



## Seeing in the Wilderness: Fourth Sunday in Lent

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### Worship of Word and Sacrament \* March 22, 2020 \* 10:15 AM

*Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.*

## The Gathering: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

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*As we gather for worship, the pastor will pour water into the font to remind us of being gathered into the body of Christ through baptism.*

### **Gathering Meditation: The Wilderness is a Place of Disruption**

My grandfather was a good man, but he believed that wilderness emotions were not to be seen. "Cry with the door closed, don't dwell on the negative. Chin up, kid, we've been here before."

My grandfather was a good man, but I'd like to say— The wilderness is here to interrupt your previously-scheduled programming.

Like water in the desert and setting the slaves free, the wilderness might be the very thing we need, the very thing we dream, the very thing we plead for.

I guess what I'm trying to say is—it never seems appealing to let a bird in the house, But if you do, then you might as well open every window and door.

And if you do, then you just might find yourself basking in the light, dancing in the breeze,

overwhelmed with the beauty that an open door brings.

So I'm opening my door and inviting in the wind, to rustle up my heart and start over again.

For sweeping the truth under the rug has never gotten us far.

So may the wilderness be like a bird in your house.

Throw open your doors.

The truth must come out.

**Gathering Song:** Open Our Eyes, Lord

**WP 113**

### **Call to Worship:**

D God is in the water that restores our soul.

**C And God is in the night when we lose our way.**

D God is in today and tomorrow, raising up leaders, prophets and dreamers.

**C And God is in the wilderness with us—every step of the way.**

D So with confidence we declare—

**C If God is in those spaces, then God is surely here.**

D Let us worship the God of creation.

**C Let us worship the God of wilderness spaces.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

D Let us pray... Merciful God, the fountain of living water,

**C you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

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*We are gathered in song and prayer that tells of the day's message.*

# The Word: God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.

## **A Reading from Psalm 23**

**CEB OT p. 528**

23 The LORD is my shepherd.  
I lack nothing.

<sup>2</sup> He lets me rest in grassy meadows;  
he leads me to restful waters;

<sup>3</sup> he keeps me alive.

He guides me in proper paths  
for the sake of his good name.

<sup>4</sup> Even when I walk through the darkest valley,  
I fear no danger because you are with me.

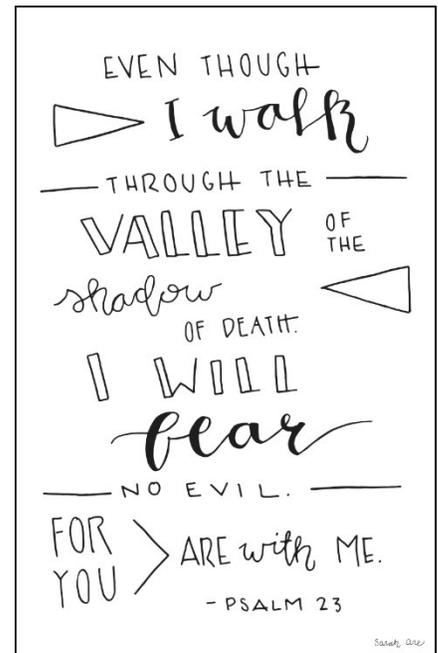
Your rod and your staff—  
they protect me.

<sup>5</sup> You set a table for me  
right in front of my enemies.  
You bathe my head in oil;  
my cup is so full it spills over!

<sup>6</sup> Yes, goodness and faithful love  
will pursue me all the days of my life,  
and I will live in the LORD's house  
as long as I live.

R The word of God for the people of God

C Thanks be to God



## **A Reading from the Gospel of John 9:1-41**

**CEB NT p. 106**

9 As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?"

<sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> While it's daytime, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup> After he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man's eyes. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (this word means *sent*). So the man went away and washed. When he returned, he could see.

