

March 22 2020 – Fourth Sunday in Lent

**Welcome to Everyone for our first online worship service. A few notices first about church in time of covid-19:**

- **We have been mandated to close the church by Public Health until further notice.**
- **We will continue to keep you updated on facebook and via our website as we are able, as well as by telephone.**
- **You will find this worship service most helpful if you read the sections out loud at home 😊**
- **Although the church will be closed, voicemail will be (remotely) checked regularly, and if you need a telephone visit or help, please do call 519-653-4721 the church number or 59-588-7701 Pastor. Both numbers have voicemail.**

**We are thankful to Nick Stienberg for being our preacher today 😊 Nick is our seminary placement student.**

### **Confession: Returning to God's Love.**

During this season of Lent, we set aside time to admit sin. For some, sin is hurting someone else. For others, sin is creating a rift between people. Sin may be our self-induced separation from God. We confess or admit to the things that make us feel guilty, ashamed or sad. To confess to God is to receive ... to receive God's grace, forgiveness and pardon. Let us offer to God what lies heavily in our hearts this day.

Blessed be Creator:  
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,  
 Who holds the doors of love and unity open for us,  
 Welcoming us back from dark places,  
 Even when we have closed the door on relationship. **Amen**

*Brief silence is kept for SILENT PRAYER & reflection*

Then, we pray together ... Holy One:  
**We know we have fallen short.**  
**We turn our backs when we could embrace.**  
**We remain silent when we could speak.**  
**We speak when we could listen.**  
**We close the door when we could fling it wide open.**  
**We judge when we could seek understanding.**  
**We cling when we could give.**  
**We use when we could refrain.**  
**Forgive us, Holy One, for being so very human at times.**  
**help us to continue to grow into your way:**  
**The Way of Jesus. Amen.**

We hear the assurance of God's forgiveness:  
 Jesus Christ on the altar holds God's doorway open.  
 Jesus on the cross ensures we have a way home:  
 Through his broken body, through his blood that was shed,  
 We are welcomed back into our home with God  
 Who receives us with love,  
 Forgiving and renewing us every time we knock.  
 Thanks be to God. **Amen.**

Adapted from: <https://holdfasttowhatisgood.com/liturgy/prayer-of-confession>

**Kyrie Eleison:** (*#23 Sing the Circle Wide*) (*Haiti*)

*Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.  
 Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.*

*Sauvez moi la vie, O Jesus je vous prie, Kyrie  
 Sauvez nous la vie, O Jesus je vous prie,*

*Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison, Kyrie eleison  
 Kyrie eleison, Kyrie eleison.*

*(you can listen to the Kyrie on youtube here – dancing is encouraged 😊)*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDHQoSfX-RQ>

### **Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
 be with you all.

**C: And also with you**

**Prayer of the Day:** (*we pray together – words on screen*)

**Loving God, you are our hope and our salvation. You guide us when we are  
 blinded by this world and lead us on to better things. Let us not wander  
 astray from your path. Keep our eyes fixed on you that we might see what  
 needs to be done as we walk this journey called life together. Amen.**

### **The Reading :** Ephesians 5: 8-16

You groped your way through that murk once, but no longer. You're out in the open now. The bright light of Christ makes your way plain. So no more stumbling around.

Get on with it! The good, the right, the true—these are the actions appropriate for daylight hours. Figure out what will please Christ, and then do it. Don't waste your time on useless work, mere busywork, the barren pursuits of darkness. Expose these things for the sham they are. It's a scandal when people waste their lives on things they must do in the darkness where no one will see. Rip the cover off those frauds and see how attractive they look in the light of Christ.

Wake up from your sleep, Climb out of your coffins; Christ will show you the light! So watch your step. Use your head. Make the most of every chance you get. These are desperate times! (The Message Translation)

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

*Reading homework. 1 Samuel 16:1-13*

### **Psalm 23    hymn the lord is my shepherd -**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZnj8yifvsw>

Gospel acclamation: Thy Word – lyric video below:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FS1LAc5DSCU>

### **The Holy Gospel according to John 9:1-41**

**C: Glory to you O Lord.**

Walking down the street, Jesus saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?"

<sup>3-5</sup> Jesus said, "You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause-effect here. Look instead for what God can do. We need to be energetically at work for the One who sent me here, working while the sun shines. When night falls, the workday is over. For as long as I am in the world, there is plenty of light. I am the world's Light."

<sup>6-7</sup> He said this and then spit in the dust, made a clay paste with the saliva, rubbed the paste on the blind man's eyes, and said, "Go, wash at the Pool of Siloam" (Siloam means "Sent"). The man went and washed—and saw.

<sup>8</sup> Soon the town was buzzing. His relatives and those who year after year had seen him as a blind man begging were saying, "Why, isn't this the man we knew, who sat here and begged?"

<sup>9</sup> Others said, "It's him all right!"

But others objected, "It's not the same man at all. It just looks like him."

He said, "It's me, the very one."

<sup>10</sup> They said, "How did your eyes get opened?"

<sup>11</sup> "A man named Jesus made a paste and rubbed it on my eyes and told me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' I did what he said. When I washed, I saw."

