

## **Worship Resources - *Renewed***

**1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent, Year B,**

**21<sup>st</sup> February, 2021**

**Mark 1:9-15 CEV / Isaiah 40:1-11 CEV / Isaiah 40:21-31**

### **Prelude      *Obey My Voice***

played by church musician Annie Center,

<https://youtu.be/Br5E14bVVg0>

### **Intro / Call to Worship**

As darkness gives way to light and winter sleep to fresh beginnings,

**We come today to be reminded of God's love for us.**

Like the green shoots of renewed life, stirring beneath the soil,

**We welcome an awakening of God's word in our lives.**

In this time of reflection and repentance,

**We affirm our identity, we claim our security, as children of God.**

I'm glad to welcome you to online worship with Olympic View Community Church. We seek to welcome all of God's children to join us in bearing witness to the radically transforming power of God's love.

As we gather today for this first Sunday of Lent, we will begin our focus this year on a return from exile, and the promise and hope that return offers. As we listen to the following familiar hymn, *How Great Thou Art*, let's give some thought as to how God has renewed and rescued us from our own exiles of life, and how that reflects on the character of our Creator.

### **Reflection video      *How Great Thou Art (with lyrics)***

performed by chris rice

Posted to YouTube by DrCheezyToe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cc0QVWzCv9k>

## Invocation

Loving God,

at the beginning of this Lenten season, we are met with the challenge of handing over every bit of our lives that do not come from You. To rid ourselves of what clutters our lives, and all that distracts us from the simple truth of Your love for us.

Your prophets have called us to change the way we worship— to make internal sacrifices instead of external ones. To seek justice, and love kindness, and walk humbly with You each and every one of our days.

If we don't give anything up for Lent, then let us at least give up this: that we might live cease living in ways that disconnect us from You, for every one of our steps is like a circle around Your temple. Perhaps this Lent, we can give up our way and give ourselves to Your way for us.

So, lead and guide us on this Lenten way. May we walk with Jesus toward the hill just outside of Jerusalem. May we like Him take up our cross and follow, spending each moment of our lives living responsively to You, just as Christ Himself did. For that is the faithful way. **Amen.**

**We light a candle today to represent the Spirit burning within us, and among us, guiding our time together. (light candle) Amen.**

**In our Gospel reading this morning, we hear of Jesus' baptism and time of temptation in the wilderness. As we hear these words from Mark, let's give some thought as to how we have experienced the renewal of the Spirit in our own lives, and the opportunity we are given to reflect on our own relationship with God during this time of Lent.**

### **Gospel reading                      Mark 1:9-15 CEV**

About that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee, and John baptized him in the Jordan River.

As soon as Jesus came out of the water, he saw the sky open and the Holy Spirit coming down to him like a dove.

A voice from heaven said, "You are my own dear Son, and I am pleased with you."

Right away God's Spirit made Jesus go into the desert.

He stayed there for forty days while Satan tested him. Jesus was with the wild animals, but angels took care of him.

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee and told the good news that comes from God.[a]

He said, “The time has come! God’s kingdom will soon be here.[b] Turn back to God and believe the good news!”

**Scripture Video**      **Mark 1:9-15 |**  
***Jesus' Baptism, Temptation and Ministry***  
Lectionary bible reading

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2hCvUTW7SY>

## **A Time of Prayer**

**Today we come together as a community to share together our joys and concerns, and lift them to God in prayer. If you would like to share a specific request to be included in our communal prayer time, please leave a comment in the video below, or email myself at: [vicarglenn@gmail.com](mailto:vicarglenn@gmail.com), and I'll make sure to include that request in next week's service, as well as send a prayer chain email, if you would like.**

## **Joys and Concerns**

This morning, we are grateful for the successful treatment of Kathy Edmark’s father Claire, and his return back home.

We also give thanks for the many in our midst who have been able to get the vaccine, and continue to pray that all will soon be able to receive that blessing.

We also lift up those today who struggle with diseases of mind and spirit, and seek God’s comforting presence in their lives.

