

April 26 2020 – Third Sunday of Easter

A Blessed Sunday morning to you, and welcome to our eighth online worship service, during the time of church closure due to COVID. Today, you get to hear Brad on the clarinet for the Prelude, a Contemplative Music Pause provided by our Seminary (now called), Martin Luther University College. Our hymnody also includes selections from Africa. Our Gathering Hymn, an easy, traditional South African call and response song called "Hamba Nathi" ... the words are from the Xhosa language:

Hamba Nathi Mkhululi wethu

Pronounced - Hamba nathi [hahm-bah nah-tee] Mkhululi wethu [koo-loo-lee way-too]

Meaning – You are Holy, You show us the way (with "you are freedom, you are justice, you are healing" as English alternates)

And our Sending Hymn is familiar from our hymnal, #866, Siyahamba, which is a South African Zulu folk song.

Both these African songs capture the language and sense of movement, fitting to the gospel reading which is about Jesus' walking with the disciples, after his resurrection, when for a while they do not recognize that it is our beloved Messiah walking with them. Perhaps this is true of our experiences these days too: Jesus is walking with us but we do not see him ... He is Holy, he shows us the way, we are marching in his light, yet sometimes we may not know it. We also have a link to a sung Lord's Prayer in Swahili, "Baba Yetu". I am thankful for the opportunity to travel the world as we worship ☺

Brad and I also met this past week, across the wide expanse of the sanctuary, to plan for our Back to Church Easter Sunday ☺ The gospel reading we study today will be used again for that Sunday when we return to community worship (with a few more verses included for our Back to Church Sunday). I encourage you to compare the two studies when we get to that point of worshipping as a gathering again. If you do this you will notice some of the many facets of insight available through any one piece of scripture.

Remember to reach out by telephone, email or facebook if you need a friendly phone call or a screen door visit. And please remain connected with each other by telephone – make it your goal this week to call at least one person every day for a telephone visit. You will be blessed, and will be a blessing in the process ☺

- with love, in Christ, Pastor Janaki.

**Please take a few moments of silence,
prepare your heart,
centre yourself for worship.**

Prelude: Contemplative Music Pause

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N988jqIXRfk>

Gathering Hymn 'Hamba Nathi'

Click here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BkONwPf2xb4>

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all, in your home and in mine.

Prayer of the Day:

Ever-present Creator, your Son Jesus walks with us even when we don't know it. You are with us in all times, in all places, walking alongside us, experiencing along with us. Open the eyes of our faith, that we might notice Jesus with us ... our Redeemer and Way-Maker. Amen

The Lesson: 1 Peter 1:17-23

If you invoke as Father the one who judges all people impartially according to their deeds, live in reverent fear during the time of your exile. You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish. He was destined before the foundation of the world but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake. Through him you have come to trust in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are set on God. Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. [NRSV]

Word of God, word of life. ***C: Thanks be to God.***

Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19 (Please read from your bibles at home)

David Haas features in our hymnal bountifully. If you have internet access at home, access this Psalm lead by him, with call and response parts for you to sing along (if you are like me you might super-impose Brad's face on David's):

Click here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z4Rs3JZ5II4>

Reading Home Work re-read Acts 2 as we look towards Pentecost.

Gospel Acclamation with visuals of our church windows:

"How Beautiful Are the Feet of Him from Handel's Messiah featuring Julianne Bintakies, soprano, Barbara Burden, alto, and Bradley Moggach, piano. The piece was recorded in 2009 for the 175th anniversary of our congregation. It was part of a CD created for the occasion entitled, Remember, Rejoice, Renew."

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rm9bAUffHK4&feature=youtu.be>

The Holy Gospel according to Luke 24:13-31.

C: Glory to you O Lord.

That same day two of them were walking to the village Emmaus, about seven miles out of Jerusalem. They were deep in conversation, going over all these things that had happened. In the middle of their talk and questions, Jesus came up and walked along with them. But they were not able to recognize who he was. **[NRSV: But their eyes were kept from recognizing him]** He asked, "What's this you're discussing so intently as you walk along?"

