa famously said, “We cannot do great things … we do small things with great love.”
* What would cause the disciples to ask for more faith, anyway? In the verses just before our reading, Jesus was telling the disciples that they need to accept every apology they receive. No matter how many times they are wronged, those who would follow me, he said, must always forgive the one who is sorry – must live lives not of holding grudges but of offering grace. And that is the life of faith – to reflect the grace and goodness we see in Jesus.
* If that’s the life of faith, say the disciples, we need more faith. We’re not ready to let bygones be bygones. We’re not ready to give up holding it against those people who hurt us. When it comes to forgive and forget, we hold on and remember. So, like Oliver Twist, the stand before Jesus and say, “More, please.”
* We live in a world that is divided in so many ways, and I don’t just mean conflicts in the mid-East. We watch with baffled amusement as our American friends endure the divisions apparent in their current presidential election campaign. I am reminded of the ardent Republican supporter who was asked how she got along with her friends who are Democrats. “Simple,” she replied. “I don’t have any friends who are Democrats.
* If forgiveness is a hallmark of the life of faith, say the disciples and maybe we would join our voices to theirs, we need more faith.
* Nonsense, says Jesus. If you had *that much* faith, you could accomplish big things. The faith you already have is enough to forgive. Just use the faith you have. Just live the faith you talk about.
* OK, that’s all well and good. But as usual, Jesus doesn’t leave well enough alone. By way of explaining the life of faith, he invites the disciples first to imagine they are rich enough to have a servant or slave and then to imagine they are the servant or slave.
* As a rich person, you would expect your servants to finish their work before they quit for the day, says Jesus, and you wouldn’t bother to thank them just because they did their job.
* Now there’s a bit of cultural disconnect here. We’re Canadian. We’re polite. We say Thank you. When I go to a restaurant, I expect my server to bring me my meal, but I say Thank you when she does. I even say thank you when she brings the bill.
* But I understand what Jesus meant. Before I became a minister, when I had a real job, I don’t ever recall a boss meeting me at the door to say thanks for getting here on time. I was expected to show up on time, and I didn’t get thanked for it. And when I was the boss, I don’t recall thanking anyone for staying until quitting time. I just expected they would.
* As much as I believe, in my Canadian way, that politeness greases the wheels of social interaction (even online), I understand what Jesus is saying. Certain things are expected of us as Christians, and for the most part, they are things we expect of ourselves – to be honest and faithful, to act with integrity and compassion, to do justice and love kindness. These aren’t special behaviours. They aren’t over-the-top extras. They don’t earn bonus points. These are the basics. These are so fundamental that we don’t expect to be thanked. If I go to the store, I don’t expect the manager to thank me for not shoplifting.
* In today’s reading, we are not seeing gentle Jesus, meek and mild. We are seeing demanding Jesus – the Jesus who shows up more often than we would like and asks of us that we commit ourselves to following his Way, that we be Christian not just in word but also in deed, Christian not just in name but also in action. To show that we understand ourselves to be forgiven by being forgiving. We pray it every Sunday – forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.
* And why should we? Is it because Jesus is the boss and we are his slaves? No. It is because Jesus is the servant who deserves our thanks. It is Jesus who washes the feet of his disciples, Jesus who prays, “Not my will, but thine be done,” Jesus who sets the table, Jesus who blesses and passes the bread, Jesus who blesses and shares the cup. This is my body, given for you; this is my blood, poured out for you. Do this in remembrance of me. So in the eating and drinking this morning, let us indeed remember. And in remembering, let us share the grace of God with family and friends and neighbours both near and far. Amen.

God of goodness and grace, we remember before you this morning that your people come from all places. They are wonderful in their variety of sizes and shapes and colours and genders and languages and clothing and cultures. May your Spirit fill us all, such that we may live in harmony with each other.

God of our hearts and of our lives, we are thankful before you this morning for all that brings joy and wonder to our lives – for the beauty of the world, with the colours of autumn leaves and the richness of harvest bounty. We pray that goodness may fall upon us and others as leaves fall upon the earth.

We are thankful also for the blessings of family and the company of friends and we pray for a world in which children may grow up without fear or hunger, a world in which curious minds are filled with knowledge, both boys and girls, a world in which spears are melted down into plowshares and guns are kept locked away, a world in which we are judged by the content of our character and not the colour of our skin.

We are thankful for the energy of youth and the wisdom of our elders, for the health that we have and the hopes that fill our dreams and energize our waking moments. We pray for those we know who whose health is at risk because of illness or injury. We pray for little ones at the beginning of their lives, for elders in the twilight of their years and for those in the vigour of their middle years.

We are thankful for the peace and the freedom that we enjoy in this country. We pray for the soldiers, police, fire fighters and others who put themselves in harm’s way to keep the peace. We pray that all the world may set aside hatred and grievance, that justice and mercy may guide human relations and that thy will be done on Earth as it is in heaven.

We pray for faith enhanced, for hope undiminished, for love realized. We pray in Jesus’ name and for his sake. Amen.