

Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

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

November 19, 2017

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

Thanksgiving Sunday

*“Jesus died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep,
we will live together with him. So continue encouraging each other
and building each other up, just like you are doing already.”*

(1 Thessalonians 5:10-11 *Common English Bible*)

Beginning with Praise (9:50 am) “We gather together” 17

Announcements

Prelude

Call to Worship

*Litany of Thanksgiving (back of bulletin)

*Hymn “Morning has broken” 648

Today’s Gospel Story Matthew 25:14-30 (*Cotton Patch* version)

Our Gratitude for the Talents of Eva Simmons

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

(Please sign the attendance pad and pass it on)

Responsive Reading from Psalm 90 819

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

Anointing Pastor Pete

Bob Barr

Hymn “For the beauty of the earth” 89

Prayer Meghan Knight

Scripture 1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11 (*Laughing Bird* version)

Message “*Living in gratitude, not fear*”

*Hymn “Now thank we all our God” 86

*Responsive Benediction

One: Let us go forth to be God’s faithful servants.

All: We will not hide our gifts

but share them with everyone we meet.

One: Let us go forth to be the followers of Jesus.

All: We will not hold back our compassion,

but will offer it to all.

One: Let us go forth to be the Spirit’s hope and peace.

All: We will be the grace, the joy, the wonder

others need in their lives.

*Postlude

*Rise in body or in spirit

* * * * *

message to be posted at
rockhay.tripod.com/sermons

Beginning with Praise, Hymn #17
“We gather together”

Announcements

Prelude

Call to Worship

Lift up your voices and your hearts, O people of God! Give thanks and be glad for all that God has given. In Christ, we live and move and have our being. Come and worship our merciful God. Draw near to the tree of life, where the radiant leaves bring healing. Drink from the river of life, which nourishes and sustains for the journey ahead. Here you will find salvation for your souls.

by W. Jason Frazer, pastor
Bethany Church of the Brethren
Stet, Missouri
from Church of the Brethren *Living Word* bulletin
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Rise, in body or spirit, and join in
the *Litany Prayer of Thanksgiving*
on the back of your bulletin.

Litany of Thanksgiving

One: We approach you, O God, with majesty and wonder.

All: For we, like Christ, belong to the day and take comfort in being made in his likeness.

One: We give thanks, O God, for the mystery of your created world and universe.

All: And like Jesus, we belong to the day, knowing that we are a part of his body.

One: Grant us mercy, O God, to see the workings of your salvation, which lie beyond time and space.

All: For the Everlasting God will whisper hope and encouragement to us with love and beauty.

One: For we belong to the day.

All: And the day belongs to us! Amen.

by W. Jason Frazer, pastor
Bethany Church of the Brethren
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Hymn #648

“Morning has broken”

Please be seated.

Today's Gospel Story
Matthew 25:14-30

(fake southern accents would be nice for the scripture itself!)

M - Our Gospel story for today is from the 25th chapter of Matthew. This is another parable of Jesus familiar to many folks, almost as well-known as last week's story of the "Good Samaritan." We often call it the parable of the "Talents," though sometimes we forget that one "talent" in the Bible here is really a large sum of money, equal to many years of labor for the average person.

P - Because this story is so familiar, we're going to read it from the *Cotton Patch Gospel*, as paraphrased by Clarence Jordan nearly 60 years ago. As you listen to the figures he used, put it into what that money would have bought in the early 1960's.

M - The *Cotton Patch Gospel* grew out of the soil of southern Georgia, where Jordan started a farm in which black folks and white folks worked together, on equal footing - a real scandal back then. A fellow named Millard Fuller joined Clarence, and the two of them dreamed up *Habitat for Humanity*. Have any of you ever heard of that ministry?

P - In a way, *Habitat for Humanity* lives out this story. Poor folks are entrusted with a house which they themselves have worked to build beside other volunteers, adding their own "sweat equity" to something that grows bigger than the money given. Think about that as you listen to this 'down south' rendition of Matthew 25:14-30.

(pause as G, the "businessman," comes forward and stands at the bottom of the steps, in the middle. Move the mic & stand in front of you.. P stands to the side, portraying all 3 "assistants.")

M - The Kingdom of God,

P - the "God movement," (if you will)

M - is "*like a businessman who was leaving town for a long time and called in his assistants and turned over his investments to them.*

P - *He made one responsible for about five hundred thousand dollars,*

M - *another two hundred thousand,*

P - *and another a hundred thousand*

M - *according to each one's ability -*

P - *and then he left town.*

M - *Right away the man with the five hundred grand got to work and made five hundred more.*

P - *The man with the two hundred grand did the same and made another two hundred.*

M - *But the guy with the hundred C's went and rented a safe-deposit box and put his boss' money in it.*

P - *After a long time the boss returned and called his assistants together for an accounting.*

M - *The one with the five hundred thousand brought his other five hundred thousand and said,*

P - *'Sir, you let me have five hundred grand; look, I've made another five hundred,'*

M - *The boss said,*

G - *‘Splendid, you good and responsible worker! You were diligent with the smaller sum; I’ll entrust you with a larger one. You’ll be a partner in my business.’*

