



Sermon: January 9, 2022

Scripture Reading: Various

The Message: Passwords

[Video Version](#)



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Last week, we thought about clearing the decks, wiping the slate of the past clean so that we could embrace what God has to offer us in the new year. As we look at all of the possibilities of the new year, today I ask, 'what doors are open to us?'

Every time I wake up my computer, it asks for my password. There are so many passwords floating through my brain right now, but rarely can I access the one that I need. I have a book full of passwords, but for the past six months, I have not been able to update my zoom account, my memory believes it is in my password book, but guess what, I can't find it in the book.

I am in a Covid vaccine study and I decided to stick with the password they gave me: q7Mvf2KN. Even though it's in my book, I usually get it wrong.

I have to change my Tyndale University password once a month or so -- I just change the last number, but that doesn't mean I don't have to try five or six different numbers before I get it right.

A friend was renting a car when he noticed something pop up on the computer screen behind the service agent. "The password has been changed. The new password is "changed."

'Don't always use the same password. Don't choose an obvious password,' -- because we wouldn't want you to find it easy to remember. 'Your password must contain an upper case letter, a number and an icon' -- you can only get when pressing control and a mystery key. 'Swear words won't be accepted even if you feel like it.'

Without the right password, you can't get in.

Christians are experts at creating passwords. These were words that distinguished one kind of Christian from another.

In the early church,

Begotten

Arians believed that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, who was begotten by God the Father with the difference that the Son of God did not always exist but was begotten within time by God the Father, therefore Jesus was not co-eternal with God the Father.

Faultless

Donatists argued that Christian clergy must be faultless for their ministry to be effective and their prayers and sacraments to be valid.

Gnosis or Knowledge

Gnostics emphasised personal spiritual knowledge (gnosis)

Dualism

Manichaeists taught an elaborate dualistic understanding of the world, describing the struggle between a good, spiritual world of light, and an evil, material world of darkness.

Dyophysitism

Nestorianism emphasizes that the two natures (human and divine) of Jesus Christ were joined by will rather than personhood: radical dyophysitism.

And one could go on through history, in the study of the bible, in theology, and in worship to uncover passwords that have been perceived as essential and allowed only those in the know to 'get in' to the privileged place of acceptance by various Christian groups.

Some of these passwords described what were called heresies, but over time, many of them were adopted and adapted by other Christians and stopped being essential to call yourself a Christian.

When we reach back even farther into the past, right back to scripture we find passwords that are eternal:

What are the passwords that might describe Christ First Christians?

Members

Donors

Attendees

volunteers

United Church

Residents of Mississauga -- as we worship on line, we are seeing people from all over joining us.

We have discovered in this pandemic that none of those passwords really describe us. But if you click on our website you will see three phrases:

Spiritually Engaged

We believe in the UCC that spiritual engagement is open to everyone. That the 'door' to engagement is entered in by Jesus' new commandment:

John 13.34-35

I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'

Matthew 26:27-28

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The Good News is that there are an infinite number of ways to become spiritually engaged. But Jesus gave us a (a password) that welcomed us all into his covenant.

Caring and Connected

Our scriptures today emphasize our collectiveness and how much it pleases God when we care for one another.

Romans 12:4-5

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another

Hebrews 13.16

"Don't forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices."

The Good News is that one of the ways you can demonstrate your love for God is to be compassionate and caring towards those you encounter here on Earth

Community focussed:

Galatians 6:2

"Carry each other's burdens and so you will fulfill the law of Christ."

The Good News: No one does anything alone. You can help friends and family to get through life's big and small obstacles, and they will do the same for you.

Spiritually Engaged
Caring and Connected
Community Focussed

It turns out that those three pillars of the church are still the most effective passwords that describe those who identify themselves with Christ First and are the only passwords that are essential to belong.

We have kept worshipping and studying through our services, our online book clubs, our children's and youth ministries no matter what. Our Mutual Support Team, our Visitors, and many others have reached out to connect to one another. And our focus has never wavered from our commitment to the community needs around us.

No, I don't believe that you need the right password to get through to God.

God is not a vending machine programmed to dispense the desired response if you insert the right coins. Or a juke box that plays pre-recorded selections when you push the right buttons. Making contact with God doesn't depend on knowing the right passwords.

And a hint for you when choosing passwords. The Bishop of Rochester told his congregation to use phrases from the New Testament.

The Bible offers a life-long source of new passwords, that can include both upper and lower case letters and numbers to help create memorable, secure passwords. Longer passwords take much more time that hackers often don't want to waste.

Include the chapter and verse number to make the password more complex. And don't go quoting your favourite scripture on social media!