



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

***Sunday Worship Service
August 31, 2025***

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

The church office will be closed Monday (September 1) in observance of Labor Day.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (September 3) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (September 3) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will be meeting next Sunday (September 7) at 9:15am. We are currently reading through “The Practice of the Presence of God” by Brother Lawrence. See Rev. Joe if you want to join!

Next Sunday (September 7) is our monthly “First Celebration Sunday” with Holy Communion in worship followed by our church brunch. Bring a friend, all are invited!

Opening Prayer

LORD, our Creator, our hearts cry out in need for all of the hurts and disappointments we face every day. Help us realize the depth of your promises, and the meaning that you will neither leave us nor forsake us in the face of anything. **Amen.**

Prelude *If You But Trust in God to Guide You* arr. Peterson

***Call to Worship (Psalm 81)**

Sing with joy to God our strength and raise a loud shout to the God of Jacob. Raise a song and sound the timbrel, the merry harp, and the lyre.

**Blow the ram’s horn at the new moon, and at the full moon, the day of our feast;
for this is a statute for Israel, a law of the God of Jacob.**

God laid it as a solemn charge upon Joseph, going out over the land of Egypt, where I heard a voice I did not know:

“I eased your shoulder from the burden; your hands were set free from the grave-digger’s basket. You called on me in trouble, and I delivered you; I

answered you from the secret place of thunder and tested you at the waters of Meribah.

Hear, O my people, and I will admonish you: O Israel, if you would but listen to me!
There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not worship a foreign god. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it.

Yet my people did not hear my voice, and Israel would not obey me. So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their hearts, to follow their own devices. Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! I would quickly subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes. Those who hate the LORD would cringe in fear, and their punishment would last forever. But I would feed you with the finest wheat and satisfy you with honey from the rock.”

Hymn #288 *I Sing the Mighty Power of God

I sing the mighty power of God
That made the mountains rise;
That spread the flowing seas abroad
And built the lofty skies.
I sing the wisdom that ordained
The sun to rule the day;
The moon shines full at God's command,
And all the stars obey.

I sing the goodness of the Lord
That filled the earth with food;
God formed the creatures with a word
And then pronounced them good.
Lord, how Thy wonders are displayed,
Where'er I turn my eyes;
If I survey the ground I tread,
Or gaze upon the skies!

There's not a plant or flower below
But makes Thy glories known;
And clouds arise, and tempests blow,
By order from Thy throne;
While all that borrows life from Thee
Is ever in Thy care,
And everywhere that we can be,
Thou, God, art present there.

***Prayer of Confession**

The promises of the LORD are mighty, but the draw of the world is a danger. Do we look too much for the promises and guarantees of others?

LORD, our Creator, we often confess you as the source of living water for all we do and want to do. But we admit that we do not drink as deeply as we need to, trust too much in the promises of others, and see the world as more powerful than what it is. We become distracted, despairing, and tired from everything we have to do. Help us to rest in your arms, in your tent, at your table, and see what you have truly accomplished and finished for our sake. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

The LORD, through Jesus Christ, is our place of rest, our proof of all that is healthy and orderly, and what we can become when accepted.

The invitation is extended, the banquet is set, and we come in the hope that what we will experience is different from what we have known before.

Hymn #579 *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.

The Apostles' Creed

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 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.**

Reading of the Scriptures

All Scripture lessons come from the Revised Common Lectionary. Prescribed lessons are underlined, with pastoral inserts to preserve the integrity of the passage.

Hear the Word of the Lord:

