



November 24, 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 November 24, 2024

Presiding: Rev. Tom Watson
Ministry of Music: Colleen Weber

Prelude

Welcome

Good morning! Welcome to worship at Melville United Church. How wonderful to be together—both in person here in the sanctuary and online.

Announcements

Land Acknowledgement

Lighting the Christ Candle

Call to Worship

Come, people of God, let us pause for a time of Sabbath re-creation.

We pause to keep in touch with who we are...

To savour the mystery that lives in us—the mystery that is the ground of every expression of life...

The source that calls all things into common community.

For such, we declare this time of worship—so that we will not forget that we are the people of God!

Hymn — Come, Let Us Sing VU 222

1. Come, let us sing to the Lord our song:

We have stood silently too long;

Surely the Lord deserves our praise,

So joyfully thank God for our days.

2. O thirsty soul, come drink at the well;

God's living waters will never fail.

Surely the Lord will help you to stand,

Strengthened and comforted by God's hand.

3. You dwell among us and cause us to pray,

And walk with each other following your way;

Our precious brothers and sisters will grow

In the fulfilling love they know.

4. Deserts shall bloom and mountains shall sing

To the desire of all living things.

Come, all you creatures, high and low;

Let your praises endlessly flow.

Gathering Prayer (in unison):

Creator God, you are the mystery and the wonder behind all being. As we worship in this place, lift us from any silence that subdues us. Bring blooms into those desert-places within us. Break our mountains

into singing. Welcome us to your well of living water, and refresh us in love. Amen.

Hymn —Praise God for This Holy Ground MV 42 (vs. 1,3,4)

1. Praise God for this holy ground,
Place and people, sight and sound.
Hal-le-lu-jah! Hal-le-lu-jah! Hal-le-lu-jah!
God's goodness is eternal.

3. Praise God who through Christ makes known
All are loved and called God's own.
Hal-le-lu-jah! Hal-le-lu-jah! Hal-le-lu-jah!
God's goodness is eternal.

4. Praise God's Spirit who befriends,
Raises, humbles, breaks and mends.
Hal-le-lu-jah! Hal-le-lu-jah! Hal-le-lu-jah!
God's goodness is eternal.

Children's Time

Ministry of Music — Choral BWV 645 "Wachet auf, ruft uns die Stimme" (Awake, the voice is calling us)
by J. S. Bach performed by Colleen Weber with trumpet played by Kaillie Rawn

Gospel Reading — Mark 13:1-8

As he came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?"

Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs."

Sermon — Life in Our Town: The End or A New Beginning?

Well, it's been a busy week in Our Town. For several weeks back in October, folks were busy watching major league baseball playoffs. Especially the World Series between the New York Yankees and the Los Angeles Dodgers.

Willy Flugel—the pastor over at The Church of the Reluctant Apostle—has been really busy for the past few weeks. Willy lives in what you would call a divided house. He and his wife Etta just don't see eye to eye...when it comes to baseball.

Willy's a lifelong Yankees fan, and just doesn't understand how Etta could possibly have strayed so far off the straight and narrow as to root for the Los Angeles Dodgers. The Yankees are classy; the Dodgers, well, you'd never use the word classy when referring to that bunch of nondescripts.

So Willy decided to teach Etta a lesson. He made a wager with her, Willy betting on the Yankees, Etta on the Dodgers. The loser would have to cook all of the meals for the month of November. The way Willy saw it, it was a sure thing. He even predicted the Yankees would win the World Series in 5 games.

After the Dodgers won the first three games, Willy had to alter his predictions, but...never one to let adversity get the best of him...Willy was certain the Yankees would stage a comeback. And they did. They won game 4, and were well on their way to victory in game 5 until...well, until the sky fell in the 6th inning.

So Willy is doing his best to come up with the November meals. Only one week to go and he can turn in his apron. Etta meanwhile...well, she's trying her best not to gloat, but she does have an unusually sly grin.

Now last Tuesday was not a good day in Our Town. Along about 5 in the morning, sirens rang. The sirens were from the volunteer fire department truck that was racing to Pete's Garage.

