



Westminster Presbyterian Church
Eugene, Oregon
“At- Home” Worship
March 21, 2021

Gathering Around God’s Word

*If you are worshipping with another family member or with children, you are invited to have different voices share and read the various parts of the service. You can also call/FaceTime someone to worship together.
(If you have a prayer request you would like added to the At- Home Worship service, please email Brooke office@wpceugene.org)*

CALL TO WORSHIP

Praise to the God of Creation,
who provided us with all we would need.
Praise to the God of Israel’s desert journey,
where He was present in manna and a pillar of light.
Praise to the God of the Prophets and Kings,
in the journeys of Elijah and David.
Praise to the God of the Church,
in the life and message of Jesus,
the Good News, redemption for all.
Let us worship God.

OPENING HYMN

There Is A Wideness in God’s Mercy

#435

CALL TO CONFESSION

God calls us into a new covenant. “I will put my law within you, and I will write it upon your hearts. I will be your God and you will be my people. I will forgive your evil deeds and I will remember your sins no more.” In penitence and faith, let us confess our sins to God and to one another.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Holy Father, we know that the sacrifice you desire of us is a broken spirit and a contrite heart. In teachings and examples Jesus showed us that if we choose to follow Him we will love our neighbor as we love ourselves. We will feed the hungry, care for the sick and the disabled in His name. We will work for justice for the oppressed and powerless. We will go into all the world and teach the good news to everyone.

I confess that I think about these things, I want to do these things. I want to examine my heart and my spirit and find myself desirable in Your sight. Show me the true intent of my thoughts and behaviors, Remind me that my actions are my offering to you. In self examination I realize I fall short of my capabilities. I am remorseful and penitent in the realization that my offering to You is lacking. Forgive me. In Christ's name we confess, Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

This is the Good News. Jesus came into the world not to condemn the world, but to save the world. Believe, and in Jesus, you are forgiven.

The Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Touch our blind eyes, open our deaf ears, and convict our intentions. Not to assess our intellectual learning, but to examine our personal behavior of service. Fill us with your Spirit. Help us see and hear and understand your words for us. Enlighten our thoughts. Challenge our behaviors. Amen

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Old Testament Reading: Jeremiah 31:31-34

The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the Lord,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

New Testament Reading: John 12:17-26

So the crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to testify. It was also because they heard that he had performed this sign that the crowd went to meet him. The Pharisees then said to one another, “You see, you can do nothing. Look, the world has gone after him!” Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

ANTHEM

Remake My Will

Bob and Robin Burk

SERMON

“Coming Soon: A New Covenant, A New Way of Being”

Dr. Karen Young

A new thing was about to happen. Sometimes you sort of anticipate it, and sometimes it just happens. In a high school in Illinois in the 1960's, around 1,000 students were headed for the auditorium to elect 5 cheerleaders for the next year. For years the mission of the education of the students of Morgan County had happened -- class after class -- season after season, comfortably predictable. And new things happened as well sometimes- like the addition to the old 3 story brick building of 3 new stories for more room for learning in the

growing, changing community. Changes like integration took place a few years earlier and there was equality of opportunity in all classes, all athletic teams, and after school activities. However, some things remained the same - there were unwritten rules, clear, but never spoken, some boundaries - invisible but never crossed. The band and the choir and the football and basketball teams, and all classes were integrated. But, when it came time to vote for Homecoming Court and Year Book Queen and Pep squad and cheerleaders -- all elected persons were White.

The school handbook rules for trying out for cheerleader consisted of guidelines for a skill set of challenging gymnastic skills, a standard description of expected social behavior and academic performance. At the last moment of the last day to sign up, Judy went to the office and signed her name, last on the tryout list of 15 girls. Judy Banks was pleasant and quiet and athletic and Afro-American.

Fourteen girls, all qualified and talented and white took their turn. Judy was the last name on the list. She came out on stage and in 3 minutes she performed a routine with loud, clearly spoken words, a smiling face, and performed athletic skills with strength and height and capabilities that wowed the entire auditorium. And her last jump was one that no one else could do, and when her feet hit the floor of the stage, all was quiet. And when the ballots were counted, that high school had its first AfroAmerican cheerleader. She was third out of 5 chosen.

Every ballot marked that day called for decisions that involved more personal decisions than anyone had imagined. All of a sudden that little part of the world chose to live in a new way of being. Progress sometimes moves forward in quiet small steps -- an event calls for a decision that has been formulating for a time. On this day the ballot called for each to decide - what do I say about the issue for race in this group of girls that represent the student body.

And so it was in today's New Testament passage. In Jerusalem, a new thing was about to happen. The Feast of the Passover was approaching. The third, and last, Passover in the 3 year earthly mission of Jesus began as he "turned His face toward Jerusalem" with the awareness that the "fullness of time" had come. Jeremiah, and other Old Testament prophets, had spoken of a coming new covenant. Not a rework of the Old Covenant, but a completely new way. Change is difficult, especially in times of chaos and conflict.

