

Key Scripture - Mark 6: 20

for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him.



Theme - Closest Alligator to the Boat

## Welcome and Announcements

- † Newcomers please sign our guestbook
- † Special requests may be made through Facebook
- † Trinity is Welcoming, Open, Inclusive and Accessible.
  - Trinity is an Affirming Congregation
- † We continue to pray for those who were impacted by the discovery of unmarked graves at Residential Schools.
- † Given the fact that the population may not be fully vaccinated until early Autumn; Trinity will not resume “In Person” Worship until September.
- † Services are pre-recorded during the week prior to the Sunday they represent, then posted to [Facebook](#). You will find a window to the Facebook Page on our [Website](#). You will also find a link to our [Bulletin Page](#). Services are rebroadcast on COGECO (Your TV) the following Sunday 10:00 am and 2:00 pm.
- † **The Annual Congregational Meeting will be September 12, 2021.** At which time, we should be able to have more than 10 people in person.
- † **We are pausing the Grocery Gift Card program.**

† If you do not already track news and events in our larger Church Community, you may wish to [visit the United Church of Canada Website](#). [E-ssentials](#) is a helpful NewsLetter you may wish to consider.

## **Healing Pathway Ministry - Distance Healing Circle - Trinity United Church**

While in-person sessions are inadvisable during the Pandemic, the Healing Pathway Ministry will be offering a group distance healing session for twenty minutes starting at 1:00 pm on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays of the month.

Distance healing is a form of prayer which recognizes that we are all One in the Source of Life. We open to the Sacred Spirit and to allow the Healing energy of the Spirit to flow.

You are invited, if you wish, to join the virtual circle via [Zoom](#)

If you wish to have a conversation and / or book an individual healing session, email -

[trinitysmithsfallshealingpathway@yahoo.com](mailto:trinitysmithsfallshealingpathway@yahoo.com)

## **Acknowledging Traditional Territory**

Smiths Falls is located on the traditional territory of the Algonquin peoples dating back countless generations. We are grateful for our neighbours and recognize the opportunity to exercise the Ministry of Reconciliation

## **Introit 430 "God Be In My Head"**

God be in my head, and in my understanding;

God be in mine eyes, and in my looking;

God be in my mouth, and in my speaking;

God be in my heart, and in my thinking;

God be at mine end, and at my departing.

## **Call to Worship**

The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it.

**The world and those who live in it belong to God.**

Who is the King of glory?

**The Lord, who is strong and mighty!**

So lift up your heads and your hearts!

**We will lift them up in praise!**

Let us worship God in beauty and holiness.

**We will offer God our steadfast love and faithfulness,  
now and always.**

## **Opening Prayer**

Gracious God, source of life and love in all creation,

In a world where power protects power,

Your power protects people.

In a culture marked by confusion,

Your light brings clarity.

In a time of conspiracies and suspicion,

You are the truth that sets us free.

Your stillness is peace when we are frantic.

Your strength is comfort when we are fearful.

Your wisdom is guidance when we are lost.

For all that you are and all that you give,

God, our Maker,

Christ, our Saviour, and

Spirit who leads us into life,

we offer you all honour, praise and worship, now and  
always. Amen.

**Hymn** 245 "Praise The Lord With The Sound Of Trumpets"

Praise the Lord with the sound of trumpet,  
praise the Lord with the harp and lute,  
praise the Lord with the gentle sounding flute.

Praise the Lord in the field and forest,  
praise the Lord in the city square,  
praise the Lord anytime and anywhere.

Praise the Lord in the wind and sunshine,  
praise the Lord in the dark of night,  
praise the Lord in the rain or snow or in the morning light.

Praise the Lord in the deepest valley,  
praise the Lord on the highest hill,  
praise the Lord, never let your voice be still.

Praise the Lord with the crashing cymbal,  
praise the Lord with the pipe and string,  
praise the Lord with the joyful songs you sing.

Praise the Lord on a weekday morning,  
praise the Lord on a Sunday noon,  
praise the Lord by the light of sun or moon.

Praise the Lord in the time of sorrow,  
praise the Lord in the time of joy,  
praise the Lord in the every moment, nothing let your praise destroy.

