

BETHEL MURDOCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

9602 Murdoch-Goshen Road, Loveland, OH 45140

September 5, 2021 10:30 a.m.

**Celebrating 206 years of Faithful Service to Our God
The Fifteenth 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: Every generous act of giving,

P: with every perfect gift, is from above,

L: coming down from the Father of lights,

P: with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty and everlasting God, increase our faith, hope, and love; and, that we may receive all you promise, make us love what you commanded; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

HYMN: B-510 “Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts”

1 Jesus, Thou joy of loving hearts, Thou fount of
life, Thou light of all, From the best bliss that
earth imparts We turn unfilled to heed Thy call

2 Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood; Thou savest

those that on Thee call; To them that seek Thee,
Thou art good. To them that find thee, all in all.

3 We taste Thee, O Thou living bread. And long to
feast upon Thee still; We drink of Thee, the
fountainhead, And thirst our souls from Thee to all.

4 Our restless spirits yearn for Thee, Where're our
changeable lot is cast, Glad that Thy gracious
smile we see, Blest when our faith can hold Thee fast,

5 O Jesus, ever with us stay, Make all our moments
calm and bright; O chase the night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light,

CALL TO CONFESSION:

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. In humility and faith let us confess our sin to God as we pray together saying,

PRAYER OF CONFESSION:

God of grace, love, and communion, we confess that we have failed to love you with all our heart, soul, and mind; and to love our neighbor as ourselves. We ignore your commandments, stray from your way, and follow other gods. Have mercy on us. Forgive our sin and raise us to new life that we may serve you faithfully and give honor to your holy name.

SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

L: Hear the good news! Who is in a position to condemn? Only Christ, and Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us, Christ prays for us. Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation. The old life has gone; a new life has begun.

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 664 “Thy Word”

Refrain: Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way, still you're there right beside
me. And nothing will I fear as long as You are near.
Please be near me to the end. (*Refrain*)

I will not forget your love for me, and yet my heart forever is
wandering. Jesus by my guide and hold me to your side;
and I will love you to the end. (*Refrain*)

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: James 2:1-17

2 My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. **2** Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. **3** If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, “Here’s a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand there” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,” **4** have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

5 Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? **6** But you have dishonored the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? **7** Are they not the ones who are blaspheming the noble name of him to whom you belong?

8 If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing right. **9** But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. **10** For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. **11** For he who

said, “You shall not commit adultery,” also said, “You shall not murder.” If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker.

¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save them? ¹⁵ Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶ If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷ In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

PSALM: Psalm 146

¹ Praise the LORD.

Praise the LORD, my soul.

² I will praise the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

³ Do not put your trust in princes,
in human beings, who cannot save.

⁴ When their spirit departs, they return to the ground;
on that very day their plans come to nothing.

⁵ Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God.

⁶ He is the Maker of heaven and earth,
the sea, and everything in them—
he remains faithful forever.

⁷ He upholds the cause of the oppressed
and gives food to the hungry.

The LORD sets prisoners free,

⁸ the LORD gives sight to the blind,
the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down,
the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹ The LORD watches over the foreigner
and sustains the fatherless and the widow,
but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

¹⁰ The LORD reigns forever,
your God, O Zion, for all generations.
Praise the LORD.

GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 7:24-37

²⁴ Jesus left that place and went to the vicinity of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know it; yet he could not keep his presence secret. ²⁵ In fact, as soon as she heard about him, a woman whose little daughter was possessed by an impure spirit came and fell at his feet. ²⁶ The woman was a Greek, born in Syrian Phoenicia. She begged Jesus to drive the demon out of her daughter.

²⁷ “First let the children eat all they want,” he told her, “for it is not right to take the children’s bread and toss it to the dogs.”

²⁸ “Lord,” she replied, “even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.”

²⁹ Then he told her, “For such a reply, you may go; the demon has left your daughter.”

³⁰ She went home and found her child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.

³¹ Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. ³² There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

³³ After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man’s ears. Then he spit and touched the man’s tongue. ³⁴ He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, “*Ephphatha!*” (which means “Be opened!”). ³⁵ At this, the man’s ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

³⁶ Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷ People were overwhelmed with amazement. “He has done everything well,” they said. “He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak.”

