

OSLER MENNONITE CHURCH

SUNDAY WORSHIP

10:00 am NOVEMBER 22, 2020

Worship Leader: Patty Friesen Pianist: Melanie Boldt
Children's Time: Kathy Braun Sound: Matthew Stefaniuk
Song Leaders: Ryan Siemens, Sandra Sinnaeve
Ushers: Bill Peters, Anna Peters Sermon: Ryan Siemens, Executive Minister of MCSK.

Memorial Sunday: "I am the Resurrection and the Life" John 11:25

Prelude

Welcome, Announcements

Special Music: Heilig, heilig heilig Ryan Siemens, Sandra Sinnaeve

Call to Worship: Blue / HWB # 805

Leader: Eternal God, before you the generations pass. Your character is love, your way is compassion, your name is everlasting. Today, we remember those who lived, labored and loved among us. Because of their lives, we know better how to live. Because of their suffering, we find greater strength. Because of their death, we better understand what is important in life.

People: We sorrow, but not as those who have no hope. We grieve, but not as those who center their thoughts on death. We sense loneliness, but not as those who are left alone. We thank you God, that even in separation, we experience love, peace and hope.

Leader: We praise you, God, for light which arises out of darkness, for comfort which is constant in the midst of confusion, for hope which springs out of sorrow.

People: We thank you God, for sending a Saviour who says: "I am the resurrection and the life; those who believe in me...shall never die."

All: O God, grant us grace to affirm in life, as in death, that we are yours. Our help is in you. Our hope is in your promise, through Jesus Christ, our loving Lord. AMEN.

Prayer of Invocation

Hymn: Blue/HWB #526 "In the Rifted Rock I'm Resting"

526 In the rifted Rock I'm resting

RIFTED ROCK 87. 87 with refrain

1 In the rift - ed Rock I'm rest - ing, safe - ly
 2 Long pur - sued by sin and Sa - tan, wea - ry,
 3 Peace which pass - eth un - der - stand - ing, joy the
 4 In the rift - ed Rock I'll hide me, till the

shel - tered, I a - bide. There no foes nor storms mo -
 sad, I longed for rest. Then I found this heav'n - ly
 world can nev - er give, now in Je - sus, I am
 storms of life are past, all se - cure in this bless'd

lest me, while with - in the cleft I hide.
 shel - ter, o - pened in my Sav - ior's breast.
 find - ing; in his smiles of love I live.
 ref - uge, heed - ing not the fierc - est blast.

Refrain

Now I'm rest - ing, sweet - ly rest - ing, in the

FAITH JOURNEY: Confession/Repentance

The image shows a musical score for a hymn. It consists of two systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. The key signature is three sharps (F#, C#, G#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: "cleft once made for me. Je - sus, bless - ed Rock of a - ges, I will hide my - self in thee." The music is written in a simple, hymn-like style with block chords and single notes.

Old Testament Reading: Ezekiel 34:11-16 *(The Inclusive Bible)*

For thus says Sovereign Yhwh : I myself will search for my sheep; I will seek them out. 12 As shepherds seek out their flocks when their flocks are scattered in every direction, so I will search for my sheep and rescue them, no matter where they scattered on that day of full clouds and thick darkness. 13 I will bring them out from the countries and bring them into their own land. And I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by its streams and wherever there is a settlement. 14 I will feed them on good pasture land, and the mountain heights of Israel will be their grazing ground. 15 I myself will tend my flock and have it lie down, thus says Sovereign Yhwh . 16 I will seek out the lost, I will return the strayed, I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, and I will watch over the fat and the sleek. I will be a true shepherd to them.

Children's Gathering Hymn: "Jesus Loves Me"

Children's Time: Kathy Braun

Offering Prayer / Offertory

Offering can be e-transferred to osler.mc.treasurer@gmail.com or dropped in the baskets on your way out of the sanctuary.

Sharing Joys and Concerns / Prayer of the Church

Gospel Reading: Matthew 25:31-46 (*The Inclusive Bible*)

“ At the appointed time the Promised One will come in glory, escorted by all the angels of heaven, and will sit upon the royal throne, 32 with all the nations assembled below. Then the Promised One will separate them from one another, as a shepherd divides the sheep from the goats. 33 The sheep will be placed on the right hand, the goats on the left. 34 “The ruler will say to those on the right, ‘Come, you blessed of my Abba God! Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world! 35 For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me drink. I was a stranger and you welcomed me; 36 naked and you clothed me. I was ill and you comforted me; in prison and you came to visit me.’ 37 Then these just will ask, ‘ When did we see you hungry and feed you, or see you thirsty and give you drink? 38 When did we see you as a stranger and invite you in, or clothe you in your nakedness? 39 When did we see you ill or in prison and come to visit you?’ 40 The ruler will answer them, ‘The truth is, every time you did this for the least of my sisters or brothers, you did it for me.’

