

New Scotland Presbyterian Church
Worship for the Fifth Sunday After Pentecost
(video link at <https://www.newscotlandpc.com/>)
June 27, 2021
The Rev. Holly S. Cameron

Prelude

Ryan Dwyer

“Sonatina in G, Moderato” by Beethoven

Introduction

Welcome to worship at New Scotland Presbyterian Church.

One announcement before worship. We have our summer chicken and rib BBQ coming up on Tuesday, July 13. The dinner is take-out only, and you can pick up your dinner at the church from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. that day. Chicken dinners are \$14, and rib dinners are \$15. You can place your order new by going to our website, www.newscotlandpc.com and filling out the form there. If you would rather avoid the computer, place your order by calling the church office, 518-439-6454, and we will call you back to confirm your order.

If you can volunteer to work the event, please be in touch with John Griffin, who is co-ordinating, so he knows there are enough volunteers.

We also have flyers that can be posted around town or given to your neighbors, just stop and pick them up from the table in the church lobby.

Call to Worship

Psalm 100:1,2,5

Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness. Come into God’s presence with singing! For the Lord is a gracious God, whose mercy is everlasting; and whose faithfulness endures to all generations.

Hymn

Choir

“Great Is Thy Faithfulness” #276 in the Presbyterian Hymnal

Opening Prayer

Merciful God, although Christ is among us as our peace, we are a people divided against ourselves as we cling to the values of a broken world. The profit and pleasures we pursue lay waste the land and pollute the seas. The fears and jealousies that we harbor set neighbor against neighbor and nation against nation. We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom, of intellect and reason, and have turned them into bonds of oppression. Lord, have mercy on us; heal and forgive us. Set us free to serve you in the world as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Dear friends in Christ, hear the words of Jesus: “Do not fear, only believe!” In Christ, and through Christ, love has overcome every threat we will ever face. God’s Love brings wholeness and healing; and offers us a new beginning. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Epistle Lesson Second Corinthians 8:7-15

⁷ Now as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness, and in our love for you—so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking.

⁸ I do not say this as a command, but I am testing the genuineness of your love against the earnestness of others. ⁹ For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich. ¹⁰ And in this matter I am giving my advice: it is appropriate for you who began last year not only to do something but even to desire to do something— ¹¹ now finish doing it, so that your eagerness may be matched by completing it according to your means. ¹² For if the eagerness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has—not according to what one does not have. ¹³ I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between ¹⁴ your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. ¹⁵ As it is written, “The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little.”

Kids' Time

For those unable to see the video, the children's sermon is about generosity. In the scripture lesson, Paul is talking about generosity in giving money to help those in need, but there are other ways for us to be generous. We can be generous in noticing what we like about the people around us, and giving them compliments. When we do that, they often smile and pass that good feeling on to others. Generosity is contagious! Now it's time to see the photos of things that make us smile! {photos.}

Prayer: Dear God sometimes it seems easier to think only of myself and try to protect myself and my stuff from other people. So, I ask you to give me a kind and generous heart, to notice what is good and special in the people around me. Help me to be generous in telling them, so that they can smile and I can smile, and we can make your world a kinder place. Help us always to be friends of Jesus. We pray in his name. Amen.

Gospel Lesson Mark 5:21-43

²¹ When Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered around him; and he was by the sea. ²² Then one of the leaders of the synagogue named Jairus came and, when he saw him, fell at his feet ²³ and begged him repeatedly, “My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live.” ²⁴ So he went with him.

And a large crowd followed him and pressed in on him. ²⁵ Now there was a woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years. ²⁶ She had endured much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had; and she was no better, but rather grew worse. ²⁷ She had heard about Jesus, and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ for she said, “If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well.” ²⁹ Immediately her hemorrhage stopped; and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. ³⁰ Immediately aware that power had gone forth from him, Jesus turned about in the crowd and said, “Who touched my clothes?” ³¹ And his disciples said to him, “You see the crowd pressing in on you; how can you say, ‘Who touched

me?”³² He looked all around to see who had done it.³³ But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, fell down before him, and told him the whole truth.³⁴ He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”

³⁵ While he was still speaking, some people came from the leader’s house to say, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further?”³⁶ But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the leader of the synagogue, “Do not fear, only believe.”³⁷ He allowed no one to follow him except Peter, James, and John, the brother of James.³⁸ When they came to the house of the leader of the synagogue, he saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly.³⁹ When he had entered, he said to them, “Why do you make a commotion and weep? The child is not dead but sleeping.”⁴⁰ And they laughed at him. Then he put them all outside, and took the child’s father and mother and those who were with him, and went in where the child was.⁴¹ He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha cum,” which means, “Little girl, get up!”⁴² And immediately the girl got up and began to walk about (she was twelve years of age). At this they were overcome with amazement.⁴³ He strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Sermon

Sometimes the most important things that happen in life are the intrusions.¹ You are on your way somewhere, you have an agenda, a clear purpose, a task you want to complete, and, along the way, you get distracted. Something else comes up that demands your attention, and the “something else” turns out to be more important than the task you started.