MESSAGE:***Picking Favorites*****Rev. Dr. Deborah Uchtman**

A young girl stands nervously, shifting back and forth on her feet, waiting for the next name to be called. She gives a silent prayer that she is not left to be the last one who will be picked for the team. The athletes of the class are the team captains and they are choosing their teams based on ability and performance in the sporting field. The girl is not into sports very much; an occasional softball game, croquet or horseshoes with the family for fun – not anything to be taken seriously. But the athletes are competitive and they only seem to pick their favorites as they desire the best of the best for their team, which means that those with lesser ability and proven performance will be doomed to be chosen last. As a child, to be chosen last feels like a public broadcast of what a failure you are in sports; a laughing stock within the class in regard to physical prowess is no place anyone wants to find themselves.

I remember those days and I hated gym class when we were lined up like cattle for the team captains to pick and choose the best of the best because I knew I would always be one of the last chosen. In fact in every class, there was always the group of less athletic children and we would all shuffle into place and begin the wishing game that some team captain would have mercy upon us so that we would not be the last man standing facing our peers and feeling like our humiliation would engulf us. Even if you got on a team, you were still treated as a pariah, an outsider and you were put at the end of the line or in the farthest spot in the outfield so as to lessen the chance for you to cause your team to lose. Instead of being able to look forward to learning to work within a team or find out more about a particular sport, it was a dreadful experience to be exiled by the other children in the class because, when it came to sports, they were always playing favorites.

I guess that is why today's passage in James resonates with me. James says that as Christians, we should not pick favorites – in fact, we should show no partiality between one person and another. James was talking about the problem that was prevalent in the church with the rich being favored over the poor. I would love to tell you that this is no longer an issue at this time in history, but that would not be the truth. Not only do some within the church favor those with more money and means than those with less money and means, in some places, those with money or power are

considered more important people within the beloved community. When this happens, there is a clear picking of favorites to the point that those who are in leadership positions bend over backwards to accommodate the moneyed people and their desires. This can lead to the favored rich trying to manipulate and control what happens when they attempt to hold the church hostage by threatening to leave or cut off funds if things are not done to their specifications. Talk about the epitome of being un-Christian! Not only on the part of the wealthy for expecting favored treatment, but also on the part of the leadership if they cave to every whim of those with money and ignore the poor, treating them with contempt or as an afterthought.

In fact James argues mightily against this practice of picking favorites based on wealth. James points out that if God shows any partiality at all, God does so in favor of the poor in the world rather than against them. In James' day, it was the Greek population who spent a good deal of their time making distinctions about other people based on a variety of things, but especially upon wealth or lack thereof. For James, the rich as a class in Greek society had a reputation of maltreating Christians on two accounts: 1. the rich oppressed the Christians by dragging them to court and 2. they blasphemed the name of Christ. James makes the case that it is not wealth, but love that is the fundamental attitude for people of faith which must be cultivated toward other people regardless of financial status.

To make his point, James contends that the Ten Commandments are to be viewed together as one unit representing God's Law; so that "whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (vs. 10). A person exhibiting the attitude of partiality of preference for those with wealth and power fell under the Law's jurisdiction; so that anyone displaying this attitude that uplifted or excluded neighbor based on wealth committed sin and was convicted as a transgressor as they failed to love their neighbor. The specific commandments in God's Law are always linked to the directive to love your neighbor.

The law that James would place before the Christian conscience is "the law that gives freedom" that is the word of truth, the Gospel. This is derived from Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees in response to their question of which is the greatest commandment of the law when he said, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself."

Finally, James finishes his argument that picking favorites can be harmful and merciless for those in the Body of Christ. James invites Christians to be merciful, just as our Father in heaven has had mercy on us, because mercy will triumph over judgment. He then encourages Christians to get out there and do something to respond to the love and mercy that we have received from God by showing love to our neighbors in a tangible way. Can you imagine how it would feel to be treated with love for someone who had always been the last to be picked? How could that simple act change the trajectory of a person's life and lead them to God?

Let's rise to James' challenge and do something kind of crazy in today's world. Let's listen to James as we commit to not doing some well accepted things in our society. Let's commit to no longer focusing on the people with money and power and giving them the best. No more ignoring the poor, the orphans and the widows and treating them with disrespect or as if they didn't exist. No more hurting others to get our way. Instead, let us love God with all that we have and our neighbors as we would like to be loved. Let's make the commitment that we will treat everyone as if they are a beloved child of God.

I, for one, cannot wait to see the results of our works that rise out of faith because I am convinced that even in this crazy time, God is using us to bring people to Christ and we can only do that if we have love for God and love for our neighbors. No more picking favorites.

We Respond with Thanksgiving

HYMN: W&R-443 "Trust and Obey"

1 When we walk with the Lord in the light of his Word, what a glory he sheds on our way! While we do his good will, he abides with us still, and with all who will trust and obey.