41 “Then the ruler will say to those on the left, ‘Out of my sight, you accursed ones! Into that everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and the fallen angels! 42 I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink. 43 I was a stranger and you gave me no welcome; naked and you gave me no clothing. I was ill and in prison and you did not come to visit me.’ 44 Then they in turn will ask, ‘When did we see you hungry or thirsty, or homeless or naked, or ill or in prison, and not take care of you?’ 45 The answer will come, ‘The truth is, as often as you neglected to do this to one of the least of these, you neglected to do it to me.’ 46 They will go off to eternal punishment, and the just will go off to eternal life.”

Response to the Scripture:

Leader: For the Word of God in Scripture,
For the Word of God among us,
For the Word of God within us,

People: Thanks be to God!

Sermon: “And When Did We See You” by Ryan Siemens

When I was first called to serve as pastor of Grace Mennonite Church in Prince Albert, one of the aspects of the congregation that drew me there was the church’s long history of working with Person-to-Person; a Prison Visitation program started by Mennonite Church Saskatchewan in 1974. In fact, the first time I preached here at OMC was in May of 2015 when I was the director of that program.

Person-to-Person, or P2P, along with many of the programs we do together as Mennonites through our many affiliations like MCC, Micah Mission, or MDS; whether it’s putting together Hygiene kits, or supporting refugee resettlement, or rebuilding homes destroyed after a hurricane or flood, are rooted in this vision of Christ’s kingdom in Matthew 25. ““And

then the righteous will answer him, “Lord, when was it that we say you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we say you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” And the King will answer them. “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”

This passage in our DNA and serves as a reminder that faith must be lived out in acts of compassion, kindness and mercy. And it makes sense that this is in our theological DNA. It was Menno Simons himself who said, “True evangelical faith cannot lie dormant, but spreads itself out in all kinds of righteousness and fruits of love; it dies to flesh and blood; it destroys lust and greed; it seeks, serves and fears God in its inmost soul; it clothes the naked; it feeds the hungry; it comforts the sorrowful; it shelters the destitute; it aids and consoles the sad; it does good to those who do it harm; it serves those that harm it; it prays for those who persecute it; it teaches, admonishes and judges us with the Word of the Lord; it seeks those who are lost; it binds up what is wounded; it heals the sick; it saves what is strong (sound); it becomes all things to all people; The persecution, suffering and anguish that come to it for the sake of the Lord’s truth have become a glorious joy and comfort to it.” These are the ultimate things that represent the Commonwealth of Christ. When the empires and ideologies of this age die, these will be what will remain.

With that said, however, I remember a story Orville Andres told me (he was the first director of P2P) about someone who wanted to volunteer with Person-to-Person. In the interview process, Orville asked him, “why do you want to visit with inmates?” And the potential volunteer replied, “because I have already given food and drink to the hungry and thirsty; I have given clothes to the poor and have welcomed the homeless and I have visited the sick. The only thing left to do is visit the inmate, and then I will have completed all the tasks to get me into heaven.”

Orville was kind of shocked by that answer...and I can’t remember if we let him become a volunteer or not, but I trust you can see the problem. For as often as have heard Matthew 25, The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, or the Parable of the Judgement of the Nations, we usually don’t read it all the way to verse 46. And let’s be honest, once Jesus starts talking about

what happens to the goats, we get a little uncomfortable...or a lot. We see what happens to those who enact compassion, and we see what happens to those who fail to be compassionate.

When we read the whole of Matthew 25:31-46, we find these words both reassuring and troubling. On one hand, it's hopeful in that when we help others, we are helping Christ; compassion and mercy are hallmarks of God's reign. On the other hand, the judgement is pretty harsh and can leave us wondering; have I done enough to be with the sheep? It's kind of like Santa's naughty and nice list? And so we do one of two things; we ignore this section altogether or we create a check list of things we need to do to earn our salvation and end up on the sheep side of the eternal equation. But what if both of these lead us to wrong conclusions, thus missing the point all together? Both the joy and frustration of Jesus' parables is that simple answers they are not. They are meant to draw us in, challenge us and invite us to see the world through a different lens.

In reading this story, what surprises me the most is how the sheep respond to the king when the king says to those on his right hand, "Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me. I was in prison and you visited me." The "righteous" respond by saying when did we see you and do these things to you? When did we feed you? When did we visit you? When did we clothe you? And so on? The sheep do not know what they are doing. They did not know that when they acted compassionately towards someone, that they were acting compassionately towards Christ. They didn't make a list saying "I need to do all these things in order to be saved." In their acts of mercy, they were not trying to justify themselves.

This story reminds me of the story of the lawyer who approaches Jesus and asks him how to inherit eternal life. And Jesus responds, "what do you read in the scriptures?" The lawyer responds, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbour as yourself." Great, Jesus says, "do this and you will live." But then, the text says in Luke 10:29, "wanting to justify himself, the lawyer asks Jesus, who is my neighbour?" And then Jesus goes on to tell the familiar story of the Good Samaritan.

