

Kensington Presbyterian Church

Growing in Faith and Sharing God's Love since 1786

Keeping Clean August 20, 2023

Welcome to worship! We offer a variety of ways for people to gather. We welcome everyone to worship in person (with singing!), as well as through Zoom, YouTube, and this paper/digital outline. No matter how you worship, you are not alone! You are always welcome to be part of our community of faith, and you are also welcome to invite others to join you or to connect with the community!

If you have prayer requests, suggestions to add something new, or you just want to talk, you can always reach out to your elder or if you have a pastoral care emergency, you can contact the Rev. Sarina Meyer at (514) 695-1879 who is filling in for Rev. Peter as he enjoys a vacation with his family.



Announcements

Jesus & Java: We are continuing to hold Jesus & Java on Thursday, August 24th at 3 PM! Join us as we enjoy a time of fellowship and discussion! We will meet at Beetz Café located at 5914 Sherbrooke St. West.

Zoom Prayer Group and Friday Film & Food: We are pausing both of these for the next few weeks. We'll resume in September.

New Hope Boutique: New Hope's Boutique is open on Monday and Wednesday from 10 A.M to Noon. Feel free to drop by and see what they have to offer! If you wish to contribute to the boutique, please let New Hope know!

Contacts

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Music Director: Zoe Dupont-Foisy | zoedupontfoisy@hotmail.com

Approaching God

Lighting of the Christ Candle

Jésus Christ est la lumière du monde.
Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

Call to Worship

Let us praise the Lord with cheerful hearts!
Let all the peoples praise the Lord!
Let the nations sing with joy for God is amongst creation.
God guides us all with justice and equity.
Let the people praise God, for how we have been blessed;
Let us worship and offer all honour and praise.

Hymn: All people that on earth do dwell (65)

Prayer of Approach

Compassionate God, you make all things new. You welcome all people to witness your blessing. You are the unending source of compassion and justice. As we gather, make us one in your sight as we give thanks for your grace freely bestowed upon us. You are our maker and you are the hope which speaks to us in times of distress. **Merciful God, while you comfort us with your presence, we confess that we sometimes turn away from you, focusing ourselves on human comforts rather than your own.**

Alexander Plant
For Kensington Presbyterian Church

When we are faced with challenges and insecurities, we often forget how to live as you taught us. Forgive us when we judge superficially and made our neighbour feel unwelcome in our communities. Reveal to us our own prejudices, and show us how to see your goodness in those who seem different from us. We seek your wisdom this day as we join our voices together in singing the prayer that you taught us...

The Lord's Prayer

(Please use a version you are comfortable with)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is 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 Amen

Assurance of Pardon

When we judge others and lose our sense of compassion, Jesus Christ is there waiting to forgive us through God's perfect love. To all who humbly seek the mercy of God, be at peace with God, with yourself and with one another. Amen.

Listening to God

Children's Time

Have you ever done arts and crafts with your hands? Maybe you did some finger painting or decorating something with coloured glitter and sparkly bits? Working as a camp counselor, arts and crafts time was always one of the messiest times of day. We always had to be careful to keep the glitter away from the younger campers, otherwise it would be an impossible mess to clean up.

Today, we are going to be learning about what it means to keep ourselves clean, not in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense. Just like washing our hands is important to keep clean, making sure our words and actions are clean helps keep our spirituality healthy.

Dear Jesus, thank you for the lessons you teach us. Continue to teach us as we learn how to keep our spirits healthy. Amen.

Hymn: Love divine, all loves excelling (371)

Prayer for Illumination

Wise and gracious God, as we gather to hear your Word, silence our troubled hearts and direct us to focus upon the wisdom you have for us. Open our hearts to receive the gifts you so freely give to us. In Christ we pray, Amen.

Alexander Plant
For Kensington Presbyterian Church

Intro to the Readings

Our reading from Isaiah is a reminder that our duty to our faith is to uphold the teachings of God, promoting righteousness in the face of evil and allowing all people to bind themselves to God's cause. Its an open invitation to enter into the bonds of covenant, protecting ourselves from that which tears us away from God's goodness.

Our reading from Matthew is a reminder from Jesus that it is not our physical cleanliness that matters to God, rather it is our thoughts expressed through our speech which can be harmful if left unchecked. Jesus encourages us to focus on the things that matter rather than the Pharisees that became obsessed with the letter of the law and neglected the core meaning behind keeping one's self clean. Jesus sums up the teaching beautifully, as it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, rather it is what comes out of the mouth, the speech and words that can have a profound impact on our neighbour.

