

**BETHEL MURDOCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**  
9602 Murdoch-Goshen Road, Loveland, OH 45140  
**November 28, 2021, 10:30 a.m.**  
**Celebrating 207 years of Faithful Service to Our God**  
**The First Sunday of Advent**

***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.**

**LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES**

Watch and wait for Christ's coming! Light candles of hope, peace, joy, and love, remembering the promises of God with prayer. We light this candle in hope.

Hear God's promise of hope from Isaiah 2:2-4:

In days to come the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. Many peoples shall come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall arbitrate for many peoples; they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Let us pray: Faithful God, out of war's chaos, you bring the order of peace. Renew us in hope, that we may work toward Christ's advent of peace among all nations.

**P: God of promise, God of hope, into our darkness come.**

Let us walk in the light of the Lord.

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

L: The days are surely coming, says the Lord,

**P: when I will fulfill the promise:**

L: I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David;

**P: and he shall execute justice and righteousness.**

### **OPENING PRAYER**

Eternal God, you taught us that the night is far spent and the day is at hand. Keep us awake and alert, watching for your kingdom, and make us strong in faith, so that when Christ comes in glory to judge the earth, we may joyfully give him praise; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **HYMN: B-476 "O Worship the King, All Glorious Above!"**

1 O worship the King all-glorious above,  
O gratefully sing God's power and God's love:  
Our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,  
Pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.

2 O tell of God's might O sing of God's grace,  
Whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.  
The chariots of heaven, the deep thunderclouds form,  
And bright is God's path on the wings of the storm.

3 The earth with its store of wonders untold  
Almighty Thy power hath founded of old;  
Hath established it fast by a changeless decree,  
And round it hath cast, like a mantle the sea.

4 Thy bountiful care, what tongue can recite?  
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;  
It streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,  
And sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.

5 Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,  
In Thee do we trust, nor find Thee to fail.  
Thy mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,  
Our maker, defender, redeemer, and friend.

### **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 the future, you are coming in power to bring all nations under your rule. We confess that we have not expected your kingdom, for we live casual lives, ignoring your promised judgment. We accept lies as truth, exploit neighbors, abuse the earth, and refuse your justice and peace. In your mercy, forgive us. Grant us wisdom to welcome your way, and to seek things that will endure when Christ comes to judge the world.**

### **SILENT PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

### **ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

**L:** Hear the good news! The saying is sure and worthy of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, that we might be dead to sin and alive to all that is good. I declare to you in the name of Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

**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***

### **OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Isaiah 53:1-6**

Who has believed our message  
and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?

<sup>2</sup> He grew up before him like a tender shoot,  
and like a root out of dry ground.  
He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him,  
nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.  
<sup>3</sup> He was despised and rejected by mankind,  
a man of suffering, and familiar with pain.  
Like one from whom people hide their faces  
he was despised, and we held him in low esteem.  
<sup>4</sup> Surely he took up our pain  
and bore our suffering,  
yet we considered him punished by God,  
stricken by him, and afflicted.  
<sup>5</sup> But he was pierced for our transgressions,  
he was crushed for our iniquities;  
the punishment that brought us peace was on him,  
and by his wounds we are healed.  
<sup>6</sup> We all, like sheep, have gone astray,  
each of us has turned to our own way;  
and the LORD has laid on him  
the iniquity of us all.

### **PSALM:Psalm 33**

<sup>1</sup> Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;  
it is fitting for the upright to praise him.  
<sup>2</sup> Praise the LORD with the harp;  
make music to him on the ten-stringed lyre.  
<sup>3</sup> Sing to him a new song;  
play skillfully, and shout for joy.  
<sup>4</sup> For the word of the LORD is right and true;  
he is faithful in all he does.  
<sup>5</sup> The LORD loves righteousness and justice;  
the earth is full of his unfailing love.  
<sup>6</sup> By the word of the LORD the heavens were made,  
their starry host by the breath of his mouth.  
<sup>7</sup> He gathers the waters of the sea into jar;  
he puts the deep into storehouses.  
<sup>8</sup> Let all the earth fear the LORD;  
let all the people of the world revere him.

<sup>9</sup> For he spoke, and it came to be;  
he commanded, and it stood firm.  
<sup>10</sup> The LORD foils the plans of the nations;  
he thwarts the purposes of the peoples.  
<sup>11</sup> But the plans of the LORD stand firm forever,  
the purposes of his heart through all generations.  
<sup>12</sup> Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,  
the people he chose for his inheritance.  
<sup>13</sup> From heaven the LORD looks down  
and sees all mankind;  
<sup>14</sup> from his dwelling place he watches  
all who live on earth—  
<sup>15</sup> he who forms the hearts of all,  
who considers everything they do.  
<sup>16</sup> No king is saved by the size of his army;  
no warrior escapes by his great strength.  
<sup>17</sup> A horse is a vain hope for deliverance;  
despite all its great strength it cannot save.  
<sup>18</sup> But the eyes of the LORD are on those who fear him,  
on those whose hope is in his unfailing love,  
<sup>19</sup> to deliver them from death  
and keep them alive in famine.  
<sup>20</sup> We wait in hope for the LORD;  
he is our help and our shield.  
<sup>21</sup> In him our hearts rejoice,  
for we trust in his holy name.  
<sup>22</sup> May your unfailing love be with us, LORD,  
even as we put our hope in you.