They just stood there, long-faced, like they had lost their best friend. Then one of them, his name was Cleopas, said, "Are you the only one in Jerusalem who hasn't heard what's happened during the last few days?" He said, "What has happened?"

Then he said to them, "So thick-headed! So slow-hearted! Why can't you simply believe all that the prophets said? Don't you see that these things had to happen, that the Messiah had to suffer and only then enter into his glory?" Then he started at the beginning, with the Books of Moses, and went on through all the Prophets, pointing out everything in the Scriptures that referred to him.

They came to the edge of the village where they were headed. He acted as if he were going on but they pressed him: "Stay and have supper with us. It's nearly evening; the day is done." So he went in with them. And here is what happened: He sat down at the table with them. Taking the bread, he blessed and broke and gave it to them. **[NRSV: Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight.]** At that moment, open-eyed, wide-eyed, they recognized him. And then he disappeared. [The Message Translation]

The Gospel of our Lord. ***C: Praise to you, O Christ.****

Sermon (imagine Pastor Janaki's voice here):

Many of us have taken to wearing masks to protect ourselves from the possibility of infection when we are out and about. But in our homes, we might be less careful about protecting ourselves from the story-telling that mongers fear in our midst; story-telling that we often reach for like children reaching for candy, because we want to "stay informed" and we "need to know what is happening in the news".

Writer/Journalist Naomi Klein has a whole book which tells of something she terms "The Shock Doctrine" – the use of the public's disorientation and fear following (and perhaps during) massive collective shocks or disasters, to drive unpopular economic, political or social agenda. Because I want to strive for some level of sanity and discernment that is driven by Spirit and Self, and not puppeteered by somebody in a newsroom or political arena, I intentionally limit my methods and access to "news". This is my version of a fear facemask if you will.

This has been a week of exceptionally tragic death, including violence. And although I had taken a break from online news because I was suffering from COVID over-newsing terrors, I checked news every day for updates on the shooting in Nova Scotia. As details became available, we learnt the stories of the people whose lives were taken away, and I even watched a video of the teenage victim, Emily Tuck, playing the violin for her family. There was even an article in which our Prime Minister asked that we not focus on the shooter, but on the lives affected by the tragic deaths – his way perhaps of helping us put on a fear facemask, and reducing the news glamour directed at the shooter.

I have prayed for all the families who lost loved ones so violently in Nova Scotia this week. And I have asked myself over and over again, where was Jesus for those people? In their final moments were they terrified? Did they know peace? Did their lives flash before their eyes?

The news has focused on the stories of their lives: RCMP mother, veteran, pregnant health care worker, teenage violinist. They are stories of lives ... and in the telling of those stories grief will walk her walk, and comfort will make her rounds through the connection of hearts in community.

Also this week, I got news from Jamaica. My family sent me a link to the newspaper, in which an article had been written about the sixth COVID fatality in Jamaica. His name was Professor Tara Dasgupta, and he was someone well known to me and my family for almost my whole life. Prof Dasgupta had two daughters, just like my dad: Sutopa and Shuvra. We were friendly faces at each other's birthday parties and gatherings as children, we went to prep school and high school together, we had what we call "play dates" nowadays ... and Prof taught at the university in Jamaica where I did my undergrad.

I remember when I began in university, he playfully chided me for not taking Chemistry, telling me it was the best subject with his big toothy smile, and I was missing out. I remember stories from times when our lives intersected ... It is hard to believe he is gone. Shuvra, like my own sister, is a doctor working in Jamaica. Her

sister, Sutopa is working and living in the USA, and may not make it home to Jamaica anytime soon to be with her family. I am praying for the entire Dasgupta family in their loss and sorrow.

