

Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

Long Green and Kanés Rds., near Glen Arm, MD

September 18, 2016

Worship 10:00 am Sunday School 11:10 am

Large print hymnals are available see an usher

This room is equipped with a sound loop for the hearing impaired

“The bottom line is this: there is one God, and only one, and there is one person standing between God and humanity to bring us together: Christ Jesus, who was as human as us and who put his own life on the line so that everyone else could be set free. All this was made clear once and for all.”

(1 Timothy 2:5-6, *Laughing Bird* version)

Beginning with Praise (9:50 am) “All praise to our...” 21

Announcements

Prelude

*Call to Worship Psalm 113 (*Good News Translation*)

*Hymn “For the beauty of the earth” 89

*Opening Prayer Meghan Knight

A Gospel Story Luke 16:1-8 paraphrased & expanded

Returning our Tithes and Offerings Luke 16:8-13
(from *The Message*)

Offertory (Please sign the attendance pad and pass it on)

Sharing a joy, a concern, a word of testimony or praise
(please be brief, and aware of God’s listening presence)

Hymn “Lead us, O Father” 359

Pastoral Prayer

Scripture 1 Timothy 2:1-7 (*Laughing Bird* version)

Message “*Believe it or not*”

*Dedicating Disciples 793

*Hymn “Today we are called to be disciples” (insert)

*Benediction

*Postlude

* Rise in body or in spirit

* * * * *

Call to Worship

Psalm 113

You are invited to follow our lead and with your motions use your body to proclaim Psalm 113. Just do what we do. Please stand if you are able and let us enter worship together.

Praise the Lord!

(Arms outstretched, palms turned up)

You servants of the Lord, praise his name!

(Arms reaching out to the congregation)

May his name be praised now and for ever.

(Repeat outstretched arms, palms turned up)

From the east to the west praise the name of the Lord!

(Point to the back of the sanctuary, then arc other arm to the cross)

The Lord rules over all nations;

his glory is above the heavens.

(Bend arms out to the sides in an expression of power)

There is no one like the Lord our God.

(Point up with one hand)

He lives in the heights above,

(Look up and reach your arms overhead)

but he bends down to see the heavens and the earth.

(Lean over to look down, moving your arms out to the side)

He raises the poor from the dust;

(Still leaning over, cup your hands as if scooping up people below)

he lifts the needy from their misery

(Raise your cupped hands a little)

and makes them companions of princes,

(Raise your cupped hands to shoulder height)

the princes of his people.

(Open cupped hands and reach out to your sides as if holding hands)

He honors the childless wife in her home;

(Hold arms down at your sides)

he makes her happy by giving her children.

(Rock a baby in your arms)

Praise the Lord!

(Raise hands in traditional praise position)

Psalm 113 from the Good News Translation®

(Today's English Version, Second Edition)

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motions suggested by Carolyn C. Brown in *Worshiping with Children*.
worshipingwithchildren.blogspot.com/2016/08/year-c-proper-20-25th-sunday-in.html

Opening Prayer

Indeed, O Lord, beauty and glory and love and joy surround us, if we but open our eyes to see, our minds to pay attention, and our hearts to receive and respond in kind. Our gratitude for it all cannot be contained in a song, but spills over into the rest of our days – if we allow it to do so. Therein lies the rub, O God.

Too quickly we forget. Too easily we turn away from you as the source of it all. Too mindlessly we grow self-absorbed. We thank you for calling us back from our sin, which eventually causes us to shrivel and die. You water us with your grace and lead us toward your kingdom come, your will be done, here as in heaven.

Bless these moments of worship with a deeper awareness of your presence through the Holy Spirit. May we hear what we need to hear, both comfort and challenge. This we pray in the name of the One who was your pure sacrifice of love. Amen.

A Gospel Story

Luke 16:1-8

- 1 - There was a very, very rich man.
2 - *(goes and brings forward a "volunteer.")*
1 - very, very rich man had a huge farm, but he didn't like to work, so he got lots of other people...
2 - *(goes and brings forward 3 more "volunteers.")*
1 - ...people to do all of the planting and growing and picking crops and such. He hardly let the farmers who did this work keep any of what they grew, though, so the farmers were hungry and angry.
2 - *(prods "people" to act "hungry and angry.")*
1 - He hired a manager
2 - *(goes and brings forward a "volunteer.")*
1 - a manager to make sure the farmers did their work, and to collect most of what they grew, and the farmers were very angry at the manager too.
2 - *(prods "people" to act "angry.")*
1 - But the manager wasn't very good at his job, and he wasted a lot of the landowner's money.
2 - *(brings "manager" to kneel before "landowner")*
1 - The owner called the manager in, and told him he was fired. And then the master went away to the city,
2 - *(leads "owner" to smooze with organist)*
1 - where he liked to lie around and visit with his friends.
2 - *(stand "manager" back up)*

