

First Congregational Church Waterville United Church of Christ

March 19, 2023

9:30 AM



"Yet even now," says the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting...rend your hearts and not your clothing." — Joel 2: 12-13

The Christian scriptures offer many images of where love, grace, forgiveness, righteousness, and healing can REALLY be found. And it is not in the "usual" places. Isn't it as true of us today as it was of the scriptural authors? Don't we often look for wholeness and happiness in places that offer only temporary "good feelings" and satisfaction? Lent is a wonderfully reflective time to reassess where we are searching for meaning and purpose. We'll move through stories of Jesus to find out who offers the "real deal."

Words of Greeting

Mission Statement

Seeking to walk in the Way of Jesus, we are an Open and Affirming church, faithfully using who we are and what we have to serve those on the margins of our community. No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here.

Prelude

Be Thou My Vision

arr. Michael Card

Threshold Moment

Confession and Assurance

Leader: Let us join together in opening our hearts to the love of God. Before we even utter a word, we can be assured God will offer us grace and a way forward. For this reason, we can be honest with what pains us most about our own thoughts and actions. Let us pray: Holy and Merciful One, in this season of discernment we come bringing our deepest longings, And our failed attempts at satisfying them. We have often looked for love, for acceptance and security, in the approval of others, giving away the power to claim for ourselves that we are inherently beloved, created by God.

People: **We yearn for lives that matter, we desire relationships that thrive, we want less regret.**

Leader: At times we fail to see that you have already given us what really matters: your love and acceptance. You provide opportunities all around us to make a difference in the lives of others. You give us a fresh start each day, inviting us to do better.

In this silence, we bring to you our pleas for openness to a different way of living.

Silence

My friends, be assured by the Psalmist who reminds us that our God is the "rock of our salvation" in whose hand is the "depths of the earth and the heights of the mountains." Let us respond together:

All: **We open our hearts, our minds, our souls, our vision to the ways of love created by God, embodied in Jesus, and already moving in us by the Spirit. We are forgiven, loved, and freed! Amen!**

Peace

Opening Hymn

Just as I Am

NCH 207

Children's Time

Song of Preparation for the Word

[sung]

**Love us into fullness,
touch us with your grace;
Jesus, in your mercy,
draw us to your face.**

Presentation of Scripture

Psalm 23 *(The Message)*

God, my shepherd!
I don't need a thing.
You have bedded me down in lush meadows,
you find me quiet pools to drink from.
True to your word,
you let me catch my breath
and send me in the right direction.

Even when the way goes through
Death Valley,
I'm not afraid
when you walk at my side.
Your trusty shepherd's crook
makes me feel secure.

You serve me a six-course dinner
right in front of my enemies.
You revive my drooping head;
my cup brims with blessing.

Your beauty and love chase after me
every day of my life.
I'm back home in the house of God
for the rest of my life.

Video Testimony

[sung]

**Love us into fullness,
hold us in your care,
cheer us with your presence,
here and everywhere.**

Presentation of Scripture

John 9:1-41 *(The Inclusive Bible, selected verses)*

As Jesus walked along, he saw someone who had been blind from birth. The disciples asked Jesus, "Rabbi, was it this individual's sin that caused the blindness, or that of the parents?" "Neither," answered Jesus, "It wasn't because of anyone's sin— not this

person's, nor the parents'. Rather, it was to let God's works shine forth in this person. We must do the deeds of the One who sent me while it is still day— for night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

With that, Jesus spat on the ground, made mud with his saliva and smeared the blind one's eyes with the mud. Then Jesus said, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam"—"Siloam" means "sent." So the person went off to wash, and came back able to see.

Neighbors and those who had been accustomed to seeing the blind beggar began to ask, "Isn't this the one who used to sit and beg?" Some said yes; others said no—the one who had been healed simply looked like the beggar. But the individual in question said, "No—it was me."

They took the one who had been born blind to the Pharisees. It had been on a Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud paste and opened this one's eyes. The Pharisees asked how the individual could see. They were told, "Jesus put mud on my eyes. I washed it off, and now I can see." This prompted some Pharisees to say, "This Jesus cannot be from God, because he doesn't keep the Sabbath." Others argued, "But how could a sinner perform signs like these?" They were sharply divided.

