

Call to Worship:

He that cometh to God believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Prayer:

Lord we know and confess that our hearts are unworthy of being in your presence. Day by day we enjoy your gifts, all the while forgetting that you have given them to us. We take them for granted or claim the credit for ourselves. We have ignored your word to us. Lord have mercy on us. Grant us your pardon , your forgiveness. Help us to be more responsive to your call. We offer praise and thanksgiving for your love. For all that you have given us. We thank you for the life promised in Jesus Christ. With these words we share our belief in you by saying;

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 our daily bread and forgive us our debts

As we forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil

For thine is the Kingdom, the Power , and the Glory, AMEN

A Vacation From God:

As you are aware, I spend a lot of time in the summer away at our place in the Kawarthas' . I sometimes wonder, do I need or do any of us need a vacation from God?

Yes, in some ways we do. Not only those who are Ministers or in the full time service of the Church, but lay people too, all who are fully involved in the life and work of the church week by week. We need to get away for a while- maybe not from worship, but certainly from our religious commitments, from the meetings, from the bible studies, from the sales, from the special projects, from the kitchen, from the setting up and taking down.

The story is told of an old farmer, who was notorious for his frugality of spirit. He was so stingy, in , fact, that he only fed his livestock the minimum necessary to keep them alive. Once he sold some pigs to a neighbour. The farmer was very anxious to fatten them up for the market so he put extra feed in their trough, something they obviously enjoyed very much as they gobbled up their food. A friend observing this cautioned him, saying, Hey, you are going to ruin these pigs by over feeding them. No danger of that, says the farmer, these pigs belonged to my neighbor farmer. Their stomachs are so drawn up, you couldn't over feed them if you wanted to.

Well, that may be true with half starved animals, but I don't think it holds good for people involved in Church affairs. It is possible to get too much. It is possible to be overloaded or to get "altar burn, or Church burn" as someone has aptly described it. The result is less and less enthusiasm for the things of God., along

with a steep decline in our efficiency in the service of God. Finally, we have to drag ourselves with a great effort of the will to do those things that we should be doing, and normally do, with great joy and gladness. When that happens, we certainly do need to take a vacation from our religious commitments and from the things of God.

We also, need to take a vacation from God, in the sense that we need to stand back from our jaded perception of God and see him once more as he truly is, not as we have down sized him and modified him and qualified him to conform to an image that is comfortable and acceptable but bears no relation to the true God who is really at the heart of our Christian faith.

A writer once said very pertinently to this matter in the following way; “Our habits and routines are the problem, even good habits, and worthwhile routines. Eventually they weave such a spell over us that we can’t see any more. We become God blind. Even in our prayers, Even where we have been accustomed to find God. What ever we live too closely with, we cease to see. And when we live too closely with God, or with a particular way of seeing God and being around God, we cease to see God. Really to see him. We get to see mere shadows, dull representations. The real God, is still there and as real as the air we breathe, only we lose the capacity to know him. Then we need to get away, to take a holiday from our too small God, and let him truly become God again.

It is not really possible , of course, nor is it desirable, for us to take a vacation from God. There is no place on earth that you can get away from God. In Psalm 139, verse 8-11, it says; Wither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there, if I make my bed in Sheol,

thou art there, If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there, thy right hand shall hold me.

No, there is no getting away from God. There is no real vacation from him. And thank goodness for that. Because it is only really possible to have a true vacation with God and in God. It doesn't matter where we go on our dream vacation, we will take God with us . And, unless we do that, we will never find the renewal of the body, mind and soul that is the principle purpose of taking time away from the maddening world's strife. We will come back as tired and as uptight and as burned out as when we went.

If we are going to have a real vacation, it's not only matter of a new awareness of God in the midst of our recreational time, but also a re-thinking our whole attitude to our work. It is surprising how many of us cannot take a real holiday because we don't feel that we have been justifiably released from the job, the tasks, the labours that occupy so much of our waking hours. The problem that haunts and bedevils us is what has come to be called the Protestant work ethic – that feeling that gives the whole meaning, provides the whole ethos of our lives. So much, so, that we feel guilty when we don't work. We are so geared up to working, so thrilled to the idea, that work is salvation, that when we come to duly earned time off, in the form of a holiday, we cannot enjoy it or benefit from it properly from it because deep down we feel that to do anything other than work, is sinful in the eyes of the Lord.

So, if we are going to take a real vacation, then we have to re-discover one of the most important biblical teachings and one of the most central doctrines of our

Christian heritage: Justification by Faith. It is our faith in God that justifies us, makes us who we are, defines our whole being, and not the work of our hands. Only with that belief firmly ensconced in the centre of our consciousness and controlling the sometimes over-bearing dictates of our conscience, can we feel free to take a true vacation.

We have just finished with summer, we should be rested. Did you use this time for real refreshment and re-invigoration of body, mind and spirit? Go every day and find this renewal in the things you do with family, friends or just with a good book.

But find the real source of the rest that you had from God, and with God and in God and in Jesus . For God says to you, in Mathew, Come to me, all who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from, for I am gentle and lowly in Heart, and you will find rest for your soul. Take his invitation to heart- and, I can assure you, you will have had your best vacation in years and then you will be ready for the work of the Church to commence.

Thank you Lord for all you have given us. Help us to live in your world and to be thankful. Guide us as we endeavour to do your work within and with your guidance in this place of worship.

Amen

Now I challenge you, go from here and see the wonders that have been bestowed upon you.

Amen