- 1 - So the manager did something very clever.
2 - *(gather "farmers" before "manager")*
1 - He called each of the farmers in, and he said, "how much did you owe my master?" One said,
2 - "a million dollars."
1 - Another said,
2 - "ten thousand dollars."
1 - Another said,
2 - "a thousand dollars."
1 - And the manager took out his eraser, and he erased a bunch of the zeroes on those bills.
2 - "Wow!"
1 - said the first farmer,
2 - "I only owe ten thousand dollars now."
1 - The second farmer said,
2 - "I only owe a hundred now."
1 - and the third said,
2 - "I only owe one dollar now."
1 - And the manager said, "See how generous the landowner is? Make sure to tell him how you feel when he comes back."
2 - *(prods farmers to cheer)*
1 - So a few weeks later, when the farmers heard that the landowner was coming back, they were prepared.
2 - *(places farmers back along center aisle, nod to congregation as "families" to join in)*

- 1 - They and all of their families were lined up all along the road to the farm,
- 2 - (*gets "owner" and hurries to the back to "process" down the aisle*)
- 1 - and they were waving balloons and signs and throwing confetti and cheering
- 2 - (*get everyone to join in*)
- 1 - "Hooray for the landowner! Hooray for the landowner! Hooray for the landowner!"
- 2 - (*continue bringing "owner" up front*)
- 1 - Well the landowner didn't quite know why they were all cheering, but he liked it a little too much to say anything right away. He didn't find out until he got back to his farmhouse,
- 2 - (*"owner" is now beside & facing "manager"*)
- 1 - where he saw the manager.
- 2 - "What are YOU doing here? I fired you!"
- 1 - But the manager told the landowner exactly what he'd done.
- 2 - (*turns "owner" and "manager" to face congregation*)
- 1 - Did the manager want to go back out and tell all of those cheering farmers that they really owed him millions of dollars? No way! The landowner liked all of the farmers cheering for him. So the landowner gave the manager his job, and forgave the debts of those farmers.
- 2 - (*nudges "owner" & "manager" to shake hands, and "owner" to smile & wave at congregation*)

- 1 - So, if the landowner could forgive because he wanted everyone to think he was as cool as they said he was, and if the steward could forgive because he wanted to keep his job, don't we have much more reason to forgive, since we know how much God loves us and forgives us?
- 2 - (*after pause, thanks volunteers & sends them back to their pews*)

paraphrase © 2004 Sarah Dylan Breuer
www.sarahlaughed.net/lectionary/2004/09/for_panicking_c.html
 she suggested telling this story with children,
 having them stand as each part as if
 the storyteller is a ventriloquist,
 with a hand on their backs.
 This telling (dividing into parts with instructions)
 is slightly different.

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

Allow me to read just a bit further in Luke's gospel, where Jesus goes on to say:

⁸⁻⁹ "Now here's a surprise: The master praised the crooked manager! And why? Because he knew how to look after himself. Streetwise people are smarter in this regard than law-abiding citizens. They are on constant alert, looking for angles, surviving by their wits. I want you to be smart in the same way—but for what is *right*—using every adversity to stimulate you to creative survival, to concentrate your attention on the bare essentials, so you'll live, really live, and not complacently just get by on good behavior."

¹⁰⁻¹³ Jesus went on to make these comments:

If you're honest in small things,
 you'll be honest in big things;
If you're a crook in small things,
 you'll be a crook in big things.
If you're not honest in small jobs,
 who will put you in charge of the store?
No worker can serve two bosses:
 He'll either hate the first and love the second
Or adore the first and despise the second.
 You can't serve both God and the Bank.

Luke 16:8-13 (from *The Message*)

1 Timothy 2:1-7

(*Laughing Bird*)

The number one thing I would urge you to do is to pray. Pray for everyone, thanking God for them and requesting the best for them. Don't forget to pray for those who exercise power and influence, for we depend on them to allow us the space to get on with our lives in simplicity, peace, dignity and God-given integrity. There is no doubt that such prayers are exactly what God would wish us to be offering. Indeed, what God really wants is for absolutely everyone to be brought into the life God intends for us, and to know it; to know the full and wonderful truth of it. The bottom line is this:

there is one God, and only one, and
there is one person standing between God and humanity
 to bring us together:

Christ Jesus, who was as human as us
 and who put his own life on the line
 so that everyone else
 could be set free.

All this was made clear once and for all.

