



**Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge  
of the United Church of Canada**

**Sunday July 11, 2021**

**Minister: Rev. Tammy Allan**

**A Family of Faith, Spiritually Motivated, Welcoming and  
Caring**



***As we worship we gratefully acknowledge that we are on the ancient  
and traditional lands of The Blackfoot Nation, the people of the  
Treaty 7, and of Metis Region 3.***

***May we cherish and care for these lands and the people,  
just as those who came before us did.***

**Prelude**

**Lighting the Christ Candle**

The light shines all around us. The candle flame reminds us of the Spirit's presence among us, brightening the path that we travel. Thanks be to God, our Creator, for the light of Christ.

**Call to Worship**

This is the day that God has made.

**This is a day of wonder and grace.**

This is a day to praise God.

**This is a day to marvel at God's handiwork.**

This is a day for seeking God's will.

**This is a day to worship God.**

**Hymn** VU 315 Holy, Holy, Holy

**Opening Prayer**

**In creation we see your constant, loving presence, O God. Yet sometimes we get weary and worn from life's challenges. May your Spirit work within us with power and with promise, that we may become those who you created us to be. May we open ourselves to Christ's presence and Jesus' work of self-giving love. Amen.**

**Time with Children** God sightings? Where was God for you this week?

Sometimes, we find people in our lives who are struggling or going through difficult times. How can we be God sightings for them?

**Hymn** MV 92 Like a Rock (sung twice)

**Scripture** Mark 6: 14-29

***This passage begins with people wondering who Jesus was, linking him to his cousin, John the Baptist, who was known to be Jesus' mentor. Then we get the 'flashback scene' telling of John's death.***

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." <sup>15</sup>But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." <sup>16</sup>But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

<sup>17</sup>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. <sup>18</sup>For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." <sup>19</sup>And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, <sup>20</sup>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. <sup>21</sup>But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. <sup>22</sup>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." <sup>23</sup>And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." <sup>24</sup>She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." <sup>25</sup>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." <sup>26</sup>The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. <sup>27</sup>Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, <sup>28</sup>brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. <sup>29</sup>When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

### **Response to the Scripture Reading**

The word of God for the people of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **Reflection**

So, in the summer, lots of people like to find a place to set their favourite lawn chair, and then settle in with a good book. I don't about you, but on days like that – I avoid heavy reading...I go more for the quick read novels. Some like mysteries or 'who-done-its'; some like Romance novels; some go for cheap, trashy books that tend to follow similar formula's. Harlequin Romances used to do this; Hallmark movies do it now. The formula fits the soap opera kind of genre.

And I guess you could say this passage is like that. Jealousy, insecurity, deception, murder, all rolled into one reading.

There can be some confusion too, in that 2 characters share the same name...there is Herod's wife Herodias – who had also been married to Herod's brother; and there is the other Herodias, Herod's daughter (who more likely was Herod's step-daughter). Both women play a role in the deception and plotting in the story.

Some wonder why this story is inserted here, between the commissioning and sending out of the disciples that we heard last week, and their return to Jesus for a time of rest and renewal by the sea, that follows this passage – that's the familiar story where Jesus and his disciples go to rest, and end up feeding thousands.

Some are sure that this placement does indeed connect Jesus' ministry to John's, and that it also connects their political standings.

As we learn in this gospel reading, John the Baptist did not approve of Herod's marriage to his sister-in-law. Now, another point of confusion to clear up - note that this Herod would have been one of the son's of the earlier Herod, who was King when Jesus was born.

The story clearly links Jesus and John, so one would assume, quite naturally, that the two prophets held similar views about the world. Herod would have been one to see things that way, so would assume that Jesus too, would disapprove of his relationship with Herodias, his brother's wife.

So no doubt, when Herod hears his people wondering about who Jesus was, he would have the same sort of reaction to Jesus as he did to John. In his statement that John the Baptist had been raised from the dead wasn't a literal statement, but a statement of fear that Jesus' sense of justice was no different than John's. Herod would have been frustrated and angry about Jesus' social and political stance. However, as he had been with John, Herod would have been respectful, perhaps even fearful enough about Jesus' religiosity, and his moral stance, that the memory of John's death would emerge – not just for Herod, but for the whole community.

And the rest of the passage tells us that it wasn't Herod's intent to have John killed- that was the idea of Herodias, his wife, who used her daughter to help carry out her devious wish. In fact, as today's reading says, Herod actually grieved the task he had to carry out- yet his devotion to his daughter, and his commitment to the promise he had made her over rode his sense of grief.

What does it tell us about Herod? It tells us that he put more stock in how he would look to his guests if he didn't honour his promise to his daughter than he

did his respect for John the Baptist. It tells us that Herod was really somewhat spineless – in that he didn't stand up for what he really knew to be right.

