

# The Fifth Sunday of Lent

## April 3, 2022



St. John United Church of Christ  
10207 Lincoln Trail, Fairview Heights, IL  
397-6323

Rev. Rosemary Captain  
Organist - Sharon Banjacvic  
Liturgy - Lavon Bayler  
Communion Liturgy - Maren Tirabassi  
Ushers - Sue and Ginny Ganschinietz  
\*Please stand if comfortably able  
and respond with words in **bold** print  
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### WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS:

PRELUDE: "Meditations on Songs of the Cross"  
Robert J. Hughes

### \*RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP:

God's Spirit is moving among us; give thanks!  
Our God is about to do a new things in our midst.

**How good it is to be chosen by God;**

**We gather to sing our praises and thanks.**

God has done great things for us; we are glad!

Now God is pointing us toward new goals.

**We are waiting to hear what God would have us do;**

**We are ready to risk new behaviors to be faithful.**

Into the wilderness of our lives comes living water.

Into the sorrow of our days comes reason for joy.

**Forgetting what lies behind, we greet our future;**

**We press on, responding to the upward call of  
Christ.**

**\*INVOCATION:** Powerful God, we give thanks that  
you have called us to be your people. In our times of  
gloom, you have sent your light. When we are weary  
and discouraged, you lift us up. In our thirst for  
meaning and purpose, you bring us to living water in  
Jesus Christ. Set before us now the joy of discovery  
and a vision of future possibilities. Unite us in

friendship with one another, with Christ as our center and inspiration. Amen.

**\*OPENING HYMN: “Fairest Lord Jesus”**

Words on screen

**\*CALL TO CONFESSION:** How much easier it is to criticize others than to see our own faults. How quickly we bemoan our suffering and struggles instead of rehearsing all our reasons for gratitude and joy. How often we cling to the past rather than heeding God’s call to new life. We are invited to confess our destructive attitudes.

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION:**

**O God, whose upward call in Christ Jesus we have so often chosen to ignore, we confess that we settle for lesser goals while you summon us to embrace the realm of heaven. We seldom look beyond our own interests to the well-being of our sisters and brothers. We can see the wasteful acts of other people but not our own selfish habits. We exaggerate the contributions we make but ignore the sacrifices of others. We need forgiveness, O God. Do a new thing within and among us. Amen.      *Silence***

**\*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS:**

God summons us to return and welcomes us with joy. We are restored to full communion with the saints and are united in the heavenly call of Christ. Together, we find our horizons expanded and our priorities refined. God forgives us and sets before us once more the promise of fulness of life. Embrace God’s pardon with renewed faith and joy.

**\*GLORIA PATRI:**

**Glory to the Creator, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, Three- in-One; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen. Amen.**

**FIRST TESTAMENT READING: Isaiah 43:16-21**

<sup>16</sup> The LORD says—who makes a way in the sea and a path in the mighty waters,

<sup>17</sup> who brings out chariot and horse, army and battalion; they will lie down together and will not rise; they will be extinguished, extinguished like a wick.

<sup>18</sup> Don’t remember the prior things; don’t ponder ancient history.

<sup>19</sup> Look! I’m doing a new thing; now it sprouts up; don’t you recognize it? I’m making a way in the desert, paths in the wilderness.

<sup>20</sup> The beasts of the field, the jackals and ostriches,

will honor me, because I have put water in the desert and streams in the wilderness to give water to my people, my chosen ones,

<sup>21</sup> this people whom I formed for myself, who will recount my praise.

### **RESPONSIVE READING OF PSALM 126, page 707**

#### **EPISTLE READING: Philippians 3:4b-14**

##### **The words of the Apostle Paul**

<sup>4</sup>... though I have good reason to have this kind of confidence. If anyone else has reason to put their confidence in physical advantages, I have even more:

<sup>5</sup> I was circumcised on the eighth day.

I am from the people of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin. I am a Hebrew of the Hebrews.

With respect to observing the Law, I'm a Pharisee.

<sup>6</sup> With respect to devotion to the faith, I harassed the church. With respect to righteousness under the Law, I'm blameless.

<sup>7</sup> These things were my assets, but I wrote them off as a loss for the sake of Christ. <sup>8</sup> But even beyond that, I consider everything a loss in comparison with the superior value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have lost everything for him, but what I lost I think of as sewer trash, so that I might gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him.

In Christ I have a righteousness that is not my own and that does not come from the Law but rather from the faithfulness of Christ. It is the righteousness of God that is based on faith. <sup>10</sup> The righteousness that I have come from knowing Christ, the power of his resurrection, and the participation in his sufferings. It includes being conformed to his death <sup>11</sup> so that I may perhaps reach the goal of the resurrection of the dead.

<sup>12</sup> It's not that I have already reached this goal or have already been perfected, but I pursue it, so that I may grab hold of it because Christ grabbed hold of me for just this purpose. <sup>13</sup> Brothers and sisters, I myself don't think I've reached it, but I do this one thing: I forget about the things behind me and reach out for the things ahead of me. <sup>14</sup> The goal I pursue is the prize of God's upward call in Christ Jesus.