And I ask myself over and over again, where was Jesus for them? Where is Jesus for them now? And I reached out to Shuvra to share condolences and love, and remember Prof ... I hope others will too, reach out and share their stories, so grief will walk her walk, and comfort will make her rounds through the connection of hearts in community.

It is hard to hold on to the promise and reality of Jesus in the face of tragic and unexpected death, hard to hold on to the comfort he offers to us of eternal life. This is hard. These times are hard. And it feels like a long trek yet before we get to where we are going. And in the midst of the walking, there are stories ... stories of lives ... the stories of those who have died, and how our lives intersected with theirs. In the stories there is hope to be found – and it is the hope of communities and love that is faithful beyond the power of death.

Today's scripture speaks to exactly these realities ... walking in grief, walking in shock, remembering the stories in the backdrop, and wondering, where is Jesus? Wondering where he is until he is revealed. Listening to the stories until revelation and its attendant comfort come along.

Two disciples, as faithful as any one of us might be, and therefore as confused and as doubting and sad as any one of us might be ... they are on their way to the village of Emmaus a few days after Jesus' violent crucifixion. A journey of about seven miles gives them lots of time to talk, reflect, lament and perhaps even curse at how things have turned out for them ... at how their beloved teacher and leader, Jesus, has first of all, died, and now his body has disappeared and people are saying he has been raised from the dead.

Notably, in the Gospel of Luke, the people saying he has been raised are women ... the disciples do not believe ... they think the women must be making this all up. So no visible Jesus has appeared to them yet, and they have burned into their memories the violence of his death ... the crushing disappointment of the hopes they had invested in him as Messiah broken, with his body, on the cross.

As they are walking on this long road, long comes a "stranger" to walk with them. They do not recognize this stranger, and it is important to note that their lack of recognition does not appear to be their own short-sightedness ... the New Revised Standard translation of the Bible says "their eyes were kept from recognizing him." This stranger, this random dude, walks along with them and talks with them ... wondering and asking what they are talking about.

I can imagine Cleopas, probably rolling his eyes and wishing this passer-by would just move along. Impatiently, Cleopas responds ... "Are you the only one who has not heard what has happened in Jerusalem?" (adding, "you imbecile, are you for real?" or some other inside voice comment which we are not quite privy to).

The response from “the stranger” is a somewhat frustrated recap of the Old Testament, from the earliest stories to the prophecies that told of Jesus’ coming, the Messiah. These stories share a collective witness that spans millennia, these stories have deep roots and bear fruits of revelation as they are told, as they are heard and as they echo reminders, not just of events, but of relationships whose connections belie simple human realities and beckon us into the unknown realm of divine possibilities and life beyond death.

These are not JUST stories about floods, wars, plagues and times of exile. These are not shock doctrine stories. Rather these are stories of the prevalence of community, love, faith and divine presence in the midst of the worst most terrifying trauma. It is critically important to sieve between the two types of stories: the shock doctrine kind (God made a flood and everybody but one family died) and the divine possibility kind (God ensured creatures and human beings survived, and promised never to do this kind of destruction again). You can see how the framing of the story makes all the difference to the listener.

The stories are familiar to the disciples, like a balm applied to their grief, like a warm blanket drawn over the cold extremities of their sorrows. The stories engender an inner shift, a metamorphosis if you will. Sometimes though, we can hear the familiar stories, we do not notice what is happening right around us while we are enveloped in them. The stories might be a source of comfort. But they also work the miracle of unknotting anger and fear, they make us want to draw closer to the source – they pull us back into connection, relationship and community from the outer realms into which disaster has violently flung us.

We realize the stranger’s stories might have been a source of comfort for the disciples because when they are ready to stop and the unrecognized stranger wants to keep going, leaving them behind, they ask this unrecognized stranger to stop with them. (This was the same stranger Cleopas handled so disdainfully a number of miles back on the same walk.) They want to continue in the fellowship of the stories he is telling ... for in them there is some promise, some comfort to be had – even if they cannot articulate the how, where or why of that comfort and that promise.

