

St. John's 
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Full  You
to are
the Brim worthy

Third Sunday in Lent - March 20, 2022



Thoughts of Preparation

Sometimes I wish I was the fig tree. No fruit here, just soaking up the sun, growing roots, turning green, stretching out my branches until I can hug the horizon.

Sometimes I wish I was the fig tree, because she doesn't produce, and she's not exhausted, and she probably gets eight hours of sleep at night.

And her branches, unlike my shoulders, are not heavy with work—pulled toward the ground, threatening to break.

And her trunk, unlike my spine, is not fighting to stand tall while holding it all together.

Sometimes I wish I was the fig tree because she knows what I forgot many years ago.

You are still worthy even if you don't produce.

"What I Forgot" – written by: Rev. Sarah Speed / sanctifiedart.org

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude *"The Old Rugged Cross"* (arr. by Mark Hayes)

Tower Bell

***Responsive Call to Worship**

Come, all who are thirsty.

Come, all who are seeking.

Come, all who are waiting.

Come, all who labor.

Come, all who need rest.

Come, all who dream dreams.

Come—whether you're young or old, confident, or curious, lonely or hopeful.

This is God's house. All are welcome here.

Let us worship holy God.

***Call to Confession**

There is something so healing, so life-giving, about telling our stories. In the prayer of confession, that is what we get to do. The mask comes off. Any pretense of perfection is removed. We let the pressure to perform slip away and we sit here, face to face with God, sharing honestly who we long to be. Friends, there is healing here. There is life to be gained here. So join me in this moment of honesty. Join me in the prayer of confession.

***Unison Prayer of Adoration & Confession**

Holy God, we treat our self-worth like something that can be bought at a store; but you know this even better than we do. Instead of trusting that we are made good, instead of trusting that we are loved exactly as we are, we stockpile our value in earthly things—in trophies and awards, in likes and follows, in wealth and power. Forgive us for creating our own measuring stick. Heal our open wounds and tell our hearts that we won't be forgotten if we slow down. We won't be forgotten if we rest. Gratefully we pray, amen. (SILENCE IS KEPT)

***Words of Assurance**

Friends, take a deep breath. Release the tension in your jaw. There is good news here. For even when we stumble, even when we take the easy way out, even when we forget our own self-worth, even when we lose our way—we belong to God. Say it with me—

We are loved. We are claimed. We are under God's wing. We are worthy of grace. We belong to God. Amen.

***Gloria Patri**

(Creatorex)

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son
and to the Holy Ghost**

**As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
world without end. Amen. Amen.**

Scripture Lesson: Isaiah 55:1-9 (Good News Translation)

“Come, everyone who is thirsty— here is water!

Come, you that have no money— buy grain and eat!

Come! Buy wine and milk—it will cost you nothing!

Why spend money on what does not satisfy? Why spend your wages and still be hungry?

Listen to me and do what I say, and you will enjoy the best food of all.

Listen now, my people, and come to me; come to me, and you will have life!

I will make a lasting covenant with you and give you the blessings I promised to David.

I made him a leader and commander of nations, and through him I showed them my power.

Now you will summon foreign nations; at one time they did not know you,

but now they will come running to join you! I, the Lord your God, the holy God of Israel,

will make all this happen; I will give you honor and glory.

Turn to the Lord and pray to him, now that he is near.

Let the wicked leave their way of life and change their way of thinking.

Let them turn to the Lord, our God; he is merciful and quick to forgive.

“My thoughts,” says the Lord, “are not like yours, and my ways are different from yours.

As high as the heavens are above the earth, so high are my ways and thoughts above yours.

Gathering Together in Prayer

Silent Prayer—Pastoral Prayer—Lord’s Prayer

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Offertory Invitation

God's economy seems scandalous in a world that judges on production, achievement, on "What have you done for me lately?" We bring our gifts as a sign of gratitude, and to express divine love in tangible, compassionate ways...and if we don't, it's never too late to learn!

Offertory *"Set Me as a Seal upon Your Heart" (Anna Laura Page)*

Set me as a seal upon Your heart,
O God, for love is as strong as death.
The waters cannot quench love,
neither can floods drown it.
Set me as a seal upon Your heart.

Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a strong spirit within me.
Cast me not away, from Your presence
Restore unto me the joy of salvation.

Uphold me with Your Spirit,
Then I'll teach Your ways,
and sinners will be converted to You.

Scripture Lesson: Luke 13:6-9

Then Jesus told them this parable: "There was once a man who had a fig tree growing in his vineyard. He went looking for figs on it but found none. So he said to his gardener, 'Look, for three years I have been coming here looking for figs on this fig tree, and I haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it go on using up the soil?' But the gardener answered, 'Leave it alone, sir, just one more year; I will dig around it and put in some fertilizer. Then if the tree bears figs next year, so much the better; if not, then you can have it cut down.'"

Sermon

“You Are Worthy”
Pastor Barry Bordenkircher

***Affirmation of Faith**

We believe that the God of the cosmos is at work here.

We believe that God is fertilizing the soil.

