

Worship Resources - *Something New*

2nd Sunday in Lent, Year B,

28th February, 2021

Mark 8:31-38 CEV / Isaiah 43:1-7,16-19

Prelude

Go, My Friends, In Grace,

music by James E Clemens,

played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/T5HMWTH1tiE>

Intro / Call to Worship

The promises of God are like bulbs deep in the soil,
The promises of God are like crocuses peeking out of the snow,
The promises of God are like fresh turned earth,
The promises of God are all around us, though we cannot perceive it yet—
Come, worship our God, for we know the seasons will change,
And our God will make all things new.

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, let's give some thought to the promise of a new beginning we have each day, and give our thanks for the opportunities we have been given.

Reflection Video *This Is a Day of New Beginnings* (Hymn)

text by Brian Wren, played by pianist Marcia Van Oyen,

& posted to YouTube by Plymouth First United Methodist Church

<https://youtu.be/7zwRIMC9-no>

Invocation

Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness and water the desert.

Help us to recognize your hand working miracles beyond our imagining.

Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, so that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love for all, and its presence in Jesus Christ.
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 Peter trying to keep Jesus from sharing the changes to come. As we listen to these words from Mark, let's think about how we handle change that isn't what we expect or think we want.

Gospel reading Mark 8:31-38 CEV

Jesus began telling his disciples what would happen to him. He said, "The nation's leaders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law of Moses will make the Son of Man suffer terribly. He will be rejected and killed, but three days later he will rise to life."

Then Jesus explained clearly what he meant.

Peter took Jesus aside and told him to stop talking like that.

But when Jesus turned and saw the disciples, he corrected Peter. He said to him, "Satan, get away from me! You are thinking like everyone else and not like God."

Jesus then told the crowd and the disciples to come closer, and he said:

If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your cross and follow me.

If you want to save your life, [a] you will destroy it. But if you give up your life for me and for the good news, you will save it.

What will you gain, if you own the whole world but destroy yourself?

What could you give to get back your soul?

Don't be ashamed of me and my message among these unfaithful and sinful people! If you are, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

Scripture Video *Mark 8:31-38 - The Passion Prediction*

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/GvCHoy5moZI>

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, 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 pray for Patti Berg, who is struggling with some health issues.

We also give thanks for those who have been blessed with healing in our congregation and families.

We also remember those who are struggling with sadness, grief, and other struggles. May God grant them the comfort they seek and need.

We lift up both Betty and George DeBon who are both in a rehab in Edmonds due to health problems. May God give them the comfort and strength they need.

May God also bless our congregational leadership as they discern God's will for our faith community.

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

Pastoral Prayer

O God, we give you thanks for the example of Abraham and for all the saints who have gone before us - for those who waited in patience for your promises to come to pass - for those who lived in hope while around them it seemed to be only darkness, for those who witnessed to you when it was not considered the proper thing to do, for those who forgot their own selves in their desire to obey your commands and respond to your call upon their lives. Help us today, O God, to examine the level of our faith - to look seriously at our resistance to talk about the cross and about sacrifice; and to consider in prayer our reluctance to give up the things of this world - to risk our reputations, our comfort, and our security for the sake of following you - for the sake of witnessing to you - for the sake of obeying you

We pray, O God, that you would make us bold in our faith. By our self-forgetting, our self-denial, help us make visible to all our brothers and sisters the reality of your power and care - that power and care that is so often made evident when we confess our weakness - and so often concealed from others when we are strong.....

We pray, O God, for those people whose names, or faces, or needs are resting upon our hearts – for the members of our church whose health is failing as they age – for those believers whose families are struggling to deal with teenage rebellion and adult confusion and uncertainty – for those who have little or no faith and who seem to be lost even though your light shines around them and your word is close to hand....

We pray, O God, for those in our family, our church, our community and our world that you bring to our hearts and minds at this time – and we hold them up to you

All these things we pray to, through your Son Jesus, who died that we might live, and who lives that we might never die. Amen.

Words of the Prophet Isaiah 43:1-7, 16-19 CEV

Descendants of Jacob, I, the Lord, created you and formed your nation. Israel, don't be afraid. I have rescued you. I have called you by name; now you belong to me.

When you cross deep rivers, I will be with you, and you won't drown. When you walk through fire, you won't be burned or scorched by the flames.

I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, the God who saves you. I gave up Egypt, Ethiopia,^[a] and the region of Seba^[b] in exchange for you.

