

Osler Mennonite Church
Sunday Worship Service
May 24, 2020

"While blessing them, Jesus left them and was carried up to heaven." Luke 24:51

Worship leader: Patty Friesen

Pianist: Naomi Schellenberg

Song leaders: Kathryn Janzen & Michelle McKinnell

Sermon: Patrick Preheim

Children's Time: Lynette Janzen

Sound: Stephanie Siemen

Prelude

Welcome/Announcements

Call to Worship: Psalm 93

Our God reigns, robed in splendour!
You are robed, Adonai, and armed with strength.
The world stands firm and cannot be moved;
your throne stands firm from ages past, from eternity you exist.
The seas are shouting –
the seas raise their voices,
the seas shout with pounding waves.
Stronger than the thunder of the great waters,
mightier than the breakers of the sea,
mightiest of all is Our God!
Your reign was made known from of old;
the holy ones praise you in your Temple, for days without end.

Invocation: #183 Sing the Story (Purple)

Leader: Lord Jesus Christ, you have ascended beyond horizons which our eyes can see, and further than the limits which our minds can reach. No longer restricted to one place, you are seated on the throne of heaven, and present in all places.

People: We praise you, our glorious Lord and Saviour, and are forever glad that now there is in heaven One who understands and intercede for us.

All: Hallowed be your name! Hallowed on earth as now in heaven. Amen.

HWB #276 This Joyful Eastertide

This joyful Eastertide

VRUECHTEN 67. 67 with refrain

1 This joy-ful Eas-ter - tide a - way with sin and sor - row!
 My love, the Cru - ci - fied, hath sprung to life this mor - row.
 2 My flesh in hope shall rest, and for a sea-son slum - ber,
 till trump from east to west shall wake the dead in num - ber.
 3 Death's flood hath lost its chill, since Je - sus crossed the riv - er.
 Lov - er of souls, from ill my pass-ing soul de - liv - er.

Refrain

Had Christ that once was slain, ne'er burst his three-day pris - on,

our faith had been in vain. But now hath Christ a - ris - en, a -

ris - en, a - ris - en, a - ris - en.

Text: George R. Woodward, *Carols for Easter and Ascension*, 1894
 Music: *David's Psalmen*, 1685
 Harmonization copyright ©1966 Alice Parker

Scripture Reading – Ephesians 1:15-23

From the time I first heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and your love for all of the holy ones, I have never stopped thanking God for you and remembering you in my prayers. I pray that the God of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the God of glory, will give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation, to bring you to a rich knowledge of the Creator. I pray that God will enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see the hope this call holds for you - the promised glories that God's holy ones will inherit, and the infinitely great power that is exercised for us who believe. You can tell this from the strength of God's power at work in Jesus, the power used to raise Christ from the dead and to seat Christ in heaven at God's right hand, far above every sovereignty, authority, power or dominion, and above any other name that can be named - not only in this age, but also in the age to come. God has put all things under Christ's feet and made Christ, as the ruler of everything, the head of the church, and the church is Christ's body; it's the fullness of the One who fills all of creation.

STJ #27 Fresh as the Morning (God of the Bible)

PROCLAIMING
27 *Harp, cord Pipe 2* **God of the Bible**
FRESH AS THE MORNING* 55. 54. 55. 54. with refrain

The musical score is written for guitar in the key of D major (one sharp) and 8/8 time. It consists of three systems of music, each with a treble and bass staff. Chords are indicated above the treble staff. The lyrics are written below the treble staff.

