



UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA MELFORT ETHELTON PASTORAL CHARGE

Office: (306) 752-2288 Email: melfortuc@sasktel.net

Website: www.melfortunitedchurch.com

Worship Time: 10:30 AM

Ministers: All of us

Worship Leader: Don Neher

Music: Jodie Allen Corbett

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter: Sharon Heavin

Scripture Reader: Gale Strachan

ORDER OF WORSHIP

November 1, 2020

Twenty-second after Pentecost, Year A

[All Saints' Day]

WE GATHER AS A COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

As we gather for worship today we acknowledge that the land on which we gather is Treaty 6 Territory. We honour the Cree and Métis people for whom this place has been a homeland for thousands of years. We respect the sacredness of our home and the ground on which we walk and we are grateful to gather here in peace and hope.

ANNOUNCEMENTS, ANNIVERSARIES & CONCERNS:

CALL TO WORSHIP:

Beloved are all who worship and give thanks.

Beloved – all who have hungered and who thirst, in body or spirit, let us gather in worship.

Beloved – all who grieve and mourn, and strive for healing of the soul, let us gather in worship.

Beloved – all who feel meek, who struggle for power and strength in this overwhelming world, let us gather in worship.

Beloved – you who have shown mercy, who seek peace, and who stand up for justice, let us gather in worship.

Beloved are you who follow Jesus' way.

In our worship, let us hear this invitation to be known and seen by God.

Come, let us gather and hear again the affirmations of Jesus as we worship.

OPENING PRAYER: *(in unison)*

**In a world full of pain and confusion,
we come seeking your healing and clarity.**

**In a world overwhelmed with information and ideas,
we come seeking guidance about which to
choose and listen to.**

**In a world of diversity and confusion,
we come wanting to celebrate your exuberance,
yet needing your wisdom to understand each other fully.**

**In a world where creation itself moans for new life,
we come hoping to be guided toward renewal.**

**Like the multitudes who gathered to listen to Jesus,
we gather to listen to you, Loving God.**

HYMN (VU 460) *"All Who Hunger"*

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE: *(in unison)*

It's not "right" in this world to be poor.

It's not considered "good" to be weak or vulnerable.

**We get the message everywhere that success is measured by
wealth, power, and privilege,**

**yet we want you to know, Great Creator, that we hear you
speaking clearly about what the "right" road is.**

**We hear you inviting us to understand that in our poverty
we can find great wealth;**

**in our weakness, we can find surprising strength;
and that in our lost-ness, we are found by you.**

**We confess, Shepherding Lamb, that we struggle to accept
these truths,**

**but we are here to be forgiven, healed, and guided again on
right paths.**

Lead us, we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

There were multitudes hearing it from Jesus...

There will be multitudes gathered hearing it in the new heaven...

And wherever we are, as one or many, we are offered the same words of healing and renewal: Blessed are you. Beloved are you.

PRAYER RESPONSE (MV 99) “Stand, O Stand Firm”

SPECIAL MUSIC: OutOfOz: *“For Good”*

Performed by Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel | WICKED the Musical

YouTube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZ0pXUb5jVU>

WE LISTEN FOR GOD’S WORD TO US

ESPECIALLY FOR THE CHILDREN:

HYMN (MV 12) “Come Touch Our Hearts”

THE LORD’S PRAYER:

MINUTE FOR MISSION:

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

RESPONSORIAL READING:

PSALM 34:1-10, 22 (VU pp. 761-762)

Taste and see that God is good.

APOCALYPSE READING:

REVELATION 7:9-17

They will hunger no more and thirst no more.

EPISTLE READING:

1 JOHN 3:1-3

What we will be has not yet been revealed.

GOSPEL READING:

MATTHEW 5:1-12

The Beatitudes.

SERMON:

The Promised Land

Joshua 3:7-17

God, we pray that you will be with us all, as we cross into the promised land. Your protection, comfort, and love are always with us when we live in faith. Amen.

Did you hear about a rather well built young man who saw an advertisement for a job at the zoo. When he went there, he was horrified to find that the only job they had open was for somebody to play the part of a gorilla. A lot of children were coming in the next few days, and the zoo, having no gorilla, needed someone to impersonate one. Since money was tight, the man decided he would take the job. He arrived before sunrise, got into the gorilla outfit, and slipped into his cage. Finally, day dawned, and the children came. All he had to do was pace the floor, look rather adept at swinging between trees, and eat the peanuts and bananas whenever they were fed to him.

