

Summerland United Church
Nov 10 The Prayer of Jesus 'On Earth as in Heaven'

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We were the forgotten of the 'lest we forget
 We were the invisible ghosts from The Rez
 We had no obligation to join
 We had to give up our treaty status
 We fought, we died, our language was used for secret messages
 We stood side by side with the other soldiers in our victory
 We were cast aside when we came back home
 We didn't get the benefits allotted other veterans
 We didn't know where to live since we gave up our treaty status.
 We were the forgotten of the 'lest we forget.'
 We were the invisible ghosts from The Rez

Threshold

Today we honour the memories of those who served in wars for the freedom we now enjoy. And we also honour those saints in our lives who made the world a better place by being in it. Many of my colleagues struggle with remembrance day, because they worry about glorifying war. Yet, that is not the purpose of remembrance day. By remembering and honour those who gave their last breath for freedom, those who lived through the horror of war and came home scared body and soul – we remember that war is not the answer. There is another way. In the prayer of Jesus we petition God for God's will to be done on earth as in heaven.

Jesus' ministry offered tangible, visible signs of right relationship and pointed us toward God's will for "a little heaven on earth." We focus on this Sunday in the series on what it means to pray thy Kingdom come... on how our work bringing right relationship in the world can be a prayer of action everyday.

We give thanks for those who were once enemies who have become friends and allies. We give thanks for the helpers, friends, family, loved ones, mentors, teachers, caregivers, pain bearers, those who have departed this world, but who's memories and gifts live on with us. We give thanks for the saints in our lives, those who shone their light in our lives. Those who made the world a better place for being in it.

Scripture: John 15:9-17

Whether you take what is written in the bible as fact, myth metaphor or story, listen for the meaning it holds for you on this day.

⁹As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.

¹²"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do

what I command you. ¹⁵ I do not call you servants^[a] any longer, because the servant^[b] does not know what the master is doing, but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ¹⁶ You did not choose me, but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. ¹⁷ I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

Reader: May God bless our understanding of these sacred words.

All: Thanks be to God.

Reflection:

The pulpit, they taught us in seminary, is not a place to spout politics. We as ministers cannot and should not force our personal political views on to our congregations from this place. We as ministers should not assume that everyone in a community of faith leans the same way politically and therefore out of respect for those who's views may differ, and to not start any arguments, just stay away from politics.

But that's really hard to do, when we're talking about the Kingdom of Heaven and God's will on earth – because this is inherently political. Jesus was up against a corrupt and violent empire when he spoke about the Kingdom of Heaven. In his world, like ours, disparity was rampant the rich got richer, and the poor got poorer. There were no safety nets for those out of work, injured, widowed or ill. And many people believed that God ordered the world in such a way that those born into poverty deserved it, and certainly didn't deserve a hand up or a handout.

For Jesus the Kingdom of Heaven, on earth, was one where people were treated equally and with respect. Classism didn't exist and everyone, everyone was welcome at the table. Everyone would be fed at the table. And everyone would be loved by God and each other.

And as we heard in the passages today, one we know very well – we're commanded to love one another as God does. Which is easy enough to do when we like the people we're meant to love.

When we look at the people who make the world a better place. When we think about our loved ones, the saints in our lives who made our lives better for being in them. We can and do love them as God does.

And while we might not agree with the concept of war and violence, when it comes to remembrance day we can love the people who fought for our freedom. We can love the ones who stayed home and waited, we can love the civilians who got caught up in the fighting, were there when the bombs fell. And after the wars ended, we can love those who were enemies, but became allies and friends.

When I was working with children and youth at my former congregation we did a series on 'loving your neighbour'. We drew a big tree on poster paper and had the kids write the names of people or places or events they wanted to pray for on heart shaped sticky notes. They put them on the tree, like leaves – showing how love grows and blossoms.

For them it was easy to say – love your neighbour, love your gay neighbour, love your unhoused neighbour, love the neighbour from a different country, love your neighbour who speaks a different

language, love your addicted neighbour, they could even wrap their heads around loving their ex-con or enemy neighbour. But one of them said, "I can't love Trump."

The concept of loving their enemy was fine until this concept was given a name and became a reality. And suddenly the concept of loving everyone because very very hard. If you happen to be a Trump supporter, imagine the reverse – being asked to love Kamala Harris.

Yet this is what we are commanded to do. To love one another as God has loved us. And if we're going to say God loves everyone – then we have to include the people we don't like.

That inclusion does not mean we condone their actions, or agree with them in anyway. It doesn't mean we welcome them into the detriment of the safety of others. Love, healthy love, requires boundaries and responsibility and consequences for actions.

By saying this I'm not asking you to love your enemy and honestly I'm reluctant to even suggest you try, as it's not something I do with any ease. But it's there is our scripture as the type of human we're commanded by Jesus to be.

When the youth made the comment about Trump, I said much the same thing, and I also said this – I asked all the youth to consider that maybe Trump never experienced the love of God the way we have. Maybe he's the way he is because no one ever loved him in a good and healthy way. That doesn't excuse behavior, that don't make it ok for him to do what he does – he's still (as we all are) responsible for his actions. But maybe he'd be different if he experienced love the way we do.

As we take time today to focus our energy and our love on the saints in our lives – those who knew what God's love means through their actions and life on earth – I want us to know and feel that love within ourselves. We are lucky to have been in relationship with these people – people who in their own ways helped create or worked towards the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Let's hold that love in our hearts, remembering them and loving them.

We also remember those who died for our freedoms, who fought and were scarred by war so we would be safe. It is an honour to remember them with respect and with love.

And perhaps, maybe if there's a little left over, maybe if the abundance of love we find ourselves surrounded in could be spread just a little bit further, we can find it somewhere to gently express a little of that love outward towards all our neighbours – praying they experience love they way we do, and perhaps be better people for it.
May it be so.