

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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◆ Sunday October 11, 2020 ◆

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH

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

◆ GATHERING ◆

PRELUDE – Gigue, *Lute Suite #2*
Chris Palmer, guitar

J.S. Bach

*OPENING HYMN – *We Plough the Fields*

VU 520

*1 We plough the fields and scatter
the good seed on the land,
but it is fed and watered
by your almighty hand;
you send the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine,
and soft refreshing rain.*

[Refrain:]

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above;
we thank you, God, O holy God,
for all your love.*

*2 You only are the maker
of all things near and far;
you paint the wayside flower,
you light the evening star;
the wind and waves obey you,
by you the birds are fed;
much more to us, your children,
you give us daily bread. [Refrain]*

*3 We thank you then, O Maker,
for all things bright and good,
the seed-time and the harvest,
our life, our health, our food;
accept the gifts we offer
for all your love imparts,
and, what from us you long for,
our humble, thankful hearts. [Refrain]*

WELCOME AND LIFE AND WORK OF THE CHURCH

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: The news is grim.

All: One political party is fighting with another. One set of the population favours following rules and keeping everyone safe; the other blatantly refuses.

One: The news is grim.

All: Opposing sides are clashing violently over equal treatment and acceptance of all peoples; over amount of aggression in police forces.

One: The news is grim

**All: There are too many walls and too much hate.
Let this Christ candle be a beacon of peace and love for all.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Praise is due to you, O God in all the earth!

All: By your awesome deeds, you answer us; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

One: You have done many great and wonderful things; you have assured your people of your continued presence.

All: You crown the year with your bounty; our lives overflow with abundance.

One: People of God, gather to hear the glorious deeds of God and the wonders of what God has done.

All: We gather to offer praise and thanksgiving for God's abundant, unconditional love, mercy, and grace. Let us worship in joy!

OPENING PRAYER (said together)

God-of-All, we have set aside this day of thanksgiving, because we sometimes have difficulty remembering to live our thanksgiving.

We sometimes have difficulty remembering to be thanksgiving?

So - thank you, for everything!

Open our hearts to realize where thanks need to be given.

Open our spirits to share the words.

Open our lives to be your love.

As disciples of Jesus, we ask this. May it be so. Amen.

A TIME WITH THE CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US
Story: Be Thankful to Others and to God

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (said together):

Out of ten that were healed by Jesus, only one returned to give thanks for God's gracious actions.

How often we forget, O gracious God, for the times we have failed to share the bread of life in all its forms. Help us to change, to give, to share, that all may know the love you offer and have their hunger filled. Forgive us for the times we have failed to set a place for you; be welcome again at our tables. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

◆ SERVICE OF THE WORD ◆

Reader: Eric Windhorst

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

One: As we come to hear scripture today, let us open ourselves that we might experience the intention the Divine Creator has called us to fulfill and act upon.

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Deuteronomy 8: 7-18

One: For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land with flowing streams, with springs and underground waters welling up in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land where you may eat bread without scarcity, where you will lack nothing, a land whose stones are iron and from whose hills you may mine copper.

You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you. Take care that you do not forget the Lord your God, by failing to keep his commandments, his ordinances, and his statutes, which I am commanding you today. When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery, who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid wasteland with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock, and fed you in the wilderness with manna that your ancestors did not know, to humble you and to test you, and in the end to do you good. Do not say to yourself, "My power and the might of my own hand have gotten me this wealth." But remember the Lord

your God, for it is he who gives you power to get wealth, so that he may confirm his covenant that he swore to your ancestors, as he is doing today.

One: The Word of the Lord

All: Thanks be to God.

REFLECTION: A Refresher in God's Providence! -Deuteronomy 8:7-18

Our Scripture features a new Biblical Book, same epoch character, Moses. We continue with Moses, fresh from the mountain where he delivered the two tablets of the Ten Commandments from God to the Israelite people. Deuteronomy contains a number of Moses' sermons to the people, clearly indicating that Moses is the spokesperson for God, speaking only words that God has given him to speak.

As a preacher, I can only imagine how freeing that would be, no concern about interpretation or fear of mishandling God's Words.

The previous seven chapters of Deuteronomy have laid out the history between Yahweh and Israel, the delivery of the Ten Commandments, and finally the greatest Jewish Commandment – "Hear, Israel: Yahweh is our God; Yahweh is one; and you shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your might."

The first nine verses of the chapter direct the people to look back in order to engage them in obedience. Remember how in all things we can trust God to provide, to see us through safely. Remember the delivery through the Red Sea, the days of wilderness

wandering, the miraculous provision of food and water, and then, look ahead to the days promised in Canaan.

After having no permanent roots during these past forty years, imagine their joy in hearing the hype about “a land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of olive oil, and honey.” The description covered two harvests, the barley harvest at Passover and the wheat harvest at Pentecost – provision enough for their annual needs, not just enough for the inhabitants, but sufficient to export to outsiders.

