

Live
Lent
with Love



Trinity United Church of Christ

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Trinity United Church of Christ
March 10, 2024
8AM and 10:30AM Worship
Fourth Sunday in Lent

Awakening joyful service guided by our still speaking God!

*If this is your first time with us, or if you have come to this sacred space your entire life, we are glad to be on this journey of faith with you. Trinity believes that **whoever you are, and wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!** To enhance your worship experience, we have large print bulletins and hearing support devices available.*

Please ask an usher or greeter for assistance.

Enter to worship today but stick around to see what God is doing in this place!

*Congregational responses in **bold print**. * Denotes standing as you are able.*

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TIME OF SHARING AND GREETING

PRELUDE – “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” – *Mason/Hamm*

*CALL TO WORSHIP

God is good; God's steadfast love lasts forever.

We know it, we believe it, we proclaim it!

God is good; God's steadfast love lasts forever.

Those who thirst for new life are satisfied;

Those who hunger for the living Word are filled!

God is good; God's steadfast love lasts forever.

The imprisoned ones know freedom; sinners know pardon!

God is good; God's steadfast love lasts forever.

The powerful are humbled; the needy are raised up from their distress!

God is good!

God's steadfast love lasts forever!

*HYMN #70 “God Is Here! We Your People”

***PRAYER**

**You are with us as we go with Jesus toward Jerusalem,
most gracious God, and we are thankful.**

**You constantly remind us of what sustains us as a faith community.
You help us understand your realm of love and justice beyond this church.**

**You are present as we walk beside the cross-carrying Jesus
and remind us of the demanding call to discipleship.**

Most gracious God, stay with us! Amen.

***SUNG RESPONSE #193 “In the Cross of Christ I Glory” (V1)**

***In the cross of Christ I glory,
towering o’er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story
gathers ‘round its head sublime.***

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

**O God of Comfort and God of Challenge, we come to you this morning
the way the Israelites did, full of complaints and dissatisfaction.**

Nothing is enough; we do not recognize your blessing at work in our day-to-day lives.

Forgive us.

**In our complaints, challenge us as you did the Israelites,
to consider the bigger picture of oppression, injustice, and inequality around us.**

**Forgive us when we close our eyes for fear of what you might show us;
lift up loving and compassionate leaders to open our eyes
until we see what you see in our world.**

(Moment for Silent Prayer)

SUNG RESPONSE #188 “Give Me a Clean Heart”

***Give me a clean heart so I may serve you.
God, fix my heart so that I may be used by you.
For I’m not worthy of all these blessings.
Give me a clean heart and I’ll follow you.***

ASSURANCE OF GRACE

**You are blessed because God’s image resides deep within each of you.
So return God’s blessing by the way you love others. Amen.**

SPECIAL MUSIC (10:30am)

“The Remembering”

J. M. Martin

Catherine Hammons

A TIME FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART (8:00am)

SCRIPTURES

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.

²Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble

³and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

¹⁷Some were sick through their sinful ways,
and because of their iniquities endured affliction;

¹⁸they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death.

¹⁹Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress;

²⁰he sent out his word and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.

²¹Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.

²²And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of his deeds with songs of joy.

John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

SERMON

Pastor Fred Young (8:00am)

Rev. Ed Gobrecht (10:30am)

HYMN #553 "There is a Balm in Gilead"
(Remain Seated)

PRAYER/LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory, forever. Amen.**

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH #881 Apostle's 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 again 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**

***CELEBRATION OF OUR GIFTS**

**You, O God, know the consequences of our giving;
you know the results of our generosity.
May they be found in persons supports, sickness faced and hope returned.**

***OFFERTORY RESPONSE #778**

***Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God for all that love has done;
Creator, Christ, and Spirit, One.***

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**
As change takes place for good,
may our gifts be blessed,
and your children restored. Amen.

***HYMN #222 “My Song is Love Unknown”**

***FINAL BLESSING**

***POSTLUDE**

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Today’s Worship Elements have been adapted from the following resources:

Written by the Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel, Conference Minister for Missouri Mid-South Conference, UCC.
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Prayers to Share Year B: David Sparks. Woodlake Books. 2002.

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Prelude: *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross:* Music by Lowell Mason. Arranged by Marilyn Ham.

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Hymns: *God Is Here! As We Your People:* Contributors Fred Pratt Green and Cyril V Taylor.