I know it happens to clergy folk – we set aside a morning to prepare a sermon, but then someone calls or stops by with an immediate need, so we drop our plan and attend to the “intrusion.” I know it happens to clergy folk, but it can happen to anyone, if you are paying attention – if you are not so focused on your own agenda, so much in a hurry, that you will not allow anything else become an intrusion.

Today’s gospel is a story about, among other things, a woman who was an intrusion. Jesus had been approached by a leader of the synagogue, Jairus. He was an important and impressive man, who begged Jesus to come to his house to help his ailing daughter. Jesus agreed, and they set off.

On the way to do this good thing for Jairus and his daughter, Jesus gets interrupted. A large crowd is following Jesus – well, not so much following, as gathering all around him, and pressing in on him, so that Jesus is in the midst of this great throng of people. In the midst of the pushing and jostling crowd, a sick woman presses her way through to touch Jesus. She touches just his clothes. She immediately feels in her body that her illness has been healed. And Jesus immediately feels in his body that some power has gone out of him.

And he stops. Now, he is already in the middle of a task: he is on his way to help a child, whose life is hanging in the balance. He has a clear purpose, and it is an emergency. But, Jesus is not so much in a hurry, that he cannot stop for someone else who is also in need. The bleeding woman intrudes into the story, and Jesus stops to pay attention.

He asks, “Who touched me?” We cannot tell from the written word what his tone

was – if he was upset because he was being distracted from the task he had already started; if he was anxious because some of his power had been taken out of him; if he was compassionate for someone who was so desperate. Maybe he was just curious about who would be so bold as to reach out and grab a blessing.

The disciples are not interested in the person who touched Jesus. They are set on the task they started: they need to get to Jairus' house to help his daughter. Why get dragged even further into this mob scene? They seem to feel it would be best to get free of all these people as quickly as possible, so they can get to where they need to go.

But Jesus wants to stop. He wants to know this person who touched him. He wants to see her, to look in her eyes, to know her name, and to hear her story.

Bishop Will Willimon says this may be the most healing moment in the whole story. This woman who was unknown—unclean—not allowed to be seen in public, forced to live as an outcast, unable to touch or be touched by anyone in polite society, identified only by her bleeding and her pain, is now going to be known—known by her face, known by her name, known in all of her particularity and individuality.

Notice that Jesus cannot identify her. With all of his power, he does not know everything. He calls out to us, invites us into his presence, but it is up to us to respond. So, Jesus calls out, “Who touched me?” And, the now-healed woman does respond. She steps forward and identifies herself.

The gospel says she is afraid. She is likely trembling, not knowing what will happen next. She may be worried that Jesus will scold her for slowing down his important trip. Or maybe the crowd will attack her, knowing that she could have touched them as she made her way through the crowd, and, if she touched them, they were made unclean. She might be afraid of the disciples – maybe they are like Jesus' henchmen, and will pick her up and take her away to teach her a lesson about appropriate behavior.

But, however afraid she may be, she steps forward so that everyone can see who she is. And Jesus asks to hear her story. And then he listens, as she tells him “the whole truth.”

This is an amazing thing about Jesus. He wants to hear our stories – the whole story – the “whole truth” – not just the nice, polite, acceptable-to-society parts of our story; he wants to hear our whole story.

Remember after the resurrection, when the risen Christ was walking with the couple on the road to Emmaus? When Jesus joined them on the road he asked them what they were talking about. And Cleopas said, “Are you the only person who has not been watching the news? Don't you know the things that have been happening?” And Jesus said, “What things?”

Now, who knows better than Jesus about what had happened in those last days in Jerusalem leading up to the crucifixion and resurrection? But, Jesus wants to hear how it has affected Cleopas and his companion. He wants to hear their story. “Tell me,” Jesus says; “what things? What is the story that you are currently living? What has been important to you, in this last week in Jerusalem?” Jesus is always asking to hear our stories.

Just like in this gospel lesson. The woman comes forward, and tells her story. And Jesus listens. And then he speaks to her. He does not criticize her. He does not scold her. He does not address her as “a patient” or “a recipient of the healthcare

system.” Jesus tenderly calls her “daughter.”

He listens to her story, and tells her she is not a misfit, unclean, outcast, lowlife, troublemaker. She is part of the family of God, a daughter that is as important, as worthwhile, as beloved, as the daughter of the important Pharisee, Jairus.

And then, Jesus praises her action, saying: “Your faith has made you well.” Willimon notes that Jesus does not claim the credit; he does not say that he healed her. Instead, Jesus gives the woman all the credit. She had faith that Jesus could heal her. But she also had faith in herself. She refused to accept the position that society had assigned her. She was determined to be more than simply a helpless person in pain. She had faith in Jesus, but she also had faith in her own capacity to reach out, to touch him, to receive healing power. And then, she had faith enough to come forward, and meet Jesus, face-to-face, to tell him “the whole truth” of her story.

Then Jesus blessed her saying, “Go in peace.” Go and rediscover what it means to be whole, to have a body that is intact, to be accepted into the company of friends and neighbors and family, go and be welcomed back to worship in the Temple; go to live life in its fullness. Your faith has made you well. Your faith has made you whole.