Praise the Lord in the peace and quiet,  
praise the Lord in your work or play,  
praise the Lord every where in every way!

## Time With Children

Hello Young Folk,

When I was thinking of the Time with Children, I thought that making reference to The Reader's Digest would date me. To date somebody might mean to go out for supper and a movie ... It also means to make reference to something that shows how old you are. I was surprised to learn that you can still subscribe to it. Anyhow, a very long time ago, probably more than 50 years ago, I heard my mother say something she read in the Reader's Digest that stayed with me. She said that the very worst thing to do if you want to be organized is to put something somewhere "for now." It seems that there is almost no such thing as "for now." The shortcut you take "for now" will become a path that you take all the time. I think about that everytime I go to the garage to get my bicycle.

Last year, I cleaned out my garage and built a heavy duty workbench with drawers and everything. All my tools were put away. It was beautiful. Everything was in its place and there was tonnes of room... Even when the car was parked indoors. With the passage of a year and my habit of putting things anywhere I want "for now" I hate to open the garage door when my very tidy neighbour is in his yard ... it is embarrassing. My once tidy garage is like a maze of tools, spare parts and half empty boxes on the floor; laid out in piles that give evidence of a task completed and tools not properly put away. There is no place I can walk in a straight line.

Does your room at home look like that? Do you have to be reminded to put your toys or clothes away?

How about your desk? When I was in elementary school, my desk would clutter up so bad that I had no room even to put a pencil away. Does this happen to you?

Why does it happen at all? Even when we want to be tidy. Even when we know that putting this away is important?

Maybe it is because we think that taking things out and doing things with them is more important or fun than putting them away

and doing nothing with them when we are done. Rather than take the time to put things away, we turn right away to the next thing we want to do. Cleaning up is what we do after the job is done and as soon as we think the job is done ... well ... we think we are done... and we leave the tools or toys or books or clothes right where we last used them.

In today's Gospel story, Herod, who was a government leader where Jesus lived, had a lot on his mind but was so focused on what he was doing in the moment, that he made promises and decisions on the spot that seemed the right thing to do at the time but it made quite a mess of everything else he wanted to do. It also hurt people very badly.

Later in the Bible, we see that Herod's decision in a moment made him afraid for the rest of his time. It was not very long after Jesus' day that he was finished. He was dismissed, he lost his position and all his power and responsibility.

What can we learn from this?

Well, if we take the kinds of shortcuts that leave a mess behind, we may come to a point that we are so mixed up in the mess that we try to hide it, like keeping the garage door closed; or we cannot do what we want anymore because we cannot find the tools or toys. Or it might mean that we make a mess that somebody else has to clean up for us. All of those things are not necessary or very nice.

For about a month now, we have been reminded of how we were unkind and careless with our Indigenous neighbours for years. We made a mess that was and remains hurtful. It is not good for anybody. We cannot hide it anymore and nobody can repair it for us. Let us pray that we and our leaders find the courage, compassion and commitment to do the right thing.

## **Children's Prayer**

Dear God,

Help us always to be kind and thoughtful. Remind us that some shortcuts and some careless acts can hurt ourselves and others deeply. When we hurt others, make us quick to work to make things right. When others are hurt, even when we did not cause it, give us enough love to do the right thing, even if the hurt was not our fault.

Help our leaders to be brave and kind and committed to bring healing for all.

Amen.

## **Prayer of Confession**

Loving God,

In a world marked by self-indulgence,  
you are generosity for those in need.

In a world marked by injustice,  
you are a conscience speaking to us.

In a world marked by vengeance,  
you are mercy and reconciliation.

Forgive our selfishness;  
our lack of concern for the vulnerable; and  
our desire to settle scores rather than work things out.

Renew us with your mercy and  
strengthen our resolve to live generously,  
in action and in attitude.

## **Words of Assurance**

Hear the good news!

Who is in a position to condemn?

Only Christ - and  
Christ died for us;  
Christ rose for us,

Christ reigns in power for us,  
Christ prays for us.  
Believe the good news of the gospel.  
In Jesus Christ,  
we are forgiven and  
set free by God's generous grace.

