

**Welcome:**

**Call to Worship:**

*"For Christ did not send the church just to baptize but to proclaim the gospel, and not with eloquent wisdom, so that the cross of Christ might not be emptied of its power. For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."*  
(1 Cor. 1:17-18)

**Song:** "Lift High the Cross (Crucifer)", words and music by George William Kitchin, Michael Robert Newbolt, Sydney Hugo Nicholson

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**Prayer:**

Lord, it is our joy and our delight to declare the power of the cross. To think that the greatest victory on earth was achieved through death just blows our mind. The world tells us that victory comes through being the best, or the most powerful, or the smartest. But the cross shows us that surrendering to the will of God brings incredible breakthrough. And so, we delight in celebrating the cross of Christ. Lord, we thank you for all that you accomplished through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. And we thank you for joy of knowing and following your kingdom ways.

Today Father, we confess that like Peter as he stepped out of the boat, everything seems great until we take our eyes off you and onto the circumstances around us. So, we ask that you forgive us for allowing ourselves to be distracted from the things of your kingdom. Cleanse us and renew us with the power of your love so that we are changed. And Holy Spirit, give us a greater hunger for you so that we are not satisfied by the cares of the world, but rather, by experiencing you in our life. Amen.

**Affirmation:** God was in Christ, not holding our sins against us but forgiving, restoring and renewing us. Therefore, in Christ, our sins are forgiven – let us say hallelujah!

**Peace:**

**Notices:** mid-week reflections Wednesday @ 10; Facebook and website posts – invite people to view.

**Uniting World Clip:** <https://vimeo.com/401537986>

**Prayer:**

God of power and love, we come to you today and declare the power of your presence in the homes and villages, communities and regions, nations and islands where the poorest of the poor live. In our part of the world Covid 19 has shaken and removed things that are temporal, in their part of the world it has exacerbated an already critical situation. Pour out your Spirit in these places and release provision for adequate resources; bring protection over lives and livelihoods; and open new ways for internal and external support systems. Lord, empower agencies such as Uniting World to bring breakthrough in social, educational, financial and spiritual growth. And Lord, use us to be a part of your kingdom presence in developing countries.

We continue to pray for the people of Guadalcanal circuit – keep them safe and well during this virus outbreak and stir their hearts towards the things of your kingdom. Thank you for what you have done and for what you are going to do in and through these communities. Lord it is our desire to continue and deepen our relationship with these churches so that we may learn from each other regarding discipleship and mission for your kingdom purposes.

Today Lord, we ask that you guard our families, keep them safe and well. Bless our church communities who are seeking to connect with and care for the communities they serve. Empower our leaders who are making decisions about health, economics, social policy and education – give them wisdom as they hear your voice and the voice of others. Father continue to draw our hearts to you during this season – give us comfort, peace and joy. And take the tithes and offerings we give – bless them and use them for your kingdom purposes. Amen.

#### **Sermon:**

- Last week we considered the notion of Surrender to Love.
- Surrender is not to be confused with compliance – doing what we’re told out of fear of the consequence → complying with Corona virus restrictions.
- Surrender is a willing desire and choice to lay down one’s life for the sake of taking up what is offered – Jesus the Good Shepherd:

*“For this reason, the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. <sup>18</sup> No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again.” (John 10:17-18)*

- Surrender is something we want to do, and therefore, we willingly lay down our life for what we can and want to take up.
- Also, surrender frees us from self-preoccupation. When we are so focussed on our self, our wants or on our lack, we become preoccupied with it.
- Surrender frees us from being caught in our self and allows us to take up the values and desires of the kingdom of God.
- We are invited to surrender to God’s love. God’s love is not dependent upon our behaviour, but rather, is the character and nature of the Father.
- The parable of the prodigal: the younger rebellious son, and the older moral upright son did nothing to receive or diminish the Father’s love – it was his character and nature.
- Today we are looking at Surrendering to the Love of God that eliminates our fear.
- A biblical understanding of fear is described as a state of panic or flight. It is the desire for self-preservation and protection in the face of overwhelming powers.
- A great illustration of this is found in our Gospel reading from Matthew:

*“Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup> But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, “Lord, save me!”” (Matt. 14:29-20)*

- Peter was doing well until he became more concerned about the waves than about Jesus.
- His distressing circumstances distracted his attention and weakened his faith in Jesus.
- In this instance, Peter experienced a state of panic, and his desire for self-preservation and protection kicked in and as he started to sink, he cried out to Jesus for help.
- Not only was the tumultuous water terrifying for the disciples in their boat, but the storm at sea heightened their fear because the Israelites regarded the sea as the domain of evil power.
- The terrifying experience of a storm at sea in the dead of night becomes deeply symbolic of the human experience with evil.
- The fear of the disciples is like the fear of all who are threatened by insecurity in the face of the unknown.
- This season we are currently in where we are faced with worldwide health concerns, economic fragility and social isolation is equivalent to Peter and the disciples experience on the storm-tossed sea.
- Life will often throw us curved balls that threaten our security and cause us to face an unknown future.

