

First Presbyterian Church of Newton



10:30 AM MARCH 19, 2023

God, you know our hearts.
You have knitted our inmost being and
you know our deepest desires,
fears and worries. Help us to journey
during this Lenten season into a new
awareness of your presence in our lives.

Save us from our own temptations,
so that we may more freely
follow you. Amen

** indicates when to
rise in body or in spirit*

(PH denotes *The Presbyterian Hymnal*,
STF denotes *Sing the Faith Hymnal*)

Gathering in God's Name

WORDS OF WELCOME

PRELUDE

*** CALL TO WORSHIP**

Leader: The Lord leads us like a shepherd.

People: God nourishes our lives and restores our souls.

Leader: The Lord is with us, even in the darkest valley.

People: God's goodness and mercy are always close.

* HYMN PH #339

“Be Thou My Vision”

***Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that Thou art.
Thou my best thought, by day or by night,
Waking or sleeping, Thy presence my light.***

***Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise,
Thou mine inheritance, now and always:
Thou and Thou only, first in my heart,
Great God of heaven, my treasure Thou art.***

***Be Thou my wisdom, and Thou my true word;
I ever with Thee and Thou with me, Lord;
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all.***

CALL TO CONFESSION

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of perfect love, you continually bring forth life, transforming sadness to joy, and despair to hope. We are weak, but you are strong. Our ways are flawed, but your ways are true. We are seldom right, but you are never wrong. Forgive us, redeem us, transform us. Take away the sin that burdens us, and restore us to the people you would have us be, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Savior.(Our silent prayers continue...)

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

Leader: Relentlessly, God seeks us out. With abundant grace and boundless mercy, God seeks us out. This is good news!

People: In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven!

***SUNG RESPONSE TO FORGIVENESS**

*The glory of these forty days
we celebrate with songs of praise,
for Christ, by whom all things were made,
alone has fasted and has prayed.*

SHARING THE PEACE OF CHRIST

(Based on Ephesians 2.15,16)

Christ is our peace. Christ has reconciled us to God in one body by the cross. We meet in Christ's name and share the peace of Christ. May the peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you. (Please share the peace from a distance.)

Listening For God's Word

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION (in unison)

Gracious God, illumine these words by your Spirit that we might hear what you would have us hear and be who you would us be, for the sake of Jesus Christ, the Word made flesh. Amen.

RESPONSIVE READING

Psalm 23

Leader: The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;

People: **The Lord leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.**

Leader: 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.

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

All: **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.**

TIME WITH CHILDREN

SCRIPTURE LESSON

John 9:1–41

As Jesus went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”

“Neither this man nor his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of the One who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

After saying this, Jesus spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man’s eyes. “Go,” Jesus told him, “wash in the Pool of Siloam” (*this word means “Sent”*). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing.

His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” Some claimed that he was.

Others said, “No, he only looks like him.”

But he himself insisted, “I am the man.”

“How then were your eyes opened?” they asked.

He replied, “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.”

“Where is this man?” they asked him.

“I don’t know,” he said.

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man’s eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. “He put mud on my eyes,” the man replied, “and I washed, and now I see.”

Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.”

But others asked, “How can a sinner perform such signs?” So they were divided.

Then they turned again to the blind man, “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”

The man replied, “He is a prophet.”

They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents. "Is this your son?" they asked. "Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"

"We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God by telling the truth," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."

He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"

Then they asked him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"

Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."

The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. God listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

To this they replied, "You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!" And they threw him out.

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

"Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."

Jesus said, "You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."

Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him.

Jesus said, "For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."

Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, "What? Are we blind too?"

Jesus said, "If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."

This is the word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

"Seeing is Believing"

Responding to God's Word

* HYMN PH #324 *"Open My Eyes, That I May See"*

*Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth Thou hast for me;
Place in my hands the wonderful key that shall unclasp and set me free.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see;
Open my eyes, illumine me, Spirit divine!*

*Open my ears, that I may hear voices of truth Thou sendest clear;
And while the wave notes fall on my ear, everything false will disappear.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see;
Open my ears, illumine me, Spirit divine!*

*Open my mouth, and let me bear gladly the warm truth everywhere;
Open my heart, and let me prepare love with Thy children thus to share.
Silently now I wait for Thee, ready, my God, Thy will to see;
Open my heart, illumine me, Spirit divine!*

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

From People at Patmos Abbey
The Order of Saint Columba

We believe that our lives are held within the encircling love of God,
who knows our names and recognizes our deepest needs.

We believe that Christ is the divine Child of the living God,
and that Christ's grace is like living waters that can never be exhausted.

We believe in the birthing, renewing, enabling Spirit of God who yearns over our welfare as a mother yearns for her child. We believe that God is in the arid desert as well as in green pastures, and that hard times and disciplines are also loving gifts. We believe that our journey has a purpose and a destination, and that our path leads to a human glory we cannot yet imagine. We believe that in the church we are fellow pilgrims on the road, and that we are called to love one another as God loves us. This is our faith and we are humbled to profess in Jesus the Christ.

MINUTE FOR MISSION

SHARING OF ANNOUNCEMENTS

OFFERING OUR GIFTS TO GOD'S SERVICE

OFFERTORY

*** SUNG RESPONSE OF THANKSGIVING**

*O enter then God's gates with joy,
within these courts God's praise proclaim.
Let thankful songs your tongues employ.
O bless and magnify God's name.*

*** PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

JOYS AND CONCERNS

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

THE 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 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.

Going Into The World as Christ's Disciples

* HYMN

“Open the Eyes of My Heart”

(see insert)

* CHARGE AND BENEDICTION

* POSTLUDE

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**OUR WORSHIP IS ENDED.**

**OUR SERVICE BEGINS!**

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Worship Leader: Susan Hermes

Ushers/Greeters: Jane MacDonald and Doris Christians

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