

Sunday Worship Service – March 19, 2023

Worship words from various sources as indicated in the footnotes.

Lighting of the Altar Candles and Lent Candles

Welcome and Announcements

A Moment for Reflection

Lenten Candle Liturgy ¹

Introduction

During the forty days of Lent the Christian Church prepares to observe the Lord's passion and resurrection. We examine ourselves as we remember the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. In this season of repentance and fasting, we come to terms with our mortality and need for God's mercy. The candles in this candelabra represent Jesus' life and ministry. Each week we extinguish another candle, remembering how we, the human race, rejected Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

Scripture reading: Luke 4.16-30

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the Sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is this not Joseph's son?" He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'" And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in his hometown. But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months and there was a severe famine over all the land, yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. There were also many with a skin

¹ written by Tyler Watson from the website spacebetweenmyears.com. Used with permission.

disease in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Reflection:

We extinguish the fourth candle (EXTINGUISH CANDLE), as we remember the people in the synagogue who reject Jesus as God’s messenger. These people, filled with hatred and fear refuse the good news of grace and forgiveness. Here Jesus tells us what God cares about: freedom and justice for those hurting in the world. Because this mission doesn’t fit their vision of what God should care about, the people refuse to believe Jesus could be God’s messiah.

Consider the ways we also reject Jesus. We may reject him because we know his good news for the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed means we would have to care for these people as well and that would be uncomfortable. We may reject him because we want to be in control. We want Jesus to submit to our plans and desires. Instead, Jesus calls us to deny ourselves, pick up our crosses, and follow him. This offends us. Maybe we want to throw him off the cliff. Or maybe we simply ignore him and refuse to obey. But let us remember, by rejecting Jesus and what he cares about, we reject God.

Prayer:

Pray with me.

Holy God, we confess that we want to be in control of you.

We want you to follow our agenda. We don’t want to listen to Jesus.

We want better food on our table,

but are not concerned with those who don’t have enough food on theirs.

We want a promotion at work, but are not concerned that others cannot find employment to provide for their families.

We don’t like you disrupting our priorities by telling us we need to bring good news to the poor, the prisoners, the blind, and the oppressed.

Change us, Jesus. Help us to care for the people you care about.

Break our hearts for the things that break yours.

Help us to listen and obey. Give us the grace to repent so we might seek first your good, true, and peaceful kingdom. Amen.

Gathering Hymn *“Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us”* #789

1. **Savior like a shepherd lead us; much we need your tender care.
In your pleasant pastures feed us, for our use your fold prepare.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us; we are yours.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have bought us; we are yours.**
2. **We are yours; in love befriend us, be the guardian of our way;
keep your flock, from sin defend us, seek us when we go astray:
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear us children when we pray.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, hear us children when we pray.**
3. **You have promised to receive us, poor and sinful though we be;
you have mercy to relieve us, grace to cleanse, and pow’r to free.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, early let us turn to you.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, early let us turn to you.**
4. **Early let us seek your favor, early let us do your will;
blessed Lord and only Savior, with your love our spirits fill.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still.
Blessed Jesus, blessed Jesus, you have loved us, love us still.**

Call to Worship ²

Shepherd us, O God.

Open our ears to hear your calling.

Shepherd us, O God.

Open our eyes to see your care.

Shepherd us, O God.

Shear our fascination with the ways of the world.

Shepherd us, O God.

Prepare us to follow you.

Opening Prayer ³

Maker of Visions, Spirit of Truth, Light of the World,
you choose the least and the weak to be bearers of your good news.
Rejecting those who brag of their own triumphs,
you anointed your servant David to lead Israel,
when all he had ever done was keep his father’s sheep.

² *Call to Worship* written by Karen Clark Ristine, from *Abingdon Worship Annual 2020*, © 2019 Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN. Used with permission.

³ *Opening Prayer* written by Deborah Sokolove, from *Abingdon Worship Annual 2017*, © 2016 Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN. Used with permission.

As we walk the uncertain paths before us,
 anoint us with gladness and bless us with vision.
 Show us the way through terror and shadow.
 Fill us with your light, that we may more fully be the body of Christ,
 bringing light to an aching, broken world. Amen.