**Scripture**            2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19;  
                              Psalm 24 (VU751);  
                              Mark 6:14-29

2 Samuel 6:1-5, 12b-19

David again gathered all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. David and all the people with him set out and went from Baale-judah, to bring up from there the ark of God, which is called by the name of the Lord of hosts who is enthroned on the cherubim. They carried the ark of God on a new cart, and brought it out of the house of Abinadab, which was on the hill. Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, were driving the new cart with the ark of God; and Ahio went in front of the ark. David and all the house of Israel were dancing before the Lord with all their might, with songs and lyres and harps and tambourines and castanets and cymbals.

It was told King David, "The Lord has blessed the household of Obed-edom and all that belongs to him, because of the ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-edom to the city of David with rejoicing; and when those who bore the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, he sacrificed an ox and a fatling. David danced before the Lord with all his might; David was girded with a linen ephod. So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet.

As the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal daughter of Saul looked out of the window, and saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.

They brought in the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place, inside the tent that David had pitched for it; and David offered burnt offerings and offerings of well-being before the Lord. When David had finished offering the burnt offerings and the offerings of well-being, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts, and distributed food among all the people, the whole multitude of Israel, both men and women, to each a cake of bread, a portion of meat, and a cake of raisins. Then all the people went back to their homes.

Psalm 24 (VU751)

*Refrain -*

*Lift up your heads,  
that God who rules in glory enter may.*

The earth is God's, and all that is in it;  
the world, and those who live upon it.  
**For God founded it upon the seas,  
planted it firm over the waters beneath.**

*Refrain -*

*Lift up your heads,  
that God who rules in glory enter may.*

Who may ascend the mountain of God?  
Who may stand in God's holy place?  
**Those who have clean hands and a pure heart,  
who have not set their minds on deceit,  
nor made false promises;**

they shall receive God's blessing,  
righteousness from the God who will save them.  
**Such are those who seek God,  
who seek the face of the God of Jacob.**

*Refrain -*

*Lift up your heads,  
that God who rules in glory enter may.*

Lift up your heads, you gates!  
**Lift yourselves up, you everlasting doors,  
that the One who rules in glory may enter.**

Who rules in glory?

**It is God, valiant and strong,  
God, who is mighty in battle.**

Lift up your heads, you gates!

**Lift yourselves up, you everlasting doors,  
that the One who rules in glory may enter.**

Who rules in glory?

**It is God of Hosts,  
God who rules in glory.**

*Refrain -*

*Lift up your heads,  
that God who rules in glory enter may.*

Mark 6:14-29

King Herod heard of it, for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

**Meditation** "Pastorale" from "William Tell" (Rossini)

**Reflection** Closest Alligator to the Boat

"Closest Alligator to the Boat" is a military saying that refers to the need to deal with the most vital and urgent issue first. It is also the title of a book that intends to help college students improve themselves and who are feeling overwhelmed by sometimes conflicting responsibilities and opportunities. I have not read the book but the synopsis is curious -

“If you want to survive and thrive, you will need to "attack" whichever "alligator" is directly in front of you. It is important to tackle the things in life that are "mission critical," i.e., prioritize what matters most. This book will help students to prioritize certain ways of thinking and acting in order to achieve their short- and long-term goals.”

What I find curious is that the synopsis seems to suggest that the alligator directly in front of you is mission critical or has anything to do with the mission at all. Not all alligators in front of you are necessary parts of the plan. Some are urgent based simply on their proximity to the boat. Attacking the alligator closest to the boat may, in fact, be a distraction from the key objective. Sometimes, the consequence or cost of attacking the closest alligator is so significant, that decisions are made and actions are taken that forever changes and reframes your intention. Rather than making progress, you remain in your boat whacking alligators while going nowhere.

Following the death of his father, Herod the Great, Herod Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea as a client state of the Roman Empire. His official responsibilities included building projects and the construction of his capital, Tiberias, on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. Herod Antipas' personal priority was to increase his power and position. Part of his plan was to curry favour with the Emperor, hence his capital was named in honour of the emperor Tiberius. Likewise, he divorced his first wife in favour of Herodias, who had formerly been married to his half-brother Herod II. In the sphere of inherited titles and authority, such a marriage should or could have increased his claim to more power. It also attracted alligators.

