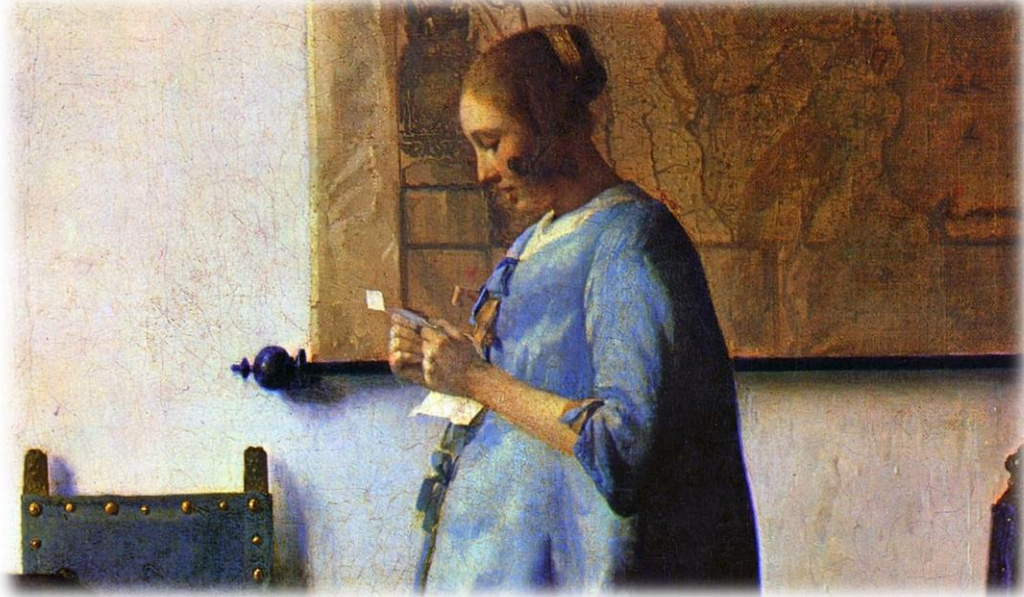


WESLEY UNITING CHURCH, FORREST, ACT.

EASTER 6

10:45am Liturgy

Sunday, May 5th, 2024



Johannes Vermeer, Woman Reading a Letter

Easter 6 focuses upon the theme of what it means to live as an Easter Christian: namely the life of friendship grounded and founded in the fact that Jesus Christ makes us his friends. In a sense Christianity is a faith of enchantment, to quote Max Weber, where the ordinary becomes extraordinary, where enchantment takes hold.

Johannes Vermeer was a little-known artist in 17th century Holland: just another 'genre painter'. He worked all his life in the town of Delft and died destitute. The times in which he painted were not his times. Paintings typically represented the rising merchant/business class - usually men - who bank-rolled portraits mirroring their success. Vermeer on the other hand, had the gift of seeing the extraordinary in the mundane - friendship offered through seemingly ordinary and bland actions: servant milkmaids in the kitchen pouring milk, women sitting sowing at the doors of their simple homes - and above, the beautiful depiction above of a young woman, dressed in blue, simply reading a letter. What is clear, is that this *ordinary depiction of the woman in blue is an extraordinary moment of friendship with a beloved.*

Today Bruce as preacher will pursue the theme of 'Opposite Action', an important behavioural principle in psychology with sound application for Christian spirituality, where an ordinary moment may be transformed into something extraordinary, as we seek to respond to our ever-changing situations and challenges in new life-changing ways. 'Opposite action' opens the path to new possibilities and friendships.

THE GATHERING OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Prelude: Etude No. 2 'Du Style' Théo Charlier (1868-1944)

News and Notices

Introit A New Commandment

A new commandment I give unto you:
that you love one another as I have loved you.
By this shall all men know that you are my disciples
If you have love for one another.

Richard Shephard (b. 1949),
words from John 13:34-35

Acknowledgement of First Nation's People & Our Mutuality

Welcome and Invocation of the Trinity

Collect

Call to Worship

See that friendship has been given to us, and we are friends of Jesus.
Therefore friends, let us not love in word or speech
but in action and in truth.

