

March 7, 2021
Third Sunday of Lent
Worship in the Wilderness¹

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PRELUDE *Jesus Paid it All on Calvary* (Watts)

GREETING & ANNOUNCEMENTS

OPENING PRAYER

Pastor: God, you rejoice with those who rejoice; you mourn with those who mourn, and you call us to do the same. Help us to come to you today with honesty and openness, sharing our sorrows and knowing your comfort.

All: *Amen.*

HYMN

Just as I Am

Charlotte Elliott, 1836; alt.

John 6:37; Eph. 2:14

1 Just as I am, with - out one plea but that your
2 Just as I am, though tossed a - bout with man - y a
3 Just as I am, you will re - ceive, will wel - come,
4 Just as I am, your love un - known has bro - ken

blood was shed for me, And that you called in -
con - flict, many a doubt, Fight - ings and fears with -
par - don, cleanse, re - lieve; Be - cause your prom - ise
ev - ery bar - rier down; Now to be yours, and

vit - ing me, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
in, with - out, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
I be - lieve, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!
yours a - lone, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

¹ Much of the worship liturgy for this year's Lenten season will be adapted from a hard copy resource called "Worship in the Wilderness" by Sara and Sam Hargreaves/Music and Worship Foundation 2018. This is from Pastor Laura's personal worship material library.

HEBREW READING – Exodus 3:1-10 (Common English Bible Version)

Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the wilderness and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. ² There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. ³ So Moses thought, “I will go over and see this strange sight—why the bush does not burn up.”

⁴ When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, “Moses! Moses!”

And Moses said, “Here I am.”

⁵ “Do not come any closer,” God said. “Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground.” ⁶ Then he said, “I am the God of your father,^[a] the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

⁷ The LORD said, “I have indeed seen the misery of my people in Egypt. I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers, and I am concerned about their suffering. ⁸ So I have come down to rescue them from the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land into a good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey—the home of the Canaanites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. ⁹ And now the cry of the Israelites has reached me, and I have seen the way the Egyptians are oppressing them. ¹⁰ So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”

This is the Word of the Lord. Let all the people say, “Thanks be to God.”

GOSPEL READING – John 11:20-29, 32-36 (CEB Version)

²⁰ When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet him, but Mary stayed at home.

²¹ “Lord,” Martha said to Jesus, “if you had been here, my brother would not have died. ²² But I know that even now God will give you whatever you ask.”

²³ Jesus said to her, “Your brother will rise again.”

²⁴ Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.”

²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

²⁷ “Yes, Lord,” she replied, “I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world.”

²⁸ After she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary aside. “The Teacher is here,” she said, “and is asking for you.” ²⁹ When Mary heard this, she got up quickly and went to him.

³² When Mary reached the place where Jesus was and saw him, she fell at his feet and said, “Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”

³³ When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ³⁴ “Where have you laid him?” he asked.

“Come and see, Lord,” they replied.

³⁵ Jesus wept.

³⁶ Then the Jews said, “See how he loved him!”

Pastor: This is the Good News of Christ, let all the people say, “Praise be to Christ.”

SERMON

Lament in the Wilderness

Rev. Laura C. Bair

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION (Based on Psalm 13)

Pastor: Let us pray, using the lamenting cries of King David as recorded in Psalm 13, as our guide. The prayer is printed in your online bulletin, but will also be projected onto the video screen behind me. Let us pray, with you reading the parts that say “All” and me reading the parts listed as “Pastor.” Let us pray...

All: *How long, Lord? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me?*

Pastor: We pray for those who feel forgotten and unseen, may they know that they are remembered and seen by your God Help us to partner with you to remember the forgotten. Search our hearts to reveal those we hid our faces from: the outcast, the foreigner, the stranger, or the homeless. Change our hearts, that we may turn our faces towards these people and see them as your beloved children.

All: *How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and day after day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me?*

Pastor: We pray for those we know who struggle with mental illnesses, anxiety, and depression. We pray that there will be resources released to help, enough staff employed, and finances given towards mental health services nationally – especially in this global pandemic wilderness. Help us to be a friend, a listening ear, a hand to hold, to those who suffer. Fill us with compassion and wisdom. Ultimately, we pray for those who wrestle with sorrow, that they may know your victory over dark thoughts which currently seem to triumph.

All: *Look on me and answer, Lord my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep in death, and my enemy will say, “I have overcome them,” and my face will rejoice when I fall.*

Pastor: We pray for those who might be considered fallen by those around them: may they know your restoration and grace. Help us to not judge or exclude your beloved children, but instead lift them up in prayer, and embrace them with the grace we know in Christ. Thank you, merciful God, for hearing our prayer. We exclaim together:

All: *But I trust in your unfailing love; my heart rejoices in your salvation. I will sing the Lord’s praise, for he has been good to me. It is through Christ we pray, continuing as he taught us: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom comes. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.*

SPECIAL MUSIC

Jesus Walked this Lonesome Valley

Carole Caswell, Vocal Solo

OFFERING INVITATION and PRAYER

Pastor: In the midst of struggles, God is present. In times of grief, times of weariness, and in tragedy God in Christ weeps with us. Even in death, we are promised a resurrection. In this we see God’s amazing grace envelop and overcome human suffering once and for all. God, our God, beckons us to live within the unfolding realm of God’s love too.

One way we do this is through the giving of our time, talent, and money. In this next moment, I want you to image an offering plate coming to you. In your mind, when it arrives, I ask you to imagine that you are responding in openness to all the blessings God has given you. As you place your financial offering in the plate, imagine yourself placing your hand over it, and silently committing to God, to use your gifts, talents, and heart for furthering the unfolding realm of God’s kingdom of eternal

healing here on earth, even as it is in heaven. (Moment of Silence)

O God our Alpha and our Omega, who through Jesus has loved us and through grace has given us eternal comfort and hope, make our hearts strong for the work which lies ahead, as bless and multiply the tithes and offerings we give in gratitude. Help us to put them to good use, so that all who lament and grieve will know you have heard their cries and the Spirit is present with them, granting your healing mercy. Amen.

HYMN

Abide with Me

In moderate time

1. A - bide with me: fast falls the e - ven - tide; The dark - ness
2. Swift to its close ebbs out life's lit - tle day; Earth's joys grow
3. I need Thy pres - ence ev - ery pass - ing hour; What but Thy
4. I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless: Ills have no
5. Hold Thou Thy cross be - fore my clos - ing eyes; Shine through the
deep - ens; Lord, with me a - bide: When oth - er help - ers
dim, its glo - ries pass a - way; Change and de - cay in
grace can foil the Tempt - er's power? Who like Thy - self my
weight, and tears no bit - ter - ness. Where is death's sting? Where,
gloom, and point me to the skies: Heaven's morn - ing breaks, and
fail, and com - forts flee, Help of the help - less, O a - bide with me.
all a - round I see; O Thou who chang - est not, a - bide with me.
guide and stay can be? Through cloud and sun - shine, O a - bide with me.
grave, thy vic - to - ry? I tri - umph still, if Thou a - bide with me.
earth's vain shadows flee: In life, in death, O Lord, a - bide with me. A - MEN.

CLOSING PRAYER

Pastor:

Thank you good and gracious God, for the space to be honest with you today. To you, all hearts are open; from you no secrets are hidden. May we continue to talk openly with you as we take our leave from this time of worship. Make us a people who listen to others, sharing their sorrows and spreading your comfort.

All:

Amen.

POSTLUDE

Calvary's Rose (Bennett)