### **Disagreement about the healing**

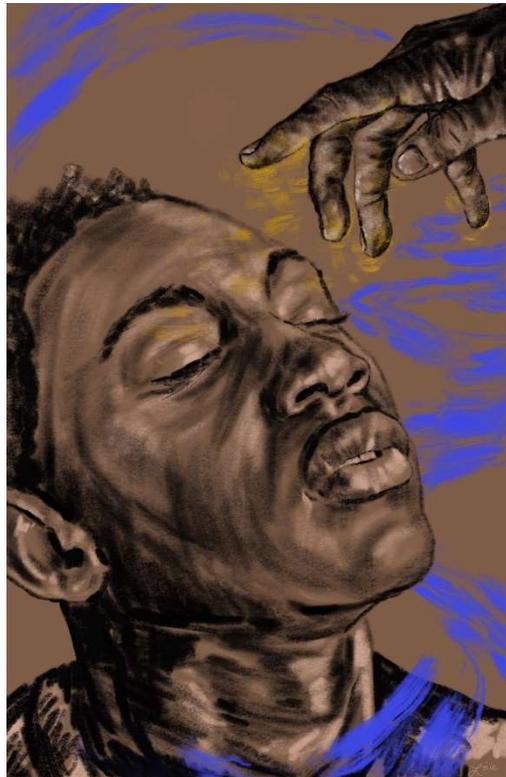
<sup>8</sup> The man's neighbors and those who used to see him when he was a beggar said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?"

<sup>9</sup> Some said, "It is," and others said, "No, it's someone who looks like him."

But the man said, "Yes, it's me!"

<sup>10</sup> So they asked him, "How are you now able to see?"

<sup>11</sup> He answered, "The man they call Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes, and said, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and then I could see."



<sup>12</sup> They asked, "Where is this man?"

He replied, "I don't know."

<sup>13</sup> Then they led the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> Now Jesus made the mud and smeared it on the man's eyes on a Sabbath day. <sup>15</sup> So Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see.

The man told them, "He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see."

<sup>16</sup> Some Pharisees said, "This man isn't from God, because he breaks the Sabbath law." Others said, "How can a sinner do miraculous signs like these?" So they were divided. <sup>17</sup> Some of the Pharisees questioned the man who had been born blind again: "What do you have to say about him, since he healed your eyes?"

He replied, "He's a prophet."

### ***Conflict over the healing***

<sup>18</sup> The Jewish leaders didn't believe the man had been blind and received his sight until they called for his parents. <sup>19</sup> The Jewish leaders asked them, "Is this your son? Are you saying he was born blind? How can he now see?"

<sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know he is our son. We know he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who healed his eyes. Ask him. He's old enough to speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they feared the Jewish authorities. This is because the Jewish authorities had already decided that whoever confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> That's why his parents said, "He's old enough. Ask him."

<sup>24</sup> Therefore, they called a second time for the man who had been born blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner."

<sup>25</sup> The man answered, "I don't know whether he's a sinner. Here's what I do know: I was blind and now I see."

<sup>26</sup> They questioned him: "What did he do to you? How did he heal your eyes?"

<sup>27</sup> He replied, "I already told you, and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"

<sup>28</sup> They insulted him: "You are his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. <sup>29</sup> We know that God spoke to Moses, but we don't know where this man is from."

<sup>30</sup> The man answered, "This is incredible! You don't know where he is from, yet he healed my eyes! <sup>31</sup> We know that God doesn't listen to sinners. God listens to anyone who is devout and does God's will. <sup>32</sup> No one has ever heard of a healing of the eyes of someone born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man wasn't from God, he couldn't do this."

<sup>34</sup> They responded, "You were born completely in sin! How is it that you dare to teach us?" Then they expelled him.

### ***Jesus finds the man born blind***

<sup>35</sup> Jesus heard they had expelled the man born blind. Finding him, Jesus said, "Do you believe in the Human One?"

<sup>36</sup> He answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him."

<sup>37</sup> Jesus said, "You have seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you."

<sup>38</sup> The man said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped Jesus.

### ***Jesus teaches the Pharisees***

<sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "I have come into the world to exercise judgment so that those who don't see can see and those who see will become blind."

<sup>40</sup> Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, "Surely we aren't blind, are we?"

<sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you wouldn't have any sin, but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

P The word of God for the people of God.

C Thanks be to God

**Sermon:**

***The Rev. Tina Reyes***

***Song of Response: Amazing Grace \*we'll sing together over zoom***

**Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me.  
I once was lost, but now am found.  
Was blind, but now I see**

**2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
and grace my fears relieved;**

how precious did that grace appear  
the hour I first believed!

