



October 20, 2024

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 Pastoral Care

Faith Formation & Youth

Ministry of Music Team

Office Administrator

Custodian

Chair of Church Council

Chair of Pastoral Care & Prayer Chain Captain

Office hours

E-Mail

Web Site

Rev. Marion Loree 519-835-8605

Ann Ward

Suzanne Flewelling, Colleen Weber

Lynda Rivet

Suzanne Flewelling

Allan Hons

Alison Rainford 519-843-3841

9:00 a.m.-3:30 p.m. T., Th. & F.

secretary@melvilleunited.com

www.melvilleunited.com

**Melville United church
Sunday October 20, 2024**

*Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson
Ministry of Music: Suzanne Flewelling*

Prelude

Welcome & Announcements

Land Acknowledgement:

Let us take time to acknowledge the peoples who have lived on and stewarded these lands since time immemorial.

God, help us to be thankful, and to become better neighbours and stewards that we might continue to honour these lands.

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

October! How I marvel at the rich colours in the fields and valleys!

The turning of the leaves, the morning frost laying its gentle blanket on the grass.

How I marvel at the changing of the seasons!

Time coming and going. Nature dancing its eternal round.

October! The time to put summer to rest. The time to gather in the harvest.

A time to rejoice in the richness of God's creation. A time to remember what sustains us.

A time to give thanks in our worship together.

Hymn —Sing Praise to God VU 221 (tune VU 220)

1. Sing praise to God, who has shaped and sustains all creation!

Sing praise, my soul, in profound and complete adoration!

Gladsome rejoice—organ and trumpet and voice—

Joining God's great congregation.

2. Praise God, our guardian, who lovingly offers correction,

Who, as on eagle's wings, saves us from sinful dejection.

Have you observed, how we are always preserved

By God's parental affection?

3. Sing praise to God, with sincere thanks for all your successes.

Merciful God ever loves to encourage and bless us.

Only conceive what godly strength can achieve:

Strength that would touch and caress us.

4. Sing praise, my soul, the great name of your high God commending.

All that have life and breath join you, their notes sweetly blending.

God is your light! Soul, ever keep this in sight:

Amen, amen never ending.

Gathering Prayer (in unison):

God of this day, and of all days, as the seasons change around us we realize that we change with them. Help us to respond as freely as the leaves that dance in the wind, as responsively as the creatures that migrate to new places, and as openly as the most generous heart. Be with us now, as we worship together in this place. Amen.

Hymn — This Is God's Wondrous World VU 296

1. This is God's wondrous world, and to my listening ears
All nature sings, and round me rings the music of the spheres.
This is God's wondrous world; I rest me in the thought
Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas, God's hand the wonders wrought.

2. This is God's wondrous world: the birds their carols raise;
The morning light, the lily white, declare their Maker's praise.
This is God's wondrous world: God shines in all that's fair;
In the rustling grass or mountain pass, God's voice speaks everywhere.

3. This is God's wondrous world: O let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong, God is the ruler yet.
This is God's wondrous world: why should my heart be sad?
Let voices sing, let the heavens ring: God reigns, let earth be glad!

Children's Time

Ministry of Music — On Eagle's Wings *performed by Suzanne Flewelling and Renee Crespo*

Gospel Reading — Mark 10:35-44

James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you."

And he said to them, "What is it you want me to do for you?"

And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory."

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

They replied, "We are able."

Then Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared."

When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, "You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all."

Sermon — Auditioning for the Lead Roles

William Shakespeare once said, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They each have their exits and their entrances...and each person, in their time, plays many parts."

I'm wondering whether the church could be likened to one grand stage—with each of us in it playing our own part. I know that if you scratch the surface of many ministers you'll find a ham actor. Actually, you don't even have to scratch! With many of us, it oozes through the surface like sap in new wood oozes through a cheap paint job.

In actual fact, the theatre and the church are children of the same womb. They spring from a deep human need to act out the mystery, to recount the story, to relive the drama. Perhaps that's why so much of our faith can never be adequately expressed in mere words—our faith only comes alive in what we do.

Theatre, though, is not a vocation for people who wait around to be asked. Theatre involves going after the parts you want to play—going to auditions and trying to convince directors that you are just the right person for that particular role and that you are immensely talented.

And perhaps that's one difference between the theatre and the church. In the church, we have this "thing" about not pushing ourselves forward. After all, we don't want to look as if we have a big ego need to fulfill. So we wait to be asked...but then, of course, we feel hurt when nobody asks.