System 1: Chords: D, A/C#, G/B, D, Bm, D/F#. Lyrics: 1 God of the Bi - ble, God in the Gos - pel, hope seen in Je - sus, 2 God in our strug - gles, God in our hun - ger, suf - fer - ing with us, 3 Those with - out sta - tus, those who are noth - ing, you have made roy - al, 4 Not by your fin - ger, not by your an - ger will our world or - der, 5 Hope we must car - ry, shin - ing and cer - tain through all our tur - moil,

System 2: Chords: Em, A, Bm, D/A, G, D. Lyrics: hope yet to come, you are our cen - ter, day - light or dark - ness, tak - ing our part, still you em - pow'r us, moth - er - ing Spir - it, gift - ed with rights, cho - sen as part - ners, mid - wives of jus - tice, change in a day, but by your peo - ple, fear - less and faith - ful, ter - ror and loss, bond - ing us glad - ly, one to the oth - er,

System 3: Chords: Em, D/F#, G, Asus, A. Lyrics: free - dom or pris - on, you are our home, feed - ing, sus - tain - ing, from your own heart, birth - ing new sys - tems, light - ing new lights, small pa - per lan - terns, light - ing the way, till our world chang - es fac - ing the cross.

*Original title
Text: Shirley Erena Murray
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Music: Tony E. Alonso
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PROCLAIMING

Refrain D A/D G/D D Em D/F#

Soprano (Melody)

Fresh as the morn - ing, sure as the sun - rise, God al - ways faith - ful,

Alto

Fresh as the sun - rise, al - ways faith - ful,

Tenor/Bass

Em A D A/D G/D D

you do not change. Fresh as the morn - ing, sure as the sun - rise,

you do not change. Fresh as the sun - rise,

Em D/F# G/A D A/D

God al - ways faith - ful, you do not change.

al - ways faith - ful, you do not change.

G/D D A/D G/D D

PRAISING/ADORING

89 For the beauty of the earth

DIX 77. 77. 77

1 For the beau - ty of the earth, for the glo - ry
2 For the beau - ty of each hour of the day and
3 For the joy of ear and eye, for the heart and
4 For the joy of hu - man love, bro - ther, sis - ter,
5 For thy church that ev - er - more lift - eth ho - ly

1 of the skies, for the love which from our birth
2 of the night, hill and vale and tree and flow'r,
3 mind's de - light, for the mys - tic har - mon - y
4 par - ent, child, friends on earth and friends a - bove,
5 hands a - bove, of - f'ring up on ev - 'ry shore

1 o - ver and a - round us lies:
2 sun and moon and stars of light:
3 link - ing sense to sound and sight: Lord of all, to
4 for all gen - tle thoughts and mild:
5 her pure sac - ri - fice of love:

thee we raise this our hymn of grate - ful praise.

Text: Follvott S. Pierpoint, *Lyra Eucharistica*, 1864

Music: Conrad Kocher, *Stimmen aus dem Reiche Gottes*, 1838; adapted by William H. Monk, *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, 1861

Offering Prayer/Offertory

Sharing Joys and Concerns/Prayer of the People

...I pray that God will enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see the hope this call holds for you - the promised glories that God's holy ones will inherit, and the infinitely great power that is exercised for us who believe. You can tell this from the strength of God's power at work in Jesus, the power used to raise Christ from the dead and to seat Christ in heaven at God's right hand, far above every sovereignty, authority, power or dominion, and above any other name that can be named - not only in this age, but also in the age to come. God has put all things under Christ's feet and made Christ, as the ruler of everything, the head of the church, and the church is Christ's body; it's the fullness of the One who fills all of creation.

Hymn of Response: STS #124 My Soul Cries Out

Watch for God Among Us

124 My soul cries out

STAR OF THE COUNTY DOWN: 98, 10 8D with refrain

Chords: Em, C, D, Em, G, D, Em, C, Em, G, D, Em, C, Em

1 My _____ soul cries out with a joy - ful shout that the
2 Though _____ I am small, my _____ God, my all, you _____
3 From the halls of power to the for - tress tower, not a
4 Though the na - tions rage from _____ age to age, we re -

God of my heart is great, and my spir - it _____ sings of the
work great _____ things in me, and your mer - cy will last from the
stone will be left on stone. Let the king be - ware for your
mem - ber who holds us fast: God's _____ mer - cy _____ must de -

