

◆ MELROSE UNITED CHURCH ◆

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◆ Sunday October 24, 2021 ◆

MELROSE UNITED CHURCH
congregational responses are in **boldface type**

◆ **GATHERING** ◆

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND LIFE OF THE CHURCH

OPENING 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.*

ACKNOWLEDGMENT (Dora White)

One: We live and work and worship on treaty land in the heart of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe nation. As we celebrate the rich bounty of harvest from local gardens and from other places – fruits, vegetables, grains from the fields, the last of the summer flowers and a rich array of autumn leaves – we are reminded that we are called into right relationship with the land and our neighbours within the Upper Canada Treaty. We affirm the need to implement the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to strive for reconciliation.

LIGHTING OF THE CHRIST CANDLE

One: We marvel at the expanse of creation, its beauty and its power. Day by day it continues to make its glorious presence known to us.

All: Jesus, the Christ was with God in the beginning, and for all time. He was part of creation; he was born into the created order; and he has returned to the side of God to be part of the ongoing creation with us as his co-creators. Thanks be to God for the ongoing light of Jesus in the world! Amen.

....Christ candle is lit.....

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: God's grace extends to us through sunrise and sunset, the ongoing scenery, children playing, people being kind, a hand or hug offered in the midst of tears.

All: In our joyful celebrations, God is with us; in the darkness of our experiences of grief and trouble God is also with us.

One: When you are afraid, or lonely, or dismayed

All: You may reach out for the kindness of others to share in God's abundance of love.

One: We come together in our Sanctuary and from our homes to rekindle some of this bountiful grace to bind us and prepare us for the balance of our journeys.

All: Let us worship our God together.

PRAYER OF APPROACH (said together)

God of abundance, we give thanks to you for the networks that surround us, the form and structure of our world that nourishes us, the creation of our environment that provides for us and then renews itself each year. You have given great thought to the planning and execution of providing a home for your people. Help us to share it with those who have meagre supplies and to provide for others from our built-up excesses. Guide us in being helpers and comforters for those in need. We pray in the compassionate and healing name of Jesus.

Amen.

A TIME FOR CHILDREN AND THE CHILD WITHIN US

Story: Seeing Jesus

HYMN – *I Love to Tell the Story*

VU 343

*1 I love to tell the story
of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory,
of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story
because I know 'tis true;
it satisfies my longings
as nothing else can do.*

Refrain:

*I love to tell the story,
'twill be my theme in glory,
to tell the old, old story
of Jesus and his love.*

*2 I love to tell the story
more wonderful it seems
than all the golden fancies
of all our golden dreams.
I love to tell the story,
for some have never heard
the message of salvation
from God's own holy Word. Refrain.*

*3 I love to tell the story,
for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting
to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,
'twill be the old, old story
that I have loved so long. Refrain.*

PRAYER OF CONFESSION (said together, Anne Mathewson)

Holy Mystery, Life Giver, I yearn for your compassion and healing. My soul aches. I feel angst. I'm apprehensive and uncertain of the path I should follow. You have brought me to this place where I understand that I need you. I come to you with a hopeful heart. I have known the peace of the Spirit's presence and desire reacquaintance with it. I yearn for the light that can dispel the shadows. Awaken me to your voice. I long to celebrate your Holy Presence once more. May it be so!

Quiet moment...

◆ **SERVICE OF THE WORD** ◆

Reader: Gwyneth Xagoraris

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

One: Holy Spirit, fill us with the love of your Scriptural Word, help it to percolate and fill us with the aroma of pleasant and fulfilling meaning for our lives. Amen.

WISDOM OF ISRAEL: Job 42: 1-6, 10-17

One: Then Job answered the Lord: "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. 'Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge?' Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. 'Hear, and I will speak; I will question you, and you declare to me.' I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; therefore I despise myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job when he had prayed for his friends; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then there came to him all his brothers and sisters and all who had known him before, and they ate bread with him in his house; they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him; and each of them gave him a piece of money and a gold ring. The Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning; and he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand donkeys. He also had seven sons and three daughters. He named the first Jemimah, the second

Keziah, and the third Keren-happuch. In all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters; and their father gave them an inheritance along with their brothers. After this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his children, and his children's children, four generations. And Job died, old and full of days.

One: The Word of the Lord!

All: Thanks be to God!

PSALM: Psalm 34

VU 761

Refrain: God of all the broken-hearted, God of love, we praise your name.