John the Baptist's condemnation of this arrangement raised the specter of popular dissent, as would mistreatment of a man that the populous regarded as a prophet. Additionally, the marriage fueled a dispute over territory on the border. It was not long before this would be his undoing.

Finding yourself in a situation where you seem to be constantly attacking the closest alligator to the boat looks disorganized and

indecisive. It requires a balancing act that is exhausting and the complete collapse of your objective is a constant possibility -

Today's Gospel tells us - "Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him."

Matthew's Gospel adds - "... Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because John had been telling him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Though Herod wanted to put him to death, he feared the crowd, because they regarded him as a prophet." Matthew 14:3-5

- Herod wants power. This is his main objective. Between him and his objective is a sea of alligators - John the Baptist, the people of his region, Herodias and his powerful friends - all of these circle his boat.
  - Herod regarded John the Baptist as a righteous and holy man and was intrigued by his teaching. John the Baptist' criticism is a problem because Herod knows he is correct.
  - The people regarded John the Baptist as a prophet. Mistreating him would be perilous. Discord in his province is a clear impediment to power.
  - Herodias was key to forming alliances and advancing claims on disputed territory. It was important that she remain on-side and she wanted John the Baptist dead.
  - Herod was careful to impress his powerful guests. He could not be seen by them failing to honour an oath.
- In the moment that Herod had to make a decision regarding the fate of John the Baptist, the closest alligator to his boat was his oath and the fact that he made it in front of his powerful guests.

Attacking the alligator closest to the boat and tackling those things that are essential in the long term are not the same thing. From that moment on, Herod is haunted by the knowledge of what he has done. This forms a part of his unraveling.

“At that time Herod the ruler heard reports about Jesus; and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist; he has been raised from the dead, and for this reason these powers are at work in him.” Matthew 14:1-2

Not only did Herod believe that Jesus was a new manifestation of the Baptist, so did the people. When Jesus asked his disciples, “Who do people say that the Son of Man is?” They said, “Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.”

Herod is in serious trouble. He attacked the wrong alligator. Sometimes the closest alligator is not the one to whack. Our priority must be that alligator that is between us and our goal. A complicating factor is that rarely are we able to choose our alligator. Often, when folk say we have to deal with the alligator that is closest to the boat, it is not the alligator we want. It seems that we have no choice but to deal with it and while we do so, the opportunity to move forward in a meaningful way is impeded or forever compromised.

On or about 27 May, our whole country was made aware, yet again of injustices committed against our Indeginious Folk. This knowledge was not new. We should be surprised if anybody was surprised. All that changed was the method by which the information was brought to us, ground penetrating radar. Perhaps there was greater precision in the counting and reporting, perhaps there was a new form of empirical evidence but the core knowledge was not new. This was not a previously unspoken truth.

On Canada Day, thousands of folk wore orange and marched in Ottawa, this was one way to keep awareness close to the large boat which is the consciousness of our whole country so that when decisions are made as to which alligator must be dealt with, justice for our Indeginious Folk is not forgotten.

The month of June was, in effect, a month of advocacy - what cannot happen is that we are permitted to navigate around this month and emerge in July with a new set of concerns ... only to revisit this grave injustice when it glances our boat again. May God help us to be faithful. May we find the courage, the love, the faithfulness to be unrelenting in our work and our advocacy until the Kingdom of Grace and Justice that Jesus proclaimed is truly in our midst.

**Hymn** 271 "There's A Wideness In God's Mercy" vs 1,3,5

There's a wideness in God's mercy like the wideness of the sea;  
There's a kindness in God's justice which is more than liberty.

There is plentiful redemption in the blood that Christ has shed;  
There is joy for all the members in the sorrows of the Head.

For the love of God is broader than the measures of the mind,  
And the heart of the Eternal is most wonderfully kind.

### **Invitation to the Offering**

The Book of Ephesians tells us that we have received an inheritance in Jesus. God's gifts to us allow us to be generous in response to the needs in the world. What we give speaks to the world of God's generosity, as well as our own.

### **Offering Prayer**

Generous God,

We look around at the growth in gardens and fields, and trust in the generosity you have planted within your creation.