When we have elections for Moderator, candidates don't campaign a lot because...well, because, in the church, you have to appear...well... humble. No hats and bands and buttons as at a political convention. "You mean you want me! Oh, gosh! Oh well then, I'll do the best I can."

Interestingly, nowhere in the Bible are we told to cower in a corner waiting for our gifts to be discovered. We are explicitly told not to hide our light under a bushel. "Let your light so shine," it says, "that people may see the greatness of God shining through you."

And that's where this morning's gospel story comes in.

James and John mull over what Jesus has said about the kingdom that he is going to set up. And that word *kingdom* is the only word that really registers. So they say to one another, "Know what? We can play a huge part in that. And, after all, we do have the stuff that it takes."

Which would seem to be the case when you consider that they came from a family of entrepreneurs. They owned a fishing business and had done quite well. In order to succeed in that business, they would have had to go out and find the fish. Fish, being as fish are, don't usually come and jump into the boat.

And their parents had probably taught them that if you want something to happen, you take the initiative. If you think you can do a job, volunteer for it. If you think you can play the part, you try out. Audition!

So James and John come to Jesus:

"Uh, Jesus, could we have a word with you?"

"Yes, James and John, what is it?"

"Well, we have been pretty faithful followers, right?"

"Yes, I suppose you could say that," Jesus replies.

"Good. Then we have a request. Will you do for us whatever it is that we ask you to do?"

Note that: Do whatever it is we ask you to do. They sound a bit like a couple of teenage children angling for the car for Friday night, without wanting to say where they are going.

"Say, Dad, Mom, given that we've been pretty good all week, will you do us a special favour?"

If you're a smart parent, you'll push for a little more information before you answer...because if you don't know that they intend to drive to Nashville, Tennessee and back over the weekend, you will later wish you had.

"Jesus, will you do whatever we ask of you?" Wisely, Jesus asks for more information. "What is it that you want me to do?"

"When you come into your kingdom, we would like to sit, one of us at your right hand and the other at the left."

In other words, they want to be the top ministers in Jesus' cabinet.

Jesus can only stand there shaking his head. "You don't even know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"

But of course they're able. Because the only word that still sticks is *kingdom*.

Isn't it interesting that, after all Jesus has said about serving, and giving your life to something worthwhile even if it means dying for it, and losing your life in order to find it.

And, just the other day, they listened as he told the rich young ruler that what he had to do was give all his money away to the poor if he was to re-discover his purpose and his focus in life.

And here, after all that, they still think in terms of power and prestige?

"We want the best parts," say James and John. "We've got what it takes to help you determine the direction of the kingdom."

This, of course, doesn't sit well with the other ten disciples when they get wind of what James and John have asked. "Hey, Jesus...what makes James and John any more special than the rest of us?"

But, as much as we might scoff at James and John for their brazen little power-grab, I suspect that we understand it all too well. Because the human wish for power and position is a major dynamic in our life together. Whoever's the star of the show delights in it...and whoever isn't wants that part.

And we buy into that because most of us still have this abiding hope that if only the right people would get into power and stay there, the world would somehow be a better place.

If you want a better solution, just elect...well...me for heaven's sake!

We tend to believe that the new world that is to come will be just like the old world except with new leadership in place.

Remove the bad guys from the head table, fumigate the chairs, seat God's new crew—with Jesus in the number one position and the most loyal members of his campaign staff on either side. And, poof, the good people will redeem the world.

And there's another side to this James and John thing too. And that is that we all like to brush up against greatness. Brushing up against greatness somehow enlarges our identity. And, if we're lucky, maybe some of their magical dust will rub off on us.

"You know what? I once visited Elvis Presley's birth place!"

"You know what? I was over in London, England, and saw King Charles wave from his balcony! That's how close I was!"

"You know what? I caught a ball that Vladimir Guerrero hit!"

"You go to Melville United Church? I was married there!"

We use whatever connections with greatness we can to enhance our identity.

James and John see the greatness in Jesus. They see that he's the stuff that stars are made of. They have seen how he healed people—cured their blindness, their paralysis, their fear. They have seen how people responded to him. It's clear that he is headed for greater things still...and they want to be part of it! They want to play a central role in the kingdom that is to come!

But, once again, Jesus turns their notions of stardom upside down. "This is not the way," Jesus responds. "True stardom comes not from being greater than others, but from serving others. True stardom doesn't come from outside somewhere, or by your position and your prestige; it comes from within. It comes from being true to yourself, and your gifts, and your God, and to who you are called to be."