Jeremiah 2:1-13

2 ¹ The word of the Lord came to me, saying: ² Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem, Thus says the Lord: I remember the devotion of your youth, your love as a bride, how you followed me in the wilderness, in a land not sown. ³ Israel was holy to the Lord, the first fruits of his harvest. All who ate of it were held guilty; disaster came upon them, says the Lord. ⁴ Hear the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. ⁵ Thus says the Lord: What wrong did your ancestors find in me that they went far from me, and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves? ⁶ They did not say, "Where is the Lord who brought us up from the land of Egypt, who led us in the wilderness, in a land of deserts and pits, in a land of drought and deep darkness, in a land that no one passes through, where no one lives?" ⁷ I brought you into a plentiful land to eat its fruits and its good things. But when you entered you defiled my land, and made my heritage an abomination. ⁸ The priests did not say, "Where is the Lord?" Those who handle the law did not know me; the rulers transgressed against me; the prophets prophesied by Baal, and went after things that do not profit. ⁹ Therefore once more I accuse you, says the Lord, and I accuse your children's children. ¹⁰ Cross to the coasts of Cyprus and look, send to Kedar and examine with care; see if there has ever been such a thing. ¹¹ Has a nation changed its gods, even though they are no gods? But my people have changed their glory for something that does not profit. ¹² Be appalled, O heavens, at this, be shocked, be utterly desolate, says the Lord, ¹³ for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living water, and dug out cisterns for themselves, cracked cisterns that can hold no water.

Hebrews 13:1-25

13 ¹ Let mutual love continue. ² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³ Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. ⁴ Let marriage be held in honor by all, and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled; for God will judge fornicators and adulterers. ⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you." ⁶ So we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?" ⁷ Remember your leaders, those who spoke the word of God to you; consider the outcome of their way of life, and imitate their faith. ⁸ Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. ⁹ Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings; for it is well for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by regulations about food, which have not benefited those who observe them. ¹⁰ We have an altar from which those who officiate in the tent have no right to eat. ¹¹ For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp. ¹² Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people by his own blood. ¹³ Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. ¹⁴ For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. ¹⁵ Through him, then, let us continually offer a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that confess his name. ¹⁶ Do not neglect to do good and to share what

you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God. ¹⁷ Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls and will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sighing—for that would be harmful to you. ¹⁸ Pray for us; we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. ¹⁹ I urge you all the more to do this, so that I may be restored to you very soon. ²⁰ Now may the God of peace, who brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹ make you complete in everything good so that you may do his will, working among us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen. ²² I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³ I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been set free; and if he comes in time, he will be with me when I see you. ²⁴ Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵ Grace be with all of you.

Luke 14:1-24

14 ¹ On one occasion when Jesus was going to the house of a leader of the Pharisees to eat a meal on the sabbath, they were watching him closely. ² Just then, in front of him, there was a man who had dropsy. ³ And Jesus asked the lawyers and Pharisees, “Is it lawful to cure people on the sabbath, or not?” ⁴ But they were silent. So Jesus took him and healed him, and sent him away. ⁵ Then he said to them, “If one of you has a child or an ox that has fallen into a well, will you not immediately pull it out on a sabbath day?” ⁶ And they could not reply to this. ⁷ When he noticed how the guests chose the places of honor, he told them a parable. ⁸ “When you are invited by someone to a wedding banquet, do not sit down at the place of honor, in case someone more distinguished than you has been invited by your host; ⁹ and the host who invited both of you may come and say to you, ‘Give this person your place,’ and then in disgrace you would start to take the lowest place. ¹⁰ But when you are invited, go and sit down at the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he may say to you, ‘Friend, move up higher’; then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at the table with you. ¹¹ For all who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.” ¹² He said also to the one who had invited him, “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, in case they may invite you in return, and you would be repaid. ¹³ But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. ¹⁴ And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you, for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.” ¹⁵ One of the dinner guests, on hearing this, said to him, “Blessed is anyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!” ¹⁶ Then Jesus said to him, “Someone gave a great dinner and invited many. ¹⁷ At the time for the dinner he sent his slave to say to those who had been invited, ‘Come; for everything is ready now.’ ¹⁸ But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, ‘I have bought a piece of land, and I must go out and see it; please accept my regrets.’ ¹⁹ Another said, ‘I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to try them out; please accept my regrets.’ ²⁰ Another said, ‘I have just been married, and therefore I cannot come.’ ²¹ So the slave returned and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house

became angry and said to his slave, 'Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame.' ²² And the slave said, 'Sir, what you ordered has been done, and there is still room.' ²³ Then the master said to the slave, 'Go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in, so that my house may be filled. ²⁴ For I tell you, none of those who were invited will taste my dinner.' "

This is the Word of the LORD.

Thanks be to God!