Song of Confession “Be Merciful O Lord” - Christ Lutheran Choir

Words of Assurance ⁴

Christ came to lead us in paths of righteousness
 and to guide us through our lives.
 Christ is with us in times of danger and times of peace.
 The goodness and mercy of God
 are given to us each and every day of our lives.
 God forgives us for our failings, upholds us in love,
 and leads us to the place that Christ has prepared for us.
 Believe in your heart that God loves you and forgives you.

Song of Praise “The Joy of the Lord” ⁵

1. **The joy of the Lord will be my strength,
 I will not falter, I will not faint.
 He is my shepherd, I am not afraid.
 The joy of the Lord is my strength.**

Chorus: **The joy of the Lord, the joy of the Lord,
 The joy of the Lord is my strength.
 The joy of the Lord, the joy of the Lord,
 The joy of the Lord is my strength.**

2. **The joy of the Lord will be my strength,
 He will uphold me all of my days.
 I am surrounded by mercy and grace.
 The joy of the Lord is my strength. (Chorus)**
3. **The joy of the Lord will be my strength,
 I will not waiver walking in faith.
 He will be strong to deliver me safe.
 The joy of the Lord is my strength. (Chorus)**

⁴ *Words of Assurance* written by Sharon McCart, from *Abingdon Worship Annual 2014*, © 2013 Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN. Used with permission.

⁵ words and music by Twila Paris © 1991 Ariose Music / Mountain Spring Music.

Prayer of the Day

**Discerner of hearts,
you look beneath our outward appearance
and see your image in each of us.
Banish in us the blindness
that prevents us from recognizing truth,
so we may see the world through your eyes
and with the compassion of Jesus Christ who redeems us. Amen.**

Scripture Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-13

The LORD said to Samuel, “How long are you going to grieve over Saul? I have rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and get going. I’m sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem because I have found my next king among his sons.”

“How can I do that?” Samuel asked. “When Saul hears of it he’ll kill me!”

“Take a heifer with you,” the Lord replied, “and say, ‘I have come to make a sacrifice to the Lord.’ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will make clear to you what you should do. You will anoint for me the person I point out to you.”

Samuel did what the LORD instructed. When he came to Bethlehem, the city elders came to meet him. They were shaking with fear. “Do you come in peace?” they asked.

“Yes,” Samuel answered. “I’ve come to make a sacrifice to the LORD. Now make yourselves holy, then come with me to the sacrifice.” Samuel made Jesse and his sons holy and invited them to the sacrifice as well.

When they arrived, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, that must be the LORD’s anointed right in front.

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Have no regard for his appearance or stature, because I haven’t selected him. God doesn’t look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the LORD sees into the heart.”

Next Jesse called for Abinadab, who presented himself to Samuel, but he said, “The LORD hasn’t chosen this one either.” So Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, “No, the LORD hasn’t chosen this one.” Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD hasn’t picked any of these.” Then Samuel asked Jesse, “Is that all of your boys?”

“There is still the youngest one,” Jesse answered, “but he’s out keeping the sheep.”

“Send for him,” Samuel told Jesse, “because we can’t proceed until he gets here.”

So Jesse sent and brought him in. He was reddish brown, had beautiful eyes, and was good-looking. The LORD said, “That’s the one. Go anoint him.” So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him right there in front of his brothers. The LORD’s spirit came over David from that point forward.

Then Samuel left and went to Ramah.

Here ends the reading.

Inspire our understanding, Spirit of God.

Psalm 23⁶— (read responsively)

Lord, you are my shepherd;

there is nothing I shall want.

Fresh and green are the pastures

where you give me repose.

Near restful waters you lead me,

to revive my drooping spirit.

You guide me along the right path;

you are true to your name.

If I should walk in the valley of darkness

no evil would I fear.

You are there with your crook and your staff;

with these you give me comfort.

You have prepared a banquet for me

in the sight of my foes.

My head you have anointed with oil;

my cup is overflowing.

Surely goodness and kindness shall follow me

all the days of my life.

In the Lord’s own house shall I dwell

for ever and ever.

⁶ from *The Psalms: An Inclusive Language Version Based on the Grail Translation from the Hebrew* © 1963, 1986, 1993 By Ladies Of The Grail (London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995).