Years of both God's validation of the nation of Israel in God's eternal plan coupled with years of prophecy about a future covenant. Now, three years of a message of new thoughts and practices from this Jesus and His follower. Living and teaching among the Jewish cities, but also spending much time among others - Caananites, Samaritans, Gentiles, tax collectors, prostitutes, and the demon-possessed. Chaos and conflict in high measure are here in Jerusalem, which makes a quiet time of decision difficult. The Pharisees and Sadducees just want to get past Passover and quietly return to their ordered prescribed positions of power, The Roman government local officials want the Jews to not cause trouble that will call the attention of Rome down on them. The citizens are excited that this Jesus was coming to their town.

What was about to happen in Jerusalem would change the way God's previous covenant with mankind was lived out. Not that the previous covenant was a failure, but rather a step in the progression of God's initial unchanging plan since the fall from Eden. Since the call of Abraham through Moses and the Kings and Prophets, the nation of Israel had led the promise of God's intent to be victorious over evil and death and separation from God. And, the promise of the Messiah was always anticipated, but variously interpreted.

As Jesus turns his eyes to Jerusalem he sees the great city of Jewish history. It is filled with people who can trace their family history back through one of the 12 tribes to Father Abraham. Their lives are ordered around

specific laws for every aspect of life. As Jesus looks to the temple he would see that to obey some of these laws there were physical divisions that separated also the access to Jewish worship -the court of women and the court of the Gentiles, structural statements of the separation of people by ethnicity and gender. And a physical statement about who could - or should- approach God.

God's plan - set from the beginning - was progressing through the history of the Jewish nation. God's plan is not the chaotic factor here. Man's ability to respond to God's progressive work is problematic, limited by humanness and the presence of evil. So many viewpoints in Jerusalem were in conflict at that time. At one point in scripture the Pharisees say about Jesus - "Look, the whole world is going after him!" They say this in frustration and fear. On this side of God's story we say, Hallelujah.

And, as Jesus is sitting with his disciples contemplating Gethsemane, another very important event for us is recorded. A group of Greeks approach 2 disciples and say, "We would like to see Jesus." And all Gentiles on this side of the story should shout -- Amen! Yes, we want Jesus also.

As Marta and David guide us through the last 2 weeks of this Lenten-Easter journey, let us all continue to examine what we bring to our part of this ongoing covenant. How do we react today in our role in God's plan for reconciliation with all people? Are we sometimes Pharisees that put up boundaries and resist some groups who seek God? Are we approachable known servants of God so that people seek us out as they desire to see God? Are we a place of safety and welcoming for the searching and broken? Do we display the behaviors associated with followers of Jesus? Do we ask for the Holy Spirit to move through us to reach those that God is calling now? What will a searching world look for in the behavior of the children of the new covenant?

The Jews at that time could be easily identified in their living according to their obedience to the rules of their relationship with God at that time. On this side of the story can we be identified by the attitudes and behavior that God has asked of us? If so, I suggest we will be known by our works in the following ways -

God's people will be seen working:

- ...to set the captive free
- ...to make plowshare out of sword
- ...to feed the hungry and quince their thirst
- ...to make love and peace their fast
- ...to serve the poor and homeless first
- ...to pray for justice to roll down and cleanse
- ...to restore harmony and peace
- ...to give thanks in one accord in service to their Lord.

Amen.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH – from A Brief Statement of Faith

We believe in God, our Creator, who at the beginning of time made us to be sons and daughters: who, after we separated ourselves from God, did not abandon us. We believe in God, our Savior, Jesus Christ, who is One with the Creator; who in love limited himself to life as a human, who was born in Bethlehem,

lived in Galilee, walked in Palestine and Israel, who through His life and death and resurrection reunited us with God, bringing to us, in His person, God's all encompassing love and peace.

We believe in God, the Holy Spirit, who feeds us with wisdom, strength, faith and love so that we can return to God restored to the wholeness for which we were created.

Responding to God's Word

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

God of Creation, who loves and redeems all that has been made..

We praise You for your unchanging covenant with this world
in the renewing pictures in nature of your miraculous
work of rest and renewal and change.

We give praise for the human intellect that can send a space shuttle to
Mars ---- please make us mindful of the vast universe in awe.

We give thanks for people who are called to leadership at local and national levels.
Convict these people with spiritual guidance for seeking out social justice based on
Godly standards.

We ask for blessings and spiritual direction for all our church leaders in this time of great
challenge of leadership and with the need for nurturing ministries.

Bless all people who are lonely and isolated. Bless all who are insecure of finances and health,
Lift up sad moods, calm anxious feelings, energize worn out intentions. Give us hope.

We bring to you now the personal burdens that weigh us down in our silent petitions.

We ask all this in Jesus name as we pray the prayer He taught us.

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen.

Sending of God's Word

CLOSING HYMN

Today We All Are Called To Be Disciples

#757

BENEDICTION

Having gathered in community with worship in music and scripture and prayer and the shared hearing of the word, let us return to our life of service - our daily lives of sacrifice and testimony lived out with the love of God our Father, with the companionship of Jesus our redeemer, and in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. Go in Peace.