Then some messengers arrive and say that Jesus should not have let himself be distracted by this intrusion, for while he has been talking with the healed woman, the little girl has died. That is why we think we have to stay focused the task at hand, because we are afraid terrible things will happen if we do not attend to the agenda we have set!

But Jesus is not concerned. He tells the father not to worry; and he leaves the crowd behind, taking only three of his disciples. When they arrive at Jairus’ house, he ushers all the mourners out, and brings the little girl back to life, and tells them to get her some food. And, I would not be surprised if he stayed and had a snack with her, and asked her to tell him some stories about her life.

My clergy friend Steve says this story reminds us that hurrying can sometimes be the enemy of healing.² What puts us in a hurry? Hurrying so much that we focus only on our agenda, and miss people whose lives need to be touched. Hurrying so much that we miss the stories of someone who just needs a little attention. Hurrying so much that we do not even realize that we can reach out to Jesus for our own healing.

My clergy friend, Rick, says that this story is about how we want to manage everything in our life.³ We don’t mind if people come and interrupt us, but only if they bother us on our terms; otherwise, we say, when do I have time for myself; if I keep attending to everyone who crosses my path in a day, when do I get my “Me time”?

The truth of the gospel is that getting our tasks done is not the most important thing in life – it’s not getting in from here to there in as straight a line as possible. It is the stories that are important – the people telling the stories and the people in the stories.

Jesus stops for every person along his way, to listen to them and to talk to them. Doing the work of the gospel involves stopping. Doing the work of the gospel happens in life’s interruptions. So Jesus stops and he stops and he stops again, as if everyone in the world were worth stopping for. Because they are. You are.

God has healing for us. And God wants to hear our stories. God stops for us. Will we stop for someone else?

This is the Word of the Lord for us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Song

“It Is No Secret” by Hamblen

Choir

Pastoral Prayer

O God, Creator of the world and all that is in it, we join with all living things to offer our thanks to you. With birds and beasts, fields and flowers, earth and sky, we praise you for life-giving air, sun that warms, and rain that nourishes us all. We thank you for calling us into communities: of families, and neighborhoods, and churches, so that we do not face the difficulties of this life all alone. And we give thanks that you stand with us in the midst of all our challenges.

On this day, we pray for all people and places that find themselves in the midst of struggle. We pray for nations and the leaders of nations, that their hearts will be opened to your way, so they may work for justice for all your children. Give us wisdom and compassion, O God, to listen to one another and to listen for your Word. Correct us when we have gone astray, and point us always toward your Way of Love and Compassion.

We pray for those who are so broken that they lash out and harm others. We pray for the victims of storms, heat, floods, and fire; for the victims of the violence of crime, the violence of war, domestic violence, gun violence, and violence of all kinds.

O God of Healing, we have been through a long and stressful time of pandemic. We ask for your wisdom and guidance as things reopen. We pray for calm and kindness. We pray for healthcare workers and all the frontline personnel who have worked so diligently through this time. We pray for those who continue to struggle with worries and concerns. We pray for those who are suffering in any way – for the sick and the dying, for those who are faced with hunger, homelessness, mental illness, loneliness, hopelessness. We pray for those who cannot find meaningful work, and for employers who cannot find workers. We pray for those in prison, and those imprisoned by addiction. We pray that you will use us to bring your healing presence to those in need.

Lastly, we do what Jesus commanded, and we pray for our enemies: those who have offended us, and those whom we have harmed; deliver us, O God, from hardness of heart. Help us to live in the way of Jesus Christ. As we seek to be his faithful disciples, we say the prayer he taught us:

Lord's Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Hymn

“Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service” #427 in the Presbyterian Hymnal

Choir

Offering

Friends in Christ, scripture says, “Remember the Lord your God, for it is God who gives you the ability to produce wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18).

Churches depend on the generosity of members and friends to support their ministries. If you are able to mail in an offering, or give online at <https://www.newscotlandpc.com/>, we are grateful for that gift of financial support. If all you can offer is prayers, we love you for the gift of that spiritual support for our church, and for our ministry in this community and in the world. We are blessed to share our gifts and to love and support one another, to know that we are not alone, but are in this together. Thank you for your generous giving!

Song of Praise

Ryan Dwyer

These are probably the most-sung lines in the last 300 years, so here are both the traditional words, and another variation:

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, you heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures high and low;
Praise God, in Jesus full known:
Creator, Word, and Spirit one.

Benediction and Blessing

Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold on to what is good; return no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak, and help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. And may the grace of God, the love of Christ, and the encouragement of the Holy Spirit go with you, and all those whom you love, both this day and always. Amen.

Choral Benediction

Choir

“May God’s Blessing Surround You” by Barrows

Postlude

Ryan Dwyer

“Sonatina in G, Allegretto” by Beethoven

Sermon Notes

¹ Much of this sermon is based on the July 2, 2000, writing of the Rev. William H. Willimon, in Pulpit Resource, Vol. 28, No. 3.

² The Rev. Steve Garnaas-Holmes, “Unfolding Light,” June 2009.

³ The Rev. Dr. Richard S. Dietrich, in a writing for June 28, 2009.