SERMON — ST. ANDREW'S, KITCHENER — JUNE 1, 2025

Acts 16:16-34; Rev 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26

"Nothing you can know that isn't known, Nothing you can see that isn't shown, There's nowhere you can be that isn't where..." Nothing is impossible, according to the Beatles, in this song that many will know, or have heard at some point: "All you need is love, love... love is all you need." A statement that is so true in its simplicity, and yet at other times, I'd say, so naive in its simplicity.

The first reading, from Acts, gives us a glimpse into a world that's troubling, to say the least. A woman who is enslaved; she has some power of insight that is being manipulated and used for the benefit of others. People who twist stories about early Christian life and action, to get them in trouble with the authorities. Jeering crowds and beatings, like Jesus knew. Imprisonment, and even the jailer living under the spectre of fear, because when he thinks things have gone wrong, his first reaction is to end his life. Can the message of the Beatles song come close to addressing the dysfunction and inhumanity of that society? My initial response might be something like if you remove "all" from the lyrics, but keep "you need love," I would agree. But we might need other things, too.

And what might be the connection between *love* and *unity?* The connection between Jesus's prayer that "they [we] may be one" and that the Divine "love with which [Jesus was loved] may be in them and [Jesus

himself] in them." The new sense of unity that's realized in the story from Acts is rooted in baptism; the jailer, and his household, is baptised. And that commitment to love God and love neighbour, and "that power working in us that can do more than we can ask or imagine" unites them.

Though I wonder if love — a deep commitment and investment in something or someone — might sometimes make unity difficult. There may be such a thing as a superficial unity. If we don't really care, we'll never have the passion or conflict that is inevitable when we really care about something. So there's unity, but not heart.

Our own Anglican Communion, has for decades talked about the importance of having "bonds of affection." That's not all the keeps us together, but it's a big part of it. The autonomous Churches of our worldwide Communion all *choose* to be connected to Canterbury. They all *choose* to be united to one another, like cousins or siblings. For centuries there was a largely shared liturgy that could be pointed to as a unifier. And it seemed to work until it didn't. And news and social media is full of Anglican stories of schism and accusation.

And yet I look around here... and I see parts of the Anglican Communion (and other traditions) represented. Just when I though that north and south were retreating into their isolated silos, it would seem that St. Andrew's, and other churches, are embodying the prayer of Jesus: *that they may be one*. Even though we may not have all the details worked out.

And there may be differences we'll eventually uncover. There may be work ahead to determine how much uniformity is needed to achieve unity.

I've shared a story before, though I think at this point several years ago, and at our Maundy Thursday evening liturgy, so many people here probably didn't hear it. (*And if you have, in the interest of love and unity, just act surprised.)* It's a true story about a Christian community in North Carolina; about a group of young adults who lived close together, and committed to gathering daily to pray and break bread. It was founded by a group of Baptists, Pentecostals, Methodists, Anglicans, and Roman Catholics. These diverse people from different traditions wanted to worship together, care for each other, and serve their neighbours. They adopted the American *Book of Common Prayer* (basically the American equivalent of our green service book), because it worked for all of them; it hit a middle ground that unified them.

And these folks, they didn't wait for their respective church bodies to solve everything first, before they moved in together. Instead, they did the reverse thing; they decided to live, and eat, and work, and pray together. And hope and, I think, *assume*, that the requisite unity would come, out of that.

One of the founders writes: *"We don't all agree on how to read the Bible, the relationship between church and state, sexual ethics or eschatology [end of life, end of time stuff]. We argue about these things, and we don't anticipate any easy resolutions.*

*"We will, in the meantime, keep washing one another's dishes."**

And maybe there is something in that example, for us, and for the world. Something reflecting the message of the Beatles. Though it may not answer every question. But there's something very Anglican about it: about making room for one another, in a big tent. About having a meal at the centre of the community, that gathers, feeds, and sends people out, transformed.

There's love in the discipline of choosing one another. Of feeding one another, and, maybe hardest of all, doing each other's dishes. And that discipline, that ethic, will serve us well in times of growth, and change, and challenge. Recalling Jesus's prayer for those who would come after him: *"The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."*

* Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, "Together on the ark: the witness of intentional community," *The Christian Century* 11 Aug 2009, https://www.christiancentury.org/article/2009-08/together-ark?reload=1555591037532 (accessed April 18, 2019).