**Because we love one another
we know that we have passed
from death into life.**

**This is the victory that overcomes the world
through Jesus our risen Christ. Amen.**

Lighting the Community Candle from the Christ candle

Hymn 181: Come O God of all the earth

(Tune: Sing Out, Marty Haugen, 1950-)

**A Confession of Our Human Condition and the Power that Friendship with
God Gives Us Shaping our Actions** (from a narrative in the film "Mississippi Burning")

Setting

On Sunday morning after spending six days struggling to create meaning from life,
the people of Bearden, Tennessee, would go to church, because they knew Jesus was
going to be there.

Sister Ora Wallace would begin the familiar hymn.
Immediately the entire congregation would join her
because they felt the presence of Jesus.

When the pastor would say,

"I know the Lord is in this place! Can I get a witness?"

**The people responded with shouts of praise saying
"Amen" and "Halleluiah"!**

Through song, prayer and sermon the community affirmed Jesus' presence
and their willingness to make it through their troubled situation.

Some would smile and others would cry.
Someone, depending upon the Spirit's effect on her,
would clap her hands and tap her feet.

All of these expressions were but black people bearing witness
to Jesus' presence among them.

He was the divine power in their lives...

How could black people know they were human beings
when they were treated like cattle?

How could they know that they were somebody,
when everything in their environment said they were nobody?
How could they know that they had value
that could not be defined in dollars and cents,
when the historical symbol of the auction block was an ever-present reality?

**Only because they knew that Christ was present with them.
That his presence generated the love and friendship
they experienced in their Christian community.**

This gave the lie to the reality outside
enabled them to respond in ways
to what may be expected.

They responded with actions offering their friendship of protest.

Confession

We confess our need for deep friendships,
for those conversations that extend into the night,
both pleasurable and difficult:
for sharing who we are and receiving from others.

We confess our vulnerability lubricated by laughter:
and sometimes tears.

We confess our difficulty in managing our emotions.

Allowing them to take-over,
inhibiting our capacity to live prayerfully, deeply and creatively:
**may your friendship transform us
being ordinary people to becoming extraordinary people!**

(Sung) Kyrie

Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.
Christ have mercy, Christ have mercy, Christ have mercy.
Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy, Lord have mercy.

Declaration of Forgiveness

We are all beggars.

We are all members of a species that is not sufficient to itself.

We are all creatures plagued by unending doubts,
restlessly compensating for and deluding ourselves.

But the good news is this: we are forgiven.

Thanks be to God!

(Sung) Gloria

Glory to God in the highest,
and peace to God's people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,

we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ,

only Son of the Father,

Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father:
receive our prayer.
For you alone are the Holy One
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit,
in the Glory of God the Father, Amen. Amen.

THE SERVICE OF THE WORD

All Age Story

1 John 5:1-6, p. 991

Hymn 416: Great God your Spirit like the Wind (Tune: Jerusalem, Alan Gaunt, 1935-2023)

Gospel: Matthew 5:38-42, pp. 786-787 (The Sermon on the Mount)

The Gospel of the Lord
Praise to you Lord Jesus Christ

Anthem Cantate Domino Tim Blickhan, words from Psalm 98: 1, 4, 6

Cantate Domino, canticum novum
quoniam mirabilia fecit
salvavit sibi dextera eius
et brachium sanctam eius.
Jubilate domino omnis terra!
Cantate et exultate et psalite.
Psalite Domino in cithara et voce psalmi.
Psalite Deus in tubis ductilibus et voce tubae
cornae.
Jubilate in conspectus regis Domini.

O Sing to the Lord a new song
for he has done marvelous things
His right hand and his holy arm
have gotten him victory.
Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth!
Break forth into joyous song and sing praises.
Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, and the
sound of melody.
With trumpets and the sound of the horn,
make a joyful noise before the King, the Lord.

Homily

Prayers for the Church and World

Today we pray for the peoples of India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We dare not forget in our hearts and minds the peoples of Gaza, the West Bank, Israel, and the international community as attempts continue to be made to find ways forward from the current violence, even as social tension rises on university campuses in the US and elsewhere.