Sermon *The Thirteenth Sunday of Pentecost*

When one part of the Church hurts, we all feel the pain. When part of the body of Christ is in pain, we all react. The recent tragedy at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis is an event which should jar all people to awaken. There has been no shortage of tragedies, of shootings, of attacks on churches across the nation. They jar us loose from the illusion of security we might have had, make us aware of how enemies might see and treat us, and where our true security and hope is found. While everyone else seems to be obsessed with making these events a political or cultural issue, trying to assign assumed blame and guilt, as Christians we should be rallying together around the common mission we share as those part of the same mystical body. We do not need to be ashamed or upset when criticized about the 'thoughts and prayers' given to those affected directly by tragedy. In fact, it is something that should not even surprise us! When someone's hope is settled on something other than our authentic purpose, on the Creator of All, they are bound to react that way. It is how we once were before our hearts were captured by the 'hound of heaven' and is a chance to show who we are and what true power in the face of evil can be.

Jeremiah prophesied this mentality among people at the start of his ministry and mission, seeing how Israel was acting in the face of the rest of the world. Israel in that era was always enticed by the practices and motives of the rest of the world around them. Time after time it was warned they would be enticed and deceived if their hearts were not properly aligned to the LORD's holy instruction. By this point in history the Kingdom of Judah had seen their siblings in the Kingdom of Israel conquered and colonized by the expanding Babylonian Empire. The power and might of that empire would have seemed like an overwhelming force, almost authenticating how mightier and better their practices, ways, and ideas were compared to what they were being called to live. Many fell away from the LORD in the pursuit of what seemed mightier, more popular, and powerful. But in doing so they surrendered the glory, their identities, to a source that promised much and did not deliver. The metaphor of a cistern, a well, that cannot hold water is almost a perfect representation of the kind of trusts we can have in this life. Leaders, institutions, and people can promise so much, make enticing arguments, attract such followings, but always fall short of making everyone's dreams come true. We will always be disappointed in some way or another and know another

well-dressed 'prophet' will be around the next corner eventually. But as Israel is called to remember all that LORD had done for them, we are called to remember what enables us to live and hope as we do.

As the writer of Hebrews finishes up his letter to the faithful, the final chapter is a call to remembrance. To remember why we show hospitality in the manner we do, why we care for those sick and in prison, why we hold marriage and relationships in such high regard, why we do not pursue money so mindlessly, and are considerate of the teachers and messengers who work on our behalf. All of this helps the fellowship, and its individuals, not to be carried away- not to go "insane" (Gk. *Paraphero*) by the changing priorities and fears around us. To know that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. Walking with and guiding us, accessible to us, and always ready to show what the holy instruction looks like in every step and circumstance of life.

When the writer speaks about the altar in the tent, and sacrifice outside of the camp, they are referring to the worship practices of old by which Israel conducted itself before. They were necessary to know and follow because they reminded the people what was necessary to expunge sin and enable them to keep living- life itself. The very life of an innocent animal, and the life of an innocent person who was crucified. To the Jewish mindset to be banished to outside of the camp, to die outside of Jerusalem, was almost a sign of banishment and exile from the people and the rule of the LORD. But we realize it is a sign of something greater.

This explanation from Hebrews reminds of the C.S. Lewis' "The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe" (The book, because the movie does not do it justice). In that story, the mighty protector of the land of Narnia, Aslan the Lion, makes a deal to buy back the freedom of a boy held by the White Witch. Aslan travels to the stone table and allows himself to be sacrificed on it. The White Witch believes she has defeated the great protector, but an unpredictable and ancient power resurrects Aslan and cracks the stone table in half. The old laws and order of Narnia are destroyed, and the White Witch is rendered powerless.

C.S. Lewis wrote that as a metaphor for the resurrection of Christ and the results of that action. More than just buying back our freedom from evil, it destroys the old order that evil used to rule, finishes the required offerings needed for life, sets us on the path by which our calling is guaranteed, and we can witness the true power of the divine at work. Exactly what Jesus does in the face of the Pharisees when he heals on the Sabbath, challenges their legalistic understanding of the LORD's ways, and what those ways actually accomplish. They are like an invitation to a grand banquet which is sent out, piquing the interest of those invited, and revealing the ones who are in the most need of being included. It separates out those whose devotion is to the things of the world and who need real hope after experiencing the motives and ways of the world. It brings people in, and together, after seeing the old order played out and need to

experience the change by which Jesus brings by his teachings and actions. A warning and sign to the Church that those who come have experienced the world, have been hurt by it, need the healing of the divine, and need to see what it is like exemplified by those who advocate for it.

