



Celebrating 175 Years



July 12, 2020

Melville United Church

300 St. Andrew Street West, Fergus, ON N1M 1N9

Mailing address: PO Box 41, Fergus, ON N1M2W7

519-843-1781

Team Ministry

Minister of Worship, Pastoral Care & Outreach	Rev. Marion Loree
Faith Formation & Youth	Martha Duncan
Ministry of Music Team	Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber
Office Administrator	Lynda Rivet
Custodian	Robert Mitchell
Chair of Church Council	Allan Hons
Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain	Alison Rainford, Rev. Marion Loree
Office hours	9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. T., Th. & F.
E-Mail	secretary@melvilleunited.com
Web Site	www.melvilleunited.com
Pastoral Care Numbers	226-500-5004, 519-843-3841

Melville United Church, Fergus Ontario
Sunday July 12th, 2020
6th Sunday after Pentecost

Worship prepared today by
Rev. Ruth Brown

We acknowledge with respect the history, spirituality, and culture of the Indigenous peoples with whom Treaty 4 - also known as the Haldimand Tract - was signed and the territory wherein our church resides, and we acknowledge our responsibilities as treaty members.

Welcome

My name is Ruth Brown. I am a retired United Church minister living in Fergus. I am grateful to be offering these words of worship and pray they will lead you and all of us together in Spirit; gathering us deeper into the common-union we share in Jesus' name, strengthening us in hope for the day that is at hand, and inspiring us with love to live faithfully and with hope.

As Christians we are now keeping time with the **Season after Pentecost**. Sometimes known as the Season of Ordinary Time. Though nothing feels ordinary about time these days. This Season begins with the great feast of Pentecost, when we celebrate God's gracious gift of the Spirit abundantly blessing the gathered community. The Season after Pentecost focuses on the Spirit at work in Jesus of Nazareth through his life and teachings, and the Spirit at work in the church through the gifts of the Spirit, given for the sake of the world.

I have chosen a sung response for this morning's worship, VU#642 Be Thou My Vision. One of our beloved heritage hymns.

May God's Spirit-ed Blessing be upon us as we begin.

Sharing the Light *Take a moment to light a candle and centre yourself for this time of worship. As you light the candle offer the following words.*

I light a candle

In the name of the God who creates life
In the name of the Christ presence who loves life
In the name of the Spirit who is the fire of life.

Words to Ponder

"The parables of Jesus, which rank among the supreme literary creations of western literature, testify to the consummate religious genius who had a unique vision of God, a vision he discovered and communicated in parables." ~ *Bernard Brandon Scott in Re-Imagine the World*

Call to Gather with God

After a week of adapting to the new normal, we gather in communion with the Spirit. Grateful for the continuity of creation's generative life—starry, starry nights, cool summer breeze and the blazing heat of high noon. We gather in communion with the Spirit, to renew our faith, our hope and our love. With hearts and minds and bodies ready to receive, we pause from the troubles of the world, and from the worries and fears we each carry.

Let us hallow this moment in time.

Prayer

Creator God help us to center our Sabbath time in you. Help us give creative rest to our bodies and souls. Through parable and story, song and silence, help us refocus our thoughts and heal our hearts and recharge our spirits. Through your Spirit breathing within us and moving among us, inspire this time of worship, that in your light we may see light. Amen.

Sung Refrain:

VU # 642 Be Thou My Vision
Be thou my vision, O joy of my heart,
Naught be all else to me save that thou art,
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping thy presence my light.

The Scripture Texts are printed from the New Revised Standard Version. If you have your own family bible or confirmation bible, whatever version, feel free to read it as well. It can be interesting to consider the different words that are chosen by each translator as they interpret from the ancient Hebrew and Greek texts.

Before reading offer the following prayer:

Prayer

May your Spirit of wisdom and love guide the reading and hearing of these words. May they settle deep into my heart and mind, body and soul, your Word of Healing and New Life. Amen

Epistle Reading: Romans 8:31-39

¹ What then are we to say about these things? If God is for us, who is against us? ³² He who did not withhold his own Son, but gave him up for all of us, will he not with him also give us everything else? ³³ Who will bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? It is Christ Jesus, who died, yes, who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who indeed intercedes for us. ³⁵ Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Gospel Reading: Matthew 13:24-35

²⁴ He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; ²⁵ but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷ And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' ²⁸ He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹ But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time

I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.”

³¹ He put before them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; ³² it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

³³ He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

³⁴ Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing.

³⁵ This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet:

“I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world.”