- For the disciples it was the evil of a stormy sea, for us it is the evil of a barely visible virus. Both are extreme expressions in size, yet regardless of how big or how small the threat is, **fear has the capacity to paralyse us.**
- Fear manifests itself in different ways for different people: some people live within restrictive boundaries where they appear quite cautious and conservative. Therefore, they tend to avoid, and be highly vigilant.
- Others who live in fear are compelled to remain in control. They attempt to control themselves and they attempt to control their world.
- Perhaps you can identify a time when fear overcame you...where you became overly cautious, avoidant and highly vigilant; or perhaps became super controlling of yourself and others.
- Fear is a natural response when our security is threatened and we are facing an unknown future, but, hear this incredible word of hope:

*“There 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. We love because he first loved us.” (1 John 4:18-19)*

- The love John is talking about here, is the same love we heard about last week – the perfect love of the Father.
- Love that is not dependent upon our behaviour, but rather, love that flows from the character and nature of the origin of Love → God.
- There is no fear when we are held safely and securely in the arms of pure, undefiled, perfect, unconditional, everlasting love.
- Our Gospel story is a perfect example of this:

*“Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, “You of little faith, why did you doubt?”<sup>32</sup> When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.” (Matt 14:31-32)*

- We do not know the tone of voice Jesus used with Peter in this verse – a harsh reprimand, or compassionate reassurance.
- What we know is, when Jesus appears to those in need, He has sovereign power not only over the forces of nature but over fear itself.
- **Jesus didn’t just have power and authority over the wind and waves, He has power and authority over what they represent in our life.**
- For the disciples it was evil that was symbolized by the stormy seas; for us it might be loneliness, the effects of an economic downturn, the concern and pain of ill health, or anything else that may threaten our security or generate an unknown future.
- Hear these words of truth: Jesus is present in the midst of the wind and waves, and Jesus has power and authority to calm them.
- Therefore, fear is eliminated where Jesus is present.
- His words to the disciples in the boat that night, *“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid”* are not empty or meaningless.
- He knows how we respond to anything that threatens our need for control. And he knows how we fear our security being taken away.
- God understands our tendency to fear. And in gentleness God invites us to let Him rid us of our fears and heal us by His loving presence.
- Jesus is the antidote to fear. Not our beliefs about God, or our self or others. Not our knowledge of the bible, not even attending worship via Zoom will eliminate our fear.
- Only the presence of Jesus eliminates our fear.
- Jesus doesn’t necessarily eliminate the threat; He eliminates our fear and gives us courage to face the threat.
- The courage to face challenging situations comes from feeling deeply loved and safely held by God.
- So basically, our gaze needs to go back and forth between divine love and our fears. We gain courage to face our fears as we soak in love.

- So, what does it look like to soak in God's love so much so, that it eliminates our fear...

Personal example – competency over connection out of fear of not being seen as valid.

- Surrender to love eliminates our fear. It doesn't eliminate the threats but it does eliminate the fear.
- We will continue to be confronted with situations that challenge us but knowing and experiencing the presence of Jesus eliminates the fear of the situation and gives us courage and strength to be and do all that we are called to.

*"They cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup> But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."'" (Matt. 14:26-27)*

**Prayer:**

**Communion:**

**Invitation:**

L: Jesus invites us to His table where we can celebrate His love, receive His love and respond to His love.

C: We come seeking comfort for our insecurities.

L: We come desiring hope in our uncertainties.

C: We come because we hunger and thirst for something more.

L: We come with open and genuine hearts.

C: We come because we love the Lord and want to love him more.

L: We come because we surrender to God's love.

**Tell the story:**

The Lord Jesus on the night that He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said:

'This is my body which is given for you. When you break this bread, remember how my body was broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.'

In the same way also, He took the cup after supper saying:

'This cup is the new covenant made in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, for the remembrance of me.

For as often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. And so according to our Saviour's command, we set this bread and this cup apart for the holy supper to which He calls us.

**Prayer of thanksgiving:**

God, you are the very essence and nature of love. Everything about you – who you are and what you do radiates from your love. And you made us in your image to love and be loved. We praise you for your eternal, faithful, everlasting promises to us, and we praise you for your son Jesus.

Born of the virgin Mary, He lived a humble, simple life that expressed your love in word and in deed. Through His ministry He healed, blessed, taught and delivered many. Bearing the cross, He disarmed evil and reconciled the whole of creation to you. Through His death and resurrection, we are given new life.

Thank you that you take and use the broken and ordinary things of this world, such as all who gather in your name, and here today you take this bread and juice, and make it sacred by your presence.

Holy Spirit bless these elements that they may become for us the body and blood of Jesus. Cause this meal to become holy and we your people to become one. Unite us in faith; encourage us with hope; and transform us with your love as we receive Jesus Christ in this holy banquet. Amen.

#### **A New Creed:**

*We are not alone, we live in God's world.  
We believe in God: who has created and is creating,  
who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh,  
to reconcile and make new,  
who works in us and others by the Spirit.*

*We trust in God.  
We are called to be the Church:  
to celebrate God's presence,  
to live with respect in Creation,  
to love and serve others,  
to seek justice and resist evil,  
to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.*

*In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us.  
We are not alone.*

*Thanks be to God.*

#### **Breaking the bread:**

Christ is the bread of life, which was broken for us, food for healing and wholeness.

#### **Lifting the Cup:**

Christ is the cup of hope, poured out for the forgiveness of our sins, the wellspring of Kingdom love.

The gift of God for the people of God.

**Partake of Communion:** the body and blood of Jesus given for you.

#### **After communion: Prayer:**

God of love, thank you for nourishing us with the bread of life and the cup of resurrection hope. May we who have received this sacrament be strengthened in your service to tell of your amazing, transforming love in our lives. And may we go from this place satisfied by our deep communion with you. Amen.

*"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you." (2 Cor. 13:13)*