

WORSHIP FOR SUNDAY, APRIL 3, 2022

Pacific Presbyterian Church and First Presbyterian Church of Union, Missouri

FIFTH SUNDAY in LENT

GATHERING

PRELUDE

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: Rejoice and be glad!

All: For God is our salvation.

One: Praise the Lord, O my soul!

All: Lord, we will praise you as long as we live!

***OPENING HYMN** “When Morning Gilds the Skies” GtG 667

1. **When morning gilds the skies,
my heart awaking cries:
may Jesus Christ be praised!
Alike at work and prayer
to Jesus I repair:
may Jesus Christ be praised!**

2. **Does sadness fill my mind?
A solace here I find:
may Jesus Christ be praised!
Or fades my earthly bliss?
My comfort still is this:
may Jesus Christ be praised!**

3. **Let earth's wide circle round
in joyful notes resound:
may Jesus Christ be praised!
Let air and sea and sky
from depth to height reply:
may Jesus Christ be praised!**

4. **Be this, while life is mine,
my canticle divine:
may Jesus Christ be praised!**

**Be this the eternal song
through all the ages long:
may Jesus Christ be praised!**

(Public Domain)

***UNISON PRAYER OF CONFESSION**

**God, our strength and savior,
you know our great transgressions,
our hidden faults, our secret sins.
We are blind to our own brokenness,
yet focused on the failings of others.
We are deaf to the cries of those who need us,
numb to the need of those who hurt.
We are silent when words are needed,
impotent when action is required.
With our hands we grasp at power;
with our feet we stumble into evil;
with our eyes we look out for ourselves.
Forgive us, gracious God;
hear our anguish,
pity our brokenness,
speak life and forgiveness
to our weary souls.
And lead us in your holy way
of life and love and peace;
for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

***SILENT CONFESSION**

***ASSURANCE OF PARDON**

One: Sisters and brothers,
rejoice and be glad,
for God is mighty to save,
and loves in such a way,
that we are restored to health and to wholeness.

**All: In Jesus Christ,
we are forgiven and restored.
Thanks be to God!**

One: As God's forgiven people,
receive this goodness and mercy,
and live a new life in the grace of Jesus Christ.

***THE PEACE**

One: The peace of Christ be with you all.

All: **And also with you.**

(From your seat, a brief sign of peace may be shared: a wave of the hand, a nod of the head, etc.)

THE WORD

SCRIPTURE READINGS Matthew 26:6-13
James 5:13-16

MATTHEW 26:6-13 (New Revised Standard Version)

⁶ Now while Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, ⁷ a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very costly ointment, and she poured it on his head as he sat at the table. ⁸ But when the disciples saw it, they were angry and said, "Why this waste? ⁹ For this ointment could have been sold for a large sum, and the money given to the poor." ¹⁰ But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? She has performed a good service for me. ¹¹ For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. ¹² By pouring this ointment on my body she has prepared me for burial. ¹³ Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her."

JAMES 5:13-16 (New Revised Standard Version)

¹³ Are any among you suffering? They should pray. Are any cheerful? They should sing songs of praise. ¹⁴ Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord. ¹⁵ The prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise them up; and anyone who has committed sins will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective.

PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

SERMON by Pastor Bill Vincent

First of all, let's be clear: the oil we speak of today is not the oil from which we get gas for our cars.

The oil that is a common object mentioned in the Bible was, in all likelihood olive oil,
-made from the prevalent fruit of the olive tree,
-found in most households,
-used in a variety of ways.

It was found in lamps as fuel for their flame providing light to the house.

It was found in the kitchen for making foods and for cooking food.

It was used in rituals of healing and to promote health.

And its most frequently mentioned use: anointing, whether anointing directly with oil or with ointments made with oil. Anointing was intended to consecrate something or someone: to set aside the item or person for sacred use, i.e., for God's purposes. Anointing could also demonstrate special care and blessing; and a special devotion, as in the woman anointing Jesus.

All of which got me to thinking: Do we know we have been anointed?