Naturally, in a small town everybody's concerned when they hear fire sirens, so within a very few minutes a huge crowd had gathered. Flames were coming from the windows of Pete's Garage and the fire fighters were working hard, trying to extinguish the blaze. Pretty soon, though, flames were shooting through the roof, and it was clear it was going to be iffy as to whether they could save the building.

To add to the predicament, Pete's Garage is not far from both Casey's Hardware and The Lodge. If they weren't able to contain the fire at Pete's, they could well lose both the hardware and The Lodge building as well.

Fortunately, the Presbyterians in the next town over arrived with their fire truck and started to pump water onto both Casey's Hardware and The Lodge. Then if any embers blew from Pete's Garage, they wouldn't catch the other two buildings in fire.

In the end, neither Casey's Hardware nor The Lodge was damaged. Pete's Garage, though, was nothing but a pile of rubble. A quick and dirty way out of business.

Late that morning, Frank and Myrtle Birstead were talking about the fire, and feeling very sorry for Pete. He'd been a staple business in town for a good number of years...and he was the only garage in Our Town.

They wondered whether Pete would rebuild or just retire. Frank said it might hinge on his insurance and whether there was a "rebuild clause" which necessitated going back into business if Pete was to collect through the policy.

Marge rocked back and forth in her rocking chair for a few minutes, then said, "Pete has some tough decisions to make, Franklin. Rebuilding or retiring from the garage is one; the other is if he leaves the garage business what will he do then? Pete's only 56."

Frank replied, "Yep, Myrt. Pete's decisions are tough."

Myrtle continued. "In essence, Franklin, it boils down to this: Pete can't do anything about what happened. The only thing he can control is what happens from now on."

With that, Myrtle got up from her chair. "Time for lunch, Franklin. I'll go make our wieners and beans."

Well, that's all the news from Our Town for this week. At least, from the stories that I've heard.

Myrtle Birstead made a very astute comment: Pete can't do anything about what happened. The only thing he can control is what happens from now on.

In other words, does the fire mean the end of everything...or the beginning of something new?

One day, Jesus and some disciples were walking near the Mount of Olives in the eastern part of Jerusalem. As they walked along, they commented on the beautiful buildings. They would, I suspect, be astounded when Jesus says, "There will come a day when these buildings will not exist. Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

Naturally, they ask when it will happen. Jesus doesn't give a precise answer, just goes on to say that there will be wars, and rumours of wars, nations will fight amongst one another, and there'll be earthquakes and famines.

They must have been thinking: "Wow! Just hold on a minute! That's an awfully lot to take in."

But then Jesus says, "However, this is not the end; it's but the beginning of the birth pangs."

An interesting historical note. Jerusalem was destroyed three times. The first was in 577 BC, when the Babylonians laid siege to it. The second was in AD 70, when some of the Jews attempted a revolt against the Roman occupying forces, and the Romans burned the city down. The third time was in AD 1244 when the Tartars attacked the city.

Now, Jesus was crucified in 30 BC, so he would have no way of knowing about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, because that would be 40 years later.

However, the connection is this: What we read this morning comes from the gospel of Mark, and biblical historians agree that Mark wrote his gospel around AD 70...shortly after Jerusalem was destroyed. So Mark would have known about that.

That, in my mind at least, accounts for his being able to have Jesus say that there will come a day when these beautiful buildings don't exist.

But Jesus says, "This isn't the end. It's the beginning of the birth pangs"—the start of something new.

Now, aside from seeing the destruction from war on TV, I have never been there when an entire city was laid to rubble. But I have seen it in two fires, such as that which destroyed Pete's Garage. One was when my dad's barn burned; the second was when my daughter Valerie's hardware store in Wawanesa, Manitoba burned down.

Right at that moment, the destruction is so vivid that the thought of "birth pangs—the start of something new" doesn't immediately spring to mind.

But it's nonetheless true. The old dies, and something new is born. It's the cycle of life. And we know that to be the case. You've seen it, and I've seen it. Birth pangs.

We've seen it...

