

Riverside United Methodist Church

The Fourth Sunday in Lent • March 22, 2020 • 9:30 AM

*We gather to worship virtually in the Name of
+ the Creator, the Christ, and Holy Spirit. +*

GATHERING

Gathering Music

Call to Worship

Processional Hymn

From Ashes to the Living Font

ST. FLAVIAN

From ashes to the living font
your Church must journey, Lord.
Baptized in grace, in grace renewed,
by your most holy word.

Through fasting, prayer, and charity,
your voice speaks deep within,
Returning us to ways of truth
and turning us from sin.

For thirsting hearts let waters flow,
our fainting souls revive;
And at the well your waters give –
our everlasting life.

From ashes to the living font
your Church must journey still,
Through cross and tomb to Easter joy,
in Spirit-fire fulfilled.

Invocation

Rev. Keith A. Turner

Gathering the Community

THE WORD

Modern Lesson from *A World Worth Saving* by George Donigian

The key to God's dream of justice is that no one will hurt or destroy anyone or anything—individuals, nations, and the earth itself. We will grow more deeply into God's love in such a way that the earth itself will be filled with the knowledge of God. Justice addresses systems that oppress people or any portion of God's creation. When we see new stories and talk to people around us, we start to get a sense of the world's brokenness. We see stories of warfare and oppression, hunger in the midst of plenty, lack of medical care, prostitution, and slavery. This is not what God dreams for the world. God dreams of a kingdom in which the wolf and the lamb, the child and the poisonous snake, the Democrat and the Republican come together under one peaceable kingdom. In God's dream, people use their gifts to care for all creation. No one will have dominion; all will be stewards. Such a vision offers us a new understanding of justice and our role in bringing it to the world. Individuals alone cannot change the destructive systems and powers of the world. As communities of faithful disciples, God works through us to bring change. Justice comes in seeing what is wrong in these systems and actively working to change them. Justice demonstrates our care God's world.

Pastoral Prayer

Gradual

Word of God, Speak

W&S 3172

One: I'm finding myself in the midst of you,
beyond the music, beyond the noise.
All that I need is to be with you.
And in the quiet, I hear your voice.

All: Word of God, speak.
Would you pour down like rain?
Open my eyes to see your majesty.
To be still and know that you're in this place.
Please let me stay and rest in your holiness.
Word of God, speak.
Word of God, speak.

Gospel Reading John 9:1-41

One: Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

All: Come, Holy Spirit.

One: A reading from the Holy Gospel according to John

All: Glory to you, O God.

As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?" Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in him. While it's daytime, we must do the works of him 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 he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man's eyes. 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. 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?" Some said, "It is," and others said, "No, it's someone who looks like him." But the man said, "Yes, it's me!" So they asked him, "How are you now able to see?" 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." They asked, "Where is this man?" He replied, "I don't know." Then they led the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees. Now Jesus made the mud and smeared it on the man's eyes on a Sabbath day. 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." 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. 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." The Jewish leaders didn't believe the man had been blind and received his sight until they called for his parents. The Jewish leaders asked them, "Is this your son? Are you saying he was born blind? How can he now see?" His parents answered, "We know he is our son. We know he was born blind. 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." 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. That's why his parents said, "He's old enough. Ask him." 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." 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." They questioned him: "What did he do to you? How did he heal your eyes?" 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?" They insulted him: "You are his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spoke to Moses, but we don't know where this man is from." The man answered, "This is incredible! You don't know where he is from, yet he healed my eyes! We know that God doesn't listen to sinners. God listens to anyone who is devout and does God's will. No one has ever heard of a healing of the eyes of someone born blind. If this man wasn't from God, he couldn't do this." They responded, "You were born completely in sin! How is it that you dare to teach us?" Then they expelled him. Jesus heard they had expelled the man born blind. Finding him, Jesus said, "Do you believe in the Human One?" He answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him." Jesus said, "You have seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you." The man said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped Jesus. 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." Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, "Surely we aren't blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you wouldn't have any sin, but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

One: This is the Gospel of Christ.

All: **Praise to Christ, the Word.**

Response

Word of God, speak.
Would you pour down like rain
washing my eyes to see your majesty.
To be still and know that you're in this place.
Please let me stay and rest in your holiness.
Word of God, speak.
Word of God, speak.

Sermon

A World Worth Saving: Seeking Justice

Rev. Keith A. Turner

THE EUCHARIST

Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings

Offertory

The Great Thanksgiving for Lent

<i>Celebrant</i>	God be with you!
<i>People</i>	And also with you!
<i>Celebrant</i>	Lift up your hearts!
<i>People</i>	We lift them up to God!
<i>Celebrant</i>	Then let us give thanks.
<i>People</i>	It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right and a good and joyful thing to give thanks to you always, Creator God, because you have made the world in all its complexity. You have given humanity abundant good things. Yet you have also given us the capacity for dark choices and anxiety. You have provided us with paths leading to wisdom through deprivation and suffering. And you have shown us, through the incarnation of your love in Jesus Christ, the way of reconciliation through letting go of self and material concerns, seeking first the compassionate realm of God.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with angels and archangels, with all the company of the heavens, and with all the creatures of the earth, who forever sing their hymns to proclaim the glory of your name:

*Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.*

Ever Living God, you have created the world out of nothingness. You are present in both the darkness and the light.

You have created humanity from the dust of the earth, and have given us the ability to choose between good and evil. You have called your prophets and champions from among the lowly. You have formed your people through wanderings in the desert and through exile in foreign lands.

In your creative thirst to be known to us, you have entered into our struggles, coming among us in the human person of Jesus, the Christ. He was conceived amid scandal, born in want, raised in obscurity. With us he embraces hunger and thirst, temptation, rejection, doubt, grief, suffering and death.

On the night before he died, he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take, eat: This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

After supper he took the cup of wine and, when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me."

Therefore we proclaim this mystery of faith:

Christ has died with us.
Christ lives in us.
Christ comes into the world again.

Now in this sacred rite of thanksgiving and praise we celebrate the saving work of Jesus. For in him the cross, the instrument of torture and death, has been transformed into the sign of reconciliation and abundant life. Recalling his life, his teaching, his death and resurrection, we offer these gifts of bread and wine. Spirit of Compassion, breathe upon them now, making them for us the very body and blood of your incarnate love, the Christ. And breathe your Spirit into us so that, having partaken of this sacramental meal in faith, we may serve you in unity, constancy and peace, and may dwell forever in the joy of communion with you.

All this we ask through the Christ, who is the human and cosmic incarnation of your Love. By Christ, and with Christ, and in Christ, in the unity of your Holy Spirit all honor and glory are yours, Creator God, now and forever.

AMEN.

The Lord's Prayer

Sharing the Bread and Cup

Hymn during Communion

The Power of Your Love

Lord, I come to You.
Let my heart be changed, renewed,
Flowing from the grace
That I've found in You.
Lord, I've come to know
The weaknesses I see in me
Will be stripped away
By the power of Your love.

Refrain: Hold me close.
Let Your love surround me.

Bring me near.
Draw me to Your side.
And as I wait,
I'll rise up like the eagle.
And I will soar with You;
Your Spirit leads me on
In the power of Your love.

Lord, unveil my eyes.
Let me see You face to face;
The knowledge of Your love
As You live in me.
Lord, renew my mind
As Your will unfolds in my life;
In living every day
By the power of Your love. R

Prayer of Thanksgiving

SENDING

Closing Hymn

Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound

UMH 389

1. 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 hath 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. Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
a life of joy and peace.
6. 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 first begun.

Benediction

Sending Music