Remember too that this story is placed right after Jesus has been back to his home town, and his ideas and teachings have been rejected there. So we've had some foreshadowing of what is to come, in terms of the actions and reactions of people who are not happy with the attention Jesus garners, already in that piece of this larger story.

Today's reading serves to add to that sense of foreshadowing. In this soap opera like flash back to John's death, and to the clear connection of the ministry of John, and John's mentorship of Jesus into his own ministry, we begin to get a sense of the what lies in store for Jesus.

And yet we know that this foreshadowing, this sense of foreboding that emerges from this story does not stop Jesus from continuing his ministry, does not stop him from teaching and preaching, from healing and challenging the societal norms that kept the poor and the marginalized in a place of oppression.

We know, through the biblical stories of Jesus' life, of his conviction to stand for the oppressed, and to challenge the powers of privilege of his day. That, of course includes challenging the actions and decisions of powerful people like Herod.

How many times in our own lives have we found ourselves in a place where we had to choose right over might? Where we had to challenge power and privilege in order to stand in solidarity with those on the margins?

Most recently, even here, we wore orange ribbons when we heard of the recent discovery of the bodies of children at residential schools. In Innisfail, a couple of weeks ago, my colleague Darren Liepold spoke at the first Innisfail Pride Day.

This week, in the news – we heard of the appointment of a new Governor General for our country –Mary Simon – a woman known for challenging injustice. And then a day later, we heard of the naming of the new National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, RoseAnne Archibald. She too is known to be a strong leader and advocate for indigenous rights.

These people are models for their communities; people who are willing to stand for justice and equity. Sometimes, there can be obstacles, or risks involved in taking a stand for justice and truth.

We know that there will be those with whom we live and work with that see things differently, that view the world from a different lens than we do. You only need to

say “government restrictions for COVID” and the opinions emerge...some radically opposed to others.

Who do we look to for support in those times? Who are our mentors? Jesus had John the Baptist. The disciples had Jesus. Where do we find our direction, our support, in those times when we know that things are not as they should be, and we need to take a stand?

For me there are a number of people who have played that role. I have 4 siblings. My mom taught us how to seek common ground in conflict, as a starting point for good problem solving. My dad taught us the value of holding true to your convictions. And together, my parents modeled acceptance, hospitality, and grace – especially to those who were in need.

There have also been people within the church – throughout my growing up, my time as a student in training for ministry, and as I’ve served in ministry. I have had the privilege of working with people who have strong convictions in regards to social justice, people who have taken seriously that line in the New Creed that says that we are the church, called to seek justice and resist evil.

No doubt each of you have people who have walked with you along life’s journey that have helped form you into the person you are today. Many of them, and indeed each of us, as people of faith, have a role to play in shaping the world we all live in.

We all have a role in building a better world.

I have personally had the privilege more than once, of mentoring ministry students. I do this out of my passion for education and life long learning – because I learn along with the student – and also out of a commitment to live following the way of Jesus- teaching, nurturing, caring.

Earlier, I mentioned a brief line from our New Creed. We have an even newer faith statement, that spans 12 pages of wisdom and truth about our church. It’s called the “The Song of Faith”, and this is one small piece of it’s poetic words:

“Jesus announced the coming of God’s reign—  
a commonwealth not of domination  
but of peace, justice, and reconciliation.  
He healed the sick and fed the hungry.  
He forgave sins and freed those held captive  
by all manner of demonic powers.  
He crossed barriers of race, class, culture, and gender.  
He preached and practised unconditional love—  
love of God, love of neighbour,  
love of friend, love of enemy—

and he commanded his followers to love one another  
as he had loved them.”

“A Song of Faith” United Church of Canada, 2006

All those people in my life, that I have encountered that have mentored me and others, - have done so out of love, capital “L” love. Most who mentored me did that out of a commitment to being the face of Christ’s love in how they lived that role of mentor and guide.

Take a moment...just a moment, in the quiet of this space, and think about those people that have been mentors, teachers, elders, wisdom bearers in your life...and how they have touched you, and made a difference in the world...

Thank God for those people, those mentors, those teachers, and leaders who have shaped our lives, who have inspired us, who have guided us, and given us the strength, the courage, the wisdom, to find the ways of justice and truth, the ways of Christ. Amen.

**Hymn** MV 150 Spirit God, Be Our Breath

**This Week’s Minute for Mission**

“We help our fellow members.”

Published On: December 4, 2020

Hard work doesn’t always pay off. Around the world, many people work hard and still can’t feed their families. Your gifts through Mission & Service turn hard work into true hope for the future. Thanks to your support, resourceful people like Margaret Kagundu don’t just survive but thrive.

