

**I AM THE VINE,
YOU
ARE THE
BRANCHES**

-JOHN 15:5

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Visitation Minister

Paul Shilton

Minister of Music

Laura Burton

Organist

Sandra Mogensen

Pianist

EASTER 5

May 2, 2021

CONFESSİON AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, + one God,
Who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation.
Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

To you, O God, all hearts are open, to you all desires known.
We come to you, confessing our sins.
Forgive us in your mercy, and remember us in your love.
Show us your ways; teach us your paths; and lead us in justice and truth,
For the sake of your goodness in Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

By water and the Holy Spirit God gives you a new birth,
And through the death and resurrection of + Jesus Christ,
God forgives you all your sins.
The God of mercy and might strengthen you in all goodness
And keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

O God, you give us your Son as the vine apart from whom we cannot live. Nourish our life in his resurrection, that we may bear the fruit of love and know the fullness of your joy, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

FIRST READING: *Acts 8:26-40*

A reading from the Book of Acts.

Led by the Spirit, Philip encounters an Ethiopian official who is returning to his African home after having been to Jerusalem to worship. Philip uses their encounter to proclaim the gospel to him. Upon coming to faith in Jesus, he is baptized by Philip.

²⁶An angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Get up and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.” (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹Then the Spirit said to Philip, “Go over to this chariot and join it.” ³⁰So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹He replied, “How can I, unless someone guides me?” And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³²Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

“Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter,
and like a lamb silent before its shearer,
so he does not open his mouth.

³³In his humiliation justice was denied him.
Who can describe his generation?
For his life is taken away from the earth.”

³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus. ³⁶As they were going along the road, they came to some water; and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water! What is to prevent me from being baptized?” ³⁸He commanded the chariot to stop, and both of them, Philip and the eunuch, went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord snatched Philip away; the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

⁴⁰But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he was passing through the region, he proclaimed the good news to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: *Psalm 22:25-31*

²⁵From you comes my praise in the | great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who | fear the LORD.

²⁶**The poor shall eat | and be satisfied,**
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts | live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn | to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow | before God.

²⁸**For dominion belongs | to the LORD,**

who rules o- | ver the nations.

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow | down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel be- | fore the LORD.

³⁰**Their descendants shall | serve the LORD,**
whom they shall proclaim to genera- | tions to come.

³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people | yet unborn,
saying to them, "The | LORD has acted!"

SECOND READING: *1 John 4:7-21*

A reading from the First Letter of John.

We love God and others because God first loved us. We cannot say we love God, whom we have not seen, while hating fellow Christians, whom we regularly see. Love toward God is to be matched by love toward others because the essence of God is love.

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. ⁹God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. ¹⁰In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. ¹¹Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

¹³By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world. ¹⁵God

abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. ¹⁶So we have known and believe the love that God has for us.

God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. ¹⁷Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. ¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. ¹⁹We love because he first loved us. ²⁰Those who say, “I love God,” and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. ²¹The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL: *John 15:1-8*

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

On the night of his arrest, Jesus taught his disciples about the relationship they would have with him. Those who abide in his word and love bear fruit, for apart from him, they can do nothing.

[Jesus said:] ¹“I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. ²He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. ³You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. ⁵I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. ⁷If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON:

<https://1drv.ms/v/s!Alrwdlq5YZa1iS-jhTh5UGIkWJG8>

(Click on the link above to view Pastor Jeff's sermon (or you can find it on the website under the separate heading "Sermons")

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

God of all fruitfulness, you abide in your church and your church abides in you. Cleanse us by your word and give yourself to the whole church on earth so that it bears fruit and witnesses to your love. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You have created the heavens and the earth. As we wonder at the beauty of creation, may we seek vital connections among all that depends on the earth for life. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You rule the nations with justice and love. Give the leaders of the earth assurance of your abiding presence, that they lead not by fear but with love for those they are called to serve. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You have loved us so that we can love others. We pray for all in need of your love: those who are poor, lowly, outcast, weak, or fearful. Provide for the needs of all (*especially Elsie, Mary, Ardath, Doreen, Margaret, Paul, Lynnette, Glenn, Maria, Beryl, Robb, Jack, John, Ralph, Dale, Katana, Ralph, Rose Marie, Nya, Muriel, Ron, Karen, Brian, and Kolby*). Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You gather us with all the saints by the power of your Spirit. With them, may our hearts live forever in your keeping. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