To me, you are very dear, and I love you. That's why I gave up nations and people to rescue you.

Don't be afraid! I am with you. From both east and west I will bring you together.

I will say to the north and to the south, "Free my sons and daughters! Let them return from distant lands.

They are my people—I created each of them to bring honor to me."

I am the one who cut a path through the mighty ocean.

I sent an army to chase you with chariots and horses; now they lie dead, unable to move. They are like an oil lamp with the flame snuffed out.

Forget what happened long ago! Don't think about the past.

I am creating something new. There it is! Do you see it? I have put roads in deserts, streams^[a] in thirsty lands.

Scripture Video

Isaiah 43:1-7,16-19

The Lord Has Rescued His People

Bible reading

<https://youtu.be/y9wWZIKapwU>

Message – *Something New*

Have you ever felt abandoned and alone, like no one cared and you were left to fend entirely for yourself? I'm sure we can all think of times in our lives where we found ourselves in desperate straits, not sure if things would ever get better, not seeing a way out or a solution to the situation we found ourselves in. For many of us, the events of the last several years may be just such a time. Whether being caught in the grips of a worldwide pandemic, or feeling helpless in the midst of political and social upheaval, it can seem like things are only going from bad to worse. It can seem like there is little hope for positive change, and that desperation and struggle are the name of the game for the foreseeable future. We just can't seem to see a way out. Often in those times, we suffer from a severe case of “tunnel vision” where we can only see the problems and the struggles in front of us. It's a perfectly natural reaction.

We're creatures tuned to solve the immediate problem at hand, our brains are hardwired for fight or flight. If we can't avoid a problem, our minds and bodies ramp up to fight it. And this approach is what works in the most basic environments of the natural world. The problem occurs when we are unable and unequipped to be able to “fight” our way out of the situation we find ourselves in. When the problem is too big for us to handle as individuals, or as a group, as we find in our text from Isaiah this week.

As I discussed last week, they were a people living in exile. They had been there for generations. Their homeland was gone, destroyed and occupied by a foreign power. Their homes were destroyed or abandoned, and their temple, the place where their God resided, at least in their minds, was razed to the ground. They were surrounded by a foreign culture in a foreign land. It's easy to see how they could find little hope in the future, isn't it? But that's the problem with having tunnel vision. You are only fixated with what's in front of you. Everything else is in the background, out of sight and out of mind.

In our reading from the prophet this morning, the Divine is reminding them that there is much more to the story. God is not only found in a building on a hill in Jerusalem. There is more to the tale than the current situation. This is the same deity who has always brought them to redemption from the dilemmas of the past. They have a long history from which to draw upon. From Abraham to Moses, from slavery to freedom and prosperity, God has been a part of their story all along. But they struggle to see anything but the here and now. Yet God always brings renewal and new beginnings.

Even as Isaiah was being written, changes were happening. Their overlords were being defeated by a new power. One who saw value in them returning to their homeland, in their

restoration as a culture. What once seemed as their eternal fate is now being overcome. Yet they struggle to see things from a different perspective.

Much like Peter in our gospel reading this morning. Jesus is teaching about the changes that are to come. Changes that are not what Peter expects from his own perspective. He, like most, are caught up in the here and now. He can only see what's in front of him. He sees the hope in Jesus in the present, not what can be possible in the future. Yet Jesus knows there is more than this, and more than what has come before.

Part of the problem with our tunnel vision is that we often can only see the way we have resolved our problems in the past. We see what has saved us from bad times before and think those are the only methods through which we will find redemption from our current dilemmas. Yet, both Isaiah and Jesus are making the point that God is not bound by the ways of the past and neither should we be.

Certainly hope can be found in the fact that we have gone through hardship and came out the other side in our own histories, but we can't narrow the realm of possibilities to what has worked before. We become creatures of habit too easily, don't we. Certainly if something isn't broke, don't fix it, right? That sentiment certainly has its value, but the problem is, we can too easily get stuck in the routine and lose sight of the fact that the old way has become broke, that it no longer works like it used to.

Peter and others of his time yearned for a valiant king to arise and triumphantly lead their nation to shake off oppression and restore them to glory and prestige. Yet that is not what God had in mind. Something new was in the works, not based on glory and might, but on humble servitude and sacrifice.