We also pray for Sylvia Hersberger’s mother who took a fall last week. May God continue to heal and strengthen Rose.

May God also work within our congregation, as we begin to discern what mission we are called to going forward, and how we can best support God at work in our midst.

Let's bring these concerns and others in our lives to God together in prayer.

## Pastoral Prayer

Almighty God, Be with us as we contend with our lives and all our challenges. Thank you for listening as we bring before you the troubles that undermine us. We affirm, it is written, "One does not live by bread alone." Strengthen and sustain our families and our communities. Nurture the bonds between us and inspire us to live with empathy and forgiveness. Help those struggling with work or facing uncertainty in their futures, that they may find peace in your abundant love. Jesus, our Redeemer, rescue us when we stumble. We proclaim, it is written, "Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him." Enable us to admit the temptations of the world, and support us to resist turning away from your teaching. Awaken us to recognize the gifts you have given each one of us, and to see the role we can play in healing your creation. Be with our leaders and those around the world, that they may act with compassion and generosity. Guide them to humbly serve their own countries and to foster peace across our borders. God, our Creator, inspire us with renewed hope. We acknowledge, it is written, "Do not put the Lord your God to the test." Deepen our faith to hear your word and follow your way. Encourage us to bring all our hopes and desires to you in prayer, that in lifting up our souls to you, we may be shaped by your love. Help us to hear the dialogue of prayer, and to listen in prayer as much as we speak.

Comfort those battling ill health to bear their pain with patience, strength and courage. Holy Spirit, our Comforter, sustain us in our times of trial. All this we pray, assured by your eternal love, Amen

**For this season of Lent, we will focus on the prophetic readings of the week as our primary texts, instead of the Gospel lessons. As we hear these words from Isaiah, let's put ourselves in the shoes of the original audience of this poetic writing, and imagine what promise we would find in our Creator as we prepare to return from exile in servitude in a foreign land, much like our own experiences recently sequestered under quarantine.**

### **Words of the Prophet    Isaiah 40:1-11; 21-31 CEV**

Our God has said: "Encourage my people! Give them comfort.

Speak kindly to Jerusalem and announce: Your slavery is past; your punishment is over. I, the Lord, made you pay double for your sins."

Someone is shouting: "Clear a path in the desert! Make a straight road for the Lord our God.

Fill in the valleys; flatten every hill and mountain. Level the rough and rugged ground.

Then the glory of the Lord will appear for all to see. The Lord has promised this!”

Someone told me to shout, and I asked, “What should I shout?” We humans are merely grass, and we last no longer than wild flowers.

At the Lord’s command, flowers and grass disappear, and so do we.

Flowers and grass fade away, but what our God has said will never change. Your God Is Here!

There is good news for the city of Zion. Shout it as loud as you can[a] from the highest mountain. Don’t be afraid to shout to the towns of Judah, “Your God is here!”

Look! The powerful Lord God is coming to rule with his mighty arm. He brings with him what he has taken in war, and he rewards his people.

The Lord cares for his nation, just as shepherds care for their flocks. He carries the lambs in his arms, while gently leading the mother sheep.

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Haven’t you heard? Isn’t it clear that God created the world?[a]

God is the one who rules the whole earth, and we that live here are merely insects. He spread out the heavens like a curtain or an open tent.

God brings down rulers and turns them into nothing.

They are like flowers freshly sprung up and starting to grow. But when God blows on them, they wilt and are carried off like straw in a storm.

The holy God asks, “Who compares with me? Is anyone my equal?”

Look at the evening sky! Who created the stars? Who gave them each a name? Who leads them like an army? The Lord is so powerful that none of the stars are ever missing.

You people of Israel, say, “God pays no attention to us! He doesn’t care if we are treated unjustly.” But how can you say that?

Don’t you know? Haven’t you heard? The Lord is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired; his wisdom cannot be measured.

The Lord gives strength to those who are weary.

Even young people get tired, then stumble and fall.

But those who trust the Lord will find new strength. They will be strong like eagles soaring upward on wings; they will walk and run without getting tired.