In our tradition, our anointing is less identified with oil and more with water: the water of baptism. But the effect is the same.

Do we know that impact? Do we remember that significance? Will we claim that?

We are anointed for a purpose: God's purpose.

We are consecrated for a task: God's work in the world.

We are blessed by God's claim upon us, and God's grace flowing over us, and God's life stirring in us.

And it seems to me this 'oil' for anointing also points us to

-the way we are blessed, and can be a blessing, and

-the task and purpose for which we are claimed and consecrated.

We are anointed...to remind others of their anointing as well: that they too are claimed, called...and loved.

We are all embraced by God and called by God. We can affirm that for others: that they too have a purpose in life.

And some people really need to hear that message. For they are aimless and drifting, with no sense of anything meaningful to do in life. But we can affirm for them – and *to* them – that they too are part of a bigger and broader purpose: part of God's work, part of God's intention for the world.

And in that call and embrace – in that anointing – that they too are blessed by God in and for this life: equipped for this purpose, freed to embrace the fulness and meaning of this life.

We are anointed...to offer healing. We can be a part of God's work of healing in people's lives – for the visible wounds, and the invisible dis-eases.

Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., in his hymn "We Come to You for Healing, Lord," writes,

**You touch us through physicians' skills,
through nurses' gifts of care.**

(Glory to God #796, 2002)

We have experienced that healing touch through the special skills and training of those in particular healthcare fields.

But we don't have to have a special degree to be a part of God's healing.

-We can hold the hand of someone who is anxious.

-We can be present for someone who is frightened.

-We can drive someone to their doctor's appointment.

-We can listen to someone talk through the tangle of their lives, and by doing so, help them to untangle the knots inside them.

And, as Stuemple continues, God touches us
**through the love of faithful friends
who lift our lives in prayer.**

Like we read in James.

The power and effect of prayer. An effect not always known, with power...and not always knowing how. But we affirm that Yes!

the prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective...

...even if the outcome ends up other than desired.

As Jill Duffield writes in her book,

Those prayers are indeed healing and effective, no matter if the physical sickness persists, the perplexing situation remains, and questions of what comes next go unanswered.

And after sharing an instance in which she and others prayed for someone, she affirms,
not only did that family feel the love of God through the prayers of the righteous, all of us also experienced the transformative power of the Holy Spirit as we poured out our hopes together. (“Thursday: Healing Oil - James 5:13-18,” in *Lent in Plain Sight: A Devotional through Ten Objects*, Jill J. Duffield, Westminster John Knox Press, 2020)

...and so knew healing.

We are anointed...to offer sustenance: the nourishment of life with spiritual *and physical* food.

We know of people’s hunger, in this community and beyond.

-We can offer the very oil needed to cook the food or make the food by donating to a food pantry.

-We can work to make sure all have enough to live on, working for justice through policy-making to deal with the systemic issues that hobble many, restricting their opportunities, keeping them in poverty.

(As an example: regarding the Self-Development of People program supported through the One Great Hour of Sharing offering,)

Peter Michael Egwudah, program coordinator for the Civil Society Coalition for Poverty Eradication (CISCOPE) in Nigeria, says, “Nigeria is one of the wealthiest, oil-producing countries in the world with an abundance of natural resources but the money doesn’t go where it needs to go, to the people.

“The people need food and seeds but we also need to get communities to a place where they can become agents of their own self-development. We can train them in new agricultural techniques and help amplify the voice of women to ensure they get a good return when they bring their produce to market.” (bulletin insert, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.))

And, yes, we can offer the vital sustenance and support of friendship, and point to the nourishment of God’s word.

And like that oil in the lamps, we are anointed...to provide light.

Not so much for us to be the light or the source of the light, as for us to reflect the light: to pass it on. Which may mean we need to polish our lives and clean up our ways so that Christ's life and his way is clear...and clearly reflected in the words we speak and the choices we make, in our encounters with others and even in our encounters with disappointment. All that our lives might reflect the love and the mercy, the peace and the hope that we see and we know and we experience in Christ Jesus.

