

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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Minister:

Music Director:

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Kevin Geluch

Michelle Millson

◆ Sunday July 12, 2020 ◆
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

* indicates a time to stand, if you are able
congregational responses are in **boldface type**

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE – *Gavotte from Cello Suite No. 6*
performed on the guitar by Chris Palmer

J.S. Bach

*OPENING HYMN – *Sing Praise to God, Who Reigns Above*

VU 216

*1 Sing praise to God who reigns above,
the God of all creation,
the God of power, the God of love,
the God of our salvation;
with healing balm my soul is filled,
and every faithless murmur stilled:
to God all praise and glory!*

*2 What God's almighty power hath made,
God's gracious mercy keepeth:
by morning glow or evening shade
God's watchful eye ne'er sleepeth;
within the shelter of God's might, lo!
all is just and all is right:
to God all praise and glory!*

*3 Our God is never far away,
but through all grief distressing,
an ever-present help and stay,
our peace, and joy, and blessing;
as with a mother's tender hand,*

*God gently leads the chosen band:
to God all praise and glory!*

*4 Thus all my gladsome way along,
I sing aloud thy praises
that all may hear the grateful song
my voice unwearied raises.
Be joyful in your God, my heart!
Both soul and body take your part:
to God all praise and glory!*

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

**All: We are filled with the light of Jesus Christ; it shines in our
midst. Jesus bids us shine our own lovely light into the
world for all to see.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We are together in the presence of God's Spirit.

All: The Spirit of life and peace.

One: The Spirit offers promise to each new day.

All: The Spirit brings hope out of despair.

One: And even in death – through God's Spirit, we discover life.

**All: God's Spirit dwells within us as we come together to
worship in this holy presence.**

* HYMN – *Fairest Lord Jesus*

VU 341

*1 Fairest Lord Jesus, ruler of all nature,
O thou of God to earth come down:
thee will I cherish, thee will I honour,
thou my soul's glory, joy, and crown.*

*2 Fair are the meadows, fairer still the woodlands,
robed in the blooming garb of spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
who makes the woeful heart to sing.*

*3 Fair is the sunshine, fairer still the moonlight,
and fair the twinkling, starry host;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
than all the angels heaven can boast.*

*4 All fairest beauty heavenly and earthly,
wondrously, Jesus, is found in thee;
none can be nearer, fairer or dearer
than thou, my Saviour, art to me.*

OPENING PRAYER (said together)

Gracious God, who creates, sustains, and redeems all life, we come seeking your disturbing presence and comforting peace. We praise you for the joy of being your people. May your Spirit be with us and move within us, in this time of worship. Give us hearts that hear your Word and minds that are open to the transforming power of your love. Amen.

A TIME WITH CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US

The Sad Peacock

There was once this beautiful peacock who was all but dancing on a rainy day. While he was busy admiring his plumage, his rough voice reminded him of his own shortcomings. All the joy beaten out of him, he was almost in tears. Suddenly he heard a nightingale singing nearby.

Listening to the nightingale's sweet voice, his own shortcoming once again became very evident. He began wondering why he

was jinxed in such a manner. At that moment, God appeared and addressed the peacock.

“Why are you upset?”

The peacock complained about his rough voice and how he was sad because of it. “The nightingale has such a beautiful voice. Why don’t I?”

God said, “every living being is special in his or her own way. They are made in a certain manner that serves the greater purpose. Yes, the nightingale is blessed with a beautiful voice, but you are also blessed – with such a beautiful and glittering plumage! The trick is acceptance and making the most of what you have.”

◆ SERVICE OF THE WORD ◆

Readers: Margaret Duff and Jim Kraemer

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION:

One: God of Mystery, you speak to us in stories, riddles, and metaphors. It’s easy to pass them off as “just stories” or a clever joke. These stories are not jokes, but contain the real stuff of life. As we pause in our week to worship you, give us the clarity to unravel the mysteries in these stories, the heart to hear and feel these realities, and the will to live them. Amen.

