

**BETHEL MURDOCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
9602 Murdoch-Goshen Road, Loveland, OH 45140  
**September 26, 2021, 10:30 a.m.**  
**Celebrating 207 years of Faithful Service to Our God**  
**The Eighteenth 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: You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**P: that though he was rich,**

L: yet for your sake he became poor,

**P: so that by his poverty you might become rich.**

**OPENING PRAYER**

Grant us, Lord, not to be anxious about earthly cares, but to love that which is above, and even now, while we live among temporary things, to hold fast to those things that shall endure; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

**Amen.**

**HYMN: B- 420 “God of Grace and God of Glory”**

1 God of grace and God of glory, On Thy people  
pour Thy power. Crown thine ancient church's story;  
Bring its bud to glorious flower. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
For the facing of this hour, For the facing of this hour.

2 Lo! the hosts of evil round us Scorn thy Christ,  
assail Thy ways! From the fears that long have bound us  
Free our hearts to faith and praise. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
For the living of these days, For the living of these days.

3 Cure Thy children's warring madness, Bend our pride to  
Thy control; Shame our wanton, selfish gladness,  
Rich in things and poor in soul. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
Lest we miss Thy kingdom's goal, Lest we miss Thy kingdom's goal.

4 Set our feet on lofty places; Gird our lives that  
They may be Armored with all Christlike graces.  
Pledged to set all captives free. Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,  
That we fail not them nor Thee! That we fail not them nor Thee!

#### **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-595 “They’ll Know We Are Christians”**

1 We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord.  
We are one in the Spirit; we are one in the Lord  
And we pray that all unity may one day be restored.

*Refrain* And they’ll know we are Christians by our love, by our love  
Yes, they’ll know we are Christians by our love.

2 We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand.  
We will walk with each other; we will walk hand in hand. *Refrain*

3 We will work with each other; we will work side by side.  
We will work with each other; we will work side by side. *Refrain*

4 All praise to the Father, from whom all things come.  
And all praise to Christ Jesus his only Son. *Refrain*

**NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: James 5:13-20**

<sup>13</sup> Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. <sup>14</sup> Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. <sup>15</sup> And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. <sup>16</sup> Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.

<sup>17</sup> Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. <sup>18</sup> Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

<sup>19</sup> My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, <sup>20</sup> remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

### **PSALM: Psalm 19:7-14**

<sup>7</sup> The law of the LORD is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.  
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.

<sup>8</sup> The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.  
The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.

<sup>9</sup> The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever.  
The decrees of the LORD are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.

<sup>10</sup> They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup> By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup> But who can discern their own errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup> Keep your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup> May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
LORD, my Rock, and my Redeemer.

### **GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 9:38-50**

<sup>38</sup> “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

<sup>39</sup> “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, <sup>40</sup> for whoever is not against us is for us. <sup>41</sup> Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

<sup>42</sup> “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. <sup>43</sup> If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. <sup>[44]</sup> <sup>45</sup> And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. <sup>[46]</sup> <sup>47</sup> And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup> where

“the worms that eat them do not die,  
and the fire is not quenched.’

<sup>49</sup> Everyone will be salted with fire.

<sup>50</sup> “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

**MESSAGE:     *The Power of Prayer*     Rev. Dr. Deborah Uchtman**

You know we talk a lot about prayer in the church however; we don't always talk about how it is that we think about prayer. If I were to ask you to define prayer, what would you say it is? Would it be a chance to share your grievances with God, or make your demands to fill your wants and desires list? Would prayer be your opportunity to tell God how things should really run in the world based upon your own vast experiences? Would prayer be like magic because God would fix everything in the blink of an eye?

According to the Directory for Worship in the Book of Order of the Presbyterian Church USA:

Prayer is a way of opening ourselves to God, who desires communication and communion with us. Prayer may take a variety of forms, such as: conscious conversation with God; attentive and expectant silence; meditation on Scripture; the use of service books, devotional aids, and visual arts; and singing, dancing, labor, or

physical exercise. Prayer may also be expressed in action, through public witness and protest, deeds of compassion, and other forms of disciplined service. Prayer is meant to be a gracious gift from God, not a task or obligation. It is an opportunity to draw inspiration and strength from one's relationship with God in Jesus Christ. It is a way of continually seeking the gifts and guidance of the Holy Spirit for daily living. Prayer is a practice to cultivate throughout one's life, and one that will bear much fruit. (W-5.0102)

In our New Testament lesson, James is very particular and adamant about the effectiveness of prayer. James says if you are suffering you should be praying. Be honest, maybe there has been a time of two that you were suffering and you got busy bargaining with God about what you will do if God makes things better. I think most of us have done that. Sometimes it is hard to pray for God's will to be done on our own behalf, it is easy to do for others, but not always easy to pray for God's will for ourselves.

James says if you are cheerful, you should be singing songs of praise. Remember that in our faith tradition, songs are considered prayer; the book of Psalms is a perfect example. Do you take your cheerfulness as what is due you, or do you burst out and sing songs of praise to God when you are cheerful?