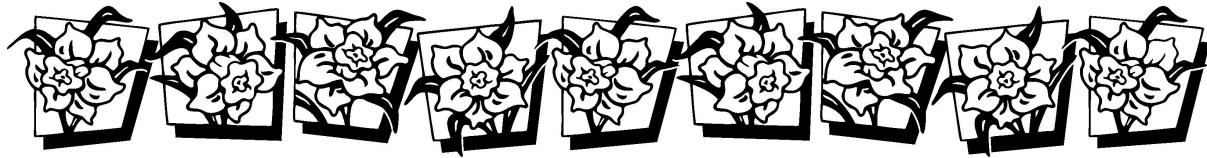
BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favour and + give you peace.
Amen.

DISMISSAL

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honour all people; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thanks be to God.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORSHIP CANCELLATION NOTICE

ON APRIL 7, 2021

**THE PREMIER OF ONTARIO, DOUG FORD, ANNOUNCED A
PROVINCE-WIDE DECLARATION OF EMERGENCY AND
STAY-AT-HOME ORDER BEGINNING AT 12:01 A.M. ON
THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 2021.**

RESTRICTIONS WILL BE IN EFFECT FOR 28 DAYS.

**IT IS BISHOP MICHAEL'S STRONG COUNSEL THAT EASTERN
SYNOD CONGREGATIONS IN THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO
CEASE ALL IN-PERSON GATHERINGS UNTIL EMERGENCY
AND STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS HAVE BEEN LIFTED.**

AS A RESULT,

**WE REGRET TO INFORM YOU THAT
ALL “IN-PERSON” GATHERINGS,
INCLUDING WORSHIP, ARE
CANCELLED UNTIL THE EMERGENCY AND STAY-AT-HOME**

ORDERS HAVE BEEN LIFTED.
PLEASE REFER TO OUR WEBSITE AT
www.zionstratford.com

FOR UPDATES !!

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COVID-19 VACCINATIONS - UPDATE

This is the latest information found on the Perth District Health Unit's website:

Friday, April 30, 2021: Appointments for vaccinations at future clinics are available to book online for those currently eligible.

Safe and reliable vaccines can help protect you and your family from COVID-19. These vaccines will be an important tool to help stop the spread of the virus and will eventually allow individuals, families and workers to safely resume normal life. Even if you have been vaccinated, it's important to continue following public health measures and to take everyday actions to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Current Eligibility List

Eligible as of April 30, 2021:

Individuals age 55 and older (born 1966 or earlier)

Eligible as of April 29, 2021:

Licensees, employees and students on an educational placement who interact directly with children in licensed child care centres and in authorized recreation and skill building programs.
Licensed home child care and in-home service providers, employees of a home child care agency and students on an educational placement who interact directly with children in a licensed home child care setting.

Groups that continue to be eligible:

Indigenous persons 16 years of age and older

Immediate household/family members of Indigenous people who themselves are not Indigenous are

also eligible to receive the vaccine.

Education staff who provide direct in-person support to students with complex special needs

Residents, Primary Essential Caregivers and Staff of High-Risk Congregate Living Settings

Adults 16 and older with the following High-Risk health conditions:

Adults 16 years of age and older who are chronic home care recipients

Staff and essential caregivers in long-term care homes, retirement homes, and any residents of these settings that have not yet received a first dose of vaccine

Alternative level of care patients in hospitals who have a confirmed admission to a long-term care home, retirement home or other congregate care home for seniors

Residents and staff in other congregate care settings for seniors, including assisted living facilities
Healthcare workers

Medical First Responders:

ORNGE, paramedics, firefighters, police providing medical first response

Faith leaders who, as part of their regular role, are at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 through close contact with persons and families in the following circumstances:

End of life care

Care of the deceased, funerals, bathing, or other ceremony with direct contact with deceased persons

Home visits to unwell persons

Pastoral care in hospitals/LTCHs/RHs or other vulnerable settings

You can also call to hear our regularly updated vaccination status message. Call HPPH at 1-888-221-2133 and press 1 (one) for COVID Vaccine. Please listen to the whole message to receive all of the information.”