Readings

Isaiah 56:1-8

Matthew 15:10-20

Sermon: Keeping Clean

Have you ever eaten a meal with your hands? There are many cultures where it's not only normal for people to eat with their hands, it's expected. In Indian and Ethiopian cultures, there are many dishes where you're not only expected to eat using your hands, you're expected to eat with your right hand specifically. If you're left-handed like me, that poses quite a challenge. Thankfully eating sushi with either hand is perfectly acceptable, so if I don't have chopsticks next to me, I'll be just fine.

There are also plenty of Western foods we eat with our hands as well. Chicken wings, french fries, cookies, sandwiches, burgers, the list goes on and on. I hope I'm not making anyone feel too hungry, but at least after service, you can grab some lunch. So why am I talking about eating food with your hands? Today's passage talks about what defiles or disgraces us.

Many parts of the Bible talk about purity, cleanliness, and hygiene. It was important for people living in an environment like the Middle East where sand and dirt are much more abundant than here in Montreal. It's also important for us to maintain our hygiene in the 21st century, especially over the past few years. So when we hear passages about cleanliness and purity, perhaps some hidden reminders remain relevant to this day.

This particular passage explores Jesus' teaching of defilement coming from the heart and not what goes into the mouth. Defilement going into the mouth sounds somewhat logical, especially if the person eats food without washing their hands. I know that whenever I ride the bus, I make sure to clean my hands before I start handling things, especially food. Sickness from unwashed hands used to be a lot more common for me before the pandemic, because I never usually put much thought into the cleanliness of bus poles or door handles. Now that I've become more conscience as to the cleanliness of my hands, I find myself becoming sick much less often and cleaning my hands when I leave my own living space has become a habit.

But are we feeling that same habit when it comes to what we say to other people? Jesus says that it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, rather it is what comes out of the mouth, meaning the words that we speak. Do we have routines to check what we say before we say it? Much like the pandemic has made us more conscience about what we touch, have we become conscience about what we say? Or are we like before the pandemic, touching door handles without a second thought? Are our words spoken without thinking about how they might affect other people?

I remember as a kid, one of the lessons adults would teach me is 'think before you speak'. But let's be honest, some kids don't pick up on that mantra, and some kids simply can't do so. Sometimes people don't have filters

and express what they are feeling without hesitation. I know people like that, and it can get super awkward in certain situations, when someone faces a stressful situation and ends up insulting another person, sometimes without realizing it.

I'm guilty of speaking before thinking about what I say. Sometimes in the moment of excitement or frustration, our emotions can jump out of our mouths and damage the relationships we have with our neighbours. Jesus is telling his disciples that the things that make us unclean are the unfiltered thoughts which can harm others. But the disciples didn't get it at first. They were concerned about what the Pharisees were focused on, eating with unclean hands.

Much like the Pharisees of the ancient world, there are people today who focus on the wrong issues, drawing people away from the things that are causing real damage to people. When people focus on irrelevant or distracting issues, attention is drawn away from the things that affect people on a deeper level. The same thing happens with our faith. When we allow ourselves to be distracted by the things which are superficial and unimportant in the grand picture of life, the little things that hurt people grow into an unruly mess.

Jesus paid no attention to the Pharisees' offence. His disciples certainly did, they recognized that the Pharisees held a position of power and influence and that they were

displeased with what Jesus was saying. His disciples pointed out to Jesus that the Pharisees were offended by what Jesus said as if saying that to Jesus would cause him to apologize and take back what he said because the almighty Pharisees got offended by what Jesus said. Eating with unwashed hands?!? What kind of monster does this Jesus think he is?

Just as I said last week when God made us flexible and adaptable, the Pharisees rejected that flexibility in favour of comforting themselves with the traditions that kept them bound to the same place. They fixated on their own laws which in turn voided the very laws that they obsessed over. Rather than focusing on the uncleanliness of people's hearts, they focused on external cleanliness instead. It's easier for them to focus on the visual and visible rather than working within one's self to improve their state of being.

It is much easier to maintain our hygiene for our hands than it is for our hearts. We can remember to wash our hands before we eat because we have visual reminders to do so. When farmers work in the field or factory workers manage the machines, when office workers handle computers and documents, there are reminders posted to wash their hands. But we don't do the same thing when it comes to our words and sometimes even our actions.