Gift of Music

Reflection The parables of Jesus and the kingdom of heaven
Matthew 13: 24-35 Romans 8:31-39

I like many of you have been reading the parables of Jesus for decades and still they remain a mystery to me. But while I have never found the parables easy or simple to understand, Jesus’ audience would have understood them fully. So much so, that at times they became quite angry or disturbed by them.

Take the three parables for today read from Matthew’s gospel. The parable of the wheat and weeds, the mustard seed and the leaven.

The Kingdom of heaven is like when both the weeds and the wheat grow together until harvest time, then they can be sorted. Until then let them grow side by side. Well how odd is that? Why would you let weeds and wheat grow together, isn’t that risky?

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed. It’s the tiniest of all seeds but when it grows, it grows so big that the birds of the air can nest in its branches. And it spreads everywhere! Well again with the weeds? Who wants uncontrollable mustard weed all through their garden choking out all the good stuff?

And the kingdom of heaven is like a woman putting yeast into her dough. Really? Israelites ate unleavened bread. Unleavened bread was sign of God’s blessing and saving liberating power. Not leavened bread. Leavened bread was puffy or puffed up, as in arrogant or smelly, like the way dead animals look after a few days on the side of the road. And that was truly an offence to God.

Jesus’ audience would have been quite surprised even offended by these parables. How could they possibly have anything to do with the kingdom of heaven and Israel’s liberation?

Jesus knew a lot about life from the underside of things. Working the trades as a carpenter, he would have seen firsthand how disposable people were. Whatever Rome and its vast military needed justified much use and abuse. There was tremendous unmet basic human need in 1st century Palestine; clothing, cool drink, medicine, community for the those isolated from family, for all kinds of reasons including sickness and debt. The small family farms of Galilee were being

bought up by large scale landowners, produce was exported to wherever Rome's military went and all for the good and the growth of the Empire.

Jesus own religious community had become focused on weeding out the impure so as to save Israel from certain death and needless suffering. For it was clearly written, God blessed the pure and clean and righteous. It was these ones who would lead the way for Israel's return to greatness. Having need was sign of God's curse upon you was it not?

Jesus vision of a re-imagined world portrayed a very different scene. Pictures of choking Weeds, offensive leaven, sprawling mustard plants provoked his audience to think about their neighbours in need; like the widows and children, the tax collectors, the sinners, the unclean, the drunkards, the hungry, the imprisoned, the foreigners, the lepers, the sick; the needy.

Jesus parables placed those unrighteous impure needy neighbours and even family members, not outside God's blessed land but strangely in it. They were front and centre. These were the very ones who would be given the seats of honour at the banquet table. These were the very ones who had God's blessing.

Well its safe to say that depending on where you stood in Jesus audience this was either good news or bad news. After all, 1st century Palestinians believed they lived in a limited goods society. To satisfy the needs of these cursed unclean ones would take away from the clean what was rightfully theirs. Would it not?

Yet Jesus parables describe the kingdom of heaven, as a land where there was more than enough for all the weeds and wheat, where even the mustard plants had a purpose to provide shelter, and the growth of leaven could be an agent for God's goodness and care, and therefore Israel's salvation. While it is very clear that in the kingdom of heaven there is no room for evil doers, what culture and religion had established as unclean, and underserving raised suspicion with Jesus and his experience of God.

While 1st century Palestinians believed in a scarcity of supply Jesus saw God's hidden abundance everywhere, even among the weeds. Jesus saw beneath the surface of cultural beliefs, market beliefs, even religious beliefs. He saw God's hidden abundance providing. They lived not in scarcity or in a limited world, but in God's world where the impossible was made possible for the healing and wellbeing of all their neighbours.

What might Jesus vision of a re-imagined world —the kingdom of heaven—look like in our place and time?

This past week I watched documentary that is airing on Netflix if you have a chance to see it or perhaps you have seen it. It is called Lenox Hill.

This documentary tells the story of a smaller sized city hospital in upper side New York. The hospital was founded in 1857 after community leaders realized there was a need for medical services among the immigrant community. Since then the hospital has continued its mission in serving the poorest in the city but also in gaining international renown for being one of the best medical treatment centres in the world, particularly for brain tumors.

The Lennox Hill story revolves around the daily lives of four physicians; two neurosurgeons on the cutting edge of brain cancer, John Boockvar and David Langer, an emergency room doctor Mirtha Macri, who functions as both doctor and counsellor for the disadvantaged and marginalized people of lower Manhattan and an obstetrician-gynecologist Amanda Little-Richardson, who delivers babies while coping with her own complicated pregnancy .

All four are vivid personalities. Both women must minister to people in extreme pain or distress and their bedside manners say a great deal about the level of respect and sympathy they have for their various patients.

