

BETHEL MURDOCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
9602 Murdoch-Goshen Road, Loveland, OH 45140
March 27, 2022 10:30 a.m.
Celebrating 207 years of Faithful Service to Our God
The Fourth Sunday in Lent

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: Jesus said:

P: I am the light of the world.

L: Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness

P: but will have the light of life.

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, in order that the children of earth might discern good from evil you sent your Son to be the light of the world. As Christ shines upon us, may we learn what pleases you, and live in all truth and goodness; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever. **Amen.**

HYMN: B-145

“Rejoice, Ye Pure in Heart!”

1 Rejoice, ye pure in heart! Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!
Your festal banner wave on high, The cross of Christ your King.

Refrain: Rejoice, rejoice, Rejoice, give thanks, and sing!

2 Yes, on through life's long path, Still chanting as ye go;
From youth to age by night and day, In gladness and in woe. [Refrain]

3 At last the march shall end; The wearied ones shall rest;
The pilgrims find their home at last, Jerusalem the blest. [Refrain]

4 Then on, ye pure in heart! Rejoice, give thanks and sing!
Your festal banner wave on high, The cross of Christ your King. [Refrain]

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:

God of mercy, you sent Jesus Christ to seek and save the lost. We confess that we have strayed from you and turned aside from your way. We are misled by pride, for we see ourselves pure when we are stained and great when we are small. We have failed in love, neglected justice, and ignored your truth. Have mercy, O God, and forgive our sin. Return us to paths of righteousness through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

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

SPECIAL MUSIC: W&R-664 "Thy Word"

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

1 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 be my guide and hold me to your side; and
I will love you to the end. *Refrain*

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. ¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! ¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

PSALM: Psalm 32

¹ Blessed is the one
whose transgressions are forgiven,
whose sins are covered.
² Blessed is the one
whose sin the LORD does not count against them
and in whose spirit is no deceit.
³ When I kept silent,
my bones wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
⁴ For day and night
your hand was heavy on me;
my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer.

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.
I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the LORD."
And you forgave
the guilt of my sin.
⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you
while you may be found;
surely the rising of the mighty waters
will not reach them.
⁷ You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.
⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.
⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding
but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.
¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the one who trusts in him.
¹¹ Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous;
sing, all you who are upright in heart!

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ Then Jesus told them this parable:

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and

he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

MESSAGE:

Layer of Anger

Rev. Dr. Deborah Uchtman

I continue to wonder about the human heart: How is it, we whose beating hearts were created by a loving God turn away from our God? We have been born in the image of God as a reflection of our God. How do our hearts not simply long for being in the presence of God? Why does the human heart grow cold and hard against God? In what way does anger play a part in our turning away from God?

Anger is a blinding emotion. In particular, anger is related to the “fight, flight, or freeze” response of the sympathetic nervous system; it prepares the human body for the first option—to fight. But fighting doesn't necessarily mean throwing punches or committing road rage; anger might actually motivate communities to combat injustice by working to change laws for those who have no voice or intentionally shifting norms of behavior to be more inclusive.

Of course, anger too easily or frequently used can undermine relationships and, studies show, it is harmful and toxic to human bodies in the long term. Prolonged release of the stress hormones that accompany anger can destroy neurons in areas of the brain associated with judgment and short-term memory, and it can weaken the immune system. You can literally make yourself sick with anger. So there is a limit to what constitutes a healthy response to the emotion of anger.

According to Psychology Today: anger is considered one of the basic emotions like happiness or sadness. Researchers suggest that these emotions have served a protective purpose over the long course of human history. However raw it can be, anger is a necessary emotion, and it serves humanity well in certain situations, and like all emotions, benefits from good personal boundaries management. When anger is uncontrolled it can cause self-harm or erupt into hostile, aggressive, or perhaps even violent behavior toward others. So we must remember that Anger is a corrosive emotion that can run off with a person's mental and physical health if left unchecked.

And yet, people often wrap themselves up with their raw anger. Which then begs the question: What is the best thing to do with that anger? Is holding it in the solution? Or is letting it all out in a fit of rage the better choice for one's personal well-being? Contrary to popular belief, anger does not

dissipate just because it is unleashed. In fact, unleashing it and letting it have free reign in the world just allows your anger to ramp up because you are rehearsing the incident that made you angry over and over again. Ranting and raving wraps that anger more tightly around your heart. You cannot make a reasoned judgment about the situation because your anger stands in the way. To continue with telling the same story about what made you angry time and again only lends itself to allowing anger to have the control over your life.