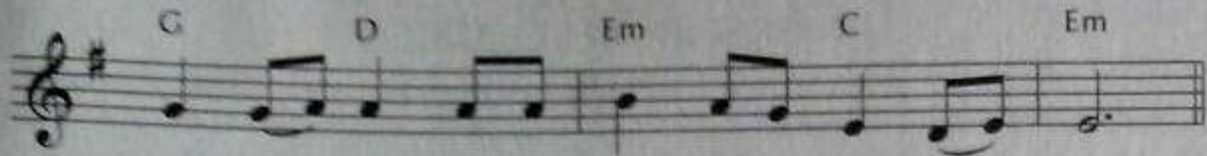
won - drous _____ things that you bring to the ones who wait. You
depths of the past to the end of the age to be. Your
jus - tice _____ tears ev - 'ry ty - rant _____ from his throne. The
liv - er _____ us from the con - quer - or's crush - ing grasp. This

fixed your sight on your ser - vant's plight, and my
ver - y name puts the proud to shame, and to
hun - gry poor shall _____ weep no more, for the
sav - ing word that our fore - bears heard is the -

weak - ness you did not spurn, so from east to west shall my
those who would for you yearn, you will show your might, put the
food they can nev - er earn; there are ta - bles spread, ev - 'ry
prom - ise which holds us bound, 'til the spear and rod can be

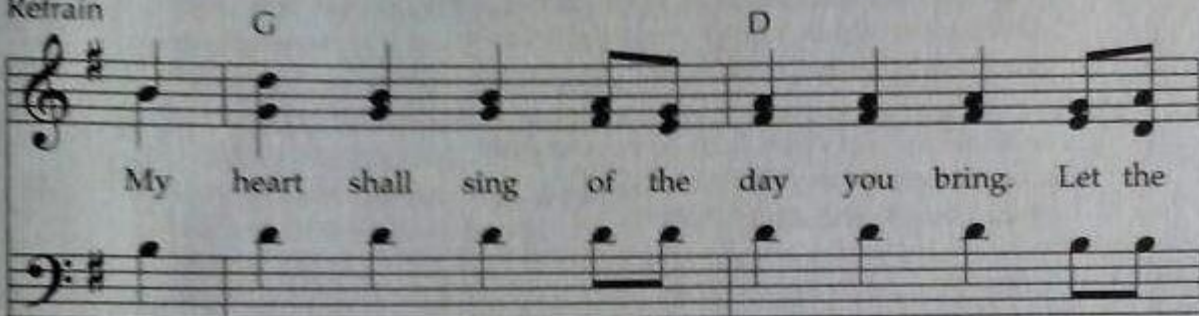
Original title: "Canticle of the Turning"
Text: Rory Cooney, based on Luke 1:46-58
Music: Irish traditional; arranged by Rory Cooney
Text and Music copyright © 1990 GIA Publications, Inc.

Watch for God Among Us



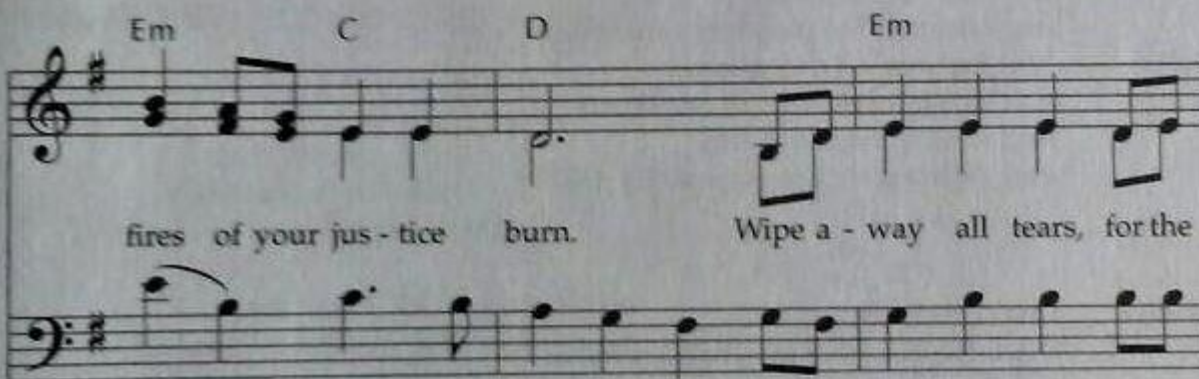
name be blest. Could the world be a - bout to turn?
strong to flight for the world is a - bout to turn.
mouth be fed, for the world is a - bout to turn.
crushed by God, who is turn - ing the world a - round.