In the neurological surgery suites, Boockvar has the swagger of a rock star, powering confidently through consultations and surgeries and spearheading clinical trials that might someday save untold thousands of lives, while Langer is more cautious and emotionally open, spending enough time with people to develop attachments, which he worries might endanger his objectivity when it comes to opening up their skulls for a risky procedure

Their patient's stories stretch over weeks and months, with heart wrenching setbacks and triumphant resolutions.

These four flawed but striving doctors time and time again pair kindness with their medical expertise. For many these four doctors are called medical saviours.

In the context of the harsh business-oriented US health system, their service to others goes above and beyond for the sake of patient care and the best medical treatment possible.

"Families don't want to see blood on your shoes," says Dr. John and so he quickly wipes himself down before going out to talk to the family of a patient who has just finished undergoing brain surgery.

"Nobody wants to wake up with all that in their hair," says Dr. David as he gently washes the hair of a patient he has just operated on, while still in his scrubs.

Small things count. Small kindnesses matter. And they abound in Lennox Hill.

As I watched this documentary, I couldn't help but think of the parables of Jesus and the kingdom of heaven, Jesus vision of the world re-imagined. I think its safe to say that in hospitals across this country of ours, as in Lennox Hill, there is this land where the elements of Jesus vision come to life every day; ingenuity, generosity, compassion, kindness, care no matter where you come alongside medical expertise. It is a wonder to behold in a pressure packed setting, the depth of humanity exposed.

Jesus saw others with eyes of faith, and hope and love. He saw everywhere God's hidden abundance providing.

May the Spirit help us have such eyes to see, and such minds to re-imagine our corner of the world, accessing that hidden abundance for the sake of our neighbour in need, a little bit of heaven on earth. Amen

Sung Response

VU#642 Be Thou My Vision

Be thou my wisdom, my calm in all strife,
I ever with thee, and though in my life,
Thou my loving parent, thy child may I be,
Thou in me dwelling, and I one with thee.

Preparation for Prayer *As we prepare our hearts and minds to enter a time of prayer, I invite you to sit comfortable and quietly for a moment. Breathe deeply a few times paying attention to your breath as it moves in through your nose and as it fills your lungs. Picture your breath as a light entering your body and filling it with love and relaxation. Then when you exhale through your mouth imagine the breath taking all your tensions and worries with it as it leaves your body. Do this a few times until you feel relaxed, then move into the prayer time.*

Prayers

All praise and thanks to you, great God of heaven and earth!

We thank you for all you have created and are creating!

In this year of pandemic and protest, we yet thank you for the splendour of the galaxy that is our home, for the beauty of planet Earth, for the wonder of life and the mystery of love.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends and for the sustaining care that surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for the delight we find in finishing well our daily tasks, and for helping us find comfort in you, even in times of failure or despair.

We thank you for Jesus, for the wisdom of his way, for the unique vision he embodied for the life of the world. We thank you that in the Spirit, we may yet put on his mind, and wear the clothes of his compassion. Grant us God, the gifts of the Spirit, that we may live as he lived, and love as he taught. Giving thanks in all times, we pray, remembering him,

Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

Sung Response:

VU#642 Be Thou My Vision

Riches I heed not, nor vain empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always,
Thou and thou only, the first in my heart,
Great God of heaven, my treasure thou art.

Offering

If you would like to do your part by making a monetary donation to Melville United Church, there are several ways to do that.

1. Cheque (post-dated cheques are welcome): made payable to Melville United Church- which can be mailed to the church at P.O. Box 41, Fergus ON N1M 2W7 or put in the mail slot beside the parking lot door.
2. Donate online through the Canada Helps web-site
<https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/melville-united-church>
3. Call or email Lynda, to arrange Pre-Authorized Remittance payments (PAR).
4. E-transfer directly from your bank. E-mail to secretary@melvilleunited.com

Thanks to all of you who continue to contribute so much to make Melville the caring community of faith that it is. May you be blessed

Sung Response:

VU#642 Be Thou My Vision
Great God of heaven, after victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O ruler of all.

Blessing

Rejoicing in the abundant grace of our God, we go forth into the new week,
To live as Jesus lived, to love as Jesus loved,
By the power of the Spirit who quenches our thirst, who refreshes our weariness, and cleanses our wounds, who is for all the world a fount of blessing and a river of hope, springing up in the midst of the deserts of despair. Honour and blessing, glory and praise be to God with Us, now and always. Amen

Prayer of the Week

I will wake the dawn with songs of your light
I will sing a lullaby of your grace to the moon
I will rejoice in the desert and give thanks in times of trouble
You have awakened my spirit; you have filled me with hope
I will commit myself to your vision. Amen

~Regina Coupar in *The Seeker's Heart*