



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: Gale Strachan

Music: Jodie Allen

Music Director: Mavis Peters

Office Administrator: Denise Todosichuk

Caretaker: Faye Greier

Today's Greeter: Gina McAvoy

Scripture Reader: Imogene Schick

ORDER OF WORSHIP

October 11, 2020

Nineteenth after Pentecost, Year A

[Creation Time 5 & Thanksgiving Sunday]

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:

Do you remember who first invited you to worship?

We come in praise for those who brought us here.

Do you remember the first community of faithful ones you joined?

A nursery class who welcomed you with care and open arms?

A youth group who accompanied you with energy and open minds?

A small group meeting in someone's home?

A congregation, large or small, rural or urban, quiet folk or rowdy ones?

We come in praise for those who meet and receive us here.

Do you remember the God you have come to worship?

The One who delivered Israel from Egypt;

the Maker of Earth and Sky;

the Ground of all Being;

the God of Jesus, born of Mary;

we come to worship God in remembrance that leads to hope.

OPENING PRAYER:

Great God, the beauty of creation reminds us
of the beauty of your way.

Your teachings bind us together as pilgrims,
on a common path towards abundant life for all.

Your laws are sweeter than honey in a honeycomb.

Guide us towards your path, God,
and lead us away from dangerous roads,
so our words, and the meditations of our hearts
may always be acceptable to you,
our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

HYMN (VU 820) *“Make a Joyful Noise”*

PRAYER FOR GUIDANCE: *(in unison)*

**Forgive us, God, when we forget you,
speaking and acting and organizing
as though you are not here.**

**For still, we fashion our own deities
to lead us on our way:**

political ideologies

that claim unquestioned allegiance;

material pursuits

that calcify our devotion in commodities;

religious self-righteousness

of the right or left that baptize our prejudices.

Forgive us, O God, when we forget you:

failing to see you in neighbour,
failing to care for you in creation,
failing to recognize your Spirit in our own being.
Forgive us, O God.
Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE:

God does not forget.

God remembers – and in doing so, re-embers us.

Remembers us with love, that puts us back together
– within and with others.

Remembers us with grace, that closes the door on fear
and opens our lives to welcome – and welcomed renewal.

God remembers us back to life.

PRAYER RESPONSE (MV 182) *“Grateful”*

SPECIAL MUSIC *“For the Beauty of the Earth”*

Elizabeth Thia: God's wonderful creation. Song is sung by Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School (Primary) choir. Be marvelled by the pictures!

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHlfRLNYUGw>

WE LISTEN FOR GOD'S WORD TO US

MINUTE FOR MISSION:

THE LORD'S PRAYER:

HYMN (VU 242) *“Let All Things Now Living”*

SCRIPTURE READINGS:

RESPONSORIAL READING:

PSALM 65 (VU pp. 782-783)
*God provides, the valleys shout
and sing.*

HEBREW READING:

DEUTERONOMY 8:7-18

God will bring you a bountiful land.

EPISTLE READING:

2 CORINTHIANS 9:6-15

God loves a cheerful giver.

GOSPEL READING:

LUKE 17:11-19

Ten healed; one returns to offer thanks.

SERMON:

Based on Luke 17:12-19

Bill Griffin tells the story of the leper in Mark 1:40 this way:

"Hello, I'm a leper!" A man popped out from behind a building and stood right in front of Jesus. 'Please don't run away, Jesus!' "What's the matter with your skin?" asked Jesus. "Can't You see I'm covered with runny sores and crusty scabs?" No one wants to look at me, my face is so horrible." "What do you want Me to do?" "You can make me better. I know You can," said the man, falling on his knees in front of Jesus. 'If You don't, I'll scratch myself to death.' "Jesus felt sorry for the poor man. "Don't touch me," said the man. 'That's how you get it.'" 'I'm not afraid to touch you.' Jesus reached down and took hold of the man's arms and pulled him to his feet. The itching was gone. The sores started to dry. The scabs began to fall off. "Thank You, thank You, thank You!" shouted the man. 'What can I do to thank You?' "You can go to the temple, show yourself to a priest and say a prayer of thanks to God." "Yes, yes; I will, I will!" promised the man hurrying off. "One more thing," said Jesus. "Anything, anything," said the man. "You don't have to tell anyone what I just did." "I won't tell a soul," said the man as he skipped toward Jerusalem; but the man was so happy and the walk to the temple was so long that he forgot and told everyone he met. Then all the other lepers along the road began to look for the wonderful Man with the healing touch." (Calvin Miller, *The Family Book of Jesus*, Bethany House, 2002.)

The story well told of the gratitude of good lepers. Good lepers are those who are healed and never forget the disease they once had. They remember how good clean feels. Bad lepers, on the other hand, are those who are healed and go on acting as if they never had the disease.

Ninety percent of all the lepers in Luke 17 are ingrates—bad lepers pretending they never met Jesus. What a shame! They were

so completely healed that there was not a smidgen of their former state of decay left to them. They were so healed, they headed back to the social centers of their communities. These pretenders were free to run for office—any office they might imagine. They were free to return to their former bridge clubs, Kiwanis clubs, golf clubs.