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There is a Balm in Gilead: African American Spiritual

My Song is Love Unknown: Contributors Sam Crousman and Stephen DeCesare. Public Domain

Special Music: *The Remembering,* American Folk Melody: arr. by Joseph M. Martin, c 2000, 2009,

GlorySound and Malcolm Music

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Today’s Worship Participants

Rev. Dr. Frederick A. Young		Pastor
Rev. Ed Gobrecht		Guest Pastor
Cindy Blevins	8:00am	Lay Liturgists
Ann Harvey	10:30am	
Sara Shank		Organist
John McKay		Senior Choir Director
Mark Luckenbaugh	8:00am	Percussion
Roberta Weiant	8:00am	Ushers
Gordon Havey, Steve Sheely	10:30am	
Mary Jane & Harry Hilbert	10:30am	Greeters
Janet Sheely	10:30am	Acolyte
Georgia Hollabaugh, Kara Young, Luke Milhimes, Russell Bailey,		Tech Team
Carl Barrick, Stacey Rushwald, George Steckert, Garrison Redding, Terry Krietz		

God Is Here! As We Your People Meet

70

Fred Pratt Green, 1978; alt.

1. God is here! As we your peo-ple
meet to of-fer praise and prayer,
May we find in full-er mea-sure
what it is in Christ we share.
Here, as in the world a-round us,
all our var-ied skills and arts
wait the com-ing of the Spir-it
in-to o-pen minds and hearts.
2. Here are sym-bols to re-mind us
of our life-long need of grace;
Here are ta-ble, font, and pul-pit,
here the cross has cen-tral place.
Here in hon-es-ty of preach-ing,
here in si-lence, as in speech,
here, in new-ness and re-new-al,
God the Spir-it comes to each.
3. Here our chil-dren find a wel-come
in the Shep-herd's flock and fold;
Here as bread and wine are tak-en,
Christ sus-tains us as of old.
Here the ser-vants of the Ser-vant
seek in wor-ship to ex-plore
what it means in dai-ly liv-ing
to be-lieve and to a-dore.

OPENING OF WORSHIP

4. Sov-ereign God, of earth and heav-en,
in an age of change and doubt
Keep us faith-ful to the gos-pel,
help us work your pur-pose out.
Here, in this day's ded-i-ca-tion,
all we have to give, re-ceive;
we, who can-not live with-out you,
we a-dore you! We be-lieve!

Words Copyright © 1979 by Hope Publishing Company

There Is a Balm in Gilead

553

African-American spiritual; alt.

Refrain:

There is a balm in Gil-e-ad, to make the wound-ed whole,
there is a balm in Gil-e-ad, to heal the sin-sick soul.

1. Some-times I feel dis-cour-aged, and think my work's in vain,
But then the Ho-ly Spir-it re-vives my soul a-gain.

Refrain:

2. Don't ev-er feel dis-cour-aged, for Je-sus is your friend,
who, if you ask for knowl-edge, will nev-er fail to lend.

Refrain:

3. If you can-not preach like Pe-ter, if you can-not pray like Paul,
you can tell the love of Je-sus, who died to save us all.

Refrain:

Jer. 8:18–22; 46:11; Acts 10:34–43

My Song Is Love Unknown

Samuel Crossman, 1664; alt.

1. My song is love un-known, my Sav-ior's love to me,
Love to the love-less shown, that they might love-ly be.
O who am I, that for my sake
my God should take frail flesh and die?
My God should take frail flesh and die?
2. God left the rich-est throne sal-va-tion to be-stow;
But Christ as flesh and bone the world re-fused to know.
But, O my Friend, my Friend in-deed,
who at my need did life ex-pend;
who at my need did life ex-pend.
3. Some-times they threw down palms and sweet-est prais-es sang.
Ho-san-nas and glad psalms through streets and mar-kets rang.
Then "Cru-ci-fy!" is all their breath,
for blood and death they thirst and cry;
for blood and death they thirst and cry.
4. What has my Sov-ereign done? What makes this rage and spite?
Christ gave new strength to run, re-stored the gift of sight.
Sweet in-ju-ries! Yet they at these
them-selves dis-please, and 'gainst Christ rise;
them-selves dis-please, and 'gainst Christ rise.

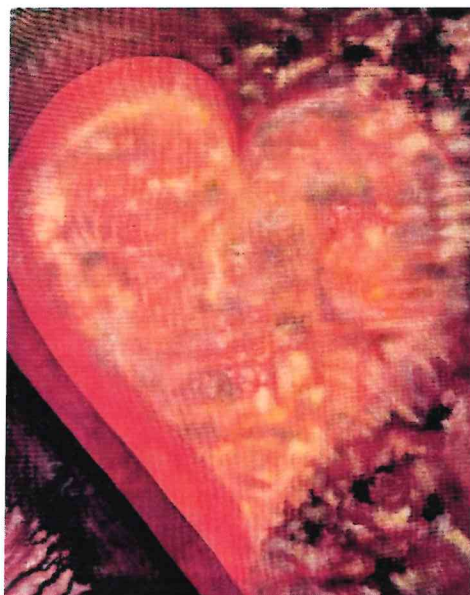
HOLY WEEK

5. I sing my plain be-lief, one song my heart out-pours:
Nev-er was pain nor grief, nev-er was love like yours.
This is my Friend, in whose sweet praise
I all my days could glad-ly spend;
I all my days could glad-ly spend.