### **NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: Romans 7:7-20**

<sup>7</sup> What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.” <sup>8</sup> But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. <sup>9</sup> Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. <sup>10</sup> I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. <sup>11</sup> For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived

me, and through the commandment put me to death. <sup>12</sup> So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

<sup>13</sup> Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

<sup>14</sup> We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. <sup>15</sup> I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. <sup>16</sup> And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. <sup>17</sup> As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. <sup>18</sup> For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. <sup>19</sup> For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. <sup>20</sup> Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

**MESSAGE:            *New Year, New You*            Elder Mike Schepers**

Happy New Year! The church calendar begins with Advent, and since this is the first Sunday of Advent, that makes this New Year's Day for us Christians. New Year's Day always makes me think about New Year's resolutions. The dawn of a new year often prompts many to resolve to improve their diet, exercise more, or lose weight. I say there will be plenty of time for that in January, and so I for one am in no hurry to do work on any of those things during the holidays!

Those kinds of resolutions are material and secular. Today might be called our spiritual New Year's Day. What spiritual resolutions might we consider making as we enter the Advent season? As we enter this sacred season of spiritual growth and renewal, I would encourage you to consider practicing traditional spiritual disciplines such as Bible reading, prayer, perhaps fasting, OR, how about just resolving to do less sinning?

Resolutions of any kind have a way of breaking down over time, however. We begin with good intentions, but soon the gym membership is no longer used, and the exercise bike we bought is now just a great place to hang laundry. The same is especially true for spiritual resolutions. None of us want to be sinful, but who cannot relate to Paul's words in today's New

Testament reading from Romans 7, as one newer translation puts it: “I decide to do good, but I don’t really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway”

However, if those words strike a chord in your heart, I have good news for you: Your resolution to sin less and do good is itself proof that you have succeeded. Not completely, not just yet, and certainly not by your own efforts, but by God’s grace you have been given a new heart that down in the bottom of your very being now wants to obey God even if you don’t always do it. Let’s look a little deeper into what Paul has to say about this besides his well-known lament about his own sinfulness:

Paul observes that our sinful nature is so deep within us that even the very thing God has given us to help us do better leads us to do wrong. God has given us his laws to instruct us on what is right and wrong. We are so sinful that without God’s laws we wouldn’t even know the difference between right and wrong.

More than that, we are so sinful that the law gives us ideas and excites our desire to do the opposite of what God commands. We are like the child who is told by his mother to keep his hands out of the cookie jar, but that gets the child to start thinking about those cookies he can’t have. The moment mom turns her back, what does the child do? Of course, heads straight for the cookie jar. And this is not only a childish thing to do. Consider the person who passes by a remote pond that is clearly marked “No Swimming” and goes for a dip on a hot summer day. Or the person who hunts on land marked “No Hunting,” or like me, who drives at 75 mph on highways clearly marked “Speed Limit 70 mph.”

Paul is very clear, there is no fault in the law—the law is good, WE are the problem, we are the ones who are not good. God’s very attempt to restrain us only serves to urge us to greater sinfulness. It is our nature that any attempt to put authority over us prompts immediate resistance

Now the sinner who smugly thinks that he or she is basically a good person and is a fine, upright individual has no problem with this tendency to break God’s laws. He or she is at peace with his or her external basic goodness. Paul says that at one time, he felt that way, too. However, one day by the grace of God he was confronted by a full spiritual understanding of how corrupt our hearts are and he began to anguish over his helplessly sinful

human nature. In fact, sometimes God allows people to delve deep into sinfulness just to drive them to that same realization.

After we repent of our sin, and receive the saving grace of our Savior, does anything change? Well, yes and no. God's laws don't change, because they are good and continue to stand to teach us right from wrong. Sadly, our sinful nature doesn't change either. We are still exposed to temptations which have a natural appeal and trigger old habits and urges that influence us into sin. But what does change is that now this behavior distresses us. The evil we do we no longer want to do, we no longer approve of. We want to do the right thing and struggle to do it. Here is the good news I mentioned earlier: This very struggle is proof of the "new you" --the true you.

Here's a quote from a great Biblical scholar, Albert Barnes, who wrote a classic commentary on the Bible. Here is what he wrote about this passage in Romans: "The fact of struggling against evil, and our desire to be free from it, and to overcome it, the anxiety and grief which it causes, is an evidence that we do not love it, and that therefore we are friends of God. The struggle against sin and desire to be delivered from its power is a decisive test of your faith."

