

BETHEL MURDOCH PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
9602 Murdoch-Goshen Road, Loveland, OH 45140
September 18, 2022 10:30 a.m.
Celebrating 208 years of Faithful Service to Our God
The Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Anniversary Sunday

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: Cry out with joy to the Lord, all the earth!

P: Worship the Lord with gladness!

L: Come into God's presence with singing!

P: Enter the courts of the Lord with praise!

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, you created the heavens and the earth, and humankind in your image. Teach us to discern your hand in all your works and to serve you with reverence and thanksgiving; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

HYMN: B-332 “Live Into Hope”

Live into hope of captives freed,

Of sight regained, the end of greed.

The oppressed shall be the first to see

The year of God's own jubilee!

Live into hope the blind shall see
With insight and with clarity,
Removing shades of pride and fear--
A vision of our God brought near.

Live into hope of liberty,
The right to speak the right to be,
The right to have one's daily bread,
To hear God's word and thus be fed.

Live into hope of captives freed
From chains of fear or want or greed.
God now proclaims our full release
To faith and hope and joy and peace.

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, you pardon all who truly repent and turn to you. We humbly confess our sins and ask your mercy. We have not loved you with a pure heart, nor have we loved our neighbor as ourselves. We have not done justice, loved kindness, or walked humbly with you, our God. Have mercy on us, O God, in your loving-kindness. In your great compassion, cleanse us from our sin. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Do not cast us from your presence, or take your Holy Spirit from us. Restore to us the joy of your salvation and sustain us with your bountiful Spirit.

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: 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-359 "Give Thanks"

Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One,
give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son.
Give thanks with a grateful heart, give thanks to the Holy One,
give thanks because he's given Jesus Christ, his Son.

And now let the weak say "I am strong," let the poor say "I am rich,"
because of what the Lord has done for us;
And now let the weak say "I am strong," let the poor say "I am rich,"
because of what the Lord has done for us; Give thanks!

NEW TESTAMENT LESSON: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. ³ This is good, and pleases God our Savior, ⁴ who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, ⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all people. This has now been witnessed to at the proper time. ⁷ And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a true and faithful teacher of the Gentiles.

PSALM: Psalm 113

- ¹ Praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD, you his servants;
praise the name of the LORD.
- ² Let the name of the LORD be praised,
both now and forevermore.
- ³ From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets,
the name of the LORD is to be praised.
- ⁴ The LORD is exalted over all the nations,
his glory above the heavens.
- ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God,

the One who sits enthroned on high,
6 who stoops down to look
on the heavens and the earth?
7 He raises the poor from the dust
and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
8 he seats them with princes,
with the princes of his people.
9 He settles the childless woman in her home
as a happy mother of children.
Praise the LORD.

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 16:1-13

Jesus told his disciples: “There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. ² So he called him in and asked him, ‘What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.’

³ “The manager said to himself, ‘What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I’m not strong enough to dig, and I’m ashamed to beg— ⁴ I know what I’ll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.’

⁵ “So he called in each one of his master’s debtors. He asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’

⁶ “‘Nine hundred gallons of olive oil,’ he replied.

“The manager told him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred and fifty.’

⁷ “Then he asked the second, ‘And how much do you owe?’

“‘A thousand bushels of wheat,’ he replied.

“He told him, ‘Take your bill and make it eight hundred.’

⁸ “The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. ⁹ I tell you, use worldly wealth to

gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

¹⁰ “Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. ¹¹ So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches? ¹² And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else’s property, who will give you property of your own?”

¹³ “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

MESSAGE: ***Wrestling with a Parable***

Rev. Dr. Deborah Uchtman

This morning's Gospel lesson is one that really makes us wrestle with what it is that Jesus is saying to his disciples, to the crowds and to us. It is a particular struggle because this passage seems to support, advocate and even applaud the actions of lying, cheating and stealing for the personal gain of an individual. From our post-modern perspective, the manager seems to be living out the ideal of “it is all about me and how I can further myself by manipulating and taking advantage of those around me.” These are not qualities we want to teach our youth, that is for sure! There are some of my ministerial colleagues when faced with this passage who say: “Ew! Really, Jesus? What were you thinking when you were telling this parable?”

But if we consider this passage in its historical perspective, we would view each of the characters very differently. In Jesus' day, the rich man would have separated himself from the working class, the merchants and the peasants whom he employed and who would have provided all that his household required to run efficiently. The rich man would have no dealings whatsoever with those who were lower on the socio-economic scale from himself. He would have a buffer in place, a person who would deal with the everyday business of his vast fortune. The rich man would have a manager to take care of his wealth and the day to day stuff in order to leave the rich man able to simply enjoy his wealth.

Now the position of the manager was obviously a trusted and extremely responsible position. The manager would need to direct all of the merchants; peasants and tradesmen who worked for the rich man to make sure that the rich man remained rich or became richer based upon the work of each person. The manager would charge each one a fee for the privilege of working for the rich man. It was perfectly acceptable and expected that the manager would take a percentage of the excess for himself as a supplement to his wage. That was considered good business by the business standards of the day.