2 Cor. 5:15–19; Heb. 5:7–10

Trinity United Church of Christ
Gettysburg, PA

Fourth Sunday of Lent
March 10, 2024



Sermon
John 3:14-21

Rev. Dr. Frederick A. Young
Pastor

Will you join me in prayer: Surround us God with your love, and compel us to share it with the world. Amen.

Last week, we talked about Jesus' anger in the temple courtyard and how he used it for the benefit of those who did not have a voice. Christ's holy anger was a sign of great justice and compassion for others. Today we hear that Christ is not only world's light, but the greatest love.

John's Gospel is notorious for characterizing a Jesus who does not hold back in sharing his identity. We may never find ourselves like the ancient, exiled Israelites or for that matter, like Jesus, wandering in a desert wasteland. However, each of us may face times when we desperately need the redeeming hand of God to help us in our calling to be the church who stretches out arms and legs, hands, feet, and voices to do the work of God in this world.

Within the passage from John, we hear how Jesus reveals God through his very being. He not only speaks the truth, he is the Truth. John's words continue beyond John 3:16. We hear about believers and

non-believers, condemnation, light and love. Preacher and educator, David Loose, has claimed:

The judgement to come is not punishment, but simply the crisis that befalls those who will not come out of the darkness for fear of the light. Judgement as crisis, as tragedy, as loss. God comes in love to redeem such loss, turn such tragedy into victory and demonstrate true power through sheer vulnerability and sacrifice.

I once heard about a mid-western farmer who refused to set his clock ahead in the spring. He simply did not agree with daylight savings time. His choice did mean that he had to be extra diligent in getting to appointments, worship and other engagements on time, but his internal clock reminded him that if it was daylight there was work to be done and when the sun set and darkness stretched the sky, his day was done.

Although this farmer is one step behind the rest of the country from March to November, he is right. What difference does it really make to take an hour of sunshine from the beginning of the day only to tack it on at the end? No one can control the light all we can do is position ourselves in relation to the light.

We hear a lot about light and darkness within the Gospel of John. Today's lesson is no different. We cannot control how long the sun will shine. Likewise, we cannot contain Christ's light and love in our world! Our truth in recognizing this comes from the position we place ourselves in relation to Christ. Today, it is becoming harder and harder to remember that we must be willing to let go of the life we have planned for ourselves so that we can make room for the life that is waiting for us in God. Our world tells us that security comes not through vulnerability, sacrifice and patience, but through access to money and power. The kind of self-sacrificing love Jesus offers must be frightening to such a worldview.

For the past several weeks of Lent, we have been focusing on creating our hearts anew. For me, I have been dedicating time each day to spend in devotion and I have been trying to take a breath and pause to **respond** and not **react** during moments of conflict or crisis. What has it meant to you? How are you opening your heart, bending beyond your comfort to re-encounter God? On Ash Wednesday, the beginning of

our Lenten journey, we talked about our flexibility. Bending can be scary, especially when our limits are unknown. I mentioned that trees don't stand stiff, but flex in the wind and bounce back rather than break. Teenager, Mark, was feeling stuck and lost in the world. He often felt that life had taken him to the breaking point. When he was away for college his Uncle Henri would send reminders that life might be unpredictable, but Christ's love would remain constant.

Henri writes:

Finally, listen to your heart. It's there that Jesus speaks most intimately to you. Praying is first and foremost listening to Jesus, who dwells in the very depths of your heart. He doesn't shout. He doesn't thrust himself upon you. His voice is an unassuming voice, very nearly a whisper, the voice of a gentle love. Whatever you do with your life, go on listening to the voice of Jesus in your heart.

Letters to Marc about Jesus. 1987.

Some of us are still rubbing the sleep from our eyes this morning after losing an hour of dreams, one of the challenges of the Gospel of

John is still before us, asking how we are positioning ourselves to live in the light and love of Christ. How are we quieting ourselves to hear a voice so gentle? Are we bending our lives, molding ourselves in response to Jesus? Imagine our world with such compassion. An even deeper question, how do we reconcile this passage where it seems that few are included and a vast majority of the world is outside of God's love. This makes me uncomfortable. It isn't the way I see Jesus. The writer of John is professing such a deep and cutting line. There seems to be no room to bend. Throughout my faith journey I have come to believe in a world where God's love is not limited to those who profess a belief in Christ but open to all, whether positioned in the light or not! This is often the hard work of scripture. This is the hard work of our faith, being willing to hear when God is still speaking.

“For God so loved the world!” Loving our neighbors as God loves us seems a simple task, yet it is easy to put up barriers that keep us from seeing each other. We need to take a deeper look at how we love. It is

vital now, more than ever for us to find common ground, a sense of community, a path of peace.

“For God so loves” us whether we like it or not. God’s love is tenacious. It will continue to chase after us, seeking to hold onto us.

“For God so” desires to be a part of our lives. Our relationship with God is one in which we are both found and lost in the power of the spirit.

“For God” wants us to renew our hearts for love. Amen.