## Scripture Videos:

**Isaiah 40:1-11**

***The Lord Will Rescue His People***

Lectionary bible reading

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlwaBkY9sfc&list=PLVKEc-OFRIx\\_4H2qrAgfVtRxMtmL0TwTH&index=4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vlwaBkY9sfc&list=PLVKEc-OFRIx_4H2qrAgfVtRxMtmL0TwTH&index=4)

**Isaiah 40:21-31**

***The Creator Cares For The Powerless***

Lectionary bible reading

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MM\\_59h-t7kg&list=PLVKEc-OFRIx\\_4H2qrAgfVtRxMtmL0TwTH&index=1](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MM_59h-t7kg&list=PLVKEc-OFRIx_4H2qrAgfVtRxMtmL0TwTH&index=1)

## Message – *Renewed*

It's been quite the year, hasn't it? When I look back, it seems hard to believe how much has happened since we began lent a year ago, just as the first “stay home” orders were issued as the pandemic ramped up. Who would have guessed we'd be here a year later, still meeting online and engaged in a global pandemic? Yet here we are. This time we've spent largely isolated in our homes has been a trying time for many of us. We are by nature social animals, and even for the most introverted among us, the amount of alone time has been trying for sure. It can feel like we're abandoned and forgotten, exiled from the life we once knew, one that doesn't seem like we'll ever completely return to.

As I began planning for our Lenten services this year, I was struck by this sense of exile, yet also the promise of redemption, as the infection numbers again decline and we look to move closer to “normal,” whatever that will look like as we move forward. It draws to mind parallels with the biblical story, particularly the ancient Israelites as they looked forward to returning home from their exile in Babylon.

The book of Isaiah was first read to this audience, struggling with living as a conquered people in a foreign land. In such straits, it's easy to become despondent. It can seem like God has abandoned you to your fate. It's easy to feel forgotten by the Divine, when it seems like you have no hope of ever returning to the good times you once enjoyed. It can be easy to wonder, why does God let bad things happen like this and why doesn't God intervene to make things right? It can be easy to see the Creator as some remote deity, sitting far away outside the early reality, a casual observer from afar who doesn't trouble with the affairs of these scurrying human “grasshoppers” here below. One can be tempted to just see the world from the human perspective, that the only help I will find is the help I provide to myself. Yet what happens when events transpire that are beyond one's ability to remedy from our human limitations?

The captives in Babylon in our reading this morning faced such a situation. They were conquered and powerless to do much to change their fate. Certainly they adapted to their new situation to survive but how could they thrive as the vanquished population in a hostile, foreign land? It would be easy to look around and see the success of their overlords and think, maybe they have it right. After all, look at the success they have. Maybe their gods are the ones more powerful. Maybe aggression and oppression is the way to go for a secure, successful life. Yet how secure is it really? True, they were conquered with many other nations by the military might of Babylon, yet their recent hope of a return to their homeland arises from the defeat of Babylon by Persia. So maybe those worldly values and foreign gods aren't so effective after all.

The writer of Isaiah is poetically trying to make the point in today's reading that God is not some remote observer, that there is a dualism at work in the Divine. There is the omnipotent Creator whose power literally brought reality into existence but there is also the caring shepherd who enters into the individual lives of each of those lives birthed by that reality. There is the destroyer of empires but also the caring arms that carry the lost and herd sheep to safety. When adversity strikes, it can be all too easy to forget the good times and positive changes of the past. We tend to have tunnel vision to the dilemma at hand, and forget that we have been brought through and renewed from the previous struggles we have faced.

Such was the case for the audience of today's reading. They, as a people, had struggled with bondage before. They had been renewed by divine action to a new and promising life in a rich land in their history. But rather than remembering the providence of their loving God, they focused on the struggles at hand, feeling abandoned by that God. Yet we are reminded again and again of the immediate presence of God among us.

Today's gospel reading is all about the breaking in of the divine in humanity. God in human flesh walking among us, suffering alongside us. We see the promise of renewal in the baptism of Jesus, the blessing of the guidance of the Spirit. Yet even the incarnation of God in human form faced his own time in the wilderness, his own time of trial. It all boils down to perspective. Do we focus on the immediate struggle in front of us, or on the bigger picture and the renewal that awaits us?