After eight or nine hours, he became thoroughly exhausted. The bananas were getting the better of him. As he swung from one tree to another, rather nauseated, he slipped and fell into the lion's den next door. He shouted, "Help! Help!" The lion leaned over and said, "if you don't be quiet, we'll both lose our jobs."

When we hear about "the Promised Land", and about entering that land across the River Jordan, we often think of it in metaphorical terms. We think of the Promised Land as heaven do we not? Often we think of crossing the River Jordan as crossing through the river of death and arriving in the eternal realms of God, don't we? But crossing the river into the promised land was not always seen as a metaphor for dying and rising again.

Rather—at the time of Joshua-- the Promised Land was a real place—a place in which the people looked forward to living in the now, in this life. The Promised Land was a place where the people could not only cry, "free at last-free at last", but also cry, "at home at last." At home where God promised he would lead them.

The Promised Land is the rich and abundant land God promised to Abraham and Isaac and to Jacob and the place of which Moses spoke as he led the people out of bandage over 400 years later. As Caleb and the others who spied out this land for Moses reported, it

was a rich land, so good that others already occupied it. It was a place of cities and of towns, not all of whom would be not be happy at being overcome that the people might truly be blessed in their occupation of that land.

The promised land was, and is a real place, and the people of Israel longed for it and dreamed about it. Indeed all of us long for this kind of place., this kind of life, where our needs are met, where the fear of the wilderness in which we wander is replaced by joy and where we are able to celebrate life and live life. And God promises to us, as he promised to the children of Israel, just such a place, just such a way of life. And as he did with the children of Israel, God guides us through the wilderness.

Today, in the third chapter of the book of Joshua, we see the final stage of the people's wandering in the wilderness, the stage where they are finally called into the Promised Land. We see them cross through the Jordan and into the land of promise.

The details of the story are instructive for our own entering into the land, into the state of being that God has promised to us in Christ Jesus. First we must understand about the River Jordan. It is the largest river in the region. No bridges across it, from the land of the Pharaohs to the land of Assyria and of Babylon. It is normally a murky river, slow moving and muddy. Even so it can be easily crossed at certain places, that is if you don't mind stepping into a river whose bottom you can't easily see. However, in the season of flooding, you not only can't see the bottom, you not only can't see where you are going, but you can't be sure the known fording places will be safe. Think about it. Crossing a river, even when you have a bridge, represents a big event in life.

Rivers epitomize a big obstacle in life. Without a way to see the bottom, without a way to know for sure the way is safe; and then the river is in flood. Accept the simple truth with me, my friends, that the River Jordan was a roadblock on the way to the promised land, just as surely as it was in the time of Moses. The Jordan must have surely frightened them, for it is one thing to put your feet in a gentle stream and another to step into a river in flood. Not only was the river in flood, but, according to verse 4, the people are not familiar with the place where they are about to cross the river. There, by the side of the river, Joshua is told by God that he will be exalted among the people, and then Joshua tells the people what is about to happen.

They will be able to take possession of the promised land despite all the powers that might prevent them. Joshua then tells the people that they are to enter the promised land by following the priests, who will carry the Ark of the Covenant into the river and that the river will part for them to make their passage through it possible.

I think it is very significant that one has to step into the waters before they are parted, rather than waiting for them to first be parted. In the faith journey, there comes times when it looks like you are backed up against a barrier; times that it looks like you are prevented from going forward because of a river at flood stage. As followers of Christ, as a people whom have been promised a new land, a new life, we are called to step out in faith.

We are called to cross the river, to enter the turbulent and muddy flood waters so we may receive the fullness of what God has promised to us and to those who follow us. We are called in the here and now. It can be a frightening proposition to have faith. We don't know what will happen, and the timing can seem so very wrong; when things are at their worst, rather than at their best. But we, like the people of Israel, have God with us. And as we step forth carrying God with us, as we trust in God's living presence, even though the circumstance do not appear to favour us, the waters will part.

What today's story tells us, is that God goes before us into the flood waters of life. God stands in the middle of the waters and God divides them, and then God watches us pass safely to the other side. It tells us that when we come to a difficult stretch on the road to recovery, when we encounter obstacles, and hazards in our attempt to become a whole person, when we come across barriers in life, that we need to hold God up for all to see, in the midst of those troubles and deliver us through our woes. The story of how Israel crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land is a story of faith. It is a story of how God acts through the trust of the people, of what God does when we affirm his presence and trust. It is the story of how God loves us, of how the Lord will not let anything stand in the way of the Creator's love and plan for you and me.