The work to which I have been appointed is the work of broadcasting this news. You can take my word for this; I wouldn't lie to you. God has made me an ambassador-at-large, so that I might teach those outside the Jewish family to believe and trust in this truth.

Ponder this as you return your offering. Ushers?

from the *Laughing Bird* version
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Dedicating Disciples

Well, believe it or not, a new year of disciple-making through our Sunday School has begun. Let's take a few minutes to dedicate ourselves to this important ministry, both those of us who will take up the mantle of teaching, as well as those of us who seek to grow as learners. At present, we have three classes.

One follows what is called the "International Lesson," a series of scripture readings which, over the course of six years, journeys through the whole Bible. The texts are chosen by a committee made up of persons from many denominations (nationalcouncilofchurches.us/cus/). By the way, September marks the beginning of a new 6-year cycle (standardlesson.com/scope-sequence/). Each denomination or publishing house puts out their own commentary. For Brethren, it is "A Guide for Biblical Studies" (www.brethrenpress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=9901). The focus for this quarter is on "The Sovereignty of God," traveling through Isaiah, Matthew, Hebrews, and Revelation to explore this topic. In September, the teacher is Gary Miller. You're welcome to join them in the church library.

Another adult class meets in room 9. Their approach is more topical. An *Our Daily Bread* (odb.org) booklet on prayer is currently providing the path for their discussion. Entitled "Let's Pray," (discoveryseries.org/discovery-series/lets-pray/) this resource uses prayers from the Bible to teach about talking to God. Translated into Chinese, it helps Ruoyon and her friend join in. Once a month, this class sets aside

its plan and opens a safe space for our *Caregiver Support Group* to meet. You are invited to be part of this class.

We've combined our young people into one class, most of whom are in middle or high school. They meet in the youth room, with Meghan Knight as their teacher, currently exploring "How to be a true friend," (www.brethrenpress.com/ProductDetails.asp?ProductCode=9433) focusing on scripture stories that model different qualities of friendship, beginning with the friend we have in Jesus. By the way, they've come up with and posted 4 rules for their time together:

- 1) Listen to the teacher.
- 2) Care for what others have to say.
- 3) No fighting.
- 4) What is said in this room stays in this room.

Those would be good rules for every class. The last one refers to personal, confidential things that are shared and should not be spread. However, this does not mean that the faith we are all growing into is something we keep behind closed doors, and only practice here. As Jesus said, disciples are called to "*Go therefore and make disciples...*" (Matthew 28:19).

Yes, as followers of Jesus, our business is making disciples – a life-long task. To dedicate ourselves to a new year of doing this through our Sunday School program, please rise and turn in your hymnal to #793, and speak in unison our shared commitment to this mission, as teachers and learners.

We commit ourselves to follow Jesus Christ,
through whom God has made friends with the world
and in whose name we share the work of reconciliation.

We commit ourselves to the way of the cross,
living a life of simplicity, self-denial, and prayer.

We commit ourselves to love each other,
serving the church,
and sharing our time, talents, and possessions.

We commit ourselves to care for the world,
bringing good news to the poor,
setting free the oppressed,
and proclaiming Jesus as Liberator and Lord.

In this commitment we find joy, peace, and new life.

Hymnal #793

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On your bulletin insert are the words to our final hymn:

“Today we are all called to be disciples.”

Remain standing, and let us sing!

Today we are all called to be disciples

(to tune: “I sing the mighty power of God” #46)

1.

Today we are all called to be disciples of the Lord,
To help to set the captives free, make plow-share out of sword,
To feed the hungry, quench their thirst, make love & peace our fast,
To serve the poor and homeless first, our ease and comfort last.

2.

God made the world and at its birth ordained our human race
To live as stewards of the earth, responding to God's grace.
But we are vain and sadly proud, we sow not peace but strife,
Our discord spreads a deadly cloud that threatens all of life.

3.

Pray justice may come rolling down as in a mighty stream,
With righteousness in field and town to cleanse us and redeem.
For God is longing to restore an earth where conflicts cease,
A world that was created for a harmony of peace.

4.

May we in service to our God act out the living word,
And walk the road the saints have trod till all have seen and heard.
As stewards of the earth may we give thanks in one accord
To God who calls us all to be disciples of the Lord.

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Benediction

As disciples of Christ:

May God give you wisdom to know-
when to speak and when to be silent,
when to offer help and when to hold back,
when to ask for help and when to go it alone,
when to comfort and when to challenge,
when to pray and when to get busy.

The grace of our Savior Christ,
the love of our faithful God, and
the joy of our Friend the Holy Spirit,
will be with you now and always.
Amen!

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Minister of the Uniting Church in Australia
<http://www.bruceprewer.com/DocC/C54sun25.htm>