GOSPEL: Mark 10: 46-52

One: They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

One: The Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ

All: Praise to you, O Christ!

REFLECTION: Gift of Clarity! - Job 42:1-6 and 10-17 and Mark 10:46-52

I'd like to talk about two scriptures today. The Old Testament passage of the last chapter of Job and the New Testament Mark from the perspective of clarity, or seeing in a new way.

Much of our own development is based on reinterpreting or understanding something with which we have been familiar, in a new and different light.

The story of Job supports this through a dramatic dialogue between God and Job. Job probes God for answers as to why he is suffering when he knows he doesn't deserve it. I would say that given this tale of gamesman-ship, God has some explaining to do.

However, we never do uncover the "why." God outlines the vast undertaking of creation and asks Job, were you there when I detailed the intricacies and fine points of how everything fits together.

This is not to skip over the struggles that Job encountered. They were very real and very debilitating. Our own real-life struggles do not magically disappear and there is usually, no happy ending. One cannot take this scripture and suggest, "there, there, all will be right in the end, and bestow a kindly pat on the head to reassure."

Placating a victim such as Job is not the answer he needs. This ending is purely a fable, set up in response to "once upon a time..." Who among you would ask for a replacement family, and restoration of your fortune after being beaten down through multiple deaths and losses? This ending is no reassurance for us.

Job is praised by God for his right and acceptable reaction. He is not considered sinful or wrong for asking "why." God gives him a look

at the wider picture, the cosmos that surrounds him. Job acknowledges that before he had not known God, but now he has seen God face to face. God has spoken to him and given him clarity, not **why** but **understanding**, and he is a changed man.

Complaint, accusation and doubt are shown to be faithful expressions of our relationship with God. They open us up beyond, to a greater understanding and depth of relationship.

We are just as ignorant of God's workings of the universe as was Job. It is God's presence that we also desire to seek. We feel strongly the absence of God and we have our eyes opened to God's work in creation; the certainty that if God has given such detailed consideration to the care and feeding, the procreation, and life cycles of animal, plant, and their habitat, then God is at One and present with us.

We move now to Mark's story about Blind Bartimaeus. A lonely beggar, sitting on the side of the road, perhaps for countless days, in hopes that someone will take pity on him and improve his lot. He hears the crowd approaching. He has surely heard of Jesus. He may even have been in the roadway in anticipation of Jesus coming by. We know nothing of his background, how he became blind, what ordeals he had to undergo in dealing with this disability. We only know that he aggressively takes action when given the chance.

The Blind Bartimaeus story opens our own eyes for our need for Christ and the dangers of being spiritually blind. Jesus stops for this man, a nobody. It is most likely that he already knows what Bartimaeus needs. Yet he asks him, "What is it that you need?"

What is it that **you** need? Sometimes you don't even know until you are asked? Sometimes you just need to put it into words, to clarify what is missing and what you need to rectify it.

Perhaps the pain of your circumstances has blinded you. Regrets and disappointments obscure our focus. Our deepest desire is for someone to see our hurt, to be able to fix it.

We turn to our recreational pursuits, our friends, our family, our social media to fill us, but they can't. They can't fix us. They don't meet our needs. Blind Bartimaeus spent his days looking for someone in the world to meet his needs but it wasn't until he met Jesus that his needs were finally met.

I admit that restoration of sight is a pretty big fulfillment of a need and it is not something that we would commonly see today other than through appropriate medical intervention. But the deeper realization here is that Jesus is the answer to our needs. He is the only one that can save us from our choices, our wrong paths, and our broken lives. Our Creator God declares our worth and nothing diminishes that, not our thoughtless actions, nor our setting God aside for other pursuits.

Sometimes we let other things become the centre of our lives, we allow it to take God's place and we find we are working from a largely empty place and our own vision becomes dim.

We look through our phones, our iPads, our computers, our social media to validate our self-worth only to find that we are chasing after a never-ending cycle of things that were never meant to fill the gap. We look for ways to make ourselves feel better and determine that we matter.

As long as we have lost the central focus of God in our lives, nothing will suffice. Nothing will quench the emptiness, not praise, not friendship, nor likes on our Facebook posts.

One of my granddaughters, had her first of several tattoos with the words - "I am enough!" I wondered about it and she explained it as a statement that reminds her that she is enough just the way she is. It helps to dispel the anxiety that arises about never measuring up, of trying to be pretty enough, of trying to fit in.