Refrain



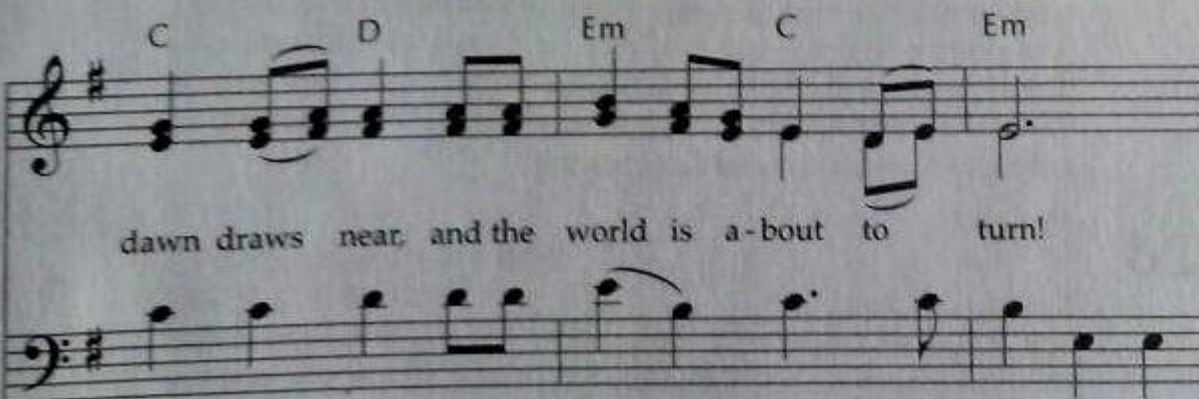
My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the



fires of your jus - tice burn. Wipe a - way all tears, for the

fires of your jus - tice burn. Wipe a - way all tears, for the



dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn!

dawn draws near, and the world is a - bout to turn!

Scripture Reading – Luke 24:44-53

Then Jesus said to them, "remember the words I spoke when I was still with you: everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the psalms had to be fulfilled." Then Jesus opened their minds to the understanding of the scriptures, saying, "that is why the scriptures say that the Messiah must suffer and rise from the dead on the third day. In the Messiah's name, repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of all this. Take note: I am sending forth what our Abba God has promised to you. Remain here in the city until you are clothed with the power from on high."

Then Jesus took them to the outskirts of Bethany, and with upraised hands blessed the disciples. While blessing them, he left them and was carried up to heaven. The disciples worshiped the risen Christ and returned to Jerusalem full of joy. They were found in the Temple constantly, speaking the praises of God.

Scripture Response:

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: "Himmelfahrt" by Patrick Preheim, co-pastor Nutana Park Mennonite Church

"Himmelfahrt", literally translated from the German language means "Driving to Heaven". Technically "Himmelfahrt" happened last Thursday. I thought it would be nice to reflect on Ascension Day as I have never preached a Himmelfahrt sermon. Patty gave me the endorsement needed to speak about such things, so here we go.

I am probably one of the last generations to be raised in a world where Ascension Day mattered. I knew about Ascension Day. I remember my parents and grandparents marking it on the calendar-- not necessarily a day to do no work, but to do work mindfully and if a church service was scheduled make sure the chores were done before 7:00pm. As a young adult operating a swathing and baling company my brothers and I had customers who simply would not have us on their fields on Ascension Day. These Ascension Day purists were usually the Reformed from across the country line rather than the Mennonites of our community, but I appreciated and respected the piety of these Calvinist Christians. My sense is that in years past the day has been important in these parts as well. With that in mind I asked Dick and Kathy Braun for their reflections on the place Ascension Day has had within the Osler and Osler Mennonite communities.

Dick reported: "Himmelfahrt was a day that there was a morning church service -- no school in the early years of my growing up. Many of the people that did not observe this day thought that it was just a day that the Mennonites would go to S'toon for the day. This was not the case in our village. In the bigger district there was school that day, and many Mennonite children were kept at home. The men that had jobs in the city would make arrangements that they would not come to work that day. There was for sure a gathering at my grandmother's place".

