

Nov 7th, 2021  
Immanuel United Church

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship:

In silent frields, poppies blow.

**In empty streets, silence dwells.**

In vacant rooms, photos sit.

**War does not end with a pen or a parade.**

Into the silence, the emptiness, the sorrow,

**let us bring the peace, the song, the hope of Holy Love.**

Let us worship.

Prayer:

**God, we are here and remind ourselves**

**that we are an important part of shalom —**

**in our relationships, in our communities, in our world.**

**Let us gather and prepare ourselves to carry peace into the world.**

**Let us remember the Holy Spirit,**

**who leads us into the ways of peace and light. Amen.**

Hymn: VU 389 *God is Here*

*(In the spirit of upholding respect and remembrance, let us hear In Flanders Fields presented by  
Lynne Strome.)*

In Flanders Fields            By John McCrae

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
    That mark our place; and in the sky  
    The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
    Loved and were loved, and now we lie,

In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

Scripture: Mark 12:38-44

As Jesus taught, he said, "Beware of the scribes, who like to walk around in long robes, and to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, and to have the best seats in the synagogues and places of honor at banquets! They devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation."

He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

The Choir Anthem: *The Gift of Love*

Reflection: **"I Saw the Rich Ones."**

"I Saw the Rich Ones" is the title of a hymn in More Voices that we will be invited to sing after the reflection. It is based on the text which Jane Nicholls shared with us this morning, and the first verse sings, "I saw the rich ones; I saw what they gave.

The widow who offered two pennies she'd saved / and I saw she was smiling. I knew she was glad / and I wondered because she gave all that she had. / But with God the world is turned upside down / the poor are embraced and the lost they are found. / Let's work for a world where all people are free / where it's good to feel good about God loving you and me."

This story, often titled the Poor Widow, is memorable. There are a few remarkable juxtapositions Jesus makes for us, the hearers, to notice. The most well-known one is the

contrast of wealth and poverty. Those who wear long robes that would make it difficult to work on the dusty ground, but instead, walk graciously. Those who are greeted even if they are surrounded by the crowd in a marketplace. Those who get the best seats in a worship place; those who have received such an education and special training on how to pray, or how to read scripture, that their words are eloquent and long. These people, including priests and scribes at that time, belong to not just to the religious elite; they are wealthy. Some lay people also contribute to the temple by donating large sums of money.

On the contrary, Jesus pays special attention to a poor woman, who does not have the status of marriage; she has lost her husband, her breadwinner. She is poor; her life is hard, yet she offers everything she has - two small copper coins, which are worth about a penny. In that moment, Jesus compares the rich people who can contribute out of their abundance to the poor woman who puts in everything she has. It is about how society, now and then, perpetuates class and wealth inequity and excludes those who are deemed less valuable, insignificant, depending on their possessions and monetary contribution. In this story, the poor woman's contribution does not lead to social change or a financial miracle; she stays poor.

Now, even if the Gospel writer may have omitted or neglected this detail (on purpose or without intention), there is another important disparity that plays a role in the story. Who are the rich in the story? "Rich" in this story does not only indicate an economic/ financial abundance but an assumed superiority in terms of class/ authority, represented clearly in clericalism: The clergy who are able to attain privileges as a priest or scribe, or some other role within the system, display their power in various ways, such as impractical garments. Their robes are unnecessarily long, inhibiting ordinary activity (thus separating them from daily lay activities — whatever they are: cooking, washing, serving others, lifting heavy stuff and carrying it, you name it). At that time, all clergy were absolutely male — which is still the same in many churches and societies — , each of them so much more elevated, more powerful, than the lay woman who is also poor.

I share this reflection as I begin to think about what my role and identity can mean as someone who is "ordained". Even if I do my best to demonstrate or practice a non-hierarchical understanding of vocation and teamwork with lay leaders in ministry, I need to periodically re-examine what I claim, express, preserve, inherit, and cherish attached to the tradition of the ordained path, which traditionally has been the preserve of men only.

You are my ministers. And I am a minister among many ministers, pastors, like you, who try to live out our call to follow Jesus in our capacity, accepting old struggles and defining new hopes day by day. And yet, there is also something special to the path I chose. My identity with this vocation/work is important to me. In fact, I like many things that this identity, this role, this work offer and enable in my life. However, in a recent discussion with friends, I learned more about “clericalism” and was enlightened about how clericalism may still have an influence or impact that disempowers lay leaders and friends whom I work with, together, sharing our common purpose and faith.

Am I a rich one? If so, how? Are you a rich one? If so, how?  
How could we innovate and re-define “rich” in our lives?

What exactly is clericalism? In the Roman Catholic faith tradition, clericalism manifests itself with the belief and practice that only ordained clergy have any true authority to make decisions and can do so without input from lay people. (Cozzens 2000) Pope Francis, in his address to the Synod Fathers at Synod2018 gave the following definition of clericalism: “Clericalism arises from an elitist and exclusivist vision of vocation, that interprets the ministry received as a power to be exercised rather than as a free and generous service to be given.”