Blind Bartimaeus may indeed have been solely a man who needed to see, and Jesus restored that sight. But he is a symbol for all who have lost the focus of their lives, who have become blind to the presence and power of Jesus to fix their vision and fill their needs.

Clarity comes from moments of divine encounter when we allow ourselves to be open to the possibilities. "What is it that **you** want?" becomes our moment of new vision with a clarity that surpasses the physical act of seeing. It is a gift that transforms us and brings us into that quiet peace of relationship with God. Thanks be to God! Amen.

SOLO - O Peace, Thou Fairest Child of Heaven

T. Arne

Soloist: Allana Stevenson

INVITATION TO OFFERING

One: We are living in God's world of abundance. It is a gift for all to share. We are moved by calls to action to support the needs of many. We, who gather here in our church of Melrose offer our support to the ongoing work of our congregation, for our community and our world. We thank the people of Melrose for their ongoing support.

*All our labour, all our watching,
all our calendar of care,
in these crops of your creation,
take, O God: they are our prayer.*

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (adapted from David Sparks)

One: Open our eyes Creator God to the magnificence that surrounds us, the rolling hills, the mountaintops, the open prairies, the beauty of our lakes, and oceans, and all that we take in of your blessed creation. As our eyes hover over the brilliance, we also see the scars of strip mining, industrial waste, neglected and abandoned properties and we long for change.

We see people fulfilled in their work, happy with their measured pace of retirement, and active in their sports and social groups, and we give thanks. We also see workers at risk of injury, retirees wishing they had focus and comradeship, and persons frustrated by their leaders and we long for change.

Open our eyes, Creator God, we see refugees being resettled and those with different physical and mental abilities finding useful jobs, and we give thanks. And then, we see women fleeing armed conflict, their children being abused, and those with physical and mental challenges unable to work, mistreated and forgotten and we long for change.

We reflect, do we have the courage to act?

Open our eyes, Faithful God to the need to ensure our churches are communities where we support the needs of local community groups with time and enthusiasm; where prayer and praise is uplifting and joyful, where study groups question the Bible and theology.

Open our eyes, Faithful God where the dying find God's peace and those who have lost loved ones come to terms with grief; where those who are afraid of dying are given hope and comfort.

Open our eyes, Faithful God to your presence with us revealed in scripture and in the faithfulness of countless saints down the ages. Help us to say the words of truth and act out the deeds that would mark us as one of your faithful followers of Christ. We pray for our United Church of Canada for its work in Mission and Service throughout the world.

We pray for the Church of Waterford in this week's Regional Council Prayer Cycle - for their minister, their lay leaders, and their congregation that they may carry out their mission in the world.

We pray for our community of Melrose, for Loretta, for Vic, and for Sylvia and for Fred and Linda and Shari. We pray for all our home-bound, and for all who are still grieving loss of their loved ones. We pray for all our members who are travelling and away from home.

Lord, we ask that you be with them in the ways that each one needs. Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people and grant what we ask in faith. Amen.

(Quiet reflection)

followed by The Lord's Prayer - *Ecumenical version* (said together)

Our Father in heaven,

Hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come, your will be done

On earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread;

Forgive us our sins,

As we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial,

And deliver us from evil;
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
are yours now and for ever. Amen.

CLOSING HYMN – *Be Thou My Vision*

VU 642

*1 Be thou my vision, O joy of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art,
thou my best thought, by day or by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.*

*2 Be thou my wisdom, my calm in all strife;
I ever with thee, and thou in my life;
thou loving parent, thy child may I be,
thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.*

*3 Be thou my battle shield, sword for the fight;
be thou my dignity, thou my delight,
thou my soul's shelter, thou my high tower;
raise thou my heavenward, O power of my power.*

*4 Riches I heed not, nor vain empty praise,
thou mine inheritance, now and always;
thou and thou only, first in my heart,
great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.*

*5 Great God of heaven, after victory won,
may I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
still be my vision, O ruler of all.*

COMMISSIONING

One: We have been filled with the words of scripture, the beauty of our music and voices, a message of hope and a long-standing commission to go into the world as ambassadors of Jesus Christ. Let us now go into that world that God so loves and act like the Christians that we are. Thanks be to God for our creation.
Amen.
Go now in peace.

SUNG BLESSING *-May God's Sheltering Wings*

MV 214

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