M - *Then the one with the two hundred G’s came and said,*

P - *‘Sir, you let me have two hundred thousand; look, I’ve made another two hundred.’*

M - *The boss said,*

G - *‘Splendid, you good and responsible worker! You were diligent with the smaller sum, I’ll entrust you with a larger one. You’ll be a partner in my business.’*

M - *Well, the hundred grand man came up and said,*

P - *‘Sir, I know you are a hard-nosed man, squeezing pennies you haven’t yet made and expecting a profit before the ink has dried. I was plain scared to take any chances, so I rented a safe-deposit box and put your money in it. Look, you’ve got every cent.’*

M - *But his boss replied,*

G - *‘You sorry, ornery bum! You knew that I squeeze pennies I haven’t yet made, and expect profits before the ink dries. Then you should have turned my money over to the bank so that upon my return I would get back at least my principal with interest. So then, y’all take the money away from him and give it to the one with the million. For it will be given to everyone who*

has the stuff, and he’ll have plenty, but the man who doesn’t have the stuff will have even what he has taken away from him. Now as for this useless critter, throw him in the back alley. That’ll give him something to moan and groan about.’

scripture text from
the *Cotton Patch Gospel*, by Clarence Jordan
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Our Gratitude for the Talents of Eva Simmons

Okay, so we now know (if we didn't already) that in this story of Jesus a "talent" was a lot of money. Of course, we also know that life is not just about money, as our Lord made abundantly clear elsewhere. The riches of God come to us in many ways, and blessings unfold as we take hold of what the Lord provides, and put it to use – each one of us.

Now is a time for us to be thankful to God for what our sister, Eva Simmons, has done with the talent given to and developed by her. Eva, would you come forward?

Your gift of music has blessed God's people here at Long Green Valley Church. You've been one of our organists here since before I arrived in 1990, and I know you have played in other congregations. Whenever I am at Friendship Church, for instance, people ask about you, and recall your gifts. Thank you for sharing those gifts here. I say "gifts" in the plural, because what you do involves more than just playing the organ.

You set the scene for worship to happen. You lead the congregation in singing. You spend a great deal of time choosing music to fit with both the theme of the day and the themes of the moment. You practice, setting the stops of your instrument to go with the piece of music you will play.

Few people today understand that the organ is intended to be more than one instrument. A praise band may include various guitars and keyboards and rhythm instruments. An organ seeks to be all of that – a bit of a one-person orchestra, if you will. It takes a lot to play an organ. Ours has 2 keyboards, three if you count the pedals. Some organs have many more. If you haven't ever seen the "other" side of this organ, what Eva and Kay see when they sit to play, come up some Sunday and look. It brings to mind the cockpit of an aircraft, with many buttons and switches (if that's what you can them) for both fingers and toes. A lot goes on during the playing of a hymn. Believe me. When I sit in the pew behind, I can see.

Eva, we are thankful for the years it took to develop your gift, beginning in your youth. Not only music, but also theology you studied. You attended seminary. While I'm sure you used that in teaching Sunday School, you also used that learning in leading worship. Again, we are so grateful for the talents God gave you. You did not dig a hole, drop in your talents, and cover them up. You did not stick them in a bank vault to gather dust. Nope. You used and perfected them.

Note, in saying "perfected," I did not say your music was "perfect." You'd be the first one to deny perfection, an ever-elusive goal. As a musician, you practiced a great deal, working toward perfecting what you've offered to God as an organist leading worship. No doubt your children heard and saw you doing this week by week. You passed along to them the love of music. One of

them, Philip, even took on the mantle of leading a congregation in music as a professional organist. I may be mistaken, but I think all of your children sing, or have sung in church choirs, continuing that gift of music you and Carl planted in them. Thanks be to God!

Eva, let me tell you that recently, even when you haven't felt at your best, for some strange reason, I have appreciated even more your organ playing. What you do in this, your tenth decade of life, is a marvel to me. Having said that. I/we want your sharing of this gift to be a joy, not a burden. We are grateful for the musical talent God has given you, and for what you have done with it. This is a celebration of that.

We want to now honor you with the title “**Organist Emeritus.**” Please understand, we are not letting you off the hook with this title, “emeritus.” You aren't handing over the car keys. You are merely free now to play *whenever the spirit leads*. No more burden of an entire month, or even an entire service – though, if the Spirit says play, we say, “be free, sister.” Have you ever thought of just sharing a Prelude, or just an Offertory, or just a Postlude? The organ will still be there. It's not going anywhere. And it's not locked up. May your spirit continue to flow musically, just in a different key and a different tempo.

We love you, Eva. Amen? (*applause?*) And we thank God for you – for you, not just for your talents – for you! Thank you for being you!

Returning our Tithes and Offerings

God gives to each and to all the abundance of the kingdom. Yes, that involves abilities, large and small, which bless others. It also involves the moments of our days, of which there are more than we realize. We have all the time we need.

On this Sunday before Thanksgiving, we are aware of the abundance on our tables. If only we paid better attention to the harvest, we'd see more clearly how rich this earth is with food, especially if farmed responsibly.

