

Worship Leadership Guide
Sunday in Lent - COVID-19 Isolation
March 22nd, 2020

Prelude: Reflection on Wondrous Love
DF

Welcome

Good Morning! ----- Welcome to Morgan Park Presbyterian Church as we experience Lent through isolation. Welcome to my home and this holy experimentation as we try to worship together as a church without being in person. We are a congregation committed to Christ, Diversity and Mission.

Intro to online worship:

1. Call in by zoom: Dial by phone (audio only): +1 312 626 6799 Then type Meeting ID: 210 508 481
 - a. I will mute you during portions of the service without group participation. This is so that you can make loud noises during my sermon without anyone finding out :) If you have the ability to mute your phone on your end, please try that to help keep down on audio feedback.
2. Join by zoom app or website by clicking here:
<https://zoom.us/j/210508481>
 - a. You will have the ability to mute your voice and your picture. We would love to see your face, but please stay on mute unless you have something to share, as this will cut down on feedback.
 - b. If you scroll right on your screen or find the view... button, you should be able to see more than one person at a time.
 - c. I will share music and prayers on zoom for all to follow along. You do not need a bulletin.
 - d. If you called in by phone, I don't have a way to share the music and prayers.
3. If you're joining me on fb live, I encourage you to participate in the comments so we can see each other and participate communally. You'll be able to go back and view the video again if you come in late and want to watch from the beginning. There may be people coming in later and may be confused, so let's all help each other out. Plus, I appreciate your feedback so I can better know how to respond to your needs. We're trying to put together meaningful worship for you

all and your feedback is helpful.

4. You can follow along on the Worship Guide Google Doc that you can open in any internet browser. The worship guide is posted as a link on facebook, in a church-wide email, and on our website. In the document is all our prayers and song lyrics as well as my sermon for you to follow along if that helps.

Please join me in calling Each Other to Worship!

The Call to Worship (responsively)

Come, let us sing to the Lord;

let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

From the intimate spaces of our homes

Let us experience God's grace!

From Midlothian to Jackson Park

Let us worship in unity!

From Mount Greenwood to Roseland

Let us love one another.

From deep in our hearts

Let us rejoice and sing!

Please join in singing our Welcoming Hymn, "Live Into Hope". The music is printed in the worship guide and will come up on the zoom screen.

Welcoming Hymn Live Into Hope #332

1 Live into hope of captives freed,
Of sight regained, the end of greed.
The oppressed shall be the first to see
The year of God's own jubilee!

2 Live into hope the blind shall see
With insight and with clarity,
Removing shades of pride and fear--
A vision of our God brought near.

3 Live into hope of liberty,
The right to speak the right to be,
The right to have one's daily bread,
To hear God's word and thus be fed.

4 Live into hope of captives freed
 From chains of fear or want or greed.
 God now proclaims our full release
 To faith and hope and joy and peace.

Prayer of Dedication for Our Homes

Holy God, you need no house to dwell in for all earth and heaven is your home, and we worship you in every place where your glory is made known. Like our ancestors who crossed the wilderness following your pillar of cloud and fire, we assemble here as pilgrims and travelers, confident that our true home is in you alone.

Please pray with me:

In this ordinary place, may your word of life be heard in all its extraordinary power and truth;

May the seeking find welcome among us and in your waters of renewal and grace;

May the hungry of heart be nourished at your table and equipped to serve the world;

**And may lives be changed, making the life of the world ever new;
 Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

In the name of God, Holy One and Holy Three, we dedicate our homes as places of worship for this people of God. As we dedicate these intimate spaces, O God, we rededicate our lives to the service of Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory now and forever. Amen.

Please join in singing our Hymn of Praise, "Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley" the words are typed into the worship guide and on the zoom screen.

Hymn of Praise Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley #80

1 Jesus walked this lonesome valley;
 He had to walk it by himself.
 Oh, nobody else could walk it for him;
 He had to walk it by himself.

2 We must walk this lonesome valley;
 We have to walk it by ourselves.
 Oh, nobody else can walk it for us;

We have to walk it by ourselves.

3 You must go and stand your trial;
 You have to stand it by yourself.
 Oh, nobody else can stand it for you;
 You have to stand it by yourself.

Call to Confession

Please be seated.

God's love has been poured into our hearts through the gift of the Holy Spirit. Trusting in God's overflowing grace, let us confess our sin, first silently, and then together.

Prayer of Confession

Please pray with me.

God of Grace, We know you have healed all of creation, and yet we often refuse to participate in your healing when you call on us. In this moment of global crisis, forgive our fears and prepare our hearts to serve in your name. Amen.

Assurance of Pardon

This is the good news of God's grace:

Though we were sinners, Christ died for us.

Once we were lost and dead—now Christ has become our life and salvation.

In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God!

Response

"Glory Be to the Father"

#579

Announcements

Goodmorning! My name is pastor Ben.