Palestine is a fertile land where these foods grow in abundance. It would be a very welcome change to their limited diet in coming across the desert. In addition to copious amounts of food supplies, there was a large supply of useful metals that would assist them in their building and tilling the soil.

Moses cautions with prosperity comes responsibility. They were always to remember their Benefactor. With prosperity comes the temptation to arrogance, pride, and forgetfulness of God.

“When you have eaten your fill and have built fine houses and live in them, and when your herds and flocks have multiplied, and your silver and gold is multiplied, and all that you have is multiplied, then do not exalt yourself, forgetting the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”

After many years of sweat equity, a person has their business or career, or whatever project they have undertaken, become a success, then, there is a justifiable sense of pride in accomplishment. However, we cannot let that pride slip into

arrogance. It is not by our own hand that we achieve success, but through the abilities and effort that were a gift of God. We are not self-created or self-sufficient; they are mere illusions. We are to remember we are dependent on God.

Today, we speak about the harvest and we are in the midst of plenty. Thanksgiving is a time for remembering, where we have come from, how much has been given to us, the joys of family and friends, and food on the table. We are in line for a refresher on how much God has provided for us. This year is certainly not a repeat of what we have been used to, and many of us are unable to celebrate with our loved ones. Perhaps this is our time of wilderness dearth and we are to be tested in how well we walk in faith before we get to enter the Promised Land.

Amen.

PSALM: Psalm 65

One: Praise is due to you, O God, in Zion; and to you shall vows be performed,

O you who answer prayer! To you all flesh shall come.

When deeds of iniquity overwhelm us, you forgive our transgressions.

Happy are those whom you choose and bring near to live in your courts. We shall be satisfied with the goodness of your house, your holy temple.

By awesome deeds you answer us with deliverance, O God of our salvation; you are the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas.

By your strength you established the mountains; you are girded with might.

You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, the tumult of the peoples.

Those who live at earth's farthest bounds are awed by your signs; you make the gateways of the morning and the evening shout for joy.

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide the people with grain, for so you have prepared it.

You water its furrows abundantly, settling its ridges, softening it with showers, and blessing its growth.

You crown the year with your bounty; your wagon tracks overflow with richness.

The pastures of the wilderness overflow, the hills gird themselves with joy,

the meadows clothe themselves with flocks, the valleys deck themselves with grain, they shout and sing together for joy.

THE GOSPEL: Luke 17: 11-19

One: On the way to Jerusalem Jesus was going through the region between Samaria and Galilee. As he entered a village, ten lepers approached him. Keeping their distance, they called out, "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" When he saw them, he said to them, "Go and show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were made clean. Then one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back,

praising God with a loud voice. He prostrated himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Then Jesus asked, "Were not ten made clean? But the other nine, where are they? Was none of them found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Get up and go on your way; your faith has made you well."

One: The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

All: Praise to you, O Christ!

REFLECTION: Chance Encounters! - Luke17:11-18: The Ten Lepers

The focus of this story is not really on healing. It occurs out of Jesus' sight, when the ten are on their way to see the priest and are to be cleared for re-entry into society.

Rather than continue on his way to the synagogue as he had been told, one did an about face and came back and fell at Jesus' feet. Now nine of them knew that even though they had been healed, they could not return home to their families without first going to the synagogue. The tenth had no such need for he was an outsider, not governed by the rules of the synagogue.

However, there is much more going on with this foreigner, another Samaritan. He could have continued on his route to his home, but he was touched by more than physical healing. His very spirit was filled with gratitude and a recognition that this was not a mere mortal who had brought about his miraculous healing. He could do no other than return to offer thanks and praise for the mercy that had set him free.

Those on the margins of society often see things differently from those who are in the center of the action. The current structures do not benefit them so they may be more open to seeing what God is doing in their midst.

Let's look at this from another perspective. The ten ostracized lepers are isolated, without hope when a chance encounter brings Jesus into their line of sight. He is passing through a "no man's land," a place of exile where the unclean are forced to live in rejection and alienation.

There are many such neglected souls within our society, that sub-exist, exiled because of afflictions of body, mind or soul. Their cries fall on deaf ears. But this group desperately seizes their opportunity; they have heard of the power of Jesus; they dare to ask for restitution.

We are often prone to tunnel vision, moving deliberately from point A to point B unlike Jesus who is always ready to be interrupted by the intrusion of human need. How often do we walk by?

I am currently watching a Netflix series called "Away." A scene in the fourth session that I watched this week brings home the willingness to be interrupted for the good of another. The wife is an astronaut on her way to a mission to Mars. The day after launch, her husband had a stroke and is in rehab. The daughter, around 16 is trying to support the father, somewhat resentful at her mother's absence, and is beginning to act out in school. The father's progress while in rehab hospital is far superior to that which he can get from outpatient, yet he knows that for the good

of his daughter, he needs to interrupt his progress and go home to parent her.

