

BETHEL MURDOCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
9602 Murdoch-Goshen Road, Loveland, OH 45140
May 22, 2022 10:30 a.m.
Celebrating 207 years of Faithful Service to Our God
The Sixth Sunday of Easter

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: You did not choose me, but I chose you.

L: And I appointed you to go and bear fruit,

P: fruit that will last.

OPENING PRAYER

Great and loving God, your will for us in Jesus is the peace which the world cannot give; your abiding gift is the Advocate he promised. Calm all troubled hearts, dispel every fear. Keep us steadfast in love and faithful to your word, that we may always be your dwelling place. Grant this through Jesus Christ, the firstborn from the dead, who lives with you now and always in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God forever and ever. **Amen.**

HYMN: B- 142 “All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name”

All hail the power of Jesus' Name! Let angels prostrate fall;

Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all!

Bring forth the royal diadem, And crown Him Lord of all!

Ye chosen seed of Israel's race, Ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail Him Who saves you by His grace, And crown Him Lord of all!
Hail Him Who saves you by His grace, And crown Him Lord of all!

Let every kindred, every tribe, On this terrestrial ball,
To Him all majesty ascribe, And crown Him Lord of all!
To Him all majesty ascribe, And crown Him Lord of all!

Oh, that with yonder sacred throng We at His feet may fall!
We'll join the everlasting song, And crown Him Lord of all!
We'll join the everlasting song, And crown Him Lord of all!

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:

Almighty God, in raising Jesus from the grave, you shattered the power of sin and death. We confess that we remain captive to doubt and fear, bound by the ways that lead to death. We overlook the poor and the hungry, and pass by those who mourn; we are deaf to the cries of the oppressed, and indifferent to calls for peace; we despise the weak, and abuse the earth you made. Forgive us, God of mercy. Help us to trust your power to change our lives and make us new, that we may know the joy of life abundant given in Jesus Christ, the risen Lord.

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"

Glorify 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-680 "Borning Cry"

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.
I was there when you were but a child, with a faith to suit you well;
In a blaze of light you wandered off to find where demons dwell.

When you heard the wonder of the Word I was there to cheer you on;
You were raised to praise the living Lord, to whom you now belong.
If you find someone to share your time and you join your hearts as one,
I'll be there to make your verses rhyme from dusk 'till rising sun.

In the middle ages of your life, not too old, no longer young,
I'll be there to guide you through the night, complete what I've begun.
When the evening gently closes in, and you shut your weary eyes,
I'll be there as I have always been with just one more surprise.

I was there to hear your borning cry, I'll be there when you are old.
I rejoiced the day you were baptized, to see your life unfold.

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: Acts 16:9-15

⁹ During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

¹¹ From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. ¹² From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days.

¹³ On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. ¹⁴ One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a

worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. ¹⁵ When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

PSALM: Psalm 67

- ¹ May God be gracious to us and bless us
and make his face shine on us—
² so that your ways may be known on earth,
your salvation among all nations.
³ May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
⁴ May the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you rule the peoples with equity
and guide the nations of the earth.
⁵ May the peoples praise you, God;
may all the peoples praise you.
⁶ The land yields its harvest;
God, our God, blesses us.
⁷ May God bless us still,
so that all the ends of the earth will fear him.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 14:23-29

²³ Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. ²⁴ Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.

²⁵ "All this I have spoken while still with you. ²⁶ But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. ²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

²⁸ "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the

Father is greater than I. ²⁹ I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.

MESSAGE: *Us and Them* **Rev. Dr. Deborah Uchtman**

Paul was given glimpses of God's plan of salvation through various visions. So many of the visions that Paul experienced were godly teaching moments that showed Paul that he would need to revise how it was that he personally viewed the world. I wonder what we need to revise about our vision of the world as we look at the world through the lens of God's plan of salvation.

Before he became Paul, he was Saul one of the zealous Jewish persecutors of the new Christian faith. For Saul anyone who did not believe in the one true God was no one who deserved to live. In fact, Saul didn't have much use for people of other ethnic groups, nationalities or religions either. For Saul there was only one way to worship God and it was his way. I wonder how many of us think that way today. Saul would gleefully round people up and stone them; kill them or make them go away because they did not believe as he did. I wonder how many of us want to do that to those we perceive as enemies.

Saul could not hear God. Saul could not see beyond his own understanding of God and how it is that God works in the world. It would take a traumatic event for God to get Saul's attention. Ending up on his backside and going blind as he encountered the risen Christ changed Saul's world and he was forever transformed. Saul became Paul. Following his experience, Paul was finally able to realize that he had a very limited view of the world. God showed him through visions that there was so much more that Paul could not see or understand because he was simply a human being. He did not think as God thought. Paul had been taught by humans that he needed to follow the letter of the law. The visions Paul received challenged that understanding and allowed Paul to see that God was doing a new thing. I wonder how many of us seem to think we know exactly what it is that the world needs because we presume to think that we know and understand God's thoughts and intentions for the world.

What Paul found by following the visions given to him by God was that in every place ordinary people, people he would never have associated

himself with were exactly the ones that he was being sent to tell about the gospel message. Paul was sent into a foreign place where for him, everyone else could be considered to be *Them* and the people who accompanied Paul would have easily become the *Us* so that there would be a clear delineation between the two. But God's new thing was to make all of creation, every man, woman and child to become known as God's children. I wonder how many of us would rather ignore the idea that all people are God's creation. I wonder if we realize that humans have the tendency to create an *Us* and *Them* situation which gives permission for those who are *Us* to dehumanize those who have been classified as *Them*.