Often we fail to see the possible hope in the situation we find ourselves in. We focus on the desperation of the here and now, and lose sight of the renewal that always comes, the proverbial light at the end of the tunnel. We try our best on our own, yet often find that when we get lost in our own perspective, we find ourselves struggling to only achieve frustration and exhaustion.

Biblical scholar and theologian William Carl tells the story of someone who kept her perspective on the promise we have in our Creator. He tells of a woman in Tennessee he knew named Margaret Stevenson. She used to hike ten or fifteen miles every day and was a

legend in the Smoky mountains. He said it was always a joy to hike with her, because she knew every turn and every trail and every plant and every tree by its Latin and colloquial name. His first trip up Mt. LeConte was her seventy-fifth, and his second was her hundred twenty-fifth His third was her five-hundredth trip. When she finally stopped hiking, she had climbed Mt. LeConte more than seven hundred times. Her husband rarely went, even before he got cancer. Once when they were hiking together, Margaret and William came upon what she described as the most unrelenting two-mile ridge in the whole area – two miles up with no break, and this after a hard six miles on a very hot day. He likes to hike in spurts, so he said, “See you later, Margaret,” and took off in his usual fashion and go way ahead of her. At some point, he found himself laying flat on his back in half delirium. A blurred Margaret passed at her steady pace. He could hear the click-click of her cane and no pity at all in her voice, “One more mile to go, Bill. I'll see you at the top!” And so she did, arriving well ahead of him without stopping once. Not long after that, her husband finally died of cancer, but because of her daily walk with God their last few hours were spent not in sadness or remorse, but in joy and celebration. For when Margaret says, “I'll see you at the top!” she means it, for her face is fixed on Christ, and she knows the meaning of Isaiah's words: “Even youths will faint and be weary, and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

How weary have we become over this last year in our own exiles? How much do we yearn for the renewal of our own strength and spirit? We have a choice in what walk we choose. We can follow Margaret's lead and focus on Christ, and the promise of Divine renewal, or we can continue to rely solely on ourselves and our own perspectives and limitations, and find the less than satisfying results that point of view entails. We can choose to brand God an absent deity, or seek to find the Creator at work all around us. We choose how we see our own reality, and I hope and pray today you will take some time during this season of Lent to reflect on the promise we have in our God, and make the choice to seek the comfort and security that can only be found in a trusting relationship with the Divine, who always offers the renewal we seek. Amen.

## **Call to Serve.**

**As we continue to seek to be a place of compassion and support to our community, we ask that you give prayerful consideration as to how you may support our efforts. If you would like to make a donation, gifts can still be mailed to our church office, or online donations can be made through the link in the video description. Thanks again for all your support, and may we continue to work together to keep being a place of ministry that seeks to promote the growth of God's shalom around us. Today, as Annie shares the following song, let's give some thought as to how we view our Creator, and the perspective we choose to guide our own lives in the days and weeks ahead.**



## A Time for Reflection

### Reflection on the Word [Video]

### ***You Are Salt for the Earth***

music by Marty Haugen,  
played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/EjEBOMMPWQ0>

## The Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of the wilderness, We give these offerings in gratitude, **rejoicing in the abundance of your gifts to us**. We give these offerings in faith, **trusting that you will provide for our needs**. We give these offerings in hope, **knowing you can use them to spread your love in this world**. And with these offerings, we give ourselves; **May we live with generous hearts, with open hands. Amen**

## Blessing/Assurance

Whatever wilderness the Spirit has brought you to: walk in boldness, as a beloved child of God walk in peace, under the shelter of the Most High walk in faith, knowing Christ walks with you. Amen.

**As we extinguish this candle, carry its divine spark into your lives this week, sharing God's love and light with all you encounter. Amen.**

### Postlude

### ***Two Fishermen***

music by Suzanne Toolen,  
performed by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/I5HcD6E0tMU>