

**Sunday, April 26th**  
**Mantua Center Christian Church**  
**MCCC Home Worship**

**You will need:**

*A candle and match*

*Bible*

*Paper*

*Bread and Juice (if desiring communion)*

**Order of Worship**

**WELCOME PANEL on the Video**

- Welcome to Worship
- Today you can gather
  - *A candle and match*
  - *Bible*
  - *Bread and Juice (if desiring communion)*

**GREETING - CHAD**

The Peace of the Risen Christ be with you. Welcome to worship this week with the Mantua Center Christian Church. Together...seeking to have Open Minds, Open Hearts, and Open Arms bearing the love and likeness of the Risen Christ.

Today we will be .....JOY.

- Joy in Laughter
- Joy in the Beauty of the Earth
- Joy that Lasts
- Joy in simply being in the presence of God.

**CALL to WORSHIP - Chad**

Family in Christ, let's turn our minds and hearts from other things and light a candle to remind us of God's abiding presence.

*Light a Candle*

**OPENING SCRIPTURE - Leighton Baynes** (in the shared Doc for April 26)

Psalm 100

Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing. Know that the Lord is God. It is he that made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise. Give thanks to him, bless his Name. For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations.

**OPENING HYMN - Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee #2, v.1-2****CHILDREN'S MOMENT - MCCC Joke Line****UPDATE on KIDS' WEEKEND MEALS - Liz Meeker****PASTORAL PRAYER****MUSIC OFFERING - Cassidy Mesaros on Flute****SCRIPTURE - Chad**

Acts 3:1-11

One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. <sup>2</sup>And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple. <sup>3</sup>When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. <sup>4</sup>Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, 'Look at us.' <sup>5</sup>And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. <sup>6</sup>But Peter said, 'I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk.' <sup>7</sup>And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. <sup>8</sup>Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God. <sup>9</sup>All the people saw him walking and praising God, <sup>10</sup>and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him. While he clung to Peter and John, all the people ran together to them in the portico called Solomon's Portico, utterly astonished.

## SERMON - Rev. Chad Delaney

### Making Joy Last...

In my religious studies education at Hiram College we had lots of required readings and source materials for our New Testament courses. We needed to get an New Oxford Annotated NRSV Bible with Apocrypha. We were have Schweitzer's Quest for the Historical Jesus and EP Sanders Historical Figure of Jesus. But also an essential feature of Prof Slingerland's required was the weekly watching of portions of Monty Python's Life of Brian. This was the professor's not-so-subtle reminder to his students not to take themselves too seriously, but also some launching points for thoughtful discussion that only good comedians can bring out.

In one fascinating scene there is a beggar who comes to Brian looking for alms. "Alms for ex-leper?" he says. "Did you say, "Ex-Leper?" Brian replies. The Beggar goes on to tell him how upset he is. He says, "I was hopping along minding my own business. All of a sudden, up Jesus comes. Cures me. One minute I'm a leper with a trade, next minute my livelihood is gone."

It's hilarious AND it prompts some very interesting questions to ponder as we read the Gospels What happened after healings? What happened with the person? With the community around them? Did their momentary, exuberant joy evaporate quickly.....or was it nurtured in some way? And why?

This morning, we see Peter and John continuing the awesome ministry of Jesus by raising people up. The word for "raise" in the Greek is *egeiro* and it shows up over 140 times in the New Testament in each Gospel. It means lift, raise, arise, stand....and its all over the place. Jesus is telling people to stand and walk to God raising Jesus from the dead. *Egeiro* is happening all over the place and captures powerfully the activity of love, the activity of the Holy Spirit in the story of Jesus. When Jesus is around,*egeiro* happens. As the great poet Rumi said, "I don't care if you're dead! Jesus is here, and he wants to resurrect somebody!"

And so, of course, this ministry of resurrection continues with Jesus' disciples. Peter and John are heading to the Temple for prayer time and the beggar entreats them. They have not gold or silver, but they have something else. Power to Raise in the Name of Jesus Christ! Stand up and walk! “And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.” This is exactly what the church is supposed to be doing!

Who is not moved to see his reaction? The guy is literally JUMPING for Joy! <sup>8</sup>Jumping up and stood entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.” It is a site to see. This one who was lame, now can walk. People recognized him and were amazed. One who was ignored and forgotten, was seen, celebrated, and lifted by the church.

So what is to become of this guy afterwards? Did this lame man suffer the same fate as the beggar in Life of Brian? Was he abandoned and left to wander the streets. Did his jumping for joy dissipate into a fading memory and a lonely walk back to the Beautiful Gate? Did someone stay with him and help him reconnect? What happened?

A few years ago a group I was a part of had a chance to sit with some leaders in the non-profit community working with marginalized groups--people on fringes--within our communities and we asked them, “What do you really wish for church folk to know about your work?” “What message would you like us to take back with us?”

One leaders said, “We need you to Stay with us. So many churches and clergy want to be part of the celebrative part or the good PR moment....but then they are gone. We want to know and trust you're in this with us...not just the joyful parts, but the hard parts too.”

The story of Peter and John raising this man up is powerful in and of itself. The ministry of the Holy Spirit is the one who lifts and heals and makes whole and new again. But another powerful part of the story is the fact that this one whom they healed was welcomed beside them as they were forming their community. The scripture points out that he clung to Peter and John as they walked from the Beautiful Gate. Then the bible says in Chapter 4 that he was seen standing next to them. And by the end of the Acts 4, it says all those who believed were of one

heart and soul, sharing their possessions, without a needy one among them. I imagine the ex-beggar was among them.

Finding Joy is more than a temporary happiness. An exuberant burst. This child of God healed at the Beautiful Gate found profound JOY in the power of the Holy Spirit. We see in the story that some were astonished and amazed at his story of healing....but others welcomed him in and it made all the difference. His joy prolonged within a community to cling to. His joy nurtured and strengthened by their support, grace, and redemptive love found around him. All rooted in the God who loves them.

Family of God, here's hoping you find JOY in all sorts of places in your life---unexpected big and small surprises that make you want to leap and jump for joy in praise to God and here's also hoping that you find ways to make it last.

Find Joy in your Family...and make it last by standing with each other through thick and thin.

Find Joy in the Creation...and make it last by taking care of the world around you

Find Joy in Service...and make it last by staying with and investing deeply in the causes you're passionate about.

Find Joy in the work of the church, in egeiro, in the lifting, raising up of all God's Children...and make it last by walking with each other in one heart and soul.

And in all things--in times of struggle or in times of great happiness....may the Love of God surround you and ground you and may the Joy of the Lord be your Strength!

May it be so! Amen.

**HYMN - I come with Joy #420, v. 1, 2, 5**

## **COMMUNION**

Meditation and Prayer - MaryEllen

Words of Institution - Chad

**CLOSING HYMN - For the Beauty of the Earth #56, v.1, 3, 4**

**BENEDICTION - Sarah Smith**

**BENEDICTION SONG - Bob Stehli**