**First United Church**

*Seeking to be a welcoming community of Christian faith, proclaiming and celebrating the love of God in Jesus Christ through the Inspiration of the Holy Spirit*

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April 19, 2019

10:30am

*7 Curtis St., St.Thomas, ON N5P 1H3 Phone: (519) 631-7570*

*e-mail: office@1stunitedchurch.ca*

*web: www.1stunitedchurch.ca*

*MINISTERS: ALL THE PEOPLE OF GOD*

*Pastoral Minister: Rev. Emmanuel K. Ofori*

*Music Minister: Jody McDonald-Groulx*

*Secretary/Treasurer: Lori Hoffman*

*Custodian: Dave Luftenegger*

April 19, 2019 @ 10:30 a.m.

PREACHER: Rev. Emmanuel K. Ofori

***Notes***: Asterisk (\*) – You may stand if able

***God Gathers Us Together***

***Opening Prayer***

***Musical Prelude***

*\** ***Hymn***: VU#142: “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” (vv. 1 & 4)

***Welcome/Life and Work of the church***

***God Draws Us Near To Worship***

***Call to Worship***

One: Change is coming, for God’s plans are unfolding. Even in the darkest moments of suffering and pain God’s purposes can be accomplished.

**All: Jesus Christ was whipped, ridiculed and crucified for all people.**

One: While completely innocent, Jesus died a grueling death on the cross to show us the way to God’s love and grace.

**All: The greatest hour of defeat, suffering and humiliation was the moment of victory, honour and glory.**

One: Jesus Christ died for you and for me. Let us respond to God’s grace freely, by living lives worthy of this immeasurable gift.

**All: We will take up our cross and serve our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.**

***\* Hymn****:* “Hallelujah, What A Saviour”

***Prayer of Approach***

L Let us pray.

**All: O merciful God, you did not spare your only Son, but offered him up for us all, that he might bear our sins upon the cross. Grant that we might so examine ourselves that we realize our own sinfulness, so great as to spiritually crucify him anew. Help us to recognize those nails which we drive into his cross today, and transform us into more faithful disciples in his name. Amen.**

***Silence***

***Prayer of Thanksgiving/Intercession***

One: Let us look to Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of our faith, who endured the cross for our sake and give thanks to God. Let us pray.

**All: Gracious God, the gift of Christ’s death on the cross for each one of us is beyond our understanding. We could never begin to thank you for the huge sacrifice made on our behalf. We can only offer our hearts, minds and souls in your service. Ultimately, we can express our gratitude through worship of you and through sharing this gift of love with others. Help us to make the necessary sacrifices to follow your calling. Help us to change our lives to model ourselves after Christ, even onto the cross. In His name we pray with thanksgiving, Amen.**

***Anthem*** – Senior Choir

***We Respond in Love***

***Offering: Solo***

***Offertory Hymn/Song***

**God of love, hear our prayer. Bless this offering we bring you. May our lives do your will, guide and guard us forever.**

**Give us courage to stand for truth, help us give to others.**

**God of love, hear our prayer. Bless this offering we bring you.**

***Offertory Prayer***

***God Invites Us To Listen To God’s Word Of Love***

***Hymn:*** VU#149 “When I Survey The Wondrous Cross”

***Gospel Reading:*** Luke 23:8-12

***Good Friday Message:*** “The Great Big Hug”

***We Go Out to Serve***

***\*Closing Hymn:*** VU#144 “Were You There”

***\* Benediction***

***\* Triple Amen***

***\* Commissioning Hymn:*** VU#298 “When You Walk From Here”

***\* Musical Postlude***

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

As humans, we fell from grace to grass and became enemies of God and of the rest of creation. But, through the death and resurrection of Jesus we have been lifted up from grass to grace; we are reconciled with God when we accept the finished work of Christ on our behalf; we are united with all the brothers and sisters around the world who do the same. Jesus unites us with God, with our friends, with our family, with ourselves and with our enemies.

1. **BIG HUG:**

**Christ’s outstretched arms embrace us all**

1. **Plea for Forgiveness for His killers and us**

*"Father forgive them."* (Luke 23:34)

1. **Promise of Salvation to one man and us**

*"Today, you’ll be with me …”* (Luke 23:43)

1. **Provision for His Mother and us.**

*"Here woman, here is your son."* (John 19:26,27)

1. **BEST FRIENDS**
2. **Christ makes friends out of enemies**

Herod and Pilate became friends because of Jesus.

*“And Herod and Pilate became friends with each other that very day, for before this they had been at enmity with each other”* (Luke 23:12)

1. **Christ the Peacemaker**

*“For [Christ] himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has****broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility****… that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so****making peace****, and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby****killing the hostility”*** (Ephesians 2:13-16 ESV; see also Galatians 3:28).

**Think about this:**

* Christ died on that Friday. So, what is so good about Good Friday?
* The story doesn’t end on Good Friday – Easter is coming! Hallelujah!