Their once former scourge-word-confession, "Unclean!" had been replaced by, "Give me five!" The untouchables were now the embraceables. The infected had become the respected. The isolated tomb-dwellers had become the officers at Toastmasters. However, for all the joy of their cleansing, we never would have known about them at all, except for the 10 percent of their group who knew the art of gratitude. One of the 10: "when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him—and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked a most perplexing question: 'Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to give praise to God except this foreigner?'" (Luke 17:15-18).

Sit at the once eroded feet of a thankful, Gentile leper and learn from him. It is the season of the year for us to come before God with the Old One-Hundredth on our lips and give praise to the Him for all of our abundance. I don't know if all lepers are pictured here to indicate that all praiseless people are in the 90th percentile of the blasé lepers who can receive so much from God and mention it so little.

C.S. Lewis said that ancient man approached God out of a strong feeling that he was approaching a judge. "For modern man, the roles are reversed," says Lewis. Modern man is the judge and God is in the dock (cited in *A Hunger for Meaning*, InterVarsity Press, 1984, p. 114). Maybe this is why we feel we have no obligation to thank Him. I suspect this is what lies behind the reason we are developing a culture without a sense of thankfulness. For me, our thanklessness smacks of a lazy atheism. Remember, one old definition of atheist is "someone who sometimes feels gratitude, but has absolutely no one to thank for it!"

There are two sides in the issue of all self-righteous abundance. These two categories are the thankful and the thankless. The thankless tend to act as though they and their circumstances are entirely self-made. The thankful see the providence of God in all they hold. The thankful believe that it is not how much we have or have

not in life, but what we see as the source of what we have or don't have that is the real issue.

I once sat down with a missionary couple in Costa Rica who obviously were living on a shoestring. I studied the very meager table as we sat down. As the host said grace, his prayer swelled with such gratitude over God's abundance that I was tempted to open my eyes to peek and see if there was something on the table that I had missed. I had missed nothing. It was not what was on the table that really produced gratitude, but because his Christian gratitude was a way of life.

I have sat down with a great many people who fed me more sumptuously, but their sign to begin eating was not a bowed head but the green light signal of a fork which the host picked up.

Back to the lone Samaritan leper, whose thankfulness mandated a bent neck and said, "God, you are the Giver of this feast": The 90th percentile lepers are those who begin to eat when the host picks up his fork. All of this goes to prove the old cliché: Gratitude is an attitude. Gratitude has absolutely nothing to do with what we have but is a lifestyle. It rehearses praise so continually that God is always the Giver, and lepers are cleansed by His giving.

Is Jesus sorry He cleanses ingrates? Of course not; it is God's nature to cleanse, heal and give; but He does ask a very profound question in Luke 17: "Where are the other nine?" It's a fair question! If 10 lepers are healed and only one comes back, where are the other nine?

We were eating out the other night and I happened to look around the restaurant filled with people, 39 percent of whom were born again (according to a Gallup poll) and saw one person praying before beginning a meal. When he finished praying, I ask him, "Sir, I couldn't help but notice you were praying. Are you a Christian?" "Yes!" he replied. "The Lord saved me four years ago. Ever since then I've been filled with gratitude for all God is doing in my life. I cannot cease to thank Him."

This lone believer reminded me that Jesus taught a very practical principle of rejoicing in the things that mean most to me. I enjoy singing the chorus: "Thank You, Lord, for saving my soul." It has old-fashioned words in the new world of upbeat worship. Still, I think about it often. My thankfulness is not rooted in the grace of mealtime, but in the awareness of my own salvation. If this

Thanksgiving your own table is more sparse than you'd like it to be, just thank Him for saving your soul.

Therefore, let us live in a constant attitude of God's abundance along with the writer of Hebrews 12:28, who said, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably, with reverence and awe."

I know God does not always provide us all the abundance we want, but Psalms 37:25 says, "I am old but have been young and I have never seen the righteous forsaken nor his seed begging bread." My suspicion is that this week most of you will sit down to a very fine meal. I hope as you do, Psalms 100:4 will come to you, "Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and enter his courts with praise." God is the Keeper of your feast. He is the Maker of your feast.

Tony Campolo said that as he was eating a meal in Haiti, he started to pick up his fork and eat when he glanced to the window, which was near his table, and saw the faces of little hungry Haitian children, faces pressed against the glass watching him eat, mesmerized.

"For a moment," he said, "I had the awful feeling of guilt and sat poised, not knowing whether to eat or not." Then the waiter stepped over and said, "Sir, don't let this bother you," and pulled the blinds. "I laid down my fork, unable to eat that meal."

He said, "It's so like the American culture to forget to thank God for what we have, to pull the blinds and forget that we are part of the 6 percent of the world that has enough continually to eat again and again and again. 'Enter His courts with praise; enter His gates with thanksgiving.'"