COVID-19 pharmacy vaccine locations

Find your closest pharmacy to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

Most pharmacies book appointments ahead of time and some allow walk-ins. Check with the pharmacy before you go.

Due to supply challenges, certain pharmacies offering the COVID-19 vaccine may be out of stock. Please check with your pharmacy first.

Before you go

You must:

be 40 years old or older in 2021 to get the AstraZeneca vaccine

be 55 years old or older in 2021 to get the Pfizer vaccine

have a valid Ontario health (OHIP) card, or other form of valid government-issued identification

In Stratford

West End Pharmacy

426 Huron Street

Stratford, ON

N5A 5T7

Who can get a vaccine

Adults 40 and over in 2021 interested in receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine

Appointment and location details

Call or visit their website to check if you need an appointment or if walk-in (first come, first served) vaccinations are available

Hours:

Monday - Friday: 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Saturday - Sunday: 9 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Phone number:

519-273-7200

In Mark 12:31 it states “The second (commandment) is this, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’” We have all been raised to love our neighbour as ourselves in normal times; but, during this COVID-19 Pandemic it has been crucial that we live by this commandment. While searching the internet for a prayer and/or words of encouragement for this week’s bulletin, I came across this review of what it means to love our neighbour as ourself that I thought I would share with you.

What Does It Mean To Love Your Neighbour As Yourself?

1. Loving your neighbor means receiving God's love.

To begin to love your neighbor as yourself, you need to know two things: you need to know what love is and that you are loved.

The Bible tells us “this is love. Not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent his Son as a propitiation...” (1 John 4:10). You are the object of this love. God loves you. Knowing this is imperative. And not just loved in a general kind of way, but deeply loved and unconditionally loved. We tap into this when we understand that God loved us first. He’s the source of our love. God loved us even before Jesus gave Himself for us. God the Father is the source of all love. Before we can give this love we need to receive it for ourselves. You can’t give what you don’t have.

2. Loving your neighbor means loving ourselves as well.

To love your neighbor as yourself as commanded, you need to measure correctly. The measurement within this command is—as yourself. To love your neighbor as yourself you need to love yourself. This is something that gets misunderstood in the body of Christ often. It gets mixed up with dying to self and denying self as if we need to destroy our self. This is not true.

Jesus died for each and every one of us. If Jesus valued us enough to go through what He went through, we owe it to Him to value what He values. We need to love what He loves – us. The Bible even tells us that the Father loves us as much as He loves Jesus (John 17:23). How dare we not love what the Father loves. Learning to love ourselves prepares and helps us to love our neighbor.

3. Loving your neighbor means showing grace.

Knowing God is love and that this love is for you is not enough. It needs to be developed. Imagine if you had a field of good soil and a bag of top notch seeds. Would they produce a crop all by themselves? No. The seeds must be planted and cared for. Grace takes the seed of His love and the soil of our heart and creates fruit for the kingdom of God.

The Bible says, “for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for His

good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13). Loving Him and our neighbor pleases Him. Grace helps us do this. Grace teaches us proper love and respect for ourselves and for our neighbor. Freely receiving His grace empowers us to freely give it.

4. Loving your neighbor means acting with compassion.

When Jesus was asked, “Who is my neighbor?” He responded with a story: the Good Samaritan. Even those who have no love for God see the value of the story. What is the bottom line of this story? Who did Jesus say was being a neighbor? The one who had compassion.

Compassion is not simply a warm fuzzy feeling in our hearts. Compassion does something. A heart that’s moved by compassion cannot sit idly by while someone suffers a need. Loving your neighbor as yourself is being moved to help to the full extent of your ability.