You all have stories on how you have changed your direction based on chance encounters that you have had. Illness, accident, family responsibilities, momentary decisions to take a different route, have altered education plans, hoped for career opportunities, routine life. Sometimes the unexpected outcome results in a new partner, a more fulfilling job, an opportunity to help someone, or a different way of looking at things. I sincerely believe that God is in those moments when you choose to follow a hunch, a signal, or a path that brings you into a place of healing need.

In the story of the Ten Lepers there are differing degrees of healing observed. Nine received the physical healing they need to return to society, whereas the tenth received healing of body, soul and mind. Through his appreciation, gratitude and acceptance he received so much more than the others. Wherever you find yourself in the presence of a holy moment through a chance encounter, may you too, recognize its life- giving gifts. Amen.

INVITATION TO OFFERING

One: You are generous, God, never holding back nor scrimping, nor cutting short of your delicate blessings and small wonders. With you everything is possible. We return to you through our various forms of offering, in thanksgiving and hope of being of service to your kingdom. Amen.

*OFFERING HYMN – *Your Work, O God, Needs Many Hands*

- 1. Your work, O God, needs many hands to help you everywhere, and some there are who cannot serve unless our gifts we share.*
- 2. Because we love you and your work, our offering now we make: be pleased to use it as your own, we ask for Jesus' sake.*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

All: God's Kingdom celebrates

One: When music, drama, and art are appreciated, and performers and artists are given the recognition and funding they deserve;

When impoverished peoples receive long-term help and opportunities for education;

When winners of the Paralympics are as widely applauded as the winners of the Olympic events

When aboriginal persons and racial minorities are safe from prejudice;

When no prisoner is left without someone who they can call on for help;

When no child is forced to work, and children recruited as sex slaves or for pornography are freed.

All: And we will work hard to bring the despised, ignored, and rejected to God's great celebration. God's Kingdom celebrates

One: When time is forgotten as lovers embrace and children lose themselves in play;

When civilians in a battle zone are carefully protected and soldiers suffering from stress are counselled;

When those who have planted gardens enjoy the harvest;

When those who have lost an honoured place in an organization dear to them are befriended;

When the depressed, the mentally ill, and their families are taken seriously;

When those who are sick find a friend to talk with;
When the bereaved are given all the time they need to
grieve;

God's Kingdom celebrates when those who have had a life's
ambition crushed are comforted.

**All: And we will work hard, to bring the despised, ignored,
and rejected to God's great celebration.**

God's Kingdom celebrates

One: When each one of us has the courage to find the vocation or
occupation that we dream of;

When we are free to laugh at our faults and our failings;

When we are ready to lose face and popularity in order to
stand with a friend;

When we adjust to our need for peace, and a renewed life of
prayer and meditation;

When we stand on the side of the hopeless and
downhearted.

All: With joy, we join God's great celebration.

One: We pray for our community of Melrose, for Loretta, for Vic,
for Jeff, for Cheryl's mother and family, for Chris' mother
and family. We pray for those outside our church
community that 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. We pray for those in
our circle who are grieving, who are recovering from
illnesses, who are struggling with imperfect relationships.
We pray for those around us who are waiting for COVID
testing, or have received a positive diagnosis. Help them to
recover without lingering after effects. We pray for the
extensive loss of California forest, homes, wild life and the
human lives that have been lost in this devastating and
unrelenting surge of fires. We pray for the First Nations

where three churches were burned and we ask for your help,
O God, in stopping racial hatred and division. 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.

* CLOSING HYMN - *This is God's Wondrous World*

VU 296

*1 This is God's wondrous world,
and to my listening ears
all nature sings, and round me rings
the music of the spheres.*

*This is God's wondrous world;
I rest me in the thought
of rocks and trees, of skies and seas,
God's hand the wonders wrought.*

*2 This is God's wondrous world:
the birds their carols raise,
the morning light, the lily white,
declare their Maker's praise.*

This is God's wondrous world:

*God shines in all that's fair;
in the rustling grass or mountain pass,
God's voice speaks everywhere.*

*3 This is God's wondrous world:
O let me ne'er forget
that though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet.
This is God's wondrous world:
why should my heart be sad?
Let voices sing, let the heavens ring:
God reigns, let earth be glad!*

Amen.

COMMISSIONING

One: And now we give a final word of thanks to the One who is Creator and Creating. Be aware of what is around you and know that God is with you, in water, land, air, and sky. Know that God is continually creating within you. Never stop learning about this world that is ours as stewards, that is God's gift to us and all of creation. Know this earth as an expression of God's love and live in gratitude. Amen.

BENEDICTION

One: 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- October Melrose Improvisation

A. Cann