OSLER MENNONITE CHURCH

Sunday Worship Service

September 27, 2020

Worship Leader: Terry Stefaniuk Pianist: Melanie Boldt Children's Time: Vanessa Stefaniuk Sound: Matthew Stefaniuk

Song Leaders: Kathryn Janzen, Ben Buhler Ushers: Anna Peters, John Gascho

Prelude

Welcome, Announcements

Call to Worship: "Prayer to Welcome the Sabbath"

Adapted from: Common Prayer

ALL: "Lord of Creation, create in us a new rhythm of life composed of hours that sustain rather than stress, of days that deliver rather than destroy, of time that tickles rather than tackles...

By your ever-restful grace, allow us to enter your Sabbath rest As your Sabbath rest enters into us."

Invocation:

Leader: "O Lord, let my souls rise up to meet you

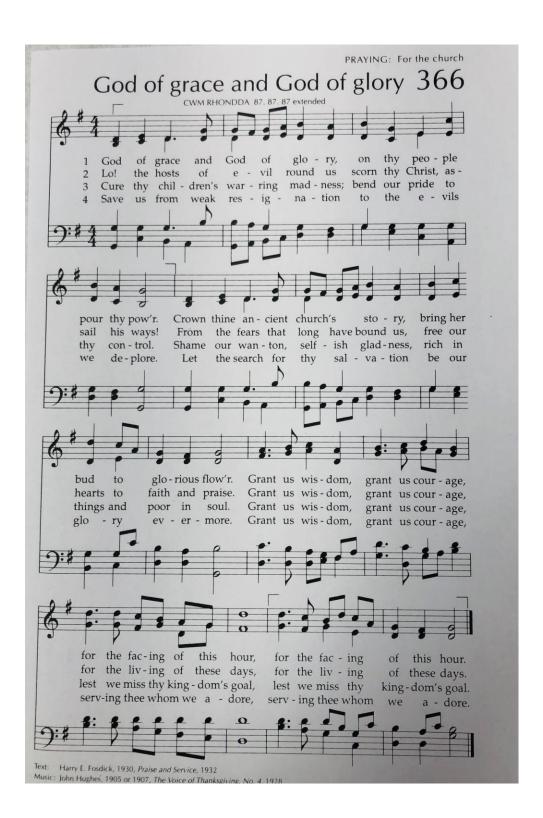
People: As the day rises to meet the sun.

Leader: Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit,

People: as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen."

Source: Common Prayer

Hymn: Blue/HWB #366 "God of Grace and God of Glory"



Children's Gathering Hymn: "Jesus Loves Me" Children's Time: Vanessa Stefaniuk

Offering Prayer: "Paul write in 2 Corinthians 9:7: God loves a cheerful giver. Eugene Peterson in his translation of the Bible says, "God loves it when the giver delights in the giving. Let us pray together: "God of grace, it is our delight and our devotion to give these gifts to you. All we are and all we have are yours alone.

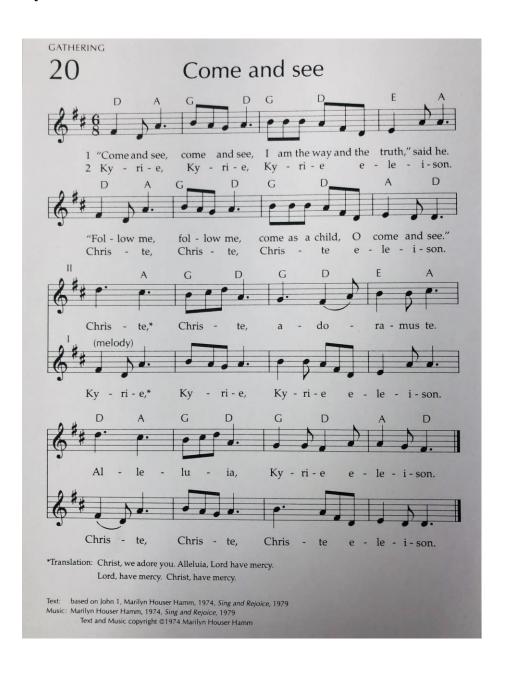
Accept this joyful offering as a token of our abiding love: use it to bring peace, justice and comfort to all the world. Amen"