I assume that it is no surprise for any of you that we are living in a time of division within this country that is of our own creation. We have taken on God's job and have judged other people based on gender, race, sexual orientation, physical limitations, disabilities and political views. We can no longer agree to disagree, instead we have allowed ourselves to blindly shuffle all people who do not look like we do or who do not agree with our point of view into a group and label that group as *Them*. We make the assumption that all people in that group are exactly the same because they are different or have differing opinions from us.

We end up playing God when we group people as *Them* because we dehumanize and take away their God-given humanity. Once we have dehumanized that group, we can begin making broad statements that supposedly encompass the entire group. We can say hurtful and harmful things and feel absolutely no remorse because those in the group *Them* are not in our group; they are not a part of *Us*. And we become indignant when someone from *Them* has the audacity to say the same kinds of things about *Us*. How dare they?

Which means that whether we are in the group *Us* or in the group *Them*, we are all missing the point that we are all God's children. Besides Jesus has told us that we are to love our enemies; and as disciples we are sent out into the world to build bridges and uplift one another. We are to be living lives that are an example of God's love through the service we do for others. I wonder how it is that splitting ourselves into groups of *Us* and *Them* helps to accomplish that goal. I wonder how condemning the actions of an entire group based on the actions of some within that group are conducive to building up the body of Christ.

If Paul had ignored the vision to go to Macedonia to share the Good News because all people in Macedonia and the surrounding area were *Them* – unclean, irreverent, unholy, subhuman; where would the church be today? If Paul had kept the Good News of God’s love to himself, how would the rest of the known world learn about God’s plan of salvation through the life, death and resurrection of God’s Son, Jesus Christ?

I wonder how can we possibly think that we are sharing the Good News of God’s love with everyone around us if we only share it with the people we consider *Us*. We are so willing to claim we know the heart of every person we have dumped into the group we have labeled as *Them*. I wonder if it is possible for us as disciples of Jesus to repent and set aside our personal biases so that we may treat each person with the dignity and love due to each one because every single person is one of God’s children. I wonder if we can recognize each person as a child of God to whom we are sent to help. Maybe that will help us to turn back and follow where God is leading.

We Respond with Thanksgiving

HYMN: B- 151 “Crown Him with Many Crowns”

Crown Him with many crowns, The Lamb upon His throne.
Hark! How the heav’nly anthem drowns All music but its own!
Awake, my soul, and sing Of Him who died for thee;
And hail Him as thy matchless king. Through all eternity!

Crown Him the Lord of love! Behold His hands and side,
Those wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified:
No angel in the sky Can fully bear that sight,
But downward bends his burning eye At mysteries so bright!

Crown Him the Lord of peace! Whose power a scepter sways
From pole to pole, that wars may cease, Absorbed in prayer and praise:
His reign shall know no end, And round His pierced feet
Fair flowers of paradise extend Their fragrance ever sweet.

Crown Him the Lord of years, The Potentate of time,
Creator of the rolling spheres, Ineffably sublime.
All hail, Redeemer, hail! For Thou has died for me;
Thy praise and glory shall not fail Throughout eternity.

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)

DOXOLOGY Praise God from Whom all blessings flow; Praise Him all creatures here below; Praise Him above Ye heavenly hosts; 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, who taught us to pray not only for ourselves but for people everywhere, hear us as we pray for others, in the name of Jesus Christ. Inspire the whole church with your power, unity, and peace. Grant that all who trust you may obey your Word, and live together in love.

Lead all nations in the way of justice and goodwill. Direct those who govern, that they may rule fairly, maintain order, uphold those in need, and defend oppressed people; that this world may claim your rule and know true peace.

Awaken all people to the danger we have inflicted upon the earth. Implant in each a reverence for all you have made that we may preserve the delicate balance of creation for all coming generations.

Give grace to all who proclaim the gospel through Word and Sacrament and deeds of mercy, that by their teaching and example they may reveal your love for all people.

Comfort and relieve, O Lord, all who are in: trouble...sorrow...poverty...sickness...grief... especially those known to us, whom we name before you in silence.... Heal them in body, mind, or circumstance, working in them, by your grace, wonders beyond all they may dream or hope.

Bring to our remembrance all those who, having served you on earth, now sing your praises eternally. May their endurance give us courage and their faithfulness give us hope; 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-150 "Come, Christians, Join to Sing"

Come, Christians, join to sing Alleluia! Amen!
Loud praise to Christ our King; Alleluia! Amen!
Let all, with heart and voice, Before His throne rejoice;
Praise is His gracious choice; Alleluia! Amen!

Come, lift your hearts on high; Alleluia! Amen!
Let praises fill the sky; Alleluia! Amen!
He is our Guide and Friend; To us He'll condescend;
His love shall never end; Alleluia! Amen!

Praise yet our Christ again; Alleluia! Amen!
Life shall not end the strain; Alleluia! Amen!
On heaven's blissful shore His goodness we'll adore,
Singing forevermore, "Alleluia! Amen!"

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