5. Loving your neighbor means looking out for their wellbeing.

The NIV translation of 1 Corinthians 13 says, “love protects.” In Philippians 2:4 it says, “Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” Loving your neighbor as yourself is to look out for other people’s wellbeing.

To look out for them is to pay attention. You notice if they need something and then you help. For example, their clothing tag is sticking out or they have food on their face so you let them know. Or something more serious like when my neighbor’s toddler got out and crossed the street. Concerned for his safety, I headed over there. I was almost there when the grandma came out to intercept him and thanked me.

6. Loving your neighbor means serving them.

Serving from the heart is kindness in action. Kindness is one of the attributes of love listed in 1 Corinthians 13. The funny thing about kindness, though, is you can do acts of kindness without kindness residing in your heart. If the kind thing is done out of duty then it isn’t love.

Jesus said he came to serve (Matthew 20:28). God, who is love, came to serve. Love serves. For you to love your neighbor as yourself, you’ll have a heart to serve them. Let them know you’re there for them. If they need a ride somewhere, you drive them. If they need their dog or cat checked on while they’re out of town, you do that for them. Other examples are getting their mail for them or taking them a meal if they’re not well. Examples in a public setting are to let people in front of you in line at the store or in traffic.

7. Loving your neighbor means speaking kindly.

The childhood rhyme about sticks and stones versus words is not true. Words build up or tear down. God created the world using words. The Bible says Jesus IS the Word (John 1:1).

To love your neighbor as yourself is to use words to build them up. Speaking words of encouragement to someone who's down is the most obvious example but there are others. We can be more intentional with our words by looking for and magnifying the good. We can always find something good if we'll take the time to look for it. Examples of this are giving someone a compliment and telling someone you appreciate them.

8. Loving your neighbor means making allowances for other people's humanity.

We live in a day and age when offense is as common as breathing. Criticism is running rampant. Love is not easily offended or critical. Everyone does dumb things; no one is always right or knows everything. We're all a work in progress.

I remember sitting through a green light. I wasn't trying to inconvenience anyone. I got stuck in grieving daze because a family member died. I remember that when I encounter people driving too slow, sitting at lights, or even cutting me off. Maybe they have a reason. Maybe they're just being human. We're imperfect beings that do dumb things often.

Giving people the benefit of the doubt is loving your neighbor. For example, I had a lady flailing her arms and cursing because I didn't go through an almost red light. She was behind me so got stuck at the red light with me. I don't know why she was so angry but she may have had other circumstances surrounding her that day. I prayed for her.

9. Loving your neighbor means sharing in their joys and sorrows.

The Bible says we are to "rejoice with those who rejoice, mourn with those who mourn" (Romans 12:15).

Celebrating can be difficult for us at times, especially if our neighbor is getting something we have longed for. For example, a new job, a raise, or a pregnancy. Celebrating with them in spite of our own pain is a strong show of love.

Likewise, mourning with our neighbor can be hard if we don't know what to say, or have recently lost something or someone ourselves. Loving your neighbor as yourself is showing up and being there with your heart open, allowing them to be what they are and support them.

10. Loving your neighbor means forgiving.

Forgiveness is a big deal to God. The Bible says He planned it for us from the foundation of the world

(Ephesians 1:4). Jesus frequently spoke forgiveness over others that resulted in the healing of their bodies.

Forgiveness is freely given to us and to love your neighbor as yourself you'll pass the forgiveness on. Jesus highlighted this in His story in Matthew 18 when Peter asks how many times is he to forgive. He tells the story of a king who forgave an enormous debt to one of his servants. This servant failed to pass the forgiveness on. He demanded payment of a small debt from his neighbor. When the king heard of it, he had his servant remanded for his debt, revoking the debt cancellation. Jesus' story tells us that love always forgives.

We all need forgiveness, so loving your neighbor is to forgive them as you have been.

*Merciful God, your commands tell me to love my neighbour
as I love myself.*

*I pray that you open my eyes to the people and needs
that surround me.*

*Equip me with the kind of spirit needed to meet those needs
with a humble heart.*

*Give me patience and kindness when I serve others.
Amen.*