But it's this question of wanting to justify himself that I would like us to draw attention to. How often do we find ourselves trying to justify who we are? And not just about spiritual matters, but in much of life? And why do we seek this justification? Often, it's because we want to be good, or, good enough. On the flip side, it can also be that we don't believe we are good enough, so if we strive a little harder, do one more thing, we will receive the love, affirmation and peace we all are longing for.

Today is Eternity Sunday, the day we remember those who have died over the last year and are now in the full presence of Christ. When I was a pastor, I had a few opportunities to sit at the death bed of a beloved church member, or the family member of a church member. These were often holy times. But what surprised me somewhat, was when in these moments nearing death, many of these good, and faithful servants really questioned if they were good enough and worthy of God's love. Now, maybe that is a natural thing to consider in your last moments as you reflect upon your life...But one time, when I was visiting the father of a church member who was in his last days, this member was shocked when his dad expressed doubt of being good enough to go to heaven. His dad was a person that lived out many of the things in Matthew 25...he was generous, compassionate and kind, and exuded a living faith, but even that left him wondering; will he be with the sheep, or the goats?

While Matthew 25 has and continues to inspire us to do acts of mercy and compassion, as it should, it has also left us with doubts and questions like have I done enough; which it shouldn't. For the kingdom of God does not begin and end with our acts of compassion and mercy, as important as they are, but rather, they begin and end with God's acts of love, compassion and mercy on us.

In some of the church circles I have been in, I've sometimes heard after someone's passing, "oh, it's too bad they didn't know the Lord." And maybe that's true. But I also take assurance in that the Lord knows them, and for that matter, us. As Ezekiel 34 states, the Good Shepherd will search for his sheep and seek them out. The Good Shepherd will rescue them from places of danger and darkness. The Good Shepherd will find good pasture and feed them. The Good Shepherd will seek the lost, bring back the stray, bind up the wounded, broken hearted and will strengthen the weak. The Good Shepherd, who comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ,

loves his flock and there is no check list that we can fill, or act of sin or goodness that we can do, that will forsake God's love for us.

I am convinced that the righteous didn't need to justify themselves through acts of mercy because they lived in the knowledge of God's love for them. And because of that, they were able to freely love others through kindness, compassion and mercy. It's because God loved them first and they embraced that love.

You are God's beloved. Live in that love. During these times of COVID limitations and restrictions, find rest in that love. And as we remember those who have died over the last year, may we one day also die in that love, knowing and trusting that nothing can separate us from the love of God made known to us through Jesus Christ; for Jesus is the king of kings, the Lord of Lord, the Prince of Peace and our Good Shepherd. Amen.

Ritual of Response: naming and lighting candles for all our losses this past year.

Prayer of Response: Everlasting God, you are our refuge and strength, a helper close at hand, a shelter in time of need. Help us, O God to hear your words of comfort, so that by faith our fears might be dispelled, our loneliness eased, and our hope revived. May your Holy Spirit carry us through our sorrow into the comfort of your presence which endures for all eternity, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Hymn of Response: Purple/SS #121 "Nothing is lost"

Watch for God Among Us

121 Nothing is lost on the breath of God

GREEN LANE Irregular

A E F#m A/C#

1 Noth - ing is lost on the breath of God,
2 Noth - ing is lost to the eyes of God,
3 Noth - ing is lost to the heart of God,

D Bm/D Esus E

noth - ing is lost for ev - er;
noth - ing is lost for ev - er.
noth - ing is lost for ev - er;

A E F#m A/C#

God's breath is love, and that love will re - main,
God sees with love, and that love will re - main,
God's heart is love, and that love will re - main,

D Bm/D Esus E

hold - ing the world for ev - er. No
hold - ing the world for ev - er. No
hold - ing the world for ev - er. No

Text: Colin Gibson
Music: Colin Gibson

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Watch for God Among Us

A E/G# D/F# A/E

feath - er too light, no hair — too fine, no
 jour - ney too far, no dis - tance too great, no
 im - pulse of love, no of - fice of care, no

B7/D# B7 A/E E

flow - er too brief in its glo - ry, no —
 val - ley of dark - ness too blind - ing; no —
 mo - ment of life in its full - ness; no be -

A E/G# D/F# A/E

drop in the o - cean, no dust in the air, but is
 crea - ture too hum - ble, no child — too small for —
 gin - ning too late, — no end - ing too soon, but is

B7/D# B7 E A

count - ed and told in God's sto - ry.
 God to be seek - ing and find - ing.
 gath - ered and known in its good - ness.

**For those people worshiping with us here at church, please remain in your seats until the ushers indicate that it is your turn to exit. You may go directly outside, or stay in peace at a safe distance and visit in the sanctuary or lobby.*

Benediction: O God, grant us grace to affirm in life, as in death, that we are yours. Our help is in you. Our hope is in your praise, through Jesus Christ our loving Lord. Amen.