- When someone encounters crushing, painful, disappointment, but then one day new joy enters their lives...and the pain goes away. Birth pangs.
- When someone dies...and at that moment, and for a time afterward...the grief is so real they can taste it. But friends stick with them, remind them that they're never alone, that the world is not such a cold and lonely place as they've felt it was lately. The grief lessens. Birth pangs.
- When someone lugs around an old hurt, or grievance, and it sticks to them like barnacles to a ship...and then one day they decide to let it go, forgive, make amends. Birth pangs.

In the current world, I see much racism. Animosity against this group or that group. Dislike of immigrants. But in other places I see people searching for new ways to include "those folks" as "our folks". Birth pangs.

I see birth pangs when people risk new friendships.

I see birth pangs when people come out of their shell of loneliness, and risk companionship, connectivity...maybe even love.

Often, though, it's a matter of making a decision. Choosing between the end and a new beginning. But when they do choose the new beginning, life once again becomes rich, and vibrant, and beautiful...reminding us that if we'll let it be so, this really is a wonderful world.

There's a song about that. Will you sing it with me?

I see trees of green, red roses too.

I see them bloom for me and for you.

And I think to myself what a wonderful world!

I see skies of blue, and clouds of white,

The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night,

And I think to myself what a wonderful world!

The colours of the rainbow, so pretty in the sky,

Are also on the faces of people going by.

I see friends shaking hands, saying, "How do you do!"

They're really saying, "I love you!"

I hear babies crying. I watch them grow.

They'll learn much more than I'll ever know.

And I think to myself what a wonderful world.

Yes, I think to myself...what a wonderful world.

Hey, this is a wonderful world! And this world isn't about endings; it's about beginnings! And we're invited to be about beginnings! We're invited to be about the good news of the kingdom of God—to be part of the birth pangs of God's new age!

To play our part to help make this messy old world something entirely different.

Amen.

Hymn — In the Bulb There Is a Flower VU 710

In the bulb there is a flower; in the seed, an apple tree;
In cocoons, a hidden promise: butterflies will soon be free!
In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be, Unrevealed until its season, something
God alone can see.

There's a song in every silence, seeking word and melody;
There's a dawn in every darkness bringing hope to you and me.
From the past will come the future; what it holds, a mystery,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

In our end is our beginning; in our time, infinity;
In our doubt there is believing; in our life, eternity.
In our death, a resurrection; at the last, a victory,
Unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.

Minute for Mission

Sharing Our Joys and Concerns

- Birthdays
 - Nancy Kruger celebrates Nov. 24th

Reflection — "Time"

The scripture this morning talks about the birth pangs of a new time. I used the notion of time to compose these thoughts.

Time is measured, and regulated,
and passes at the same speed each minute, each hour, each day.
Our perception of time does not always follow this pattern.
If we are particularly busy, or enjoying a special occasion, time seems to fly.
But, if we are waiting for something to happen, time can appear to pass very slowly.
Young people are eager to grow up; older people find it difficult
to believe how many years have gone by.
Time runs in circles and cycles. Day follows night,
weeks turn into months, then months into years.
One generation follows another.
Our lives are locked by, and linked by, time.
And all time is linked to God.
Let us, then, lean with anticipation, into God's new time.

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 —Take My Life and Let It Be VU 506

1. Take my life, and let it be consecrated, all for thee;
Take my moments and my days, Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
2. Take my hands, and let them move at the impulse of thy love;
Take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee.
3. Take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee;
Take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.
4. Take my will, and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine;
Take my heart; it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne.
5. Take my love; my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself, and I will be ever, only, all for thee.

Benediction

When we are apart from this place, may we feel the warmth of God no matter where we go.

When we are sad, or lonely, may we find comfort.

In the pleasant valleys of happiness, and in the quiet places of peace and rest...

May we feel the reassuring hand of God with us.

Go in peace. Live in peace.

This day and always. Amen.

Postlude

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: Vivian & Havey Andrews

Counters: David Gohn, Mary Lloyd

Worship Schedule

December 1	1 st Sunday of Advent	Rev. Jeff Hawkins
December 8	White Gift Sunday	Anne Ward & Rev Tom Watson
December 15	3 rd Sunday of Advent	Rev. Tom Watson
December 22	4 th Sunday of Advent	Rev. Felicia Urbanski