The comfort of the familiarity of the past and its ways can be a powerful temptation and obstacle to moving forward, so much so that Jesus refers to Peter as the "adversary," which is the literal meaning of the word "satan." How often do we find ourselves doing the same thing? The last year has found many of us struggling and despondent in a new reality not of our own choosing. We can all identify with the hardship of isolation and restriction. Yet we too have our own tunnel vision, don't we? We only see the here and now, and find it difficult to see a return to better times, to "normal." But then again, that also speaks to looking backwards to the past and dwelling in the way things were, much like Peter in our story. Certainly we can find hope in our past redemptions, that we have always pulled through, or we wouldn't be here now. Yet what worked then may not be what will work now, and the argument could be made that what worked in the past for us, did not work so well for others. Even in the biblical record, in the glory days, there were those who struggled more than others, those for whom the system as it was did not work. Likewise, in our pre-pandemic time, not all looked on those days positively.

Perhaps we are called to something new, by our God who makes all things new. Maybe the last year is a reminder that we have work to do, highlighting what wasn't working, not only

as individuals in a society, but also as members of a community of faith. As Christ's body here and now, how stuck in the successes of the past are we? Do we wistfully look back like Peter, and try to restore that former glory of yore? Or do we turn our eyes forward, and see what new things God has in store for us? Do we keep trying the same old things that haven't worked in a long time and hope for different results?

There's the story of a woman who was going through some very difficult and trying circumstances. She was experiencing major distress in her marriage, her job was very unfulfilling and was causing her heartache. She became so distraught over her circumstances that she felt like just giving up. She felt lonely, dejected and very isolated. She had tried everything she could to better herself, her marriage, things at work but it seemed everything turned out horrible for her. Finally she came to the point of exhaustion and felt there was no way out of her terrible circumstances and there would never be any more joy in her life. One day she was sitting in her kitchen very frustrated and lonely. She sat there for a long time and just wept. Then she noticed a small sparrow had somehow gotten into her kitchen, so she opened the door thinking the sparrow would simply fly out the door. To her surprise the sparrow kept flying into the closed window that was just above the door. This distraught woman noticed several times that the sparrow would fly directly into the top of the window thinking it was an opening to freedom and each time colliding into glass of the window. This small sparrow after each time hitting the window would become weaker and weaker. The woman also noticed the sparrow hitting the window lower and lower each time he flew into the window until he got so weak that he couldn't even fly, all he could do was walk. Then she noticed this little sparrow very slowly, and simply walked through the door to freedom. As she observed this little bird walk through the door, the sparrow began to regain his strength and he flew off into the air free again. It was as though God literally opened her spiritual eyes. She realized in just about every area of her life she was behaving just like this sparrow. She was trying in her own way to get out of the confining situations she was in, each time being knocked down in defeat. She finally realized that all she had to do was do just like this sparrow - to very humbly walk in the power of God's grace and mercy and allow God to lead her into a new reality.

How much are we like the sparrow? How often do we try the same old thing, over and over again, and find yet again the same results. I hope and pray as we go forth this week that we truly start to seek God's guidance and let ourselves be led by the God who makes all things new, who is not a God of the past but of the here and now, and the hope we so desperately seek today. Amen.

Call to Serve.

Without talking back, Without asking questions, Let us move into God's love. Let us go in-between with God to offer our gifts. Let us give God our thanks in our tithes and offerings.

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 can seek God's new work around us, and how we can join in and support that work in our world, here and now.

A Time for Reflection

Reflection on the Word [Video] *God Created Heaven and Earth*

Taiwanese melody,
played by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/Xox4MTWCz4Q>

The Prayer of Thanksgiving

In-between God, Bless these gifts with your love
So that we might share them quite openly
With all who need your change. Amen.

Blessing/Assurance

The peace that surpasses all understanding is with us, now. Christ Jesus has shown us the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Your sins are forgiven. Rejoice, and reclaim the life that God has in store for you. Seek forgiveness where you have gone wrong, and work to repair and restore. Turn your hearts to the newness of God's promises, and live into God's ways. Amen.

Holy Light, shine bright in our lives when the shadows threaten. Shine bright in our lives when despair creeps in. Shine bright in our world when the systems of sin threaten to overpower us. Shine bright in our world when evil seems to prevail. Shine bright in us, so we may be beacons of hope for others. Shine bright in us so that nations will be drawn to Your light, as Isaiah spoke long ago. Shine bright in us, Lord Jesus. 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

This is My Father's World,

music by Franklin Sheppard
performed by church musician Annie Center

<https://youtu.be/e1PLZ1XontM>