It is easy to advocate and say what we think people need, but our character and actions truly show how much we have allowed the divine invitation to change us. To demonstrate what has and can change by being in the presence of holy love and mercy. If we participate in society's great 'blame game' of who and what is responsible for way things are, we are simply living the old ways that Christ seeks to fulfill and bring to a conclusion. Assumptions and guesses do not actually heal or bring understanding, they just concentrate power, cast blame, and change the rules of who can benefit in the order of things. All people hurt when tragedy strikes, and that hurt ripples across all demographics of society in a way which remind we are all wired in a similar way- which requires a common hope and healing to give the tools and purpose needed to keep going the face of evil. The solution is to embrace our identity as the created of the LORD, not surrender it to others, and thus embody and carry living water to a thirsty world. Others will reject and criticize such attempts, but that does not and should not stop us. Christ has proven the old order of things may hang on, but do not have the stranglehold they once had. Only when we embrace what is hopeful, see our space as a refuge for the hurts and disappointments around us, and confess the only being capable of fulfilling the longing which cannot be named can we understand the promise of, "The LORD is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?"

Prayers of the People

Let us remember in prayer:

Dominic Aquino, Tom & Amy Aquino, Mary Ellen Beans, Terry Carpenter, Fritz Chambers, Michelle Chamberlain, Mary Jane Dougherty, Don Eberheart Jr., Allison Folly, Kay France, Jamie Frank, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Barry Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, David Mackey, Breanne Mathias, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Carol Phillips, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Simone Villarruel, Holly Waldenmyer, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.

LORD, our Creator, it seems like every time we look at the world there is some kind of tragedy and evil taking place. Around every corner there is senseless violence, wars without meaning, hatred without cause, and subtle signs that evil is winning. It is easy to give into despair and think you are not listening, or somehow disappointed with us. It is hard to see your presence or trust that you are always with us. But your power is made available through weakness, and how we treat others is how we recognize your great strength. Your fellowship, your mystical body of the Church, and its resilience in the face of evil are proof that your ways are decisive. Your work is finished, your will is done, and you set us up to realize that reality through everything we see happening.

Your Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever! Thank you for showing us the meaning of the gospel through every conceivable circumstance experienced.

For those who are still waiting to see your presence, realize your gospel, in their sufferings we offer up in hope that you will answer...*Reading of the Prayer List*...Draw all those to yourself in need of ultimate mercy and assurance.

Moment of Silence

You give us seats of honor not to hold or prove ourselves to others, but that we might bring all our unknowns and hurts to experience your solutions. Aid us in bringing all refugees from the hurts of life to your presence, and letting your prayer be our guide:

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.

Offering our Gifts

We are charged as the holy fellowship to go out and seek those in need of the divine feast. By what we offer is how we might work for the good of those who need this.

Offertory *Andante Religioso* arr. Landon

Hymn #592 *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.

***Prayer of Dedication**

LORD, our Creator, you send us out into the streets to gather the hurting who need your ways. By what we offer may our work continue, and may your identity shine like never before to show others something has changed for their good. **Amen.**

Hymn #289 *O God of Every Nation

O God of every nation,
Of every race and land,
Redeem the whole creation
With Your almighty hand;
Where hate and fear divide us
And bitter threats are hurled,

In love and mercy guide us
And heal our strife-torn world.

From search for wealth and power
And scorn of truth and right,
From trust in bombs that shower
Destruction through the night,
From pride of race and nation
And blindness to Your way,
Deliver every nation,
Eternal God, we pray.

Lord, strengthen all who labor
That we may find release
From fear of rattling saber,
From dread of war's increase;
When hope and courage falter,
Your still small voice be heard;
With faith that none can alter,
Your servants under gird.

Keep bright in us the vision
Of days when war shall cease,
When hatred and division
Give way to love and peace,
Till dawns the morning glorious
When truth and justice reign
And Christ shall rule victorious
O'er all the world's domain.

***Benediction**

Hear now, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; you will love your neighbor as yourself.

With the gospel of Jesus Christ guiding you, go into the world to live this sole purpose.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

***Postlude *Andante Maestoso* arr. Price**

Be blessed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ wherever you may go!

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