And it is in the remaining with the story-teller that his identity is finally revealed to them. In staying with this initially annoying story-teller their eyes finally are opened, and they are able to recognize the risen Christ.

Listening to our stories, honouring our stories, especially in the face of incredible trauma and grief is vitally important. Listening and honouring our stories, especially (and perhaps most importantly) when we are grasping at the question “Where is Jesus in all this?” is vitally important ... because the stories and the faithful listening to them is our means of remaining in relationship with each other and with the divine storyteller until our eyes can be opened to the truth of the matter ... until we can finally see Jesus in the context of difficulties in which we find ourselves.

When we ask the questions of purpose and meaning: “what is the point of all this suffering anyway?” or “Why would God allow such senseless things to happen?” or “Where is the meaning in all this?” it is vitally important that we keep ourselves open by the conversation along the way, by listening for the stories ... the Divine presence will be revealed to us when we remain in relationship like this. The Divine presence is with us the whole time, but our eyes perhaps cannot see yet.

In the meantime, while we walk this stumbling journey, blind although Jesus is with us. We may not recognize him, we may not realize he is with us, and we may even be annoyed by the presence of strangers in our midst, the presence of the unknown, the unfamiliar, the one who does not fit in with the context we know ... but today’s Gospel invites us to keep listening to the stories, to invite them to be with us as we break bread and sit together, until Christ is revealed to us, like the light of a slowly breaking new morning, that cannot be rushed before night’s dark hours are done.

As we walk, keep the lines of listening and story-telling open: we know those lines as prayer. God will not turn a deaf ear – God will hear our prayers in, with and through Jesus. Amen.

Hymn of the Day – O Lord Hear My Prayer

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f51n-yb11dY>

Thanksgiving for our Presence on this Land.

We thank you God, for granting our existence on this safe, bountiful, land, and we recognize that we thrive here and enjoy life on the traditional territories of the Anishnabe, Neutral and Haudenosaunee people. **Amen.**

A RE-cited Apostle's Creed (By Bishop Sid Haugen)

I believe that God created this good world of sun and stars, of wild places and cultivated fields, of work and play, of art and sport. I believe that God placed me on this earth for a reason; along with every other human being I meet each day. I believe that every day is a gift. For all of this I am called to thank God and love the life God made.

I believe that Jesus Christ is the divine one: who walked this earth, and who, in his teaching, life and death shows me the heart of a loving God. I believe that the resurrection of Jesus brings a hope and a life to the world and to my life that cannot be quenched by all the forces of this world, by my own human brokenness, or by death itself. For all this, I am called to love Jesus and to follow him by serving others.

I believe in the Holy Spirit. I believe that I could never find God by my own intelligence or effort, but the Spirit of God, moving like the wind, has graciously called me through the wonder of the gospel: through the community of Jesus, through the Word and sacraments – just as the Spirit calls the whole church in its many families with its many names. I believe this same Spirit speaks and works through people who may not know a church and who may not call themselves religious in any way. For all of this, I am called to live generously, as one who has faith that God is always at work in me, in the church, and in the world itself.

While you listen to the offertory song, continue your prayers with the words of the song, and consider how you may be a blessing in the coming week.

Offertory – **Baba Yetu** (Swahili Lord's Prayer)

Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r6qi393Z7L8>

Offering Prayer

God of all abundance, receive our brokenness and the offering of our lives. Take us, who return to you in thanksgiving: form us and shape us into a love like Jesus, so that we may be love for this broken world. **Amen.**

(please remember to send an offering to the church if you are able)

Prayers of Intercession (Adapted from prayers prepared by Pastor Joanna Miller)