<sup>12</sup> "So where is he?"

"I don't know."

<sup>13-15</sup> They marched the man to the Pharisees. This day when Jesus made the paste and healed his blindness was the Sabbath. The Pharisees grilled him again on how he had come to see. He said, "He put a clay paste on my eyes, and I washed, and now I see."

<sup>16</sup> Some of the Pharisees said, "Obviously, this man can't be from God. He doesn't keep the Sabbath."

Others countered, "How can a bad man do miraculous, God-revealing things like this?" There was a split in their ranks.

<sup>17</sup> They came back at the blind man, "You're the expert. He opened *your* eyes. What do you say about him?"

He said, "He is a prophet."

<sup>18-19</sup> The Jews didn't believe it, didn't believe the man was blind to begin with. So they called the parents of the man now bright-eyed with sight. They asked them, "Is this your son, the one you say was born blind? So how is it that he now sees?"

<sup>20-23</sup> His parents said, "We know he is our son, and we know he was born blind. But we don't know how he came to see—haven't a clue about who opened his eyes. Why don't you ask him? He's a grown man and can speak for himself." (His parents were talking like this because they were intimidated by the Jewish leaders, who had already decided that anyone who took a stand that this was the Messiah would be kicked out of the meeting place. That's why his parents said, "Ask him. He's a grown man.")

<sup>24</sup> They called the man back a second time—the man who had been blind—and told him, “Give credit to God. We know this man is an impostor.”

<sup>25</sup> He replied, “I know nothing about that one way or the other. But I know one thing for sure: I was blind . . . I now see.”

<sup>26</sup> They said, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

<sup>27</sup> “I’ve told you over and over and you haven’t listened. Why do you want to hear it again? Are you so eager to become his disciples?”

<sup>28-29</sup> With that they jumped all over him. “*You* might be a disciple of that man, but we’re disciples of Moses. We know for sure that God spoke to Moses, but we have no idea where this man even comes from.”

<sup>30-33</sup> The man replied, “This is amazing! You claim to know nothing about him, but the fact is, he opened my eyes! It’s well known that God isn’t at the beck and call of sinners, but listens carefully to anyone who lives in reverence and does his will. That someone opened the eyes of a man born blind has never been heard of—ever. If this man didn’t come from God, he wouldn’t be able to do anything.”

<sup>34</sup> They said, “You’re nothing but dirt! How dare you take that tone with us!” Then they threw him out in the street.

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and went and found him. He asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

<sup>36</sup> The man said, “Point him out to me, sir, so that I can believe in him.”

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said, “You’re looking right at him. Don’t you recognize my voice?”

<sup>38</sup> “Master, I believe,” the man said, and worshiped him.

<sup>39</sup> Jesus then said, “I came into the world to bring everything into the clear light of day, making all the distinctions clear, so that those who have never seen will see, and those who have made a great pretense of seeing will be exposed as blind.”

<sup>40</sup> Some Pharisees overheard him and said, “Does that mean you’re calling us blind?”

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said, “If you were really blind, you would be blameless, but since you claim to see everything so well, you’re accountable for every fault and failure.”

*(The Message Translation)*

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

## Sermon (imagine Nick's voice here!)

Good morning everyone! Once again what a pleasure it is to be preaching the word of our Lord with you. I was also going to say a pleasure not to be preaching about doom and gloom, but given the circumstances, I think maybe I have been foiled by the spirit of the times right now.

Now, today there is only a small part of the reading from our Gospel selection, as it is part of a much larger story. The full text is John 9, the story where Jesus heals a man blind from birth. Now in the story, this is a man blind from birth whom Jesus heals, but he heals him on the Sabbath, the day of rest. Doing so causes some ruffled feathers among the Pharisees who, despite seeing a genuine miracle before them, are bothered by the man being healed, so they throw him to the street.

This prompts Jesus to speak with them, and they ask "are you saying we're blind?"

What an uncomfortable question.

But in the wake of the current illness sweeping our world, what a good question.

For a while there wasn't too much known about this illness, as it was something that the Chinese government kept firmly locked up behind their wall of silence.

Now, it is everywhere, with new updates, warnings, and even closed borders. The world media only sparsely examined it as it spread in the city of Wuhan. It was something we have all seen before. First there was AIDS, then there was SARS and Bird Flu, Swine Flu ...

All diseases that came and went in the blink of an eye.

I myself was very dismissive of this illness, thinking it was one more thing the media was going to talk about which barely darkened our shores.

Well friends, there was my blindness, both spiritual and real.

I feel like God may ask me, were you blind? And what else did you not see?

Illness like this is one of those things I think our modern mind has a difficult time wrapping itself around. We live in a generally healthy world after all! What is there to worry about with our modern medical centers and skilled scientists? Yet as soon as this respiratory illness arises, suddenly there is no more toilet paper and no more masks!

Despite the fact experts have said "wash your hands, and self-isolate and observe social distancing for safety". It is literally told to us as that simple.

So I remind you all, wash your hands, keep the safe distances and self-isolate.

Since we do not have access to the baptismal font think of the hand washing as your reminder of baptism that you are washed by the Grace of God – over and over again, as often as necessary.