Take a moment to check out what is new in the announcements section of your bulletin:

- COVID-19 Plans
 - Thank you for adjusting with us to this strange and hazardous reality that we find ourselves in today. We canceled in person worship to protect the most vulnerable among us - which, honestly, is most of us.
 - Like this video to sign in to worship on facebook. If you are on zoom, we will have a record of your presence.
- You can find our bulletin online at MorganParkPres.org/health
- And please type in your community prayers in the comments or send an email to pastor Ben.
- Next Sunday we will celebrate the planting of seeds for our Garden Ministry. Please contact the church if you are interested in gardening with us this year.
- Are there other announcements anyone can share this morning?
- Now let us return to worship.

Passing of the Peace

(Peace prayer)

God so loved the world, that God extended radically inclusive peace to all of creation through Jesus. And this gift of peace is given to all who seek to follow him. May you find God's peace this day.

Peace be with you.

And also with you.

What is a word that brings you peace today?

Children's Sermon Worshiping from Home

Transitions are hard. What has been special to you about staying at home?

Invitation to God's Word Open the Eyes of My Heart Lord

Open the eyes of my heart, Lord

Open the eyes of my heart

I want to see You

I want to see You

Prayer of Illumination

Living God, through the reading of the Scriptures and by the power of your

Spirit, may we find connection with you, our God of Grace. Amen..

Scripture Lessons

Our Hebrew Bible reading for this morning is Psalm 23. Hear now the Word of the Lord.

Hebrew Bible Reading Psalm 23

23:1 The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want.

23:2 He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters;

23:3 he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

23:4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.

23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

This is the Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

Our Gospel scripture readings throughout Lent are stories of encounter between Jesus and someone who is transformed by encountering Jesus - people who become his followers, his disciples. We have heard the stories of Nicodemus speaking to Jesus in the secrecy of night, the samaritan woman at the well, and now the man who was born blind. Each of these people encounter Jesus in isolation, but they go on to transform their entire community as they experience

healing transformation in their own lives.

The reading today is long, so as I read, I invite you to close your eyes and imagine being there with this blind man. What changes in him as time goes by? How does he cope with the dramatic change that happens to him? How does he respond to others?

COVID-19 has completely transformed our lives in a flash. What might you learn from this man's transformational encounter with Jesus that could help us cope with the dramatic change in our lives?

Let us Pray. God of love and wholeness, may the words of my mouth and the meditations of each of our hearts be acceptable to you - our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Gospel Reading John 9:1-41

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him." 4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, 7 saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. 8 The neighbors and those who had seen him

before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." 10 But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." 12 They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." 16 Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. 17 So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

18 The Jewish leaders did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight 19 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" 20 His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; 21 but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish authorities; for they had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. 23 Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

24 So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." 25 He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26 They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" 28 Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." 30 The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes." 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36 He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." 37 Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." 38 He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,'

your sin remains.

This is the Word of God for the People of God.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Sermon Pastor Ben Heimach-Snipes

In her poem, “Wild Geese”, Mary Oliver writes,

“You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting. / You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves. / Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. / Meanwhile the world goes on. / Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain / are moving across the landscapes, / over the prairies and the deep trees, / the mountains and the rivers. / Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the clean blue air, / are heading home again. / Whoever you are, no matter how lonely, / the world offers itself to your imagination, / calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting— / over and over announcing your place / in the family of things.”

We are in the midst of so much change right now, as our lives are disrupted by the immediate needs of isolation in response to COVID-19. Most of us experience change as a type of death--as what was normal before is lost and we adjust to the birth of what is a new normal. Our American culture hasn't been great at helping us honor and process the transitions that come with change over our lifetimes. So each new transition, brings up unresolved pain, fear, and anxiety from past losses.

¹ Sheryl Paul, a psychologist who focuses on transitions and anxiety, describes transition in three stages. The first one is “Letting go”: where we

¹ <https://events.iteleseminar.com/index.php?eventID=120618822> and <https://conscious-transitions.com/what-to-do-when-fear-of-the-pandemic-washes-in/>

grieve what once was and experience fears about what is to come and all that is uncertain right now.

I can feel the man born blind, from our Scripture today, going through this “letting go” as he silently washes the mud out of his eyes and hears the neighbors asking questions about him. Could this really be him? The uncertainty as he is taken to the Jewish Authorities while still going through the shock of using his eyes for the first time in his life.

The second stage is the “Liminal” stage: where we’re in between our old life internally, and haven’t figured out yet what the new life will be. We don’t necessarily have our new routines or clarity. We might feel depressed, numb, out of control or disoriented.

As the formerly blind man gets further and further from his encounter with Jesus, I can imagine the disorientation and anxiety of experiencing the world in a completely different way. All the sounds and feelings that he has known his whole life now have a visual experience to go with them. The light itself must have been blinding. And then the Jewish Authorities approach him in a completely new way. Where his blindness identified him as a beggar before - unimportant, not worthy of their time. Now they want to interrogate him and threaten him in his transformed identity. How do you respond when you have never been treated this way before?