"The new world," Jesus says, "isn't going to be the old world made over with new furniture and new players. The number one players will not be the powerful ones seated on the right and left sides of the chief; they will be the quiet ones who are over there at the edges serenading the others while they dine, and afterwards laying out clean silverware for the next guests at the table."

You see, being in charge of something is now always easy.

You and I have discovered that being the church in our day and age is not easy. But here we are, still plugging away. Still working. Still serving. Still trying our best to be faithful to our calling. Because we follow that man from Galilee in whom we see a different way of being.

Interestingly enough, that man from Galilee never held any position of power...never got together a particularly effective organization...spent the entirety of his short life in a very small area of a forlorn little desert country occupied by foreign rulers and troops...and in the end died the death of a common criminal on a little wooden cross outside Jerusalem?

But here...in this man Jesus...lies a way of being capable of transforming all of history.

And it's up to each of us to figure out how to play our role.

Hymn — 'Tis the Gift to Be Simple VU 353 (tune 352)

1. 'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free,
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.

When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.

2. 'Tis a gift to be gentle, 'tis a gift to be fair,
'Tis a gift to rise and breathe the morning air,
And everyday to walk in the path we choose,
'Tis a gift we pray we may ne'er come to lose.

When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.

3. 'Tis a gift to be loving, 'tis the best gift of all
Like a quiet rain that whispers when it falls,
And if we have this gift we may truly believe,
'Tis better to give than it is to receive.

When true simplicity is gained,
To bow and to bend we will not be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.

Poem — "Imagining" (by James Clarke)

Imagine a place to make peace,
not just any place but a special place.

You are at ease, cool and composed,
communicate slowly. Patient with
time, you let your imagination
roam freely.

Capitalists abandon Wall street,
distribute their surplus wealth,
hawks cease to clamour for war.
Consider for a moment: no more
winners and losers, no more
oppressors and oppressed,
an end to polarities of race,
colour, class, religion, gender...
just everyone together at peace
in one, united, family of brothers and sisters.

A pipe-dream, cynics say, it won't happen.
Perhaps...but what are wishes for?
When our dreams fly free, are we not
already ascending to a new life?

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

- **Birthdays**
 - Elmer Shortt celebrates on Oct. 22nd
 - Joyce Keizerwaard celebrates on Oct. 25th

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer

Offering Invitation

Offering Hymn — Praise God from whom all Blessings Flow **VU 541**

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures high and low;
Give thanks to God in love made known,
Creator, Word and Spirit One.

Offering Prayer

Reflection

Hymn — It Is Well with My Soul

1. When peace like a river attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say,
It is well, it is well with my soul.

It is well (it is well),
With my soul, (with my soul),
It is well, it is well with my soul.

2. My sin, oh the joy of this glorious thought—
My sin, not in part but the whole—
Is nailed to the cross and I bear it no more.
All is well, all is well with my soul.

It is well (it is well),
With my soul, (with my soul),
It is well, it is well with my soul.

3. And, Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll.

The trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall descend,
Even so, it is well with my soul.

It is well (it is well),
With my soul, (with my soul),
It is well, it is well with my soul.

Benediction — (sung, tune Morning Has Broken MV #409)

New life has bloomed here, God's love has warmed us;
Now the world calls us to go spread that love.
God's peace go with us, may it sustain us,
And bring us together, to praise God again.

Postlude — In The Quiet Curve of Evening *sung by Rev. Tom Watson, accompanied by Suzanne Flewelling*

Household Prayer:

Wondrous God, I am in awe that you would choose to be born among us, revealing your divineness enlivening the ordinary things of my life.
I thank you for the gift of Jesus who walked among us, wept with the suffering and raged in anger at the injustices of his day. I thank you for the vision you etched in his heart, a fullness of righteousness for all the world.

I thank you that he called others to follow that they too might know the joy of new life. As Jesus' disciple, help me to walk in the way. Help me to carry the vision in my heart, however discouraged I get. Help me to see through eyes of faith, my life, my relationships, the world you so love. Help me day by day, in my words and deeds to reflect your light.
Through your wisdom and Spirit, may I grow in my capacity to love you, my neighbour, and myself, as you so love. Amen.

Welcomers: Linda and Norm Porritt

Counters: Karen Smillie, Kaillie Rawn.

Worship Schedule

October 27	Anniversary Sunday	Rev. Gord Dunbar
November 3	24 th after Pentecost	TBD
November 10	Remembrance Sunday	TBD
November 17	Children's Sunday	TBD