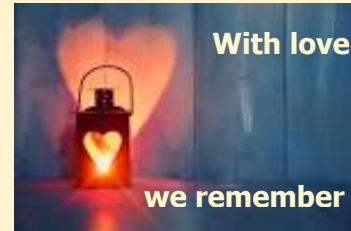


October 25, 2015

## Memorial Service

Mark 10:35-45

On this Sunday here at UPC we celebrated the first annual memorial service. It was a time of sacred memory. We listened to stories of people who have passed away, we lit candles in their memory. We observed times of silence and also listened to powerful piano music offered by our pianist and choir director Rachad.



We began with a story about Bob McEwen who had a cottage in Quebec when his children were small. They ran out of bird seed and didn't have it at the English speaking store. So instead they went to the French speaking store where Bob said to the store clerks: "Avez vous – manger – pour les avions" – all the while waving his arms. (Bob didn't realize that avions in French means airplane.) The clerks laughed and gave him the bird seed. Bob went into that store with boldness – the same boldness with which Jesus invites us to come to this service.

In the assurance of pardon we talked about God being with us, Emmanuel. But the trouble is that God seems light years away in times of death. Yet, death is a time we need the presence of God acutely.

We can learn from the spiritual disciplines of others. The Iroquois, for example wipe their eyes with maple leaves because grief blinds us to the joys of life. They use other medicines to unplug the ears because grief deafens us to the sounds of life and yet other medicines to clear the obstructions of grief from the throat because grief makes it hard for us to even talk, in some ways we become mute.

So may our experiences today wipe our eyes, unstop our ears and clear our throats so we can see the joy of life around, the love of family and friends, the compassionate presence of God. God is indeed here. God is with you. Emmanuel.

In our Children's Story we wrote a letter to the person we knew who had died and it was as well a letter to God. Then we did something crazy that the person would have enjoyed. We danced a little and we sang Jesus loves me.

In the sermon time we heard stories – of death, or remembering, of experiencing loved ones, and of the journey of grief that is so hard but a journey that we do not enter into alone – the church walks with us and God, Emmanuel is beside us.

We ended with the story of Bartimaeus – the blind beggar on the roadside as Jesus is heading towards Jerusalem, thoughts of his ultimate demise already deep within his mind. Others told Bartimaeus to shut up – Jesus had no time for the likes of him. But Bartimaeus did not shut up. "Son of David have mercy on me", he cried. "And Jesus stopped".

Three of the most powerful words in the Bible: "And Jesus stopped"

And just as he stopped for Bartimaeus, so he stops for you and me today  
Wherever we are in grief, in sadness, in anxiety, in pain, in sorrow  
Jesus stops

Thanks be to God