The third stage in transition is called “Rebirth”: Here, we embrace our new life and identity and move into the opportunity of this new life with confidence.

The newly sighted man goes through the chaos of transition and is reborn as a self proclaimed disciple of Jesus. He returns to the Jewish Authorities to tell them himself - allowing his new identity to define his path forward. And this proclamation of faith leads to his second encounter with Jesus as he explains that his life was transformed by his encounter with the Savior of the world - the human one of God.

My guess, is that many of us rationally know that this moment of isolation is an opportunity to serve God in new ways, to care for our community and to step up to the challenge before us--to do all we can to save lives. However, many of us may be struggling with how to accept this new reality and what it means for our daily life. Emotionally and spiritually, we might still be in the letting go stage as we let go of the routines of work and school and family and travel and physical community.

We might be in the “liminal stage” as we accept this new reality, but haven’t figured out how to cope, how to stay isolated, how to make a home livable at all hours of the day, or how to serve on the frontlines (for our healthcare workers, shelter volunteers, and food workers). So how can we think about “trusting God” when all we feel is the chaos of this moment?

Some of us feel trapped in the silence of isolation with nothing to do and no sense of community, and some of us are burning the candle at both ends as we work long hours in hospitals or even parent our young kids and try to work from home at the same time. But even acknowledging where you’re at and noticing your emotions in your body, and having compassion for

yourself right now, will help you move through this transition for some sense of confidence and stability.

Where are you today? Lonely, overwhelmed, bored or anxious? And where do you see yourself in the transition from normal life to COVID-19? I invite you to post a comment on zoom or in the facebook video comments to share with each other where you are in this global transition into crisis.

I think I am somewhere between “letting go” and the “liminal” in between stage. I know things are different, and I am working to understand how to behave in a way that is loving and respectful to others and myself in this new world.

However, I don't think I yet understand how this global transition will impact my identity. Who am I as someone living through a deadly pandemic? Will I play some role in responding to the crisis? Will I face the trials of illness myself? Will I be a bystander in the trauma I see around me?

I believe we as the church have important work to do right now - to discover what our new identity will be as we go through this global transition. What could rebirth look like for our community? How could we come together in isolation to be the Body of Christ in this moment? What act of love and voice of justice is needed in this moment that we could form into an identity for ourselves?

Out of the chaos of this global change, we can find confidence in our identity as followers of Christ. We can find confidence in loving our neighbor as ourselves. We can find confidence in being people who rely on each other and offer support in counter cultural ways.

The first glimpse of this that I saw this week was in a conversation with Connie Leininger and Odessa Clark - who are now leaders in our Spiritual Care Team. We had been planning to meet for months to organize spiritual care visits for our community, but when the meeting fell right in the middle of the chaos of our new sense of isolation, our conversation became exciting. We found confidence in taking on the new identity of Spiritual Care Team as a response to our new found isolation. And instead of reaching out to a few members in isolation, we decided to find a way to stay connected to all the people in our Morgan Park Presbyterian community.

If you would like to be part of this Spiritual Care Team - to provide a sense of connection to our church community through the phone - please let me know - we need the help.

But there will be other identities formed through the chaos of this moment as well. What will that identity be for you? What is God calling you to become right now?

As we move into this new way of life in this moment, let us move with confidence - seeking out our identity in Christ. And also confidence that we can still grieve and find comfort in the transition.

Martha read Psalm 23 this morning, a passage that I have read for grieving families at a freshly dug grave site and for loving families huddled in anxious hospital rooms. All seeking comfort and confidence in the love and grace of God that guides us through every loss and every transition. Let's pray it. As generation after generation has prayed this psalm and found it as a source of comfort. Let's breathe in God's grace demonstrated through the image of God as shepherd. God leading us to rest in a beautiful pasture, walk beside still waters, guiding us toward right paths in each of our steps. God knows the pain that we experience, our fears and anxiety, our grief and intrusive thoughts. God doesn't shame them, God holds them and through that embrace, eventually they pass. God massages goodness and mercy, love and compassion into our tension. God prepares us for our new identity.

Amen.

Choir Anthem Calvary

Offering our Tithes and gifts to God

All that we have is a gift from God.
In faith and gratitude,
we return now a portion

of what we have so abundantly received,
as grateful heirs of the promises of God.

Online Giving demonstration.

Doxology

Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God,
we dedicate to you not only these gifts,
but also ourselves, in deep gratitude—
for your call on our lives,
your guidance in the baptismal journey,
and for blessing us
that we may be a blessing to others.
Accept what we bring
for your own good purposes.
In Christ we pray. Amen.

Prayer of the People

...Now, pray together the prayer that Jesus taught us!...Our father, who art
in heaven...

Lords 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 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,
for ever and ever.

Amen.

Closing Hymn When I Survey the Wondrous Cross #101

1 When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss,
and pour contempt on all my pride.

2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God!
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them through his blood.

3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?

4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small.
Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.

Charge Pastor Ben

Postlude