We are baptised communally so we show what that shared baptism communally.

It also takes us to our verses today. Jesus told the blind man after he had placed clay in his eyes to go wash in the pool of Siloam, the pool of the sent it is translated as in some versions.

Then when he is thrown out Jesus says that he came to make those who see blind, in response to the Temple's unwillingness to accept what has happened.

Paul says too, we should live our lives in the light. Rise from the dead and go!

The Psalm says, the Lord is our shepherd.

I only leave these little snippets because as we cannot come together and read together, so I implore you come together at home and read the verses with your families and friends, listen to what they are saying.

Come out of darkness.

See and trust.

We have been so blessed and so graced to live on our part of the world, so how are we using our blessings right now?

How do we trust that God is looking out for us?

How are we seeing what is directly in front of us?

Right now, many of us are living blind because we are stuck at home, or working from home, places to go are closed, travel is hard, and there is an uncertainty in the air.

How then shall we cope?

Will we stay in darkness behind our doors, will we turn a blind eye to what is happening?

For this community I know the answer already, it is no!

The question I suppose is how we shall make things seen?

I know there will be people out volunteering on Friday and Saturday, I am sure many of you are making calls to friends and loved ones, but let us also make calls to each other in church.

Who is the most isolated among us?

Who needs a helping hand right now?

Let us not turn a blind eye to neighbours' needs.

Let us wash ourselves in the pool of the sent so that we see what needs to be done with healthy hearts and healthy eyes.

Now that this illness has brought many things out into the open, let us use the sight we have to see what needs to be done.

In the time of the Black Death, some of the highest casualties were among priests and active lay people. They went and buried the dead, they offered prayers and hope to the afflicted despite the risk to themselves.

Sweeping changes were made so that more people could serve the needs of others. Why, they even had women accepting confessions and offering up forgiveness.

Now, unless you work in the health industry, don't jump into the jaw of illness, but from this historical fact let us see how faith has made people brave in the face of illness.

I hope and pray none of us are affected by this illness, but I pray we have the courage to do what needs to be done for those in need. Let us let our faith make us strong and show us the way.

May we spend this week and the coming weeks with our eyes open to danger, but in the knowledge the Lord is our shepherd and our salvation.

*Silence for Reflection*

**Hymn of the Day - Amazing Grace ...**

**<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tGIMd53So0A>**



### **Prayers of Intercession**

Awaiting the promised light of God that comes in Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, God's creation and those who suffer ...

God of abundant blessings,

God whose love denies confinement,

Make us true disciples, removing empty piety from our midst.

Make us, your body, an example of Jesus' unbounded love.

We bring forward our prayers for your church, calling them out to you, here:

(pray your petitions for the church and communities of faith in these times)

**God of abundance ... Hear our prayers.**

Jesus our redeemer and way-maker,

You came for everyone, bringing forgiveness and grace to everyone.

Not one person or nation or place did you leave out.

We pray for our world, our country, our region: so badly in need of all you bear.

We call out our prayers for places that need your healing here:

(pray the places & situations you want to pray for here)

**God of abundance ... Hear our prayers.**

Spirit of God, mighty counsellor of all creation, you are here.

Where creation groans in pain, where all hope seems lost, you are here.

In carbon footprints, big and small,

In waterways and forests, in garbage dumps and trash heaps, you are there.

Our responsibility for creation and the environment weighs heavily on us.

We call out our prayers for creation and the environment here:

(pray your prayers for the environment here)

**God of abundance ... Hear our prayers.**

God who comes as Father, Son and Holy spirit, we pray:

For families affected by addictions and suicide,

of which indigenous families are affected in disproportionately high numbers.

We pray for those who are suffering in mind, body or spirit:

we pray for those we name out loud,

and in the silence of our hearts:

(pray the names of those on your heart here)

May we all lean on you for comfort,

**God of abundance ... Hear our prayers.**

These, our collective prayers, spoken out loud or within our souls,

we bring before you .... entrusting all into your tender-loving care.

In Jesus' powerful name.

**AMEN.**

Offertory - **Hymn One Bread, One Body ...**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FG9T8UmN6VY>

## **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 mail an offering to the church if you are able to do so)

## **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.**

**LORD'S PRAYER:** *(Retranslated from the Aramaic - we pray together)*

***O Breathing Life, your Name shines everywhere!***

***Release a space to plant your Presence here.***

***Imagine your possibilities now.***

***Embody your desire in every light and form.***

***Grow us through this moment's bread and wisdom.***

***Untie the knots of failure binding us,***

***as we release the strands we hold of others' faults.***

***Help us not forget our Source,***

***Yet free us from not being in the Present.***

***From you arises every Vision, Power and Song***

***from gathering to gathering.***

***Amen - May our future actions grow from here.***

*(found at orucc.org Orchard Ridge United Church of Christ.)*

**Sending Hymn Be still for the presence of the Lord ...**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZugvUQ4m90U>

**Blessing:**

May God bless you and keep you.

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

May God look upon you with favor

and give you ☩ peace.

**Amen.**

**Have a safe week beloved friends ☺**