Margaret and her children live in challenging conditions in Nyeri, Kenya. In an area of widespread poverty, families live in makeshift homes without running water and have very little access to healthcare. Disease is so rampant that the average woman like Margaret can expect to live just 30 years.

Margaret struggled to meet her family’s basic needs before she received a micro-loan from a lending program called Jamii Imara (pronounced *Jam-ee EE-mara*), which your gifts support.

*Photo Credit: The United Church of Canada*



Wanting to improve her life, Margaret applied for a small, interest-free loan from Jamii Imara to lift herself out of poverty. She used it to purchase a home to rent out. With the rental income, she paid back the loan and then applied for another. She has received and paid back many loans to date. Margaret now owns two rental homes and is a proud landlord. The income is helping her feed and educate her family.

Your support teamed up with Margaret's hard work means that Margaret's son is in high school today. Considering 90 percent of children living in poverty in Kenya don't finish grade 8, that's a remarkable achievement.

"I was granted 10,000 shillings four times. I have even started keeping goats that reproduce. I have educated my children," Margaret says.

The Jamii Imara project helps women like Margaret establish their businesses. Together, the businesswomen share best practices and help each other financially to survive difficult times.

"We help our fellow members. If one's husband is ill, we continue to help her. If one's child is ill, we contribute to help her," says Margaret. "There are many women who want to join the group because they see that I have progressed a lot. I am no longer the way I was before."

*Supporting women like Margaret who are determined to change their lives is just one of the ways you are helping to turn hard work into hope every day. Make your Mission & Service gift today to help transform and save lives.*

**Offertory Music**    MV    191    What Can I Do?

### **Offertory Prayer**

**Loving God, receive our offering this day; may it be used to ease the suffering of those you love, and bring hope to the world. We bring our gifts in praise and thanksgiving for your abundant grace. Amen.**

### **Prayers for the Day**

As we enjoy the beauty of the summer season, we hold in prayer all those that will be travelling to and from vacation sites. We know that as restrictions are lifting people are eager to visit and travel again. We pray for safe travels, and joyfilled visits.

For the wider world, we lift up in prayer, the places in our world torn by conflict and violence, and ask that peace may prevail on earth. We pray for those who live in parts of the worlds where governments are less than just, that give preferential option to the mighty, the wealthy, the powerful; instead of those who most need the support of a leadership with integrity and passion for all people.

We pray for those living in places where climate change and weather related events have created situations of food insecurity, of water shortages, of flooding, and of extreme weather events. Even in our region – we know that heat is

affecting crops and in turn is creating worry and stress for farm families. We continue to pray for areas of our country affected by forest fires – for those who have lost property and possessions, those who are risking as they fight those fires. We think of the family and friends of the helicopter pilot who lost his life serving last week.

Close to home, we pray for those in our communities in need of your healing powers...we pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones, and those living with health challenges, mental, physical or spiritual.

O God of grace and love, we offer a moment of silent reflection, as we lift up the prayers of our hearts..... We give thanks for your gift of love, O God. Hear us as we join our voices, and share the words of Jesus' prayer.

### **The 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, for ever and ever, Amen.**

**Hymn** VU 586 We Shall Go Out with Hope of Resurrection

### **A Blessing for Today**

Let us go from here to serve the world that God loves.

**We go with hearts full of tenderness and joy, and minds full of hope.**  
May the blessing of God surround each of us, this day and always.

**Amen.**

**Choral Benediction** MV 224 May the God of Peace

### **Postlude**

*Thank you for taking time to be part of the Olds-Sundre Pastoral Charge worship experience.*

*Today we also welcome the people of Knox (Didsbury) United Church, joining us in worship via ZOOM, at 9:30.*

*Olds and Sundre are having in-person worship with careful COVID precautions:  
Olds – 9:30am and Sundre - 1:30pm.*

*The bulletin and sermon will continue to be posted to the websites, for those who are unable to join us. Messages will also be posted to the Facebook Page, Olds and Sundre United Churches.*

*Each week, via email, there will be updates and announcements. If you'd like to receive those emails, please contact your church office and ask to be included.*

***Questions? Wish to financially support our ministries?***

**To Contact us:**

**Olds United Church**

4810 50<sup>th</sup> Street, Olds AB. T4H 1E4

email [office@oldsunited.ca](mailto:office@oldsunited.ca) website [www.oldsunited.ca](http://www.oldsunited.ca) 403-556-3052

**Sundre United Church**

Box 614 118 Centre Street North, Sundre AB. T0M 1X0

email [sundreuc@telus.net](mailto:sundreuc@telus.net) website [www.sundreunited.ca](http://www.sundreunited.ca) 403-638-4428

**Rev. Tammy's confidential email** [minister@oldsunited.ca](mailto:minister@oldsunited.ca)