Bless the gifts we bring, that they too may grow in fruitfulness, and touch lives in need with your generous love, in the name of Jesus, our help and our hope. Amen.

**Hymn 559 "Come, O Fount Of Every Blessing"**

Come, O Fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing your grace;  
streams of mercy, never ceasing call for songs of endless praise.  
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.  
Praise the mount; I'm fixed upon it, mount of God's unfailing love.

Here I pause in my sojourning, giving thanks for having come,  
come to trust, at every turning, God will guide me safely home.  
Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God,  
came to rescue me from danger, precious presence, precious blood.

O, to grace how great a debtor daily I am drawn anew!  
Let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to you.  
Prone to wander, I can feel it, wander from the love I've known:  
Here's my heart, O, take and seal it, seal it for your very own.

**Prayers of the People**

Blessed are you, O God, for all your goodness to us.

In Christ, we meet your love and wisdom, face to face.

Through the Holy Spirit, we recognize the abilities and opportunities  
you create

in us and for us,

to reach out to the world you love.

We thank you for all the ways friends and families,  
neighbours and strangers,

reach out to us and to others,

offering support and kindness,

speaking up when we must confront wrongdoing,

celebrating when achievements bless us all

with healing and happiness.

Today we pray for courageous leaders  
in cities, countries and congregations  
who strive to serve with integrity and honesty  
in a world prone to self-interest.

We pray for those who struggle to create justice  
where it has been compromised, and  
to build reconciliation and understanding in divided  
communities.

We remember before you quiet and reliable leaders  
who keep their word and meet their deadlines  
so that we can depend on them in these unsettling times.

We pray for patient church members and community volunteers,  
who work diligently towards long-term goals that will improve  
our life together.

And we pray for the creative, impatient change makers,  
who keep challenging us,  
to be bolder and more determined in righting wrongs and  
trying new strategies.

We pray for the troubled in mind or spirit,  
for the angry and unhappy, and  
for those who feel that every day is a struggle.

Soothe their concerns and open their hearts  
to claim the hope and help you offer.

We remember before you the sick and the dying, and  
the bereaved who must try to put their lives back together again.

We pray for those who are recovering from the pandemic,  
looking for better health, a fresh start, more stability or a  
glimpse of hope.

Draw close to all these who suffer,  
offering your comfort and courage to face whatever comes next.

Receive our prayers, both spoken and unspoken, and  
embrace us all in your love.

Give us hearts to understand not only what you do on our behalf,  
but also what you call us to do on your behalf,  
for we are friends and followers of Jesus,  
who taught us to pray:

*Prayers conclude with:*

We experience God in a relationship from which we draw strength,  
courage and encouragement.

The ways of knowing God - as Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer;  
Father, Mother, Friend; may be expressed in the prayer Jesus taught us -

## **The Lord's Prayer**

### **We Depart to Serve with Joy**

**Hymn** 267 "Like A Mighty River Flowing" vs 1,3,4

Like a mighty river flowing,  
like a flower in beauty growing,  
far beyond all human knowing  
is the perfect peace of God.

Like the summer breezes playing,  
like the tall trees softly swaying,  
like the lips of silent praying  
is the perfect peace of God.

Like the morning sun ascended,  
like the scents of evening blended,  
like a friendship never ended  
is the perfect peace of God.

### **Benediction**

We are sent by God, to be God's people in the world.

**We will tell of God's joy and hope to all.**

We are called by Christ, adopted into God's gracious family.

**We will share the good news of Christ's grace for everyone.**

We are chosen by the Spirit to care for and serve creation.

**We will join our sisters and brothers in every moment.**

### **Choral Amen**

**Postlude** "The Impossible Dream"

To dream the impossible dream  
To fight the unbeatable foe  
To bear with unbearable sorrow  
And to run where the brave dare not go.

To right the unrightable wrong  
And to love pure and chaste from afar  
To try when your arms are too weary  
To reach the unreachable star.

This is my quest  
    To follow that star  
No matter how hopeless  
    No matter how far

To fight for the right  
    Without question or pause  
To be willing to march, to march into Hell  
    For that heavenly cause

And I know  
    If I'll only be true  
To this glorious quest  
    That my heart  
Will lie peaceful and calm  
    When I'm laid to my rest.