If anger is in control, one takes on a Jekyll-Hyde persona. The good person who can better think through a situation has been usurped by the angry monster bent on killing anyone or anything in its path. Like the brother of the prodigal son, when you are angry and responding in an unhealthy way you no longer care about what other people are feeling. You do not care if someone becomes a casualty of your sharp responses. You slap at everyone, even if they are not responsible for you being angry - you take it out on them because they are convenient. You do not think - you only react in a negative way. Your anger takes on a life of its own. Your anger becomes your god. And when it has that type of status in your life, your anger will consume everything and everyone in its path and then it will turn and consume you.

In order to unwrap the unhealthy layer of anger from our hearts, we must learn to channel our anger in a healthy way instead of allowing it to consume us. Anger can be dissipated through forgiveness. When we forgive, anger loses its hold over our hearts. As Christians, we understand that God should be angry at the human race for the mess it makes in the world. And yet, we have been forgiven by God in Christ. Does it seem such a difficult thing to forgive one another and relieve ourselves of the heavy burden of anger? Just as the father encouraged the brother of the prodigal son who was consumed with anger by saying, "My son you are always with me, and everything I have is yours." We can remember that God is with us even in the times we are faced with anger.

I wonder if we realize that when we are focused on and consumed by our anger we are lost and we are dying. I wonder – when tempted to be consumed by our anger, do you think that we can ask God to help us loosen the tight grip of unhealthy anger surrounding our hearts by forgiving those with whom we are angry, so that we may find ourselves better able to reason and think. When you forgive others and are released from your

anger, do you think you will then be able to realize that you are found by God the Father and very much alive in the Son, Jesus Christ?

We Respond with Thanksgiving

***HYMN: B-376 “Loves Divine, All Loves Excelling”**

1 Love divine, all loves excelling, Joy of heaven, to earth come down, Fix in us Thy humble dwelling, All Thy faithful mercies crown! Jesus, Thou art all compassion, Pure, unbounded love Thou art; Visit us with Thy salvation, Enter every trembling heart.

2 Breathe, O breathe Thy loving Spirit Into every troubled breast! Let us all in Thee inherit, Let us find the promised rest; Take away the love of sinning; Alpha and Omega be; End of faith, as its beginning, Set our hearts at liberty.

3 Come, Almighty to deliver, Let us all Thy life receive; Suddenly return, and never, Nevermore Thy temples leave. Thee we would be always blessing, Serve Thee as Thy hosts above; Pray, and praise Thee without ceasing, Glory in Thy perfect love.

4 Finish, then, Thy new creation; Pure and spotless let us be; Let us see Thy great salvation Perfectly restored in Thee; Changed from glory into glory, Till in heaven we take our place, Till we cast our crowns before Thee, Lost in wonder, love and praise.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Christ Jesus, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross. Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue should confess to the glory of God: Jesus Christ is Lord! Amen.

(Philippians 2:5-11)

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.

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

Let us pray,

Almighty God, we confess that at times, even when we do our best, we fail. We are not perfect. We sometimes do not recognize when our words or actions, even when we mean well, can cause harm. We miss signs and cues from others. Call us into accountability and show us mercy. Instill in our hearts kindness and compassion, for others and ourselves.

Teach us how to forgive well, in ways that protect ourselves from further harm, but extend the same mercy You have extended to us. Forgive us when we have failed to notice the harm we have caused, and help us to correct our faults and make amends as best as we are able.

God of hope, comfort and restore all who suffer in body, mind, or spirit. We lift before you those concerns we have as we pray for those in need.

We lift before you those things that have brought joy into our lives.

We ask travel mercies on all who are traveling.

We remember with thanksgiving those who have died in the faith of Christ, and those whose faith is known to you alone. Give comfort to those who mourn.

We take just a moment to pray for ourselves.

Author of Life, inspire in us to write a new page, a new chapter on healing and forgiveness. Inspire us to leave the unhealthy anger in the world behind by ceasing violence, and instead seek ways of reparation and restoration. Sing into our hearts the songs of praise and thanksgiving. Write into our bodies the actions of love and justice. Plot in us the course to follow the way of Christ in all we say, do, think, feel, and believe. Create in us a new, whole story, of love and life everlasting. We ask this in the name of Jesus, 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-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 Christ like 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!

5 Save us from weak resignation To the evils we deplore;
Let the gift of Thy salvation Be our glory evermore. Grant us wisdom, grant
us courage, Serving Thee whom we adore, Serving Thee whom we adore.

Charge and Benediction

It is a blessing that we are not perfect. It is a blessing that we make mistakes. It is a blessing that we have opportunities to grow and learn. God created us to change! May we offer forgiveness and give space for one another to learn and grow. For God has shown us abundant mercy, grace, forgiveness, and healing. Go into the world, to restore and repair, to heal and forgive.

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