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Genesis 25:19-34

These are the descendants of Isaac, Abraham’s son: Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was forty years old when he married Rebekah, daughter of Bethuel the Aramean of Paddan-aram,

sister of Laban the Aramean. Isaac prayed to the Lord for his wife, because she was barren; and the Lord granted his prayer, and his wife Rebekah conceived. The children struggled together within her; and she said, "If it is to be this way, why do I live?" So she went to inquire of the Lord. And the Lord said to her, "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples born of you shall be divided; the one shall be stronger than the other, the elder shall serve the younger." When her time to give birth was at hand, there were twins in her womb. The first came out red, all his body like a hairy mantle; so they named him Esau. Afterward his brother came out, with his hand gripping Esau's heel; so he was named Jacob. Isaac was sixty years old when she bore them. When the boys grew up, Esau was a skillful hunter, a man of the field, while Jacob was a quiet man, living in tents. Isaac loved Esau, because he was fond of game; but Rebekah loved Jacob. Once when Jacob was cooking a stew, Esau came in from the field, and he was famished. Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stuff, for I am famished!" (Therefore he was called Edom.) Jacob said, "First sell me your birthright." Esau said, "I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?" Jacob said, "Swear to me first." So he swore to him, and sold his birthright to Jacob. Then Jacob gave Esau bread and lentil stew, and he ate and drank, and rose and went his way. Thus Esau despised his birthright.

One: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 119: 105-112 VU 841

Refrain 5 *Michael W. Smith 1984, arr. Keith Phillips, alt.*

Unison

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.

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PSALTER 841

Part Five (105–112) Nun*

Your word is a lamp for my feet, and a light for my path.

I have sworn an oath and confirmed it,
to keep your righteous judgements.

I am in deep distress,
give me life, O God, according to your word.
Accept, O God, the willing tribute of my lips,
and teach me your decrees. R

I take my life into my hands continually,
yet I never forget your law;
the wicked have laid a snare for me,
but I have not strayed from your precepts.

Your testimonies are my heritage forever,
the very joy of my heart.
I have set my heart to fulfil your statutes,
forever, even to the end. R

GOSPEL: Matthew 13:1-9 and 18-23

That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: "Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the

birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!" "Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what is sown in the heart; this is what was sown on the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet such a person has no root, but endures only for a while, and when trouble or persecution arises on account of the word, that person immediately falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the lure of wealth choke the word, and it yields nothing. But as for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty, and in another thirty."

REFLECTION: Purpose and Direction!

A sower of seed sets out with a purpose in mind, to plant a seed, to watch it grow, to tend and give it care, and then to reap the rewards in harvest. But many obstacles can get in the way, bad decisions where to plant and the initial purpose is not fulfilled.

Any clear vision of the future starts with great hope and expectation. From before we are born, God has designed a purpose for our lives. We spend much of our time trying to find

out what that is and how we might direct our lives towards fulfilling and augmenting God's overall plan for humanity.

When we come to realize that we are not isolated, but are part of a connected whole, we begin to accept our responsibility for our part in furthering the common goal.

I believe we have a plan before we come here, before we are born into this world, but it is not so evident to us as we are growing and maturing, where this will lead us. We struggle with our place in family, our place in our community, and our place in the world. If we could just relax and make the connections with God through prayer and meditation, we would find our answers come easier to us and our way becomes clear.

Some have been blessed with a clarity of purpose from the time they are four years old. Dr. Robert Schueller knew at four that he was going to be a preacher. He did not come from a ministerial family, it was just something that was planted in his mind and he did everything in his power to make it happen.

Others, of us, realize at 50, or beyond, that there is something calling to us that deserves to be explored. It begins with a restlessness, an awareness that something doesn't feel right. We take many opportunities during the various stages of our life to re-examine where we are. It happens in college when first year students finish their year and come to the realization that this path they have chosen is not right for them, and they choose something else. Some do this several times before they find what excites them.

Seniors start to reassess their lives, to think in terms of leaving a legacy for their grandchildren. They sense the seeds of change stirring them to make lasting changes, to move into areas that bring them joy and fulfillment.

The secret to getting what you want from life is understanding that what you do *right now* drives your future. It is never too late to do something amazing.

History records very early child prodigies and very late bloomers in living into their talents.

At age 1, the child prodigy, Christian F. Heineken had read the first five books of the bible; at age 3, Wolfgang Mozart taught himself to play the harpsichord; at age 7 English philosopher and economist, John Stuart Mill had mastered Greek.

At age 69 Ed Whitlock of Milton, Ontario became the oldest person to run a standard marathon in under 3 hours; at age 77 John Glenn became the oldest person to go into space; at age 91, Allan Stewart of New South Wales completed a Law degree from the University of New England.

Some are born knowing their destiny; others take a lifetime to work into their true calling. Many of us stumble along the way but, we can take heart because God is not finished with us yet.