He said,

"You are the light of the world." (Matthew 5:14)

For we share the light that comes into the world to offer life to all the world.

We are anointed to be oil for God's blessing and purpose.

Let us be that oil that offers itself as a blessing to others and in service to God.

Let us be that oil that offers healing and wholeness through our prayers and our presence.

Let us be that oil that provides sustenance and nourishment in words of good will and deeds of generosity.

Let us be that oil that provides light through dark valleys and the dark of night. A light that shows others a way by a life that is well-lived and a faith that is well-placed, even as we know and relish the light of Christ shining for us.

***AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

We trust in God the Holy Spirit,

everywhere the giver and renewer of life.

The Spirit justifies us by grace through faith,

sets us free to accept ourselves and to love God and neighbor,

and binds us together with all believers

in the one body of Christ, the Church.

The same Spirit

who inspired the prophets and apostles

rules our faith and life in Christ through Scripture,

engages us through the Word proclaimed,

claims us in the waters of baptism,

feeds us with the bread of life and the cup of salvation,

and calls women and men to all ministries of the Church.

In a broken and fearful world

the Spirit gives us courage

to pray without ceasing,

to witness among all peoples to Christ as Lord and Savior,

to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,

to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,

and to work with others for justice, freedom, and peace.

**In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"**

(from *A Brief Statement of Faith*, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) Book of Confessions)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Pastor: Pour out your healing grace, O Lord...
People: ...fill us with your light and life.

THE EUCHARIST

OFFERING

Invitation

Reflection

**Unison Prayer of Dedication*

**In gratitude, O God, we come to your table,
into your presence, into your house.
For all that you have done for us,
most especially for your gift of Jesus Christ,
we offer our thanks and praise.
And we offer our gifts and ourselves.
Direct us as we work each day,
that our gifts and our lives
may mirror your goodness and grace
to the world;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

***HYMN** "Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts" GtG 494 (*Verses 1-3*)

- 1. Jesus, thou joy of loving hearts,
thou fount of life, thou light of all,
from the best bliss that earth imparts
we turn, unfilled, to heed thy call.**
- 2. Thy truth unchanged hath ever stood;
thou savest those that on thee call;
to them that seek thee thou art good,
to them that find thee, all in all.**

3. **We taste thee, O thou living bread,
and long to feast upon thee still;
we drink of thee, the fountainhead,
and thirst our souls from thee to fill.**

(Public Domain)

SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Invitation to the Lord's Table

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

(The prayer continues...)

The Lord's Prayer (Contemporary)

**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.**

Breaking of the Bread

Communion of the People

(With the passing of the bread, please wait until all have been served so that we might partake of it together, to remind us of our participation in this sacrament as a community.)

(With the passing of the cup, please drink the cup as you are served as an expression of our personal commitment to our Lord.)

Prayer

SENDING

***CLOSING HYMN** “More Love to Thee, O Christ” GtG 828

1. **More love to thee, O Christ,
more love to thee!
Hear thou the prayer I make
on bended knee.
This is my earnest plea:
more love, O Christ, to thee;
more love to thee,
more love to thee!**

2. **Once earthly joy I craved,
sought peace and rest.
Now thee alone I seek;
give what is best.
This all my prayer shall be:
more love, O Christ, to thee;
more love to thee,
more love to thee!**

3. **Then shall my latest breath
whisper thy praise;
this be the parting cry
my heart shall raise.
This still its prayer shall be:
more love, O Christ, to thee;
more love to thee,
more love to thee!**

(Public Domain)

***CHARGE AND BLESSING**

Pastor: ...And let the gathered people of God say...
People: ...Amen.

POSTLUDE

The Call to Worship, Prayer of Confession, Assurance of Pardon, Prayers of the People (adapted), Prayer of Dedication are used by permission of Westminster John Knox Press from *Feasting on the Word® Worship Companion*. Copyright 2013, 2014, 2015.

The Prayer of Thanksgiving is used by permission from *Book of Common Worship*, © 1993 Westminster/John Knox Press.