Refrain: Trust and obey, for there's
no other way to be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.

2 Not a burden we bear, not a sorrow we share, but our
toil he will richly repay; not a grief or a loss, not a frown or a
cross, but is blest if we trust and obey. [Refrain]

3 But we never can prove the delights of his love until
all on the altar we lay; for the favor he shows, and the joy he
bestows, are for them who will trust and obey. [Refrain]

4 Then in fellowship sweet we will sit at his feet, or we'll
walk by his side in the way; what he says we will do, where he sends we
will go--never fear, only trust and obey. [Refrain]

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and
earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally
begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true
God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all
things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from
heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became
truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he
suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in
accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at
the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living
and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end. We believe in the Holy
Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has
spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church. We acknowledge
one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the
dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen. (*The Nicene Creed*)

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

DOXOLOGY

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

**PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE – (Please send your joys and concerns to
the church email and we will publish them in the weekly ENews)**

Let us pray,

Almighty God, in Jesus Christ you taught us to pray. Guide us by your Holy Spirit, that our prayers for others may serve your will and show your steadfast love.

God our creator, you made all things in your wisdom, and in your love you save us. We pray for the whole creation. Overthrow evil powers, right what is wrong, feed and satisfy those who thirst for justice, so that all your children may freely enjoy the earth you have made, and joyfully sing your praises.

Merciful God, you bear the pain of the world. Look with compassion on those who are sick in body, mind or spirit. Cheer them by your word, and bring healing as a sign of your grace.

God of comfort, stand with those who sorrow that they may be sure that neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, shall separate them from your love.

God of all generations, we praise you for all your servants who, having been faithful to you on earth, now live with you in heaven. Keep us in fellowship with them, until we meet with all your children in the joy of your eternal kingdom.

Mighty God, whose Word we trust, whose Spirit enables us to pray: Accept our prayers and further those which will bring about your purpose for the earth; through Jesus Christ, Amen.

SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Friends, this is the joyful feast of the people of God! They will come from north and south, from east and west, and sit at table in the kingdom of God.

According to Luke, when our risen Lord was at table with his disciples, he took the bread, and blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him.

This is the Lord's Table. This is not just a Presbyterian table. This is the Lord's table. Our Savior invites those who trust him to share the feast which he has prepared.

Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: And also with you.

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: We lift them to the Lord.

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Holy God, Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, with joy we praise you and give thanks to your name. You raised up Christ to rule over all creation, giving him the name which is above all other names, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. We praise you that, lifted in power, he lives and reigns forever in your glory and so fulfills his promise to be with us always to the end of time.

Great and wonderful are your works, Lord God almighty. Your ways are just and true. Therefore we lift our hearts in joyful praise, joining our voices with choirs of angels, and with all the faithful of every time and place, who forever sing to the glory of your name:

P: “Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.”

We praise you, most holy God, for sending your only Son to live among us, sharing our joy and sorrow. He told your story, healed the sick, and was a friend of sinners. Obeying you, he took up his cross and died that we might live. We praise you that he overcame death and is risen to rule the world. He is still the friend of sinners. We trust him to overcome every power that can hurt or divide us, and believe that when he comes in glory, we will celebrate victory with him. Remembering all your mighty and merciful acts, we break bread and share one cup giving thanks for your saving love in Jesus Christ. As you raised our Lord from death and call us with him from death to life, we give ourselves to you to live for him in joy and grateful praise.

According to his commandment:

We remember his death, we proclaim his resurrection, we await his coming in glory.

Gracious God, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and upon these your gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood. Send us out in the power of the Spirit to live for others, as Christ lived for us, announcing his death for the sins of the world, and telling his resurrection to all people and nations. By your Spirit draw us together into one body and join us to Christ the Lord, that we may remain his glad and faithful people until we feast with him in glory.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor are yours, almighty God, forever and ever. Amen.

Breaking of the Bread

The Lord Jesus, on the night of his arrest, took bread, and after giving thanks to God, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take, eat. This is my body, given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup, saying: This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this in remembrance of me.

Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the saving death of the risen Lord, until he comes.

Communion of the People - Invitation

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Prayer after Communion

Loving God, we thank you that you have fed us in this Sacrament, united us with Christ, and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet in your eternal kingdom. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

And now, with the confidence of the children of God, let us pray as we sing:

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

BLESSING AND CHARGE

Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold on to what is good; return no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak, and help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord.

Choral Amen

Postlude