#### **\*GOSPEL READING: John 12:1-8**

##### **Mary anoints Jesus' feet**

**12** Six days before Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, home of Lazarus, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. <sup>2</sup> Lazarus and his sisters hosted a dinner for him. Martha served and Lazarus was among those who joined him at the table.

<sup>3</sup> Then Mary took an extraordinary amount, almost three-quarters of a pound, of very expensive

perfume made of pure nard. She anointed Jesus' feet with it, then wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house was filled with the aroma of the perfume.

<sup>4</sup>Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), complained, <sup>5</sup>“This perfume was worth a year's wages! Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?” (<sup>6</sup>He said this not because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief. He carried the money bag and would take what was in it.)

<sup>7</sup>Then Jesus said, “Leave her alone. This perfume was to be used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it. <sup>8</sup>You will always have the poor among you, but you won't always have me.”

These are the ancient Words revealed to us anew.

**Thanks be to God. Amen.**

### **MESSAGE: “A Pilgrimage of Change”**

The last few weeks we have been talking about change as it relates to repentance. Lent is a faith journey, a pilgrimage; a chance to get closer to God. And if we truly desire to get closer to God, we may have to change some of our beliefs and value systems. When you think about it, you probably spend your time and are comfortable with your friends and/or spouses with whom you share many

of the same beliefs and a sense of right and wrong. It is the same with God. If we want to live with God, we have to think like God. We try to connect with God and learn from God's wisdom and compassion. And this might involve changes for us. Today's scripture texts point out times when the ancient people and people of the first century had to make or chose to make changes in their lives.

The exact author of the Isaiah text is unknown but it is known that this prophet was active in Babylon shortly before the fall of that empire by Cyrus in 539 B.C. We can hear the soaring and joyful words of this text, yet we need to remind ourselves that these words were uttered to a community not yet set free, and far from hopeful. The fact that this prophetic poet so often argued the case for a God both willing and able to redeem these people suggests that the opposite view was held by many. The exiles had been away from their homeland in Jerusalem for almost 71 years and many thought God had abandoned them. They had given up hope. The prophet who wrote this passage in Isaiah will have to convince the people that God will rescue them. The people will have to make changes in their beliefs and go home to God.

Psalm 126 speaks to this change. “When the Lord changed Zion's circumstances for the better, it was

like we had been dreaming. Our mouths were suddenly filled with laughter; our tongues were filled with joyful shouts. It was even said, at that time, among the nations, “The Lord has done great things for them!”

Once the exiles changed their minds and listened to God, they realized that God never abandoned them. They just had to change how they listened to God.

In Philippians 3:4b-14 the Apostle Paul is preaching to this community all about change. Paul describes all the changes he himself had made. Verses 12–14 describes how his journey is still not complete. He must continue his pilgrimage and “grab hold of Christ because Christ grabbed hold of him for just this purpose.” Change.

In the Gospel of John 12:1-8 we read how Mary’s great love for Jesus spilled out in unexpected ways. I wonder if she had ever done this for any other man? In those days women could not let their hair done among men who were not her relatives. Women with loose hair were adulteress, if you know what I mean. Here she was, in front of men she hardly knew, breaking customary practices. Plus, she used expensive perfume to wash the feet of Jesus. That was the job of the lowest of servants. She was breaking another custom. Changes.

And then Judas complained about the changes she was making. But Jesus rebuked him. “Leave her alone. This perfume was to used in preparation for my burial, and this is how she has used it.” (*Another change.*) Jesus continues, “You will always have the poor among you, but you won’t always have me.” Changes were coming. Jesus would soon leave them.

As we continue on our pilgrimage to repentance and change, what can we learn from these biblical stories of change with the Jewish people? What do you think? Amen.

**MUSIC: “Grace Upon Grace” Matthew West video**

**PASTORAL PRAYER:** Beginning with silent personal prayer. Our gracious and ever faithful Sovereign, you never change, you never leave us as orphans. You can us free-will and we went in many different directions. We need to change and turn back to you, and learn to do your will here in the world you created. And we are very grateful.

Today we pray that your whole church, filled with the Spirit, may be a light everywhere and a shelter and sanctuary for those threatened by trouble and violence. May we be known for our mercy and tender love and care for the hurting and helpless. Keep us in the truth, holding the mystery of the faith

in good conscious, in love which is the bond of peace, and in all goodness of life.

To your healing care we commend all who are distressed in body, mind, or spirit, especially those young or old, known and dear to us, whom we remember before you in our hearts.

We pray for those affected by the war in Ukraine. May peace in the region come soon so the people can return to their beloved land.

We pray all these things in the name of your Son, Jesus, who taught us to pray. . .