We also keep close the peoples of Ukraine as they continue to live under the imposition of war and the people of Russia as they themselves live under repression. We offer the Bidding: Lord...**hear our prayers.**

Offering

The congregation stands as the offering is received by the minister and prayers are offered over the gifts.

EUCCHARIST

The Peace

We greet each other with the words, "The peace of the Lord be with you" with the response "And also with you", or if from a distance, the hand over the heart, or the hands clasped.

Hymn 422, Come Holy Spirit, come! vs 1,2,3,4&6.

(Tune: Diademata, Michael Lindsay Forster, 1946 -)

Invitation

This is the table of the Lord.

It is to be made ready for those who love him and who want to love him more.

So, come, you who have much faith and you who have little, you who have been here often and you who have not been for a long time, you who have tried to follow and you who have failed.

It is our Lord who invites you.

It is his will that those who want him should meet him here.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise

Gratitude, praise, hearts lifted high,

voices full and joyful,

These you deserve O God.

For when we were nothing you made us something.

When we had no name and no faith and no future,

You called us to be your children.

When we lost our way or turned away,
you did not abandon us.
When we came back to you,
your arms opened wide in welcome.

You loved the world so much
that you sent your only Son
to bring us life eternal.
Dying he destroyed our death, alleluia.
Rising he restored our life, alleluia.

And so we praise you
with the faithful of every time and place,
joining with choirs of angels and the whole creation
in the eternal hymn

(Sung) Sanctus and Benedictus

Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

Lord God, as we come to share the richness of your table
we cannot forget the rawness of the earth.
We cannot take bread and forget those who are hungry.
Your world is one world and we are stewards of its nourishment.
Lord, put our prosperity at the service of the poorest of the earth.

We cannot take wine and forget those who are thirsty. The ground and the rootless,
the earth and its weary people cry out for justice.
Lord, put our fullness at the service of the empty.

We cannot hear your words of peace
and forget the world at war.
Or, if not at war, then preparing for it.
**Show us quickly, Lord, how to turn weapons into welcome signs and the lust for
power into a desire for peace.**

We cannot celebrate the feast of your family and forget our divisions. We are one in
Spirit but not in fact; history and hurt still dismember us.
Lord, heal your church in every brokenness.

Institution

The Blessing of the Bread and Wine

With this bread and this cup
we do as our Saviour commands:
we celebrate the redemption he has won for us.

(Sung) Acclamations

Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.

By your Word and Holy Spirit,
bless these gifts that we may truly share
Christ's body and blood,
and become by grace, his body given
for the sake of the world.

(Sung) Acclamations

Blessing and honour
and glory and power
are yours for ever and ever.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread

Look, the bread of Heaven is broken for the life of the world.
Here is Christ coming to us in bread and wine.
The gifts of God for the people of God.

(Sung) Agnus Dei

Jesus, Lamb of God have mercy on us.
Jesus, bearer of our sins, have mercy on us.
Jesus, redeemer of the world, grant us peace.

The Distribution

*The elements are distributed to the congregation: initially the bread and then the 'wine'.
We hold the elements and take together.*

Prayer after Communion

Open our eyes. Open our hands.

Free our hearts to see and respect your presence
in all and through all.

We will respond with gratitude, joy, and grace.

We will give our lives to the promise of Easter Love and friendship always rising up in
our midst.

May it fully be so.

SENDING OUT

Sending Hymn 411: Filled with the Spirit's power (Tune: Woodlands, J.R.
Peacey 1896-1971 *alt*)

Comission and Blessing

The wisdom of love and friendship is the foundation for justice

Go now, and bear fruit for God, fruit that will last.

As Christ has loved you, so love one another.

The blessing of God almighty,

the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

Be upon you and remain with you always.

Our service has ended.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord

In the name of Christ.

Postlude

Liturgist/Preacher: Rev'd Dr. Geoff / Rev'd Dr. Bruce Stevens

Music Coordinator: Jade McFaul

Organist: Esther Arthur

Wesley Music Scholars:

Jesse Hill (trumpet), Evie Osborne and Phoebe Bourke (voice and choir)

Reader: Femi & Christie Idowu

Flowers: Silk Flowers