Dick and Kathy agree that the church service messages were very serious and somber: the worship team stressed the complete picture of Jesus's birth, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and finally the coming of the holy spirit; and on that day to which Ascension Day points, Pentecost, was baptism. At Osler Mennonite, the service was in the evening. After a long day of seeding, milking, gardening and otherwise plying one's trade, both Dick and Kathy noted that the service was filled with a great deal of head nodding. This bobbing of the

heads, we suspect, had more to do with weariness than piety—but maybe the nodding of warm and still heads while in a worshipping community is as much a mark of piety as any other act of faithfulness we attempt. Maybe.

O.K. I have given a brief historical review of this Christian festival from two different communities, which may differ or echo practices you remember. From here I will make a few observations about the Ascension Day text from Luke and then offer some reflections on Ascension Day in relation to our spiritual journey.

The Text

The ascension account in Luke has three movements. First, the risen Lord “opened their minds to the scriptures” and gives guidance on what is to come. Next, he takes them out to Bethany for a blessing, during which he ascends. Finally, the disciples, after worshiping, go back to Jerusalem to praise God in the temple.

Part one: learning as we go. We may note sadly that despite three years of direct teaching in multiple forms, the disciples’ minds were still closed. When we think of the disciples, 11 of them, gathered around the risen Christ, we might try to imagine what supernatural pedagogy he employs with this audience of non-learners. In his human form, they failed to understand him, although they had the opportunity to travel with him, watching and listening as he interacted with crowds and individuals using storytelling, exhortation, and conversation as his teaching tools. They did not understand what was happening, did not understand who he was. If this was the case for them, what chance do we have then, at this great distance, to grasp the magnitude of his life, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, his pouring out of the Holy Spirit? This is a great story for many of us who are struggling our way toward the light; those of us who are grasping to understand. Jesus is not deterred by our limited comprehension, our limited trust, our limited commitment, our years of confused discipleship. He comes to us and seeks to grow our hearts and minds in faith even after we thought him dead and gone.

Part 2: Bethany Blessings. Jesus then takes these maturing disciples to Bethany for a blessing. Certainly, Bethany is an important town within the biblical narrative. It is the place in which Jesus makes camp the last week of his earthly life (Luke 19:29 and parallels). It is home to dear friends Mary, Martha and Lazarus (John 11:1). It is where a woman blesses Jesus with pouring costly ointment on his head (Mark 14:3ff). It is the cite of the Mt. of Olives—the mountain from which God stages the reclamation of a defiled Jerusalem in Zechariah 14 as well as the mountain from which Simon Maccabees rode into Jerusalem on a donkey as a conquering hero to temporarily re-establishing a Jewish Kingdom. It is the place in which Jesus was arrested and the disciples fled in terror (Mark 14:50ff). And then there is the meaning of the name “Bethany”, house of affliction. We do not know if there is specific intent for Jesus to take the disciples to Bethany for the blessing, but it might have something to do with some or all of these reasons. And this got me thinking.

It makes me wonder where do we go to receive a blessing from Jesus? Are we drawn to visit the home of friends who have so graciously hosted us in years past? Is it that camp, that church, that certain hiking trail, that certain lake, that certain park where significant spiritual events have previously happened? Is it retreating to that certain hymn which moves us in ways mere words are unable to do? Where do we go to receive our unmerited blessing from the risen Christ?

As intriguing as that question is, we can also turn it around. Where do we take people to offer the blessing we would wish to impart? I think this is a very important to consider because the truth of the matter is that one day we will follow Jesus in ascending into the arms of the God from whom we have drawn life. We dare not wait too long for extending grace and peace to those people who have been so much a part of our lives and who we hope will continue the ministries of healing and reconciliation to which we given our lives. And we certainly dare not wait until we feel they deserve our blessing, or that they have finally gotten it. The offering of a blessing is sometimes just what is needed to empower a person or community for positive steps in their spiritual

journey. Where would we take sibling, children, or friends which might accentuate the deep affection and hope we have for them: the orchard, the cemetery, the field?