The Temple authorities refused to believe that this one had been blind and had begun to see, until they summoned the parents. "Is this your child?" they asked, "and if so, do you attest that your child was blind at birth? How do you account for the fact that now your child can see?" The parents answered, "We know this is our child, blind from birth. But how our child can see now, or who opened those blind eyes, we have no idea. But don't ask us—our child is old enough to speak without us!"

A second time they summoned the one who had been born blind and said, "Give God the glory instead; we know that this Jesus is a sinner." "I don't know whether he is a sinner or not," the individual answered. "All I know is that I used to be blind, and now I can see." If this one were not from God, he could never have done such a thing!" "What!" they exclaimed. "You're steeped in sin from birth, and you're giving us lectures?" With that they threw the person out.

When Jesus heard of the expulsion, he sought out the healed one and asked, "Do you believe in the Chosen One?" The other answered, "Who is this One, that I may believe?" "You're looking at him," Jesus replied. "The Chosen One is speaking to you now." The healed one said, "Yes, I believe," and worshiped Jesus. And Jesus said, "I came into this world to execute justice—to make the sightless see and the seeing blind." Some of the Pharisees who were nearby heard this and said, "You're not calling us blind, are you?" To which Jesus replied, "If you were blind, there would be no sin in that. But since you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

[sung]
**Love us into fullness,
and we will be strong;
Jesus, walk beside us,
fill our hearts with song.**

The Word in Music

Brave

Sara Bareilles

Sermon

Look for the Shepherd

Prayers of the Day

Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison, Kyrie Eleison [NCH 751]

Prayer of our Savior (*say the one that is in your heart*)

A Traditional Version

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. Amen

A Contemporary Version

Our Creator in heaven, holy is your name. Your kingdom come. Your 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. Do not lead us into temptation; but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Offering

Creation Care Moment

Announcements

Closing Hymn

Savior, like a Shepherd Lead Us

NCH 252

Benediction

Leader: Go forth into the world, looking for love in all the right places!

People: **We will look for signs of The Shepherd, tending to the world around us with love!**

Postlude

Blessed Assurance

Phoebe Knapp

WORSHIP PARTICIPANTS

Rev. Ian R. Lynch - Pastor
David Dean – Soloist/Pianist
Sally Melcher-McKeagney - Liturgist
Jackie Kulik – Deacon of the Week

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10:00 a.m. Daily Prayer Check in password

The safest and most effective way to connect to a Zoom meeting is to manually enter the Meeting ID, 914 158 897 - and then the password - 693668

If you want to try just clicking on this link with the password embedded, it should also work:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/914158897?pwd=VkEwUG5rbEdwaFB3NGJyU3NhV2hGUT09>

And you can always call in: 1 929 205 6099 US

And enter the Meeting ID: 914 158 897 Password: 693668

One Great Hour of Sharing Special Offering

In 2022, through your gifts to OGHS, the UCC was present with our neighbors in tangible ways, standing in solidarity and mutuality to respond to ongoing and emerging needs, and work for the benefit of all. Working collaboratively with Conferences, local, national, and global partners we helped to provide clean water, food, education, health care, resettlement for refugees and displaced persons, emergency relief, and disaster preparedness and response.

We will receive this offering on March 19th. You may also give online at watervilleucc.org

Our Church Life: This Coming Week

March 19, 2023

Today, March	19	9:30 a.m. Worship Service in-person, Zoom and You Tube
Monday	20	Office Closed 10:00 a.m. Daily prayer/check-in time on Zoom
Tuesday	21	Office Closed 10:00 a.m. Daily prayer/check-in time on Zoom
Wednesday	22	9:00 Essentials Closet 10:00 a.m. Daily prayer/check-in-time on Zoom
Thursday	23	10:00 a.m. Daily prayer/check-in-time on Zoom 5:00 p.m. Essentials Closet 7:00 p.m Worship Series on Zoom
Friday	24	9:00 Essentials Closet 10:00 a.m. Daily prayer/check-in-time
Saturday	25	10:00 a.m. Daily prayer/check-in-time
Sunday	26	9:30 a.m. Worship Service in-person. Zoom and You Tube