Source: Carol Penney: leading worship

Offertory

Sharing Joys and Concerns / Prayer of the Church

Hymn: Blue/HWB #20 "Come and see"



Jesus entered the Temple precincts and began teaching. The chief priests and the elders of the people came to him and said, "By what authority are you doing what you do? Who gave you this authority?" 24 " And I," replied Jesus, "will ask you a single question; if you give me the answer, I will tell you my authority for these actions. 25 What was the origin of John's right to baptize? Was it divine or was it human?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'divine,' he will respond, 'Then why did you refuse to believe him?' 26 But if we say 'human,' we have the people to fear, for they regard John as a prophet." 27 So they replied to Jesus, "We don't know." Jesus said in reply, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things." 28 Jesus continued, "What do you think? There was a landowner who had two children. The landowner approached the elder and said, 'My child, go out and work in the vineyard today.' 29 This first child replied, 'No, I won't,' but afterwards regretted it and went. 30 The landowner then came to the second child and said the same thing. The second child said in reply, 'I'm on my way,' but never went. 31 Which of the two did what was wanted?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "The truth is, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you. 32 When John came walking on the road of justice, you didn't believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. Yet even when you saw that, you didn't repent and believe."

Response to the Scripture:

Leader: For the Word of God in Scripture,

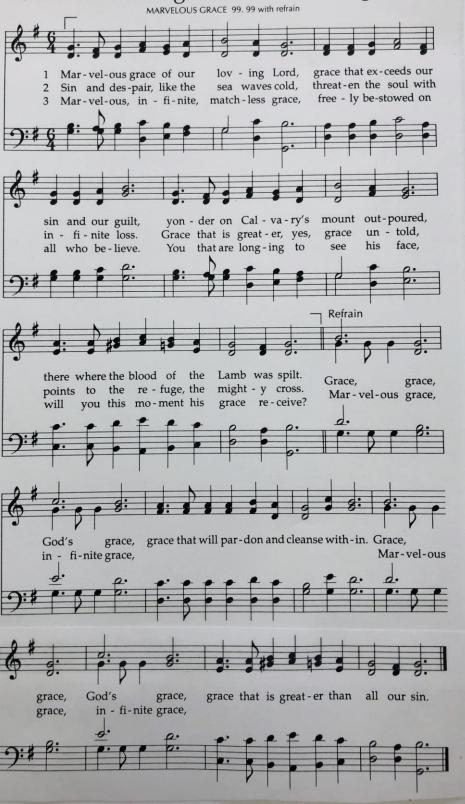
For the Word of God among us,

For the Word of God within us,

People: Thanks be to God!

Hymn: Blue/HWB #151 "Marvelous grace of our loving Lord"

151 Marvelous grace of our loving Lord MARVELOUS GRACE 99. 99 with refrain



Sermon: "Better Late than Never" Patty Friesen

God is the God of Latecomers, Late-Bloomers and Mind Changers. In today's parable of the two sons, the first son said he was not going to work in the vineyard and later changed his mind and the one who said he was going and didn't show up. Jesus condemns the religious leaders who challenged his authority by saying prostitutes and tax collectors will end up in the kingdom of God before them because they showed up - even though it was late. They, the outcasts of society changed their minds about Jesus while the religious leaders never did.

Jesus is turning religion and a proper work ethic on upside down. This is offensive to religious leaders, and to all of us obedient ones who have obeyed all the laws about not being late: early to bed, early to rise; the early bird gets the worm and all the proverbs against laziness. Here Jesus is upholding an irresponsible, lazy, disobedient son who probably doesn't even know how to work in a vineyard. Jesus is upsetting the balance of obedience and responsibility. What other bible stories do we have about those who refused their responsibility? Jonah ran away from God's call. He later went to Ninevah but only after a major conversion experience in the belly of the whale. In the parable of the Prodigal Son - the disobedient son who fritters away his inheritance and then comes crawling back to for forgiveness after his conversion experience in the pig pen. What is with these latecomers, late bloomers and mind-changers and why does God have so much patience with them?