Allow me to try to illustrate this point with a parable of my own making. I call this the Parable of the Pig Farmer. It goes something like this: There once was a pig farmer who lived in a nearby county. He lived alone on his farm, tending his hogs each day. He had a reputation for having the dirtiest farm in the county. His barnyard and pig pens were a muddy, slimy, mess. Even his house was filthy with all the mud and goop he tracked into the house with his muddy boots and dirty overalls each day. He had lived this way for so long, he was blind to the deplorable conditions he wallowed in every day.

Then one day, the farmer met a woman who saw through the muck and the mire that covered everything on that farm and saw a gentle soul. The two fell in love and were married. His new wife convinced the farmer that it was not good to live in such filthy and dirty conditions. The farmer saw that his wife loved him and wanted the best for him—and completely changed his life. With his wife's help he kept his home spotless and cleaned up his farm as best as he could considering that he was a pig farmer, after all.

Now, instead of heedlessly tracking filth into the house every day, he tried his best to wipe his feet and brush the worst of the dirt off his clothes before going inside at the end of each day. But no matter how hard he tried, he could not help but track muddy footprints and dirty handprints through the house on his way to take a shower and put on clean clothes for the evening. Unlike before he met his wife, he now felt very badly about the mess he would make in the spotlessly clean kitchen. But his wife was understanding. She forgave him every time he said he was sorry because she knew that underneath those muddy boots and dirty bib overalls was a changed man whose true heart was clean and pure, and that someday he would retire from farming and they would live happily ever after in a home that would never get so dirty again.

I hope you caught my meaning. We are all dirty pig farmers with muddy boots and filthy overalls of sinful behavior. But that outward behavior is not what the true heart inside of us wants. We regret the muddy footprint of hurt and shame we leave in our sinful tracks. It is that regret and sorrow that proves we have a changed heart inside. Like Paul, we are all wretched creatures, but thanks be to God we have not been left that way.

God, through Christ, looks upon our muddy exterior and sees only clean clothes and a clean heart. Let me share with you a quote from the first book ever published by a woman in the English language. It was written in 1547 by Katherine Parr, the sixth and final wife of King Henry VIII. In her book, *The Lamentations of a Sinner*, she writes, "I feel myself to come, as it were, in a new garment before God, and by His mercy, to be declared just and righteous. By faith alone I am sure to be justified, although the dregs of Adam do remain."

As we enter the Season of Advent, I encourage you, I challenge you, to make it your New Year's resolution to take some time each day or at least on a weekly basis to focus on your own personal struggle against sin. Take some time to think about what you did that day or that week that you really did not want to do and wish you hadn't. Allow yourself to feel the anxiety and sorrow of it. Then remember that to you a child was born, to you a son was given on Christmas Day. Give thanks that because of that baby born in a cattle stall, and his death on the cross, God has given you a new heart, a new you, and today a new year to serve Him. Happy New Year!

## ***We Respond with Thanksgiving***

### **HYMN: B- 41     “O Come, All Ye Faithful”**

1. O come, all ye faithful, Joyful and triumphant!  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!  
Come and behold Him, Born the King of angels.

Refrain:

O come, let us adore Him, O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him, Christ the Lord!

2. Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, Born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to Thee be all glory given!  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing: [Refrain]

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!  
Glory to God, all glory in the highest: [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**

O Lord, we long for your coming into our world. We long for your justice.  
We long for your peace.

Creator, Redeemer, your people turn to you, for you alone have the power  
to heal. Mend the torn fabric of your church.

Peacemaker, Painbearer, restore the shalom of the earth burdened by the  
pollution of our sin, and guide all nations in the way of your wholeness.

Weaver of Compassion, restore those whose bodies, spirits, minds, and  
lives are broken by sickness, circumstance, or grief.

Healing God, we reach out to touch the hem of your grace, daring to pray  
for ourselves, for our own lives are broken, too.

Hear us, Redeemer Creator, for we ask all these things through and for the  
glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, broken that we that we might know life in all  
its wholeness.

Holy God, heaven and earth may pass away but your realm is eternal and  
your promise is sure. Leaven our hearts with hope as our redeemer draws  
near. Help us to heed the signs of the times, so that we may be ready to  
stand before Christ, our judge and savior; in whose powerful, glorious  
name of Jesus Christ, your Son, we pray the prayer he taught us,

### **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:R-283**

### **“It Is Well with My Soul”**

1. When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,  
When sorrows like sea billows roll;  
Whatever my lot, Thou hast taught me to say,  
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”

*Refrain:* It is well (it is well) With my soul (with my soul)  
It is well, it is well with my soul

2. Though Satan should buffet, tho' trials should come,  
Let this blest assurance control,  
That Christ has regarded my helpless estate,  
And hath shed His own blood for my soul. *Refrain*
  
3. My sin – oh, the bliss of this glorious thought,  
My sin – not in part, but the whole,  
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more,  
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! *Refrain*
  
4. And Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll,  
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend,  
“Even so” -- it is well with my soul. *Refrain*

### **Charge and Benediction**

Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous and strong. Let all that you do be done in love.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Choral Amen**

### **Postlude**