We believe that God is planting roots. We believe that God is growing fruit that is yet to be tasted. But until that promised day when the fig tree stands tall and swords are beaten into plowshares, we believe: when our work does not bear fruit, God still loves us.

When our soil grows dry and cracked, God still longs for us.

When all seems hopeless here on earth, God holds hope for us.

The God of the cosmos is at work here. We believe. Help our unbelief. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

***Hymn #255** *“Beneath the Cross of Jesus” (St. Christopher)*
(see last page)

***Our Lenten Series Benediction (Responsive)**

As you leave this place, may you be awestruck by the beauty of this world.

We will laugh, and may it be contagious!

May you overflow with love for those around you.

We’ll hope profusely, and be quick to point out joy!

And in all of your living, and breathing, and being,

We will learn to see our lives full to the brim with God’s Holy Spirit, and may it change our lives..

In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—

We will go in peace, full to the brim. Amen.

Postlude

“Minuet” (from Concerto 9) (G. F. Handel)

WORSHIP NOTES

Today's worship liturgy is adapted from the work of Rev. Sarah Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org. The artwork in today's front page banner is entitled "You Are Worthy" by Rev. Lauren Wright Pittman, inspired by Luke 13:1-9.

Today's Worship Leaders:

Preaching Today: Rev. Barry Bordenkircher

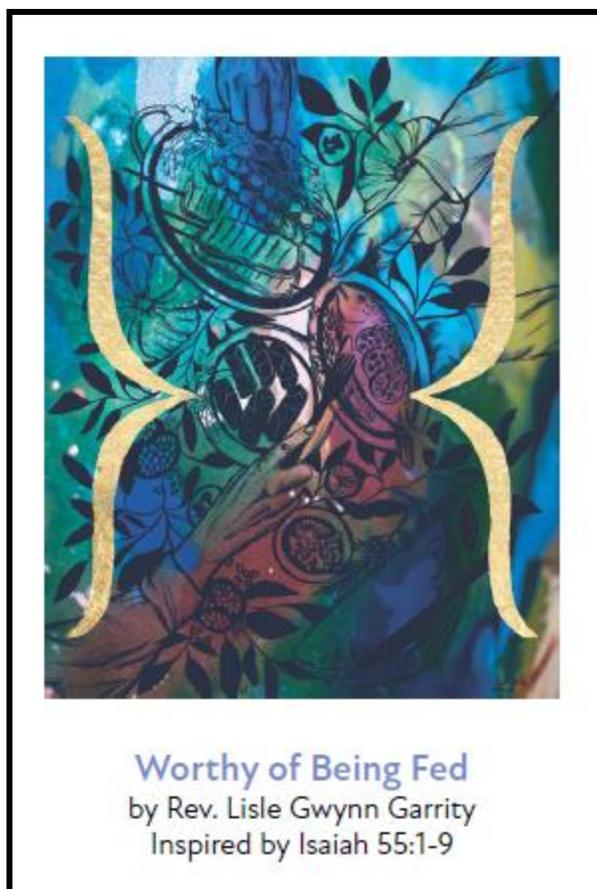
Liturgist: John Robson

Organist: Michael Sullivan

Choral Director: Dobin Park

Thanks to all the musicians and to Michael Sullivan and Dobin Park for assisting with filming and to Dobin Park for film editing.

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In my early 20s, in the midst of too many life transitions to navigate at once and a personal crisis that deeply unraveled me, I called an old family friend who happened to live in the new city I had just moved to. I don't remember what I said, exactly, but the friend instantly sensed that I needed more than just a phone conversation. She invited me to meet her at the park near her apartment. We went on a walk, and as the daylight waned, she said, "Would you like to stay for dinner?"

I'll never forget the way she warmed up homemade soup from her fridge and fixed me an arugula salad. She dressed it with olive oil and lemon juice, and to my surprise, added a pinch of salt and a shake of pepper. Like manna in my desert, that meal nourished me at a time when I did not think I was worthy of being fed.

The prophet Isaiah brings a message of good news to the Israelites, though they have been in exile for so long that perhaps they've forgotten there is a story beyond scarcity. Through Isaiah, God invites them into an abundant life rich with food that is free and waters that satisfy.

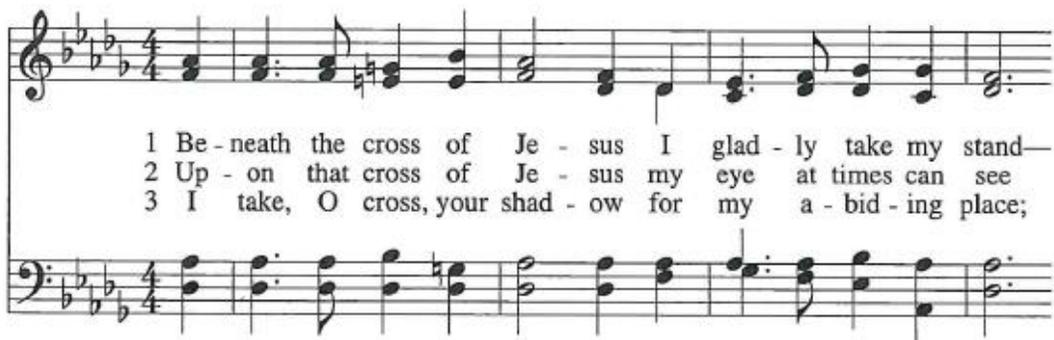
In this image, a feast is savored and shared. The brackets, which look like doves flying inward, also form the shape of a vessel that is simultaneously upright and full and also upside down and poured out. We fill up so we can pour out—we can't give from an empty cup.