Unexpected occurrences, life's little shipwrecks (loss of employment, end of relationships, death) intervene and open up new possibilities for change. A trip or a chance encounter, a book, or a stimulating lecture may tune you in at the appropriate moment when there is an uneasiness, or a yearning, for something different in your life.

Listen to your inner voice, it prompts you to try new things, but we often disregard it. When passion enters the picture it becomes a whole new ball game. Your life soars when you have passion. Overcome your fear and rise to the challenge. Believe that you can do it, try something new. Act on it and discount the naysayers who say it cannot be done. Learn to move forward by taking baby steps until you develop the confidence to stride forward.

People who make choices to change are not stronger, more intelligent or fearless than you. They have made a decision to act in the direction of their dreams. Don't get to the end of your life with regrets, regrets about avenues not explored. Do what brings out the best in you.

To live a passionate, engaged life is to have found your purpose, your reason for being here. God has something good in store for each of us and does not want us to live a life of painful drudgery. God helps us to find our purpose through prayer, and scripture. Then, it is up to us to assess our gifts and strengths, to look for things that excite our passion, take time in solitude and retreat, to seek guidance from those that we trust and finally to trust God that we are moving in the right direction.

Nothing gives a person more inner wholeness or peace like a distinct understanding of where they are going. Robert Bryne said "the purpose of life is a life of purpose." We need to have a clear destination fixed in our minds. Just as we would map out a direction and destination on a road trip, we travel along paths that may bring interesting stops and detours before we get to the place we have held in our mind.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky said “The mystery of human existence lies not in just staying alive, but in finding something to stay alive for.” Finding our purpose leads to smiles and laughter and action that you want to and enjoy doing.

If you find you are not on a track that brings satisfaction and fulfillment, there is always an opportunity to change direction. You can change your goal, rethink, choose another way.

If life is getting you down and you wake up with apathy or dread or boredom, it is a sure sign that you are probably not doing what you are meant to be doing. Somehow you are missing the mark. Joy and excitement overall should fill your days. When you are doing rewarding, meaningful, purposeful things you can be sure that you have found your niche in life. By using your skills and passion in a job, giving and receiving in a relationship, and being involved in invigorating hobbies, you can rest assured that you are on the right track.

God has created us in love and designed us to be part of an overall plan. Each of us fit into it as pieces of a whole, much like the pieces that fit exactly into a jigsaw puzzle. The completed view is beautiful to behold.

A story about finding your purpose in life – called Panning for Gold

A frustrated young man went to see the wise man of his village. “I don’t know what to do with my life. How do I find my purpose” the young man asked

“Follow me,” said the old man.

Silently they trudged together to a far away river where they found dozens of prospectors panning for gold.

“There are three types of prospectors here,” the sage said. “There are those who strike gold straight away. Excited, they take their plunder, cash it in and live comfortably for the rest of their lives. Then there are those who pan for years. They know that there is gold here and they have seen others strike it rich, so they persist until they too find the gold they have been searching for.” “Then there are the individuals who get frustrated that they haven’t found what they are looking for, so after a day, a week, or a year or two, they give up, walk away and never find the gold.”

Slightly confused the young man asks, “What has that got to do with finding my purpose?”

“Ah yes, there are those in life who look for their purpose and seem to find it almost immediately. From a young age they seem to have a clear sense of purpose and pursue their dreams with energy and enthusiasm. Some others have to look a bit harder, perhaps for many years, but if they persist and keep looking they will find something to live for. Finally, there are those who want to know their purpose, but they become frustrated with the search and give up too soon, returning to a life of meaningless wandering.”

“Can everyone find their purpose?”

“Is there gold in the river?” the wise man responded.

“So, how do I find my own purpose?”

“Keep looking.” “There is no guarantee you will find it quickly, the only guarantee is that if you give up and stop looking for it, you’ll never find it.”

Sensing the young man’s despondency, he placed a reassuring hand on his shoulder. “I can sense your frustration, but let me assure you, if you can find your true calling in life, you will live with passion, make the world a better place, be richer than you could imagine and feel as though the very face of God Himself is smiling upon you. When it happens, the search will be worth it and your life will never be the same again. So for now, *your purpose is to find your purpose.*

Remember all those men and women that went down to the river to find the gold, they did not sit at home waiting for it to come to them. They were actively searching.