James says if any are sick they are to ask the elders of the church to come and pray over an individual and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. Would you do that? Do you call and ask the elders to pray over you and anoint you or do you think that that is too much of a bother? You don't want to put anybody out, right? Or maybe you do not think that the elders' prayers are that important to your wellbeing, is that it? Or have you just never thought about that kind of prayer as an option?

Do you know that when James is talking about people being sick, he is also referring to those who have a spiritual sickness, like those who have sinned? To James it is crucial that we be willing to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another so that we can be healed. How many of us would rather remain sick in our souls carrying the burdens of our sins than to confess that we had done something wrong to anyone else, especially, someone from the church? What would they think about us? What if they thought that we were – “gasp” – Sinners?? But really, aren't we all sinners? Don't we all have feet of clay?

James proclaims that prayer is powerful and effective. I wonder just why we don't always act like we believe that. If we did, we would engage in prayer all of the time, wouldn't we? We would pray without ceasing because there is always, always, always something to pray about. James offers us the example of the prophet Elijah as to how effective and powerful prayer can be; keep in mind that a prophet communicates directly with God about all things – good and bad/ no filters here – the prophet is keeping an open line of communication with God at all times. Which makes me wonder – has this conversation changed your thoughts about what prayer is, what it looks like, how you do it, or what you think prayer can do?

My friends, we are called as people of God to pray without ceasing. I hope that sounds less intimidating when so many things that we do every day are already ways to engage in prayer. We are to understand that God called ordinary people, people like you and me to do extraordinary things as prophets who remind the world that God is in control, not us, not humanity. It is not about us, it is about God and what God is doing in the world to save the world. These same prophets remind you and me and all of our Christian siblings to point to God with gratitude for our grace-filled lives. They also demand that we repent, turn away from our self-centered ways and become God-centered people as disciples of Jesus Christ.

So what's holding you back? Will you sing, will you dance, will you labor as a sweet, sweet prayer? Will you fight injustice; live with compassion? Will you exercise that most excellent and gracious gift and engage in prayer today? How about right now?

Pray with me: Holy God, you invite us to pray without ceasing and you make it so easy that most everything we do is a form of prayer. We still our busy minds and listen for the movement of the Holy Spirit so that we may know for what we should pray without ceasing. When we pray for ourselves or others who suffer, help us to find peace. When we pray out of our joy, hear us sing. When we pray for those who need healing, let them feel your presence in a special way. We love you, we adore you, we are grateful for the Son you share with us so that we may be made whole through him. We ask this in the blessed name of Jesus. And all God's people said **Amen**.

***We Respond with Thanksgiving***

## **HYMN: W&R- 478    “Sweet Hour of Prayer”**

1 Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, that calls me from a world of care,  
and bids me at my Father's throne make all my wants and wishes known.  
In seasons of distress and grief my soul has often found relief,  
and oft escaped the tempter's snare by thy return, sweet hour of prayer.

2 Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, the joys I feel, the bliss I share  
of those whose anxious spirits burn with strong desires for your return!  
With such I hasten to the place where God my Savior shows his face,  
and gladly take my station there, and wait for you, sweet hour of prayer!

3 Sweet hour of prayer, sweet hour of prayer, your wings shall my petition bear  
to him whose truth and faithfulness engage the waiting soul to bless.  
And since he bids me seek his face, believe his Word, and trust his grace,  
I'll cast on him my every care, and wait for you, sweet hour of prayer!

## **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**

Holy God, in Jesus Christ you taught us to pray to you in his name. 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.

Eternal God, you sent us a Savior, Christ Jesus, to break down the walls of hostility that divide us. Send peace on earth, and put down greed, pride, and anger, which turn nation against nation and race against race. Speed the day when wars will end and the whole world accepts your rule.

Merciful God, you bear the pain of the world. Look with compassion on all those who are sick mentally, emotionally or physically. Cheer them by your presence and your Word, and bring them healing as a sign of your grace.

Have mercy on those who are facing financial difficulties or loss of jobs and homes. 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.

Mighty God, whose Word we trust, whose Spirit enables us to pray: Accept our requests and further those which will bring about your purpose for the earth; through Jesus Christ our Lord, we pray the prayer he taught us as we say together,

### **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-276      "Great Is Thy Faithfulness"**

1 Great is thy faithfulness, O God my Father,  
There is no shadow of turning with Thee;  
Thou changeset not, thy compassions, they fail not;  
As Thou hast been Thou forever wilt be.

Refrain:

Great is thy faithfulness! Great is thy faithfulness!  
Morning by morning new mercies I see. All I have needed  
Thy hand hath provided. Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me!

2 Summer and winter, and springtime and harvest,  
Sun, moon, and stars in their courses above  
Join with all nature in manifold witness  
To Thy great faithfulness, mercy, and love. [Refrain]

3 Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth,  
Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;  
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow,  
Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside! [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**