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 5:8-14

You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, so live your life as children of light. Light produces fruit that consists of every sort of goodness, justice, and truth. Therefore, test everything to see what's pleasing to the Lord, and don't participate in the unfruitful actions of darkness. Instead, you should reveal the truth about them. It's embarrassing to even talk about what certain persons do in secret. But everything exposed to the light is revealed by the light. Everything that is revealed by the light is light. Therefore, it says, *Wake up, sleeper! Get up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.*

Here ends the reading.

Inspire our understanding, Spirit of God.

Sermon: What the Shepherd Knows

Hymn of the Day "Shepherd Me, O God" #780 (Congregation sings the Refrain)

Refrain: **Shepherd me, O God, beyond my wants,
beyond my fears, from death into life.**

1. **God is my shepherd, so nothing shall I want,
I rest in the meadows of faithfulness and love,
I walk by the quiet waters of peace. (Refrain)**
2. **Gently you raise me and heal my weary soul,
you lead me by pathways of righteousness and truth,
my spirit shall sing the music of your name. (Refrain)**
3. **Though I should wander the valley of death,
I fear no evil, for you are at my side,
your rod and your staff, my comfort and my hope. (Refrain)**
4. **You have set me a banquet of love in the face of hatred,
crowning me with love beyond my power to hold. (Refrain)**
5. **Surely your kindness and mercy follow me all the days of my life;
I will dwell in the house of my God forevermore. (Refrain)**

Apostles' Creed

Let us confess our faith together using the words of the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

**On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Supplication ⁷

You, O God, the Good Shepherd, lead your people along still waters. You have sent your Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as the lamb who redeems your people from their sin. Jesus has become the light that illumines the darkness, allowing us to learn what is pleasing in your sight. You know the thoughts of our hearts before we speak. Hear us then as we utter this prayer.

As you lead us along paths of righteousness, give to us the clarity of vision to discern the way we should go. Our spirits are eager to be faithful in Christ's name. The problems that confront us impel us to act. When we hold back for fear that we will fail, may your Spirit infuse us with the courage to proceed. Good Shepherd, **hear our prayer.**

The issues that face us often do not lend themselves to simple solutions. May your rod and staff comfort us with the promise of your presence. There are many who hunger for sustenance, and thirst after their own redemption from the demons that enslave them. May we take from your table the bread that will nourish them with the truth of your gracious salvation; may we lift to their lips the cup that holds the promise of new life. Good Shepherd, **hear our prayer.**

Your goodness and mercy dwell with us throughout our lives. As members of your household we inherit the promise of your rest. Help us in times of reflection to discover the truth, and in times of action to be more decisive and deliberate. Good Shepherd, **hear our prayer.**

⁷ from *When We Gather: a Book of Prayers for Worship Year A* by James G. Kirk © 1983 The Geneva Press, Philadelphia, PA

As we pass through valleys that await us, may we be led by your radiance and refreshed by the promise that you shepherd us still. Good Shepherd, **hear our prayer.**

The Lord's Prayer (sung)

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Offering Presentation & Offering Prayer ⁸

Loving shepherd, gentle savior,

we give you thanks this day:

for rest in green pastures,

for refreshment beside still waters,

for health and wholeness for our souls.

As we rejoice in your goodness and mercy,

we offer you our gifts this day.

Through our offering, may others be blessed,

as we have been blessed from your hand. Amen.

Sending Hymn *"When You Go from Here"* ⁹

When you go from here, when you go from here,

live with justice, love with mercy, humbly walk in God's care.

Benediction ¹⁰

Open your eyes and your heart to the light of God,
even in the presence of your enemies.

For the vision of God's light
is found in what is good and right and true.

⁸ written by B. J. Beu, from *Abingdon Worship Annual 2023*, © 2022 Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN. Used with permission.

⁹ text and music by Linnea Good, © 1991 Borealis Music, from *Sing a New Creation – Anglican Church of Canada*

¹⁰ *Benediction* written by Deborah Sokolove, from *Abingdon Worship Annual 2017*, © 2016 Abingdon Press, Nashville, TN. Used with permission.

Go forth as children of the light,
in the name of the One who is Maker of Visions,
Spirit of Truth, Light of the World. Amen.

Commission

Go in peace, inspired by Christ to love and serve.

Thanks be to God!

Postlude – Joshua Hendricksen