

BETHEL MURDOCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
9602 Murdoch-Goshen Road, Loveland, OH 45140
September 19, 2021, 10:30 a.m.
Celebrating 207 years of Faithful Service to Our God
The Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

We Enter Into God's Presence

WELCOME

L: This is the day that the Lord has made.

P: Let us rejoice and be glad in it!

THE PEACE

L: Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another.
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

P: And also with you.

“SURELY THE PRESENCE”

Surely the presence of the LORD is in this place.

I can feel His mighty power and His grace.

I can hear the brush of angel's wings, I see glory on each face.

Surely the presence of the LORD is in this place.

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth!

P: Worship the Lord with gladness!

L: Come into God's presence with singing!

P: Enter the courts of the Lord with praise!

OPENING PRAYER

O God, you are rich in love for your people. Show us the treasure that endures and, when we are tempted by greed, remind us of your lavish mercy. Call us back into your service and make us worthy to be entrusted with the wealth that never fails. We ask this through your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

HYMN: B- 454 “Blessed Jesus, at Your Word”

1 Blessed Jesus, at Your Word We are gathered
all to hear You; Let our hearts and souls be stirred
Now to seek and love and fear You; By your teachings

true and holy; Drawn from earth to love You solely.

2 All our knowledge, sense, and sight Lie in deepest
Darkness shrouded, Till Your Spirit breaks our night
With the beams of truth unclouded You alone to
God can win us, You must work all good within us.

3 Glorious Lord, Yourself impart! Light of Light, from
God proceeding, Open now our lips and ears and heart;
Help us by Your Spirit's pleading; Hear the cry that
we are raising; Hear, and bless our prayers and praising.

CALL TO CONFESSION:

The proof of God's amazing love is this: While we were sinners Christ died for us. Because we have faith in him, we dare to approach God with confidence. In faith and penitence, let us confess our sin before God and one another as we pray together saying,

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

Merciful God, in your gracious presence we confess our sin and the sin of this world. Although Christ is among us as our peace, we are a people divided against ourselves as we cling to the values of a broken world. The profit and pleasures we pursue lay waste the land and pollute the seas. The fears and jealousies that we harbor set neighbor against neighbor and nation against nation. We abuse your good gifts of imagination and freedom, of intellect and reason, and have turned them into bonds of oppression. Lord, have mercy upon us; heal and forgive us. Set us free to serve you in the world as agents of your reconciling love in Jesus Christ.

SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

L: Hear the teaching of Christ:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you.

P: We know that we are forgiven and we can be at peace. Thanks be to God! Amen.

***RESPONSE:**

“Gloria Patri”

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end.
Amen, Amen.

We Hear God’s Word

SPECIAL MUSIC: W&R-465 “Lord, Be Glorified”

In my life, Lord, be glorified be glorified
In my life, Lord, be glorified today.

In our homes, Lord, be glorified, be glorified
In our homes, Lord be glorified today.

In your Church, Lord, be glorified, be glorified
In your church, Lord, be glorified today.

In your world, Lord, be glorified, be glorified.
In your world, Lord, be glorified today.

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: James 3:13-4:8

¹³ Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. ¹⁴ But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵ Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. ¹⁸ Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

4 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? ² You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. ³ When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

⁴ You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you think Scripture says without reason that he jealously longs for the spirit he has caused to dwell in us? ⁶ But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says:

“God opposes the proud
but shows favor to the humble.”

⁷ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

PSALM: Psalm 54

¹ Save me, O God, by your name;
vindicate me by your might.

² Hear my prayer, O God;
listen to the words of my mouth.

³ Arrogant foes are attacking me;
ruthless people are trying to kill me—
people without regard for God.

⁴ Surely God is my help;
the Lord is the one who sustains me.

⁵ Let evil recoil on those who slander me;
in your faithfulness destroy them.

⁶ I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you;
I will praise your name, LORD, for it is good.

⁷ You have delivered me from all my troubles,
and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 9:30-37

³⁰ They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹ because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” ³² But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

³³ They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” ³⁴ But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

³⁶ He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷ “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

MESSAGE: ***Root of Conflict*** **Rev. Dr. Deborah Uchtman**

When I was young one of the voices that I valued hearing was that of Paul Harvey. Paul Harvey was a radio personality who had a program entitled “The Rest of the Story.” Mr. Harvey would tell stories about average everyday people who, from all accounts of the society in which they lived, would never make anything at all of themselves. Most were born losers, the rejected, the overlooked, the broken of society. As the story unfolded, it seemed as if no good could ever come from these people. But there always seemed to be a turning point in the story and this apparently useless, used up individual would make a great discovery or invent something earth shattering or stand up in the face of danger when no one else would. These ordinary people chose not to listen to how the people around them tried to keep them down or label them as misfits or no good or too old or not smart enough. Each of these ordinary people would rise to the occasion and do something extraordinary. And Mr. Harvey would reveal that “The Rest of the Story” was the identity of the person who was always well-known or greatly respected within their particular field. Each person was someone who had made a difference to the whole world by their contributions. And their stories made me think that I could make a difference, too.

Of all of the true stories that Mr. Harvey told to his listening audience, the one that was most impactful and prophetic to me was his speech given in 1965 entitled, “If I Were the Devil.” This dark vision perfectly describes how the devil would use his deceptive ways to infiltrate the world with evil and be the root of conflict.