Part 3: a return to the temple. It strikes me as somewhat curious that following the ascension the disciples return to the Temple. Worshipping Jesus makes a bit of sense to me in that through Jesus God has demonstrated a power greater than persecution and death. Although, the “idea of a person being carried up to heaven was not strange in the ancient world”; think here of Elijah, for example. Joy seems logical as well, and linguistically is important in that just a few verses earlier (on the walk to Emmaus) those two disciples were also joy filled but disbelieving (24:41); here the disbelief has been resolved. And the joy they have come to own echoes the promises of Zechariah of Simeon, and affirms that Jesus has fulfilled his destiny foretold those decades earlier. Joy seems natural. Returning, though, to the place where Jesus had faced so much opposition and betrayal is counter-intuitive. Perhaps there is something significant in their return to the scene of so many crimes.

In some respects, a return to Jerusalem and the temple sets the stage for the book of Acts. The ministry and mission to which the disciples are called in the Pentecost anointing radiates from the Jewish temple to the peoples of the known world. The opposition of religious leadership and the Roman Empire is not to be run from-- God’s reconciling work in Jesus faces these things head on and blows through them. It is an act of empowerment to name our fears, to confront our fears, and with inspiration of the risen Christ blow through them. It is counter intuitive, but that is much of what the alternative story of God which Jesus fulfilled in his life, death, resurrection, and ascension.

The Discipleship of the Text. I have already alluded to a few points of application. At this point I will suggest reasons I feel Ascension Day strengthens our practice of Christianity.

First, there are worse things than death. In this COVID-19 season we are inundated with death counts, and it is serious business. Jesus, according to estimates, only lived to around age 33. I am not suggesting we flaunt the health directives of our Provincial or Federal leadership. I am suggesting, though, that when we experience death in our families (COVID-19, heart-attacks, or otherwise) there is a future beyond this place. Christians have good news in this respect, and that takes me to application point two.

Second, Jesus demonstrates for us “the way”. Jesus not only teaches us how to live through his life. He not only models for us how to suffer faithfully as we watch his suffering throughout the text. In his death he points us to ways that we might die well. In the blessings he offers we learn how to bless. In his ascension we are not only shown the way, but we are promised a companion, a Good Shepherd who joins us for the transition from this world to the world that is to come (Jn 14:3). He shows us how to live, how to suffer faithfully, how die well, the path of return to our heavenly parent. It reminds me of a quote from 14th century saint Catherine of Siena: “All the way to heaven is heaven, because He said, ‘I am the way’”. The ascension, the return, to God is an important part of our life. I am grateful Jesus has shown us the way and promised to go with us through it.

Finally, we are invited to bless the ones near us. They may not be the sharpest tools in the box; they may be finding their way; they may be beloved companions. Bless them. Maybe this blessing is what they need for the next steps.

And with that I offer a benediction, a blessing, for all hear and all who are watching or listening. A blessing from the Hebrew scriptures which Jesus, perhaps, bestowed upon those with him. May God bless you and keep you. May the very face of God shine on you and be gracious to you. May God’s presence embrace you and give you peace. Amen.

Spoken Benediction

Sung Benediction - HWB #577 O Love that Will Not Let Me Go

577 O Love that will not let me go

ST. MARGARET 88. 886

1 O Love that will not let me go, I rest my
 2 O Light that fol-lows all my way, I yield my
 3 O Joy that seek-est me through pain, I can - not
 4 O Cross that lift - est up my head, I dare not

wea - ry soul in thee. I give thee back the life I owe, that
 flick-'ring torch to thee. My heart re-stores its bor-rowed ray, that
 close my heart to thee. I trace the rain-bow through the rain, and
 ask to fly from thee. I lay in dust, life's glo - ry dead, and

in thine o - cean depths its flow may rich - er, full - er be.
 in thy sun-shine's blaze its day may bright-er, fair - er be.
 feel the prom-ise is not vain, that morn shall tear - less be.
 from the ground there blos-soms red, life that shall end - less be.