Loving God, in these days, when it feels like we're living out the realities of Holy Week like never before, keep reminding us that the story doesn't end with death, or waiting. Help us to believe that something new and wonderful will emerge from this; fill us up with hopeful expectation for what will come. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We are seeing reports, God, of drastic drops in the levels of emissions and pictures of the ways that life is re-emerging. Help us to be inspired by these stories and pictures, that we might become even more committed to the work of caring for this planet we inhabit and for all the creatures who share it with us. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the decision makers, O God. For our political leaders, that they lead according to the best information to keep as many of our neighbours as safe as possible. For the scientists, who are working so hard to understand what is happening and for the ones who work hard for a vaccine. For the business leaders who are responsible for the care of their workers. For the health care providers, who run towards the fire and accept the risk in the name of serving others. For the parents, who struggle to find a balance between work and play, screens and fresh air. Give them all your wisdom and compassion. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for all who are affected by violence during these days, whether it is the plague of domestic violence, or the terrible realities of physical and gun violence. We especially uphold in our prayers, the family and loved ones of those who died last weekend in Nova Scotia. We remember those who are hurting, loved ones to both the shot and the shooter, and we ask you to walk with them Jesus. To bring your peace and comfort to them, in the midst of this random, mysterious grief.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We pray for the vulnerable in our midst. For those whose suffering began long before we heard of COVID-19. For those whose mental health is suffering. For those who are in the midst of treatments and diagnoses and for all who are medically fragile. Be with each one, send them your healing, be present with them. We pray especially for those we name we name either silently or aloud.

Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

We give you thanks for all the saints that have gone before us, whose faith reminds us to hold on in the midst of fear and unknown. Bless all those in your presence and all who will die this day. Lord, in your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

All these things, Lord, we entrust to your care, knowing that you hear all of our prayers. And we pray in the way that Jesus taught us to pray:

Baba Yetu – Swahili Lord's Prayer - Click here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or4IKVG2zAA>

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. **AMEN.**

Sending Hymn: #866 Siyahamba – We Are Marching in the Light of God

Click here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TAiOdFOt4il>

Blessing:

May God bless us and keep us.

May the face of God shine upon us with grace and mercy.

May God look upon us with favor

and give us ✝ peace.

Amen.

Dismissal:

Go in Peace, Go in Hope. ***Thanks be to God. ****

Notices about church in time of COVID-19:

- **The Public Health & Provincially mandated closure of churches continues through May 14th (at the earliest). We will continue to keep you updated on Facebook, via website and by telephone, as we are able. Although the church building is closed, voicemail is checked regularly at 519-653-4721 the church number or 519-588-7701 Pastor. Please call if you need a pastoral telephone visit, or if we can help in any way. It is impossible for Pastor to call everyone in turn, so she is relying on you to reach out if you need a call.**
- **You will find this worship service most helpful if you read the sections out loud at home 😊 And sing along 😊 Brad also recommends looking up other lyric videos that pop up - Glory to God at home 😊**
- **As far as possible, the regular work of the church continues. Lay leaders are meeting using online meeting tools. In the coming week, church council and VIM will meet using Zoom, to finalize a Terms of Reference for continuing our missional redevelopment explorations. Our goal is to share information and be "ready to roll" when COVID lockdown is over.**
- **Bonnie Scott continues to prepare and share information as widely as possible for those who do not have internet access. Brad continues to come in and practice. Pastor continues to visit, via telephone, to accompany however possible, and to prepare worship materials. Alex continues to bear the responsibility of treasurer and reminds us that buying and selling maple syrup is a good way to occupy our time 😊**
- **Thank you for accessing this Third Sunday of Easter service. When we re-open, we will have our Easter service in community.**
- **Please stay in touch with each other. Call each other. Visit on the telephone, and where safe, through closed glass doors, and across fences. Let us know how we can help if you are shut in but need groceries or something delivered. Keep safe, and keep on praying. Think of this time as our time in the tomb, with our Saviour, from which we will be delivered soon 😊 Call Pastor if you need to talk, because she cannot possibly call everyone 😊**
- **May God bless you and keep you safe ...**