The journey of faith we have pledged ourselves to, to becoming followers of Christ Jesus, is not a journey through a land of ease, it is not a journey through a land of peace. But it is a journey to such a land. We journey to the Promised Land and on the way we are called into deep waters, we are told to cross rivers whose bottoms we cannot see, trusting in the one who not only parted the sea and made

the River Jordan cease it's flowing but who vanquished death and brought to light, life and immortality.

If we take the plunge, if we step out in faith and get our feet wet, if we start walking with ark of God's presence in our heart and head, into the turmoil and chaos about us, God will part the waters, and bring us safe to the other side.

This is the message of the Gospel that we proclaim, as the Apostle Paul wrote--"Trust that God will make straight your path. Blessed be God's name, now and forever." **Amen.**

[written by Rev. Dave Whalley, used with permission]

OUR RESPONSE

OFFERING:

(Please use the offering box at the front/back of the Sanctuary as you exit. Thank you!)

HYMN (MV 191) *"What Can I Do?"*

PRAYER OF DEDICATION: *(in unison)*

**Because you have loved us,
we dedicate ourselves to loving others.**

**Because you have forgiven us,
we dedicate ourselves to forgiving others.**

**Because you have blessed us,
we dedicate ourselves to being blessings to others.**

**Take these gifts, receive this worship,
and know our gratitude and devotion,
today and always. Amen.**

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:

We have not always recognized ourselves in Jesus' words,
Merciful God.

We do not always know how to receive your blessings.

Yet, we hear that we are beloved, and our hardened hearts
are melted by the kindness and generosity in these words.

We do hunger, Holy One, and we know others hunger, too.

We thirst, and we mourn; we grieve, and we seek peace;

we strive to be merciful and just, and we know we are not perfect.

In your loving grace, help us to hear your blessings, and be empowered by them, to stand tall in our faith and renewed in spirit, as we journey as your people seeking a new world order.

And when our peace has meant hunger or thirst, suffering or pain for others, please forgive us and show us a new way. When our leaders have tromped on the peace of others; when our governments have made decisions that cause brokenness in our world; when the privileged of this planet do not see the diminishment to others that makes their comfort possible, help us to see and understand, and then to act.

We pray for renewal.

We pray that the reversals we now understand will make way for dignity and wholeness to be experienced by all, and for a new way to be paved.

We pray for justice to prevail, so that peace may be manifest for all.

And we offer ourselves, your children, your multitudes, your beloved, to the work of your blessings and renewal.

Help us to awaken to your presence and your grace.

We pray in Christ's name. **Amen.**

SENDING FORTH

HYMN (VU 337) *"Blessed Assurance"*

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:

Beloved of God, rejoice and be glad,
for yours is the realm of God.

Go in peace, inviting all to know their
belovedness in God's light.

CHORAL BLESSING (MV 213) *"Take Up His Song"*

PRAYER RESOURCES:

**Seasons of the Spirit – Seasons FUSION Pentecost 2, 2020; The United Church of Canada Pentecost 2020 Year A Gathering Resources for Worship Planners. Used with permission.*

NEXT WEEK'S (November 8th) READINGS:

*Psalm 78;
Joshua 24:1-3a, 14-25;
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
Matthew 25:1-13*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH

Tuesday, November 3rd - Church Office Closed
@ 7 pm – Women Alive

Wednesday, November 3rd
@ 4:40 pm – Worship Committee Meeting
@ 7 pm – Choir

Pastoral Care - Contact Information

Should you need emergency pastoral care please call Ron Nielsen
@ 306-921-7794 or 306-752-4119.

Transfer or Applying for Membership

If you wish to transfer or apply for membership in our church,
please contact the church office or a member of the
Membership Committee.

Changes to Contact Information

If you have changed your address or phone number, please advise
the Church Office so that we can keep your information current.

Thank you!

Winter Newsletter

Please submit your report/submission for the winter newsletter
by November 26th; either to the office or by email to
melfortuc@sasktel.net. Thank you.

FundScrip Deadline for November

The next FundScrip deadline is Thursday, November 26th. Your order will be available for pickup on Thursday, December 3rd.

Stewardship Seconds

Stewardship does not put God in a box labelled "church on Sunday." Stewardship brings God to every part of daily life, and speaks out against oppression wherever it is found.