In this text, there is no doubt that God's expansive mercy is abundant. The only question—for the Jewish exiles and for us—is are you ready to be restored? Can you believe you are worthy of God's nourishing grace? Will you allow yourself to receive it?

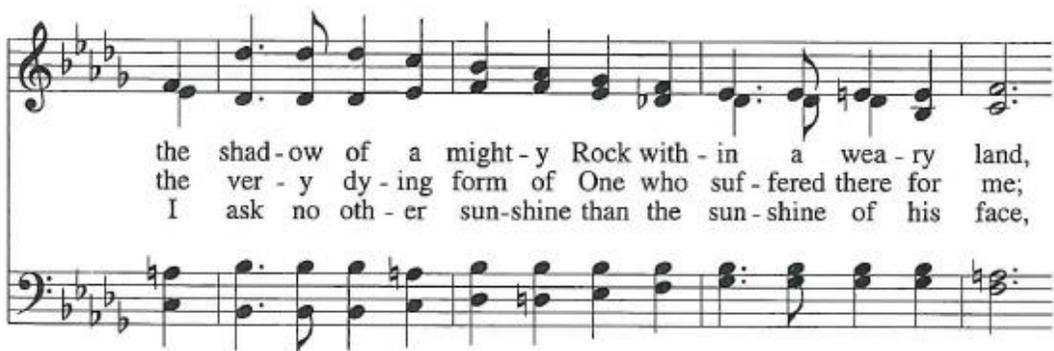
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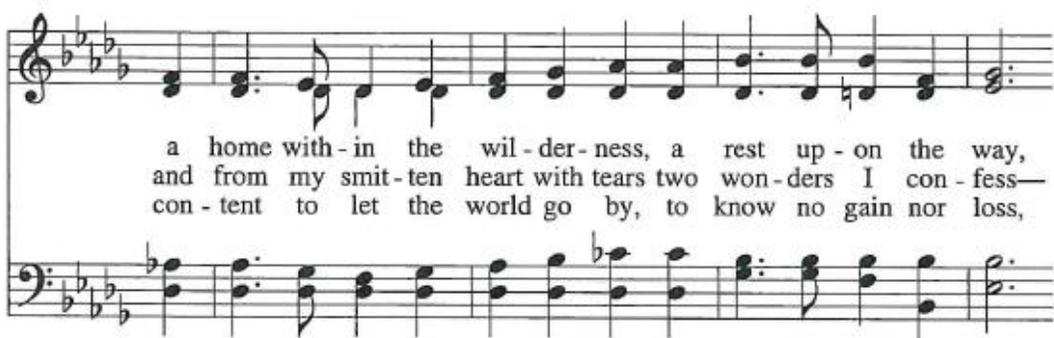
Beneath the Cross of Jesus



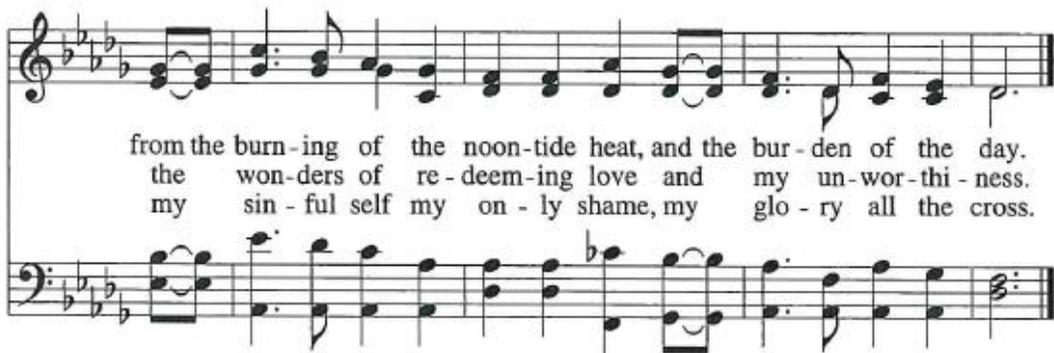
1 Be - neath the cross of Je - sus I glad - ly take my stand—
2 Up - on that cross of Je - sus my eye at times can see
3 I take, O cross, your shad - ow for my a - bid - ing place;



the shad - ow of a might - y Rock with - in a wea - ry land,
the ver - y dy - ing form of One who suf - fered there for me;
I ask no oth - er sun - shine than the sun - shine of his face,



a home with - in the wil - der - ness, a rest up - on the way,
and from my smit - ten heart with tears two won - ders I con - fess—
con - tent to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,



from the burn - ing of the noon - tide heat, and the bur - den of the day.
the won - ders of re - deem - ing love and my un - wor - thi - ness.
my sin - ful self my on - ly shame, my glo - ry all the cross.