In the article, “How Do You Recognize Clericalism?”, the Archdiocese of Vancouver Clericalism Committee tries to combat “The inherent evil of clericalism” within both the laity and clergy of the Catholic church in Vancouver, and it has come up with a working definition of clericalism: “Clericalism is a misplacement of responsibility with little or no accountability of the ordained ministers and lay faithful in the people of God. This leads the faithful and ordained clergy to expect that ordained ministers are better than and should rule over everyone else among the People of God, which further leads to abuses of power and hinders the universal call to holiness and the mission of evangelism.”

In my twenties and thirties, I often found myself vulnerable in various situations which clericalism in the church caused, reinforced by patriarchy. I directly and indirectly went through the pains that clericalism, conjoined with patriarchy, created. An example is the assumed gender-based expectation, reverence, and/or harassment against the wife of an ordained husband. At the same time, I found a path towards ordination as something that opened to me, as the way to “Struggle to be the Sun again”. I rediscovered the sense of vocation which I buried when I was a child, told that ordained ministry was only for boys. I left Korea and enrolled myself at Vancouver School of

Theology. There began my journey towards ordination, and I started writing an open-ended book that now has many chapters.

Ordination is a rich tradition and experience; it has allowed me to own some beautiful privileges (for example, being asked to be part of someone's life, when my presence means care and celebration). However, I will learn and examine how hierarchical notions of clericalism and power and privilege are still carried in the ordained identity I have adopted to and in my practice. Immanuel United Church has been wonderful; my true education on dismantling hierarchy started the moment I was offered the ministership here. You clearly stated from the beginning that you would like me to be part of your team, equal and free.

We see the rich ones in our lives and in the world. How we define "rich", who we call rich, our very concept of wealth can change. We can innovate the meaning of "rich", remembering the words of Jesus and others in the Bible. Jesus says, if being rich means power, privilege, turning a closed eye to oppression, abuse and the status quo, rich ones can never enter the shalom of God, just as it is impossible for a camel to go through the eye of a needle. Let's be God's version of "rich ones" in our ministry together, in the world, as the meaning of being rich is "turned upside down".

Hymn: MV 127 *I Saw the Rich Ones*

Introduction to Offering:

[Sunday School] 211107 | Pat Schulz | Live Generously

<https://youtu.be/iVATpuiFLHo>

Offering Prayer:

**Oppression, inequality, scarcity, and intolerance are the kindling for conflict. Through our offerings, Gracious God, address injustice, encourage dialogue, and fill minds and stomachs to put out the embers before they become the fires of war. Amen.**

Hymn: VU 540 **Grant Us, God, the Grace**

Communion

May God be with us.

**God's Spirit is with us.**

Let us open our hearts to God.

**We open them to God and to one another.**

Let us give thanks to God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Mighty and tender God, in Jesus of Nazareth  
we recognize the fullness of your grace:

**light, life, and love, revealed**

**in words that confront and comfort us,**

**in teachings that challenge and change us,**

**in compassion that heals and frees us.**

And now we gather at this table to remember  
and to be filled with such longing for your realm,

**that we may rise together**

**to turn our worship into witness**

**and to follow in your way.**

We remember that when Jesus ate with his friends,  
he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it,  
he broke it and gave it to them, saying:

**“Take, eat. This is my body, given for you.**

**Each time you do this, remember me.”**

Then, he took a cup, and after giving thanks,  
passed it to his friends, saying:

**“Drink. This cup that is poured out for you**

**is the promise of God, made in my blood.**

**Whenever you drink it, remember me.”**

At this time, we also remember  
all with whom you would have us share your feast.  
We pray for all who are in sorrow or in pain . . .  
all who are ill or alone . . .

all who live with fear, oppression, or hunger . . .  
for all whom the world counts as last and least . . . .

Help us to love as Christ loved.  
Knowing our own weakness,  
**may we stand with all who stumble.**  
Sharing in his suffering,  
**may we remember all who suffer.**

Held in his love,  
**may we embrace all whom the world denies.**  
Rejoicing in his forgiveness,  
**may we forgive all who sin against us.**

Loving God, we rejoice in the gift of your grace,  
remembering Christ's life and death,  
proclaiming his resurrection,  
waiting in hope for his coming again.  
Grant that, in praise and thanksgiving,  
we may so offer ourselves to you  
that our lives may proclaim the mystery of faith:

**We proclaim Jesus,  
crucified and risen,  
our judge and our hope.**

Send, O God, your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these gifts,  
that all who share in this loaf and cup  
may be the body of Christ:  
light, life, and love in the world.  
In this hope and as your people, we praise you.

Through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
all glory is yours, God most holy, God in all Creation,  
now and forever.  
**Amen.**

We gather these and all our prayers,  
thankful that we may turn to you  
as to our Mother who loves us, as:  
**Our Father, who art in heaven . . .**

**The Prayer of Jesus (sung)**

**The bread of freedom.  
The cup of shalom.**

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Come, for all things are now ready.

Distribution

Prayer after Communion:

Gracious God,  
may your gifts of love transform and enliven us  
that we may live lives of thanksgiving.  
May your presence among us  
provoke such longing for your shalom,  
that we will never be satisfied  
until the whole earth knows  
your justice, your peace, and your love.  
In Christ's name, we pray.  
**Amen.**

Hymn: MV 209 *Go, Make a Diff'rence*

Amen (VU 974)

Postlude