And, of course, there is what we have been given financially. Not by our employers, but by God. Even when paychecks are small in comparison to others, we are blessed. Often, the most generous persons are those who are poorer. Remember Bea Gaddy, and her meal that continues to feed the homeless long after she died and joined the "*great cloud of witnesses who surround us?*"

Yes, look at the windows on either side of our sanctuary, with names galore of the saints triumphant, official or not, long ago or recent. If you wish, add the name of someone later today - a loved one or friend who is now in the arms of God in heaven. We have been blessed by great wealth!

May we hear God's voice. "*Splendid, you good and responsible worker! You were diligent with the smaller sum; I'll entrust you with a larger one. You'll be a partner in my business.*"

Now is the time to return a portion of what we have been given. As the plates are passed, add your own prayer of gratitude.

Ushers?

Offertory

Responsive Reading from Psalm 90

We turn to the 90th Psalm to read responsively a portion of it. #819 in the back of your hymnal divides the text into lines that are in regular print, and ones that are **in bold**. For this reading, would you on the left (your left) read the lines in regular print. Those of you on the right (your right), please read what is in bold print. We'll join together on the last four lines, which are in bold and in italics.... Do you understand?... Let us speak and hear God's Word together.

Lord, you have been our dwelling place
in all generations.

**Before the mountains were brought forth,
or ever you had formed the earth and the world,
from everlasting to everlasting you are God.**

You turn us back to dust,
and say, "Turn back, you mortals."

**For a thousand years in your sight
are like yesterday when it is past,
or like a watch in the night.**

You sweep them away; they are like a dream,
like grass that is renewed in the morning;

**in the morning it flourishes and is renewed;
in the evening it fades and withers.**

For all our days pass away under your wrath;
our years come to an end like a sigh.

**The days of our life are seventy years,
or perhaps eighty, if we are strong;
even then their span is only toil and trouble;
they are soon gone, and we fly away.**

So teach us to count our days
that we may gain a wise heart.

Turn, O Lord! How long?

Have compassion on your servants!

***Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love,
so that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.***

Hymnal #819, Psalm 90:1-6,9-10,12-14
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Sharing a joy, a concern,
a word of testimony or praise

Prayer

(written by Meghan Knight)

Anointing

(see <http://rockhay.org/worship/anointing.html>)

for Pastor Pete in prep for surgery, led by Bob Barr

Hymn #89

“For the beauty of the earth”

1 Thessalonians 5: 1-11

P - Turning to the apostle Paul's first letter to the folks in Thessalonika, we hear what he had to say to them through the down-under accent of an Australian paraphrase called the *Laughing Bird* version. Those who first followed Jesus expected him to return very soon and usher in God's kingdom. But he didn't come, & they needed to deal with it. In the following words, Paul was just trying to help folks move through their fears toward a deeper faith. In doing so, he simply encouraged them to keep up the good work they already were doing. Sound familiar? ... Listen...

M - *Sisters and brothers, there is really nothing much I can say about God's ultimate timetable that you do not already know.*

P - *You yourselves are up to speed with the fact that the day of the Lord will hit without warning like a redback in a dark dunny*

M - (in Australian, that means: "like a highly venomous spider in a dark outhouse")... Whoa!

P - *The propaganda machines will still be pumping out reports of secure borders and boom times ahead, when suddenly the whole world will be turned on its head.*

M - *It will be like the sudden rapid onset of labor for a pregnant woman: unpredictable, intense, and inescapable!*

P - *But, my dear friends, you are not in the dark about these things, so that day won't catch you off-guard like the red-back.*

M - *Instead, for all of you, the lights have been turned on and bright light is now your natural habitat.*

P - *We no longer live our lives stumbling around in the darkness, so let us not laze around, oblivious to what's going on, the way other people do.*

M - *Instead, let's keep on our toes, and be clear-headed. Those who drink themselves into a stupor and pass out, dead to the world, do so at night, under the cover of darkness.*

P - *But we are creatures of the light of the new day, so let us keep our heads clear and our wits about us.*

M - *Put on all the protection God has provided, for our faith and love will protect our hearts better than a bullet-proof vest, and our confident anticipation of being rescued into new life will protect our heads better than a crash helmet.*

P - *God has not set us up for failure and punishment, but to be rescued from all that into the life opened up for us by our Lord, Jesus the Messiah.*

M - *Jesus paid the ultimate price to secure that life for us, so that whether we live until that day or die first, we will be raised up to live with him.*

P - *In light of all this, keep on doing what I know you are doing: cheering one another on, and helping one another to grow stronger.*

Message

“Living in gratitude, not fear”

Hymn #86

“Now thank we all our God”

Responsive Benediction

One: Let us go forth to be God’s faithful servants.

**All: We will not hide our gifts
but share them with everyone we meet.**

One: Let us go forth to be the followers of Jesus.

**All: We will not hold back our compassion,
but will offer it to all.**

One: Let us go forth to be the Spirit’s hope and peace.

**All: We will be the grace, the joy, the wonder
others need in their lives.**

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from: <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>

Postlude