While you eat your Thanksgiving turkey, consider this: 600 people will die of starvation while you're eating that meal. On Thanksgiving Day, 12,000 people will die of starvation. Eight hundred million people in this world have not had enough to eat today. One of every 10 babies born this week will die within the first week. Twenty-five percent of those babies never will reach age 5. I now understand what it means to be a nation upon whom God has rained His blessings.

I understand how Malcolm Muggeridge must have felt when he watched Mother Teresa take from a dustbin a baby someone had cast aside, believing it dead, then suddenly chirping, "See, there's

life in it!" Most of the world is not dying under nuclear annihilation; rather by the thousands, many die whimpering in the night.

T.S. Eliot's lines haunt us: "This is the way the world ends for most people, not with a bang, but with a whimper!"

We all sometimes complain that God is unfair, but gratitude is an attitude. Habakkuk 3:17-18 shouts our obligation to praise, whatever our financial circumstances:

"Though the fig tree does not bud

"And there are no grapes on the vine,

"Though the olive crop fails

"And the fields produce no food,

"Though there are not sheep in the pen

"And no cattle in the stalls,

"Yet I will rejoice in the Lord,

"I will be joyful in God my Savior."

There's no use whimpering. Harold Kushner said he once had an old teacher who said, "To say life is unfair is like saying a bull won't charge a man who happens to be a vegetarian." God has a plan for His world, and that plan is that everybody would know Christ. Somehow we are involved in that plan. If that plan does not speak in our lives a sense of worship and praise, we miss the whole point. Jesus' lone leper is a picture of great gratitude, a picture of grace.

Those of us who have been redeemed by a living Lord Jesus cannot help but say, "Thank You, God. Thank You for eternal life. Thank You for our daily bread." Thank you for the many blessings we've been given.

This Thanksgiving, enter His courts with thanksgiving and enter His gates with praise. "Were there not ten lepers healed? Where are the other nine?"

Then answer, "Lord, I do not know where the other nine have gone...I only know I have received healing and not to praise You is a sin I must not condone. I have been loved. I am clean. I must enter Your gates with thanksgiving. I must come into Your courts with praise."

[Written by Calvin Miller]

YouTube link: <https://www.preaching.com/sermons/90-percent-of-all-lepers/>

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)

**Thank you, God, for these gifts;
gifts that we now return to you.
May they be faithfully used for the
building of your kin-dom here on Earth.
Amen.**

PRAYERS FOR THE PEOPLE:

Let us remember in prayer those who suffer the brokenness of grief: of friends and loved ones who have died in this week, or in times more distant yet still fresh with pain and longing. *(silent prayer)*

Let us remember in prayer those broken in body or mind or spirit: those who are ill and hospitalized, those treated for cancer or other diseases, those who are depressed. *(silent prayer)*

Let us remember in prayer those whose brokenness is in relationship: with partner or child or parent, in vocation or friendship, estranged from hope or from God. *(silent prayer)*

Let us remember in prayer the brokenness in creation: rivers polluted and hillsides denuded; overabundance hoarded and need ignored; for denial of natural crises. *(silent prayer)*

Let us remember in prayer the brokenness among nations and peoples: for growing accustomed to war; for achieving ends with violence; for demonizing those who differ from us. *(silent prayer)*

And let us remember in prayer the one to whom we pray: whose way is love; whose wisdom is justice, whose heart is compassion; whose promise and call is peace.

Remember us, O God, and make us whole.

SENDING FORTH

HYMN (VU 232) "Joyful, joyful we adore you"

COMMISSIONING & BENEDICTION:

Whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just:

remember these things.

Do these things.

Whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable:

remember these things.

Do these things.

Rejoice in God. Help one another.

Trust that the peace of God,

which surpasses all understanding,

will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

CHORAL BLESSING (MV 209) *“Go Make a Difference”*

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 (October 18, 2020) READINGS:

Exodus 33:12-23;

Psalms 99;

I Thessalonians 1:1-10;

Matthew 22:15-22.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK AT MELFORT UNITED CHURCH

Wednesday, October 14th

@ 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!

Looking for Volunteers

We are looking for volunteers on a couple of committees: for help on the committee to reopen for rental (short term volunteer), men and women for the Property committee and someone for M&P. Call Don Neher (306.921.4130) or the church office (306.752.2288) if you can help us out!

Financial Flash

The Bake-less pie sale has already raised \$410. Thank you all for your donations!

Take Out Lunch Sunday, October 18th

On Sunday, October 18th Naomi Unit of the UCW are providing a takeout lunch – soup, bun & cookie - for \$5.

Covid guidelines will be followed.

A sign up sheet is on the easel in the CE foyer or call the church office next week.

Looking for Leaders for Our Worship Services

We are looking for volunteers to assist our committees with the weekly worship services - to give them a bit of a break, so to speak.

If you are willing to lead a service please call/talk to one of the Worship Committee members (Jean, Gina M or Dorothy) or call the Church Office.

FundScrip Deadline for October

The next FundScrip deadline is Thursday, October 29th. Your order will be available for pickup on Thursday, November 5th.

Stewardship Seconds

Everything comes from God and belongs to God; we give, not in tribute to God's power, but in gratitude for what we have been given.