What made the first son change his mind to go work in the vineyard? Did he have nothing better to do? Did his conscience get the better of him? Was he typically rebellious and late and resentful? We suspect so. What if we took out the moral judgements around work ethic out of the equation and what if he was just a late-bloomer - not only of conscience but of thought

and commitment? We all know people like that and we might even find ourselves in the first son.

Parables and folk tales around the world all contain such characters of late-comers and late-bloomers as re-told by Dr. Clarissa Pinkola Estes in The Myths of the Late-Bloomer. The Late-Bloomer is the one called to a mission but doddles irresponsibly along the path through the forest, or who gets lost or has other adventures not related to the original mission. While we the listeners may despair of the late-bloomer ever reaching their destination, or ever fulfilling their potential or obligation or purpose - the late bloomer actually gains wisdom and problem solving skills and endurance along the long way and finally arrive to the mission fully equipped to do the job well. And all readers and parents sigh with relief.

In these international folk tales, there is not judgement of the lateness or the lostness or the doddling but an honouring of the time it takes for the maturation of the late bloomer. She may not be the first on the scene but when she arrives, she brings greater depth and commitment to the project. He may not be the first responder in a crisis but is the patient physiotherapist for the long road for healing. Folk tales suggest we need late-bloomers - that we have gifts that are worth waiting for. While the path for late-bloomers feel circuitous rather than straight, we gain the life experiences and wisdom along the way that fill out a rich life.

Our western culture is not sympathetic or supportive of late-bloomers; and mind changers; by high school graduation you are supposed to have figured out your whole life on a straight successful career path so that by the time you reach 30 you own a house and are happily married with children. The path is not that straight for most of us. Many brilliant actors and artists particularly came into their own in the second half of their lives. Julia Child was 50 when she got her famous cooking show. Vincent Van Gogh didn't start painting until he was 42.

Abraham and Sarah were senior citizens when they left for Canaan. Jesus didn't really get going until his mid-30's which in first-century Palestine was considered middle-age.

I was taught growing up that God had a plan for each of us but I was never quite sure what that was. I was the last kid on our block to learn how to ride my bike. I didn't get my driver's license until I was 17. I didn't finish school or get married until my 30s and didn't own a home until I was 40 and at 55 I'm finally learning how to play the accordion. I had no clue where I was headed in life but I went with whatever was put in front of me which led to a winding path to Canadian Mennonite University, Voluntary Service in Oregon, seminary in Indiana, pastoring in Minnesota, moving to Saskatchewan. Being a late-bloomer was certainly was nerve-wracking for me and for my parents who didn't know what I was doing from year to year. They were relieved when I finally married Patrick - they thought that would help. It has but I still change three jobs for his every one job:)

What I do know is that God loves late-bloomers, late-comers and mind-changers. God is a God of openness and opportunities and options as opposed to a traffic cop who points us in a particular direction with dire consequences if we don't go there. Theologian Walter Wink tells the story of an agonizing life decision he had to make and he prayed and prayed about which path to take and finally he felt he heard God sigh and say - "I can work with either option!"

God is way more flexible and patient that we humans are and is a Flow that runs deeper and gentler than we can know or imagine. As Nora pointed out in the parable of the latecomers to the vineyard last week who got the same wage as those who started working at the crack of dawn - God is the God of enough of whatever we need. We have no need to worry about God's generosity and what appears to be God's injustice over grace given to latecomers and latebloomers and mind-changers; prodigals and tax-collectors and doddlers.

May God bless us all through this word: Gracious God, you are wider in mercy and deeper in grace that we can even imagine. Thank you for your patience with all of us who bloom late and show up late and change our minds. Lead us in the reality of this truth this week as we seek to know you and love you more deeply. Amen.

Sung Benediction: Purple/SS #121 "Nothing is lost on the breath of God"





Spoken Benediction: "May the peace of the Lord Christ go with you where he may send you: may he guide you through the wilderness: protect you through the storm; may he bring you home rejoicing: at the wonder he has shown you; may he bring you home rejoicing: once again into our doors."

Source: Common Prayer