So when Jesus is telling us to focus on what comes out of our mouths rather than what goes in, there's a reason

for it. It's much harder for us to mind what we say. Out of our hearts come the expressions of thoughts which can harm others. When we get angry or frustrated at someone, those things that Jesus mentions, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, and slander, all of these things come out of our mouths as an expression of our reaction to things.

Jesus is not saying it's wrong to be angry or frustrated. Rather, we must process and express those things in a clean way. When our faith is challenged by moments of selfishness, it is in our ability to reflect on our responses that lies the key to growing ourselves as Christians. When we focus on the example of Jesus and remember the warnings he gives us, this is our reminder to ourselves to keep on track toward Jesus' teachings of love and compassion.

So when Jesus sees the Pharisees taking offence to what he says, he simply brushes them aside, saying that anything that God has not planted will be uprooted. They are blind guides of the blind. Sometimes we find ourselves like the Pharisees, blinded by our obsession over the little things. But unlike the Pharisees, we can open our eyes and truly see within ourselves what comes out of our mouths.

When we have the courage and the maturity to take a good look at ourselves and identify the wrong things that come out of our mouths, that is when we begin to understand what Jesus is teaching us and how his example

leads us to better relationships with our neighbours. Whenever I find myself unintentionally trying to steer a conversation into talking about myself rather than listening to the other person, I try to proactively catch myself by recognizing that the other person hasn't talked much or I haven't been listening. Sometimes it works, and other times I fail to recognize my selfish behaviour, but that's ok because catching ourselves isn't easy and we will stumble and forget ourselves.

That's why communities of faith like Kensington exist. We have the capabilities to share ourselves with others, both the strengths that help lift others and support the outreach initiatives that we engage in, but also the weaknesses, where we can learn from one another ways in which we can better ourselves and the things that come out of our mouths. So when you find yourself reacting to a situation or engaging someone in a conversation, remember to take time to reflect either in the moment, or if you've already said something that hurt someone else, and take a proactive role in recentring your words and reactions so they can be expressions of love even in the face of anger and frustration.

Ultimately, it helps build relationships to be stronger, and in the face of love and compassion, we draw ourselves closer to Jesus' teachings and allows us to focus on what matters most, becoming better Christians and helping to build better connections with one another. Thanks be to God, Amen.

Responding to God

Hymn: Thy word is a lamp onto my feet (496)

Offering

Financially, we have set up a donation option on our website. Just click the 'Donate Now' button, and then the pretty button. It gives you various options that are easy to follow. You can also donate through interac e-transfer. Our name is "Kensington Presbyterian Church" and the e-mail address is: info@kensingtonchurch.ca. Mailing a cheque or signing up for Pre-Authorized Remittance (PAR) are also good options.

Prayers of the People

Living God, you have so lovingly created us with so many gifts. Your people are diverse, both in their gifts and in their challenges. With so many of our needs, you have such deep compassion for each and every one, and so we express our love for you in worship and prayer. We give you thanks for your guidance in our lives, as we seek your compassion through our prayers. Be with us in our lives as we face the challenges which aim to block us from truly progressing in your calling of love and grace for all people.

We pray for the work of your church. For the outreach that you call us to partake in, may your hand work in ours as we serve our neighbour in love and generosity. We pray for your presence when our work faces obstacles.

Alexander Plant
For Kensington Presbyterian Church

Clear our vision and our prejudices and work in our circumstances to show us the path that you have laid out for us.

We pray for the choices we face in our country and for the choices being made in countries around the world. For those in positions of power whose shoulders bear the burden of responsibility and accountability, inspire in them clean and honest hearts, so that your truth may shine through the darkness of lies and deceit. Inspire leaders to show your compassion in their governances and inspire the people to take courage and focus them on promoting your love onto other people through social justice and community outreach,

Living Christ, you are the personification of peace and love. You show us the possibilities that elude us during times of chaos and despair. Fill us with the strength and courage we need to walk with you, show us grace and compassion for today and tomorrow. Unite us in your love as we go from this place to seek purified hearts and loving actions. This we pray in your most precious name. Amen.

Hymn: God of mercy, God of grace (39)

Sending & Benediction

Go with the conviction to seek pure hearts as we depart from this place, seeking to do the good that God calls us to do. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen.