

St. John's 
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

TO BE HIS LIGHT THAT TRANSFORMS LIVES

Full  Brazen
to the Brim acts of
beauty

FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT
April 3, 2022



Thoughts of Preparation

‘You seem to be saying that prayer is first of all about me and getting myself out of the way?’ That is exactly what I am saying. God is *already* present. God’s Spirit is dwelling within you. You cannot search for what you *already have*. You cannot talk God into “coming” into you by longer and more urgent prayers. All you can do is become quieter, smaller, and less filled with your own self and its flurry of ideas and feelings. Then God will be obvious in the very now of things.

– Richard. Rohr, What the Mystics Know

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude

“Wondrous Love”

(Gordon Young)

Tower Bell

*Responsive Call to Worship

God’s reach is endless.

God’s mercy is unstoppable.

God’s grace is lavish.

God’s love is constant.

God’s wisdom is vast.

God’s hope is stubborn.

God’s presence is here—

with us, among us, moving THROUGH us, dwelling IN us!

Breathe easy. Breathe deeply.

We are in God’s house.

Let us worship the One who welcomes us home.

*Call to Confession

If you ask any parent with a teenager what it’s like to wait up for their child to meet curfew, they will tell you—they’re standing at the door.

The porch light is on. No one can sleep until that child is home safe.

Friends, I think God is like that for us. The porch light is on. The door is unlocked. We might be late for curfew, but God is just so glad we’re home. So let us pray the prayer of confession together, trusting that no

matter what we do or what we leave undone, the porch light is always on. Let us pray. . .

***Prayer of Adoration & Confession**

God of open doors, we often long to come home to You, to love, and to ourselves, but we aren't always sure how to get there. We know that we need You, but the road back to You is heavy with distractions. So if we can dare to be so forward, we pray—reach into the chaos we make of our hearts and minds and make Yourself known. Quiet everything but Your Word for us today. Leave us awestruck. Drown out the distractions. Come as thunder or come as a still, small voice; we don't care which, we just pray that You will come. And then grant us a beautiful anointing: pour over us the reality that we CANNOT be apart from You. Separation is an illusion. Forgive us for preferring the illusion—which leaves us in control—instead of the reality, that in You we live, and move and have our whole being. AMEN.

[SILENCE is kept]

***Assurance of Pardon**

No matter how many times we run, no matter how far we go or how lost we get, God is standing at the end of the driveway waiting for us. He's been with us all along, and the doors are open.

This grace is extravagant. It calls for an anointing, a bringing forth of our best for God one another! Thanks be 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: Philippians 3:4b-14

If any of you think you can trust in external ceremonies, I have even more reason to feel that way. I was circumcised when I was a week old. I am an Israelite by birth, of the tribe of Benjamin, a pure-blooded Hebrew. As far as keeping the Jewish Law is concerned, I was a Pharisee, and I was so zealous that I persecuted the church. As far as a person can be righteous by obeying the commands of the Law, I was without fault. But all those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ's sake. Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ and be completely united with him. I no longer have a righteousness of my own, the kind that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is based on faith. All I want is to know Christ and to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings and become like him in his death, in the hope that I myself will be raised from death to life.

I do not claim that I have already succeeded or have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to himself. Of course, my friends, I really do not think that I have already won it; the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead. So I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above.

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

Mary brought her gift of expensive ointment to anoint Jesus, in an act of love. Can we learn to see our offering in this way? As gifts of love to God, and an anointing for God's work in creation?

Offertory

"Take Up Your Cross"

(Lloyd Larson)

"Take up your cross," the Savior said, "if you would my disciple be; take up your cross with willing heart, and humbly follow after me."

Take up your cross; let not its weight fill your weak spirit with alarm;
His strength shall bear your spirit up, and brace your heart and nerve your arm.

Take up your cross and follow Christ, nor think till death to lay it down;
for only they who bear the cross may hope to win the glorious crown.

When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.

"Take up your cross," the Savior said, "and humbly follow me."

Scripture Lesson: John 12:1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?"

(He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

Sermon ‘Brazen Acts of Beauty’ Pastor Barry Bordenkircher

***A Prayerful Affirmation of Faith [Responsive]**

Holy God, sometimes my waking is a prayer.

Sometimes the song I have stuck in my head, rumbling around on repeat, is a prayer.

Sometimes the way I talk to the children and the way I hug the dog is a prayer.

Sometimes the way I take my phone out to get a picture of the sunset or of the people I love—that is a prayer.

Other times, prayer is moments like this—gathered together here, heads bowed, eyes closed, hearts quiet for just a moment.

And in all of it, I trust You to hear me. Help me to hear from You in return. Help me learn that all of life is a prayer, and all creation, and all of ME is a reflection of You—

And that we are never apart. Never. Gratefully we pray, amen.

***Hymn #61** *“There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”* (Wellesley)
(see last page)

***Lenten Series Benediction**

As you leave this place, may You be awestruck by the beauty of this world. May you laugh, and may it be contagious. May you overflow with love for those around you. May you be effusive with hope and quick to point out joy. And in all of your living, and breathing, and being, may you find yourself full to the brim with God’s Holy Spirit, and may it change your life. In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself—go in peace, full to the brim. Amen.

Postlude

“Postlude in C Major” (Gordon Young)

WORSHIP NOTES

Today’s worship liturgy is adapted from the work of Rev. Sarah Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org. The *Communion Thanksgiving* is from Sacredise (sacredise.com) by the Rev. John Van De Laar. The *Closing Hymn* is used with permission from *Gifts of Love: New Hymns for Today's Worship* by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette (Geneva Press, 2000).

Today’s Worship Leaders:

Preaching Today: Rev. Barry Bordenkircher

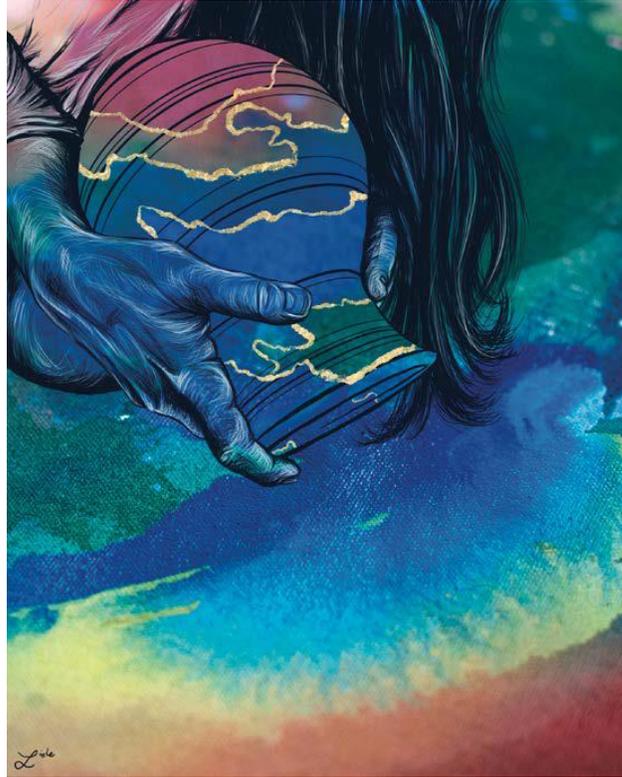
Liturgist: Diana Stamm

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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Brazen Beauty

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 12:1-8

Acrylic on raw canvas with digital drawing

In the chapter just before this, Lazarus dies and Jesus weeps. But after being laid in the tomb, Lazarus is raised and made well. This act solidifies for the chief priests and pharisees that Jesus is a dangerous threat. In response, they order for his arrest and plot how they will kill him. Jesus retreats from public ministry, hiding out in the wilderness in Ephraim. As the passover nears, people begin to wonder: “Will Jesus be here?” Despite the threats mounting, Jesus does return. On his way to Jerusalem, he stops in Bethany, seeking refuge and comfort in the home of his friends. Martha cooks a feast, and Lazarus—healthy and alive—joins him at the table. In resistance to death, as an act of extravagant love, Mary anoints Jesus with a fragrance that fills the whole room. Her actions could appear impulsive, but if you were saying your last goodbye to someone you loved, how would you act? This image began as a painting on raw canvas. With fluid strokes of paint, I allowed the colors to run and bleed into each other. As I drew Mary kneeling, I omitted the other details in the scene, removing Jesus’ feet, the other guests, the table full of food. I wanted to focus on Mary’s brazen act of pouring out the expensive perfume, a commodity valued at a year’s worth of wages. The luxurious liquid is expansive, flowing out toward us as the viewer. It bleeds into the red, foreshadowing the blood Jesus will soon shed. The vessel she holds is lined with gold, a reference to the ancient Japanese practice of *Kintsugi*, of repairing broken pottery with gold lacquer. The art of *Kintsugi* embellishes the cracks and transforms a shattered vessel into a new object of beauty. In this embodied act of worship, Mary is practicing *Kintsugi*—boldly celebrating the beauty of life even as death approaches.

There's a Wideness in God's Mercy 61

1 There's a wide-ness in God's mer-cy like the wide-ness of the sea;
2 There is wel-come for the sin-ner and more grac-es for the good;
3 For the love of God is broad-er than the meas-ure of our mind;
4 If our love were but more sim-ple, we would take him at his word,

there's a kind-ness in his jus-tice which is more than lib-er-ty.
there is mer-cy with the Sav-ior; there is heal-ing in his blood.
and the heart of the E-ter-nal is most won-der-ful-ly kind.
and our lives would be il-lu-mined by the pres-ence of our Lord.

WORDS: Frederick W. Faber (1814-1863)
MUSIC: Lizzie S. Tourjée (1858-1913)

WELLESLEY
8.7.8.7.