When we consider today's passage, there are a few things we need to think about and keep in mind. The rich man must have been a very hard task master because in the beginning of the parable we hear that the rich man is dismissing the manager because he has heard a rumor that the manager had engaged in poor business practices. The rich man does not give the manager a chance to defend himself or explain, he simply tells the manager to put all of the rich man's affairs in order and give a final accounting of the state of the rich man's wealth because the manager is being dismissed.

When the manager realizes there is no recourse, no arguing with the rich man over the accusations against him, the manager does a bit of soul searching and evaluates his position. The manager decides that there are younger people more suited for manual labor than he is so it would be unlikely that he could do that type of job. Also, because of his business dealings for the rich man and the hard stance of his master on receiving payment from those who work for him - the manager is probably not the most popular guy in the city. Few would think of him as a buddy and fewer still would consider helping him in his most terrible hour of need.

Therefore the manager chooses to do something radical and entirely unexpected. The manager meets with each of the tradesmen, merchants and other employees of the rich man and rather than pad his own pockets by skimming something off the top for himself, the manager drastically reduces the debt owed by each person on a case by case basis. In doing so, the manager has created in each person a sense of relief from the debt that they owed the rich man and appreciation for what the manager did on their behalf so that they will most likely help to support him in the future. Because for many of the employees, the reality was that they would have been unable to negotiate a lower amount or pay off the debt they owed to

the rich man in their lifetime. Now with the manager's help, their debt seems controllable.

Let us also consider the response of the rich man - he does not get angry or threaten to prosecute. No, what the rich man does is to congratulate and lift up the manager for meeting the needs of the tradesmen, merchants and other employees. The manager had connected with each of them on a relevant and personal basis making himself invaluable to the people whose debt the manager has relieved. This does not change the fact that the manager will still lose his job, but it is clear that he has earned the respect and admiration of the rich man and those he helped to secure a lower debt.

Let's do something radical and consider this parable in a completely different way: what if we think about how Jesus often portrayed God as a rich man or a father in the parables. God sees the relationship broken by original sin and the subsequent sin that the people have engaged in which in turn makes the debt that they owe to be reconciled to God astronomical; they are simply unable to pay.

Let's take into consideration that Jesus may be portraying the messiah of the people as the manager. Jesus is the manager who knows the truth of the unbearable debt that the people owe and he knows he will have just a limited time on earth to make a difference to the people; but he has to be willing to give up everything on their behalf.

Let's ponder the idea that all of humanity is represented by the tradesmen, merchants and employees. We cannot hope to bridge the gap of original sin or to pay what we owe for the sin we have engaged in. God knows too well that we have all sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

In this context: Doesn't it make sense that Jesus would negotiate in order to take away the debt of sin that each person owes to God? And once the negotiations were complete, that God would commend, admire and uplift Jesus for doing so even though, or perhaps especially because Jesus will be required to give his life to save the people? And yet, the most remarkable thing is that out of this uncomfortable parable we can clearly hear the grace of God given to us in the person of Jesus Christ, our Savior. That, my friends, is truly the Good News! Alleluia! Amen.

We Respond with Thanksgiving

HYMN: B-375

“Lord of All Good”

Lord of all good, our gifts we bring to You;
Use them Your holy purpose to fulfill;
Tokens of love and pledges brought anew,
That our whole life is offered to Your will.

We give our mind to understand Your ways,
Hands, eyes, and voice to serve Your great design,
Heart with the flame of Your own love ablaze,
Till for Your glory all our powers combine.

Father, whose bounty all creation shows;
Christ, by whose willing sacrifice we live;
Spirit, from whom all life in fullness flows:
To You with grateful hearts ourselves we give.

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,

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.

Gracious God, you have called us to be the church of Jesus Christ. Keep us one in faith and service, breaking bread together, and proclaiming the good news to the world, that all may believe you are love, turn to your ways and live in the light of your truth.

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 those who are sick 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.

Holy God, we are grateful for the faith and Christian witness of this congregation over the past 207 years. We ask that you strengthen us to remain faithful and obedient servants of Jesus Christ as we enter into this 208th year in service to our Lord and Savior.

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; who rules over all things and 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: 343 “Called as Partners in Christ’s Service”

Called as partners in Christ's service, Called to ministries of grace,
We respond with deep commitment Fresh new lines of faith to trace.
May we learn the art of sharing, Side by side and friend with friend,
Equal partners in our caring To fulfil God's chosen end.

Christ's example, Christ's inspiring, Christ's clear call to work and worth,
Let us follow, never faltering, Reconciling folk on earth.
Men and women, richer, poorer, All God's people young and old,
Blending human skills together Gracious gifts from God unfold.

Thus new patterns for Christ's mission, In a small or global sense,
Help us bear each other's burdens, Breaking down each wall or fence.
Words of comfort, words of vision, Words of challenge said with care,
Bring new power and strength for action, Make us colleagues free and fair

So God grant us for tomorrow Ways to order human life
That surround each person's sorrow With a calm that conquers strife.
Make us partners in our living, Our compassion to increase,
Messengers of faith, thus giving Hope and confidence and peace.

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.
Go in Peace to love and serve Our God.

Choral Amen

Postlude

We believe that our mission is to:

Bring people to Jesus

Educate them in God's truth

Teach them to love God and each other

Heal the brokenhearted in loving family community

Enjoy God and each other

Live worshipful lives