God calls into all walks of life. If you sense you are where you are meant to be, it matters not whether it is in custodial, administrative, caretaker, service, or professional life, if you put your whole being into your work, you and the people around you live with joy.

We have only to see the complete reversal of revered roles during our pandemic to realize that the store clerk, the janitor, and the health care worker are the real heroes. Entertainers and sports figures entertain and they fill a value in our society in allowing us to step outside ourselves and live in fantasy for a moment. They may be called and serve with passion, but they should be no higher regarded than the ones whose shining moment arises to sustain and preserve our daily living.

Are you where you want to be? Or are you still looking for something more meaningful in your life?

Trust in the One who sees the big picture to help you find your niche where you can be the best version of who you are intended to become to be. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

One: It is indeed a privilege to share in God's mission and to adapt to the needs around us. We are reminded to continue our gifts as we are able in the service of the ongoing work of our church.

*OFFERING HYMN - *We Give Thee But Thine Own*

VU 543

*1 We give thee but thine own,
whate'er the gift may be:
all that we have is thine alone,
a trust, O God, from thee.*

*2 May we thy bounties thus
as stewards true receive,
and gladly, as thou blessest us,
to thee our first-fruits give.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

One: Oh God of majesty and awe, you give us opportunities to sew seeds into fertile ground, but often we place them on rocky soil through our stubborn and wayward actions. We strive for peace amidst a world that is too quick to take offense, to cross their boundaries with hostile actions. We abuse our earth leading to extreme climate, flooding, forest fires and scorching heat. Loving God help us to meet our concerns for future

generations, to help those in tough situations, and to be open to other points of view.

All: Not stony ground, but fertile soil of growth and abundance.

One: O God, of creation and re-creation, we fight illnesses that do not yield to current treatment, our hospitals and medical care have long waiting lists;

We broker troubled relationships for which there seems no possibility for resolution or change;

We live in the barren, empty place of bereavement and loss.

Loving God, may we move to wholeness and healing, to reconciliation and hope.

All: Not stony ground, but fertile soil of growth and abundance.

One: Our faith life can be stale and unrewarding; we tend to apathy, and leave it to someone else to fix;

Sometimes we display an unwillingness to cooperate, to go our own way.

May the renewal of spiritual practice lead us to take responsibility, to reach out to neighbours and friends in the Spirit, to bring a new harvest of religious relevance and faithful action.

All: Not stony ground, but fertile soil of growth and abundance.

One: Help us to move out of circumstances where we are stuck, to encourage us to embrace change.

Enable us to release fears that are hidden so deep that we

cannot easily release them.

Encourage us to express our opinions without fear of what others think.

Loving God, may renewed determination bring a harvest of new opportunities where our courage and openness bring new life.

All: Not stony ground, but fertile soil of growth and abundance.

One: We worry about our families: children, grandchildren, parents, and friends. We worry about our life's direction, our ability to live out our dreams. We worry about our world and its fragility and recovery.

We pray for our community of Melrose. We pray for those outside our church community who have been impacted in many adverse ways from our months of isolation. Lord, we ask that you be with them in the ways that each one needs. For all those that we hold in our hearts we raise up to you for their safekeeping.

(Quiet reflection)

Followed by The Lord's Prayer (said together)

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 trespasses, as we forgive those that

Trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory,

For ever and ever. Amen.

*1 Come now, almighty King,
help us your name to sing,
help us to praise;
one God all glorious,
ever victorious,
come and reign over us,
Ancient of Days.*

*2 Come now, incarnate Son,
your life in us begun,
our prayer attend;
come, and your people bless;
come, give your word success;
stablish your righteousness,
Saviour and friend!*

*3 Come holy Comforter,
your sacred witness bear
in this glad hour;
your grace to us impart,
now rule in every heart,
never from us depart,
Spirit of power!*

*4 To the great One in Three,
eternal praises be
for evermore;
your sovereign majesty
may we in glory see,
and to eternity
love and adore!*

COMMISSIONING

We go forth in the name of Jesus,
We do not know where it will lead us
But we trust that God will provide the direction.
We provide the hands and feet and the work of our hearts, to live
up to our greatest calling.
Thy will be done in our lives, gentle Saviour.

BENEDICTION

May God keep us
In our going out and our coming in
In our lying down and our rising up,
In our work and in our leisure,
In our laughter and in our tears,
Until we meet again. Amen.

POSTLUDE - *Variation 5, Goldberg Variations*

J.S. Bach