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:**

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your 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.**

**PRAYER RESPONSE: NCH 769**

**Hear our prayer, O God, hear our prayer, O God;  
Incline your ear to us, and grant us your peace.**

**INVITATION TO SHARE:** The most lavish gifts we can bring are never enough to thank God for all we have received. Yet the tinniest offerings we present do

not escape God's notice when presented with full commitment and devotion. Let us give as we are able.

**OFFERTORY: "Treasury of Calvary"** Don Newman

**\*DOXOLOGY:**

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God for all that love has done.  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

**\*UNISON PRAYER OF DEDICATION:**

**Generous God, we are glad for all the good things you have done for us. We count everything a loss before the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ. Receive our costly offerings and our best efforts, here dedicated for your use. May Christ be proclaimed and the poor be saved from the terrors of suffering and neglect. Fill the hearts of all your children with laughter and joy. To that end, bless our offerings. Amen.**

**\*CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION:**

Words on the screen

**\*INVITATION TO COMMUNION: (Psalm 126)**

Come to this table, wherever it is set,

all you who go out weeping,  
bearing the seeds of desperate hope,  
lingering sadness, loss, fear, or depression,  
bearing the seeds of sunflowers.

**We come holding hearts,  
even if we cannot hold hands.**

Come to this table, wherever it is set,  
all you who come home with joy,  
with release from pain,  
with new tender love, soft vintage love,  
child-smile, or good memory.

**We come to the ordinary table  
of God's extraordinary love.**

**WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE AND CONSECRATION** (John 12:1-8)

We remember so many different  
tables of Jesus – his acceptance of hospitality  
from Peter's mother-in-law and Zacchaeus,  
the Syrophenician woman's challenge,  
the generous boy with his lunch.

We remember a meal Martha served, with food Jesus  
didn't criticize, a living but endangered Lazarus  
sitting at the table, and the gift of costly perfume  
Mary poured over Jesus' feet.  
There is always controversy about how to love God

live in justice, share compassion.

Jesus remembered six days later what Mary had done  
and washed his disciples' dirty, calloused toes.

We, too, remember – the Passover with a betrayer, a  
denier, a doubter, all clean and loved.

Jesus used what was familiar, accessible and ordinary  
– bread already on the table a cup for all lips.

And so we share these from our tables – knowing  
that some of us cook, some anoint, some argue,  
some simply eat, and there are many present whom  
Christ has returned to life.

**Holy God, bless every piece of bread near the mouth  
of any one of your children so that it becomes the  
strength and hope and holiness we need. Bless a  
small plastic cup or a beautiful chalice, and every  
glass in between, reminding us that we can never  
spill our love and we always and in all places drink  
your healing. Amen.**

*Sharing of the Elements*

You hold the Bread of heaven. Honor it.

It is consecrated to perfectly match your need.

Receive it.

**Unison: We eat it in hope.**

You hold the Cup of blessing. Honor it.  
It is consecrated so you become a communion of  
saints. Receive this one small sip – deeply.

**Unison: We drink it in joy.**

**\*PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING:** (Isaiah 43:16-21)  
**God, we give you thanks that we are the people  
chosen in this meal, chosen to make new paths, new  
ways in the wilderness of sorrows, losses and  
injustices, dangers to all creatures and the earth  
itself. From this blessed meal we take hope that  
even war may be quenched, and that we can  
recognize your new things springing forth, and  
commit ourselves to be the bringers of their  
blessings to all people. Amen.**

**\*CLOSING HYMN: NCH 52**  
**“There is a Name I Love to Hear”**

**\*COMMISSION AND BLESSING:**  
The spirit of God sends us forth, a thankful people;  
God goes with us, accomplishing new things among  
us.  
**We are God’s chosen people, appointed for service.  
May our lives proclaim our thanks and praise.**  
The great things God has done for us inspire our  
work. We stretch and strive to reach new goals.  
**Day by day, we will listen for a new word from God;**

**Hour by hour, we will dare to be faithful to God’s  
call.**

God will feed our hunger and quench our thirst and  
will comfort us in our need and uplift us.

**God’s praise will continually be on our lips. We will  
embrace God’s future as we seek to follow Christ.  
Amen.**

**\*BENEDICTION RESPONSE:** Words on screen  
**“Let There Be Peace on Earth”**

**POSTLUDE: “Alla Marcia”** Stephen Otis

**PRAYER LIST:** Urban Baum, Donna Isselhard, David  
Seneczyn, Warren Neff, Carol White, Dennis Franklin,  
John Biehl, Cheri Schutzenhofer, Dorothy Wagner,  
Grand-daughter Captain, Lori Riess, Theo Mally, Leah  
Horner, Dorothy’s friend, Ron.

**CONDOLENCES** to the family and friends of Rick  
Drake.

**Our last LENTEN reflection and discussion will be  
April 6 via Zoom 6:30 pm. If you don’t have a  
computer, you can join us on your phone. The Zoom  
meeting ID is 878-8123-0951 and the pass code is  
651278. The phone number is 1-312-626-6799 and  
use the same ID and passcode.**