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares  
I have already come;  
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,  
and grace will lead me home.

4 The Lord has promised good to me;  
his word my hope secures;  
he will my shield and portion be  
as long as life endures.

5 When we've been there ten thousand years,  
bright shining as the sun,  
we've no less days to sing God's praise  
than when we'd first begun.

Text: John Newton, 1725-1807, alt., sts. 1-4; anonymous, st. 5

Tune: (Traditional) NEW BRITAIN W. Walker, *Southern harmony*, 1835; arr. Edwin O. Excell, 1851-1921, alt

***Affirmation of Faith for Lent (in the wilderness)***

P: We believe in a wilderness God—

**C: Who breathed life into dust, turned seeds into flowers, and flooded the sky with stars.**

P: We believe in a wilderness God—

**C: Who went hungry in the desert, walked barefoot on the water, and taught from the mountainside.**

P: We believe in a wilderness God—

**C: Whose love could be described as nothing short of wild.**

P: So with confidence and hope, we long to follow our wilderness God who walks with people on their darkest nights,

**C: Who sings hope into places of grief, isolation, and suffering, and who exists in the form of untamed joy, wildfire love, and impossible hope. Step by step, may it be so. Amen.**

***Prayers of the People:***

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

*A brief silence.*

God of insight, open the hearts of the church and the world to all who testify to your deeds of power. Raise up voices in your church that are often silenced or overlooked due to age, gender expression, race, or economic status. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, empower us to care for the land and all living things that dwell in it and beneath it. Provide rich soil for crops to grow. Bring rain to lands suffering drought. Protect hills and shorelines from damage caused by erosion. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, bring peace to all people and nations. Anoint leaders who seek goodness, righteousness, and truth on behalf of all. Frustrate the efforts of those who would seek to cause violence or terror. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, you care for our needs even before we ask. Come quickly to all who seek prayer this day. Accomplish healing through the work of doctors, nurses, physical therapists, nutritionists, and all who tend to human bodies. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

God of insight, help this assembly lift up the unique gifts of each person who enters, no matter their physical capacity, cognitive ability, or sensory need. Help us to be creative and brave in making our facilities and our ministries accessible to all. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

God of insight, you call out to those who are asleep and awaken them to new life with you. We give thanks for your saints. Join us together with them as your children in this world and the next. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

### ***Sharing the Peace***

P The peace of the Christ be with you all.

**C And also with you.**

## The Thanksgiving: We offer thanks for the gifts God has given us.

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*Please read the announcement insert for alternate giving options.*

**Receiving the Offering:** We can't physically receive an offering from you all today. If you are Simply Giving family, thank you.

If you usually give on Sundays, please mail your offering to Shepherd of the Hills, 246 Woodport Rd, Sparta, NJ 07871.

You may choose to give electronically through 1. our online portal at [www.sothnj.org](http://www.sothnj.org) or 2. By texting the amount you wish to give to **973-832-0226**. You will receive a message that will help you complete this transaction. You can make a one-time gift or set it up for regular offerings.

**Offering Song:** Create in Me

### ***Offering Prayer:***

D Let us pray... God of wonder, you formed us in our mother's womb, and from mother earth you bring forth this bread and wine. We place them on your table, together with our lives and all that you have made. Open the heavens to us and pour out your Spirit. We wait for your mercy; we long for your peace; we hunger and thirst for Jesus Christ, our banquet of life.

**C Amen.**

### ***Thanksgiving for the Word***

D Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God,

**C we give you thanks and praise.**

D By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God,

**C we give you thanks and praise.**

D Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God,

**C we give you thanks and praise.**

D Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who taught us to pray...

*The Lord's Prayer*

***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen***

## The Sending: God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

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*With the blessing of God,  
we go out to live as Christ's  
body in the world.*

***Benediction:***

P Now is the acceptable time. Now is the day of salvation. Holy God, speaking, spoken, and inspiring, ✠ bless you, unbind you, and send you in love and in peace.

**C Amen.**

***Sending Song: Amazing Grace (to the tune "House of the Rising Sun")***

*We are sent out to continue  
to our role in God's mission.*

***Dismissal:***

D Go in peace. Share the Good News!

**C Thanks be to God.**

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