Mr. Harvey had assured his listeners that if he were the prince of darkness he would want everyone, especially you under his spell. So he would whisper in your ear to do as you please, just as the serpent had whispered in Eve's ear in the garden. As the devil, he understands the allure of rumors and innuendo, he would whisper in your ear that the Bible was nothing but a myth and that instead of being centered on God as we pray to our Father, The devil would lure us to be centered on political power as we pray, "Our Father, which art in Washington." The devil would create and then broadcast dirtier movies on television; peddle narcotics, alcohol and pornography to the best of society. There would be wars within families, churches and nations front and center in the media to fuel the fire and of course for the best ratings. The devil would encourage the lack of emotional discipline within youth so that drug-sniffing dogs and metal detectors were a necessity at every school house door.

Mr. Harvey would perhaps be shocked that all of his predictions about what society would accept as normal 56 years ago have come true because so much of humanity has successfully been turned away from God under the tutelage of the devil. In short, the infiltration of the devil is complete in 2021, just as it had been foretold by Paul Harvey.

I find it very disturbing that his vision was so accurate. However, in our scripture this morning, James tells us that the devil has been at work like this throughout the ages weaseling his way into our thoughts - even when we think we are wise. James warns us that there are two kinds of wisdom. He says:

if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.¹⁵ Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. ¹⁶ For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

In other words, you will find the devil at work. James goes on to say: ¹⁷ But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Which means it is time for us to wise up and get serious.

As Eugene Peterson in the Message tells us:

"We need to admit that we are cheating on God. If all we want is our own way, flirting with the world every chance we get, we will end up enemies of God and God's way. And do you suppose God doesn't

care? The proverb has it that “God is a fiercely jealous lover.” And what he gives in love is far better than anything else you’ll find. It’s common knowledge that “God goes against the willful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble.”

⁷⁻¹⁰ So, my friends, it is time to purify your hearts and let God work his will in you. Yell a loud *no* to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet *yes* to God and he’ll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify your inner life. Quit playing the field. For those of you who will miss the sin: Hit rock bottom, and cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. It is time to get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master; because without a doubt it is the only way you’ll get on your feet.

To those of you who might be thinking of yourself as born losers, the rejected, the overlooked, the broken of society – I want you to think about how God has called you, how God loves you deeply and that God is counting on you to further God’s mission in the world. The rest of the story is that you will turn away from the ways of evil to claim your discipleship to Jesus Christ and be transformed by the Holy Spirit. Then you may live your life with a purified heart so that everyone you meet will come to know the Good News of God’s love through you. Glory be to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit!

We Respond with Thanksgiving

HYMN: W&R- 577 “Sing a New Church”

Summoned by the God who made us rich in our diversity,
Gathered in the name of Jesus, richer still in unity:

Refrain: Let us bring the gifts that differ and, in splendid, varied ways,
Sing a new church into being, one in faith and love and praise.

Radiant risen from the water; robed in holiness and light
male and female in God’s image, male and female, God’s delight: *Refrain*

Trust the goodness of creation; trust the Spirit strong within.
Dare to dream the vision promised sprung from seed of what has been.
Refrain

Bring the hopes of every nation; bring the art of every race.
Weave a song of peace and justice; let it sound through time and space.
Refrain

Draw together at one table all the human family;
shape a circle every wider and a people every free. *Refrain*

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.
Amen. *(The Apostles' Creed-Ecumenical)*

OFFERING (Please remember to mail your offering to Bethel Murdoch Presbyterian Church, 9602 Murdoch Goshen Road, Loveland, Ohio 45140)

JOYS & CONCERNS OF THE CONGREGATION – (Please send your joys and concerns to the church email and we will publish them in the weekly ENews)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

In peace, let us pray to the Lord, saying: Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, for the loving kindness of God, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the world, for the unity of the church of God, and for the well-being of all peoples, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this gathering of the faithful, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this place, for every city and community, and for those who live in them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For seasonable weather, and for abundant harvests for all to share, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who travel by land, water, or air, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the aged and infirm, for the widowed and orphaned, and for the sick and the suffering, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the poor and the oppressed, for those unemployed and the destitute, for prisoners and captives, and for all who remember and care for them, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For deliverance in times of affliction, strife, and need, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For all who have died in the hope of the resurrection and are at rest, let us give thanks to the Lord.

Alleluia!

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

In the communion of all the saints, let us commend ourselves, one another, and our whole life to Christ our Lord, the One who taught us to say as we pray,

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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 this day 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, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

We are Sent Out to Love and Serve

HYMN: B-527 “Near to the Heart of God”

1 There is a place of quiet rest, Near to the heart of God,
A place where sin cannot molest, Near to the heart of God.

Refrain: O Jesus, blest Redeemer, Sent from the heart of God,
Hold us, who wait before thee, Near to the heart of God.

2 There is a place of comfort sweet, Near to the heart of God,
A place where we our Savior meet, Near to the heart of God. [Refrain]

3 There is a place of full release, Near to the heart of God,
A place where all is joy and peace, Near to the heart of God. [Refrain]

Charge and Benediction

Go out into the world in peace. Love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself.
And as you go out, know that you take with you the love of God, the grace
of Our Lord, Jesus Christ and the *awesome* power of the Holy Spirit.

Choral Amen

Postlude