

## Worship Resources - *Coming Home*

<https://youtu.be/-gMNRH1xGGk>

5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent, Year B,

21<sup>st</sup> March, 2021

**John 12:20-33 CEV / Jeremiah 31:7-14 CEV**

**Prelude**            ***Gentle God, When We are Driven***

Music by Jillian Bray, played by church musician Annie Center,  
used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

<https://youtu.be/Mr3C1-HfmcY>

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

Praise God! For God is gathering His people together.

**From near and far we come together— the wounded and the whole, the weak and the strong— seeking God's presence, God's forgiveness, and God's direction for our lives.**

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 as the body of Christ, let's take a few moments to reflect on what it means to be Christ's body in this world, as Annie shares the following interlude.

**Reflection Video**    ***Lamb of Glory,***

words and music by Greg Nelson & Phill McHugh,  
played by Annie Center,  
used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

<https://youtu.be/r4x4XqDUhBc>

### **Invocation**

O God of our Hearts You yearn to be so close to us that we can know you in every breath, in every hope, in every relationship.

Meet us here today and teach us to recognize the covenant of justice, peace and love you have written on our hearts.

So may our desires become your desires, our work become your work, and our community the place where you are sought and found. In Jesus' name we pray, 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 the promise of new life emerging from the remains of the old in the form of a seed of wheat. As we listen to the following words from John, let's reflect on how we seek new life rising from the remains of what was in our own lives, and the promise of new life we have in Christ's sacrifice for us.**

## **Gospel Reading                      John 12:20-33 CEV**

Some Greeks[a] had gone to Jerusalem to worship during Passover.

Philip from Bethsaida in Galilee was there too. So they went to him and said, "Sir, we would like to meet Jesus."

Philip told Andrew. Then the two of them went to Jesus and told him.

Jesus said: The time has come for the Son of Man to be given his glory.[b]

I tell you for certain that a grain of wheat that falls on the ground will never be more than one grain unless it dies. But if it dies, it will produce lots of wheat.

If you love your life, you will lose it. If you give it up in this world, you will be given eternal life.

If you serve me, you must go with me. My servants will be with me wherever I am. If you serve me, my Father will honor you.

Now I am deeply troubled, and I don't know what to say. But I must not ask my Father to keep me from this time of suffering. In fact, I came into the world to suffer.

So Father, bring glory to yourself. A voice from heaven then said, "I have already brought glory to myself, and I will do it again!"

When the crowd heard the voice, some of them thought it was thunder. Others thought an angel had spoken to Jesus.

Then Jesus told the crowd, "That voice spoke to help you, not me.

This world's people are now being judged, and the ruler of this world[c] is already being thrown out!

If I am lifted up above the earth, I will make everyone want to come to me."

Jesus was talking about the way he would be put to death.

## Scripture Video

**John 12:20-33**

## The Grain Of Wheat Dying In The Earth

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/2O2xf8GeQ00>

## 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 let's continue to keep Patti Berg in our prayers as she has returned home and is adjusting to changes in her medication, anxiety and difficulties sleeping. May God continue to give her healing and strength.

Let's also continue to remember Betty and George DeBon as they continue to work through treatment and the adjustment to a new living situation.

We also celebrate the promise of Easter and take joy in returning to our sanctuary in a couple of weeks to worship together in person for the first time in over a year.

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

## Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God We come to you broken – from that which confines us: the prejudice buried, weighted down with fear distorted self-protection breaking me, breaking you.

And, so we come to you seeking to be made whole. For you, God, put your love within us; you wrote it on our hearts, that we may be your people.

On this day we pray for those who weep, who are struggling from lack of clean water, healthy food, quality, affordable health care. Women who want to make decisions about their families, their lives, their bodies, how and when, and with whom. And, so we come to you seeking to be made whole.

Compassionate God, God of covenant, God of love, We come to you tired, yearning for peace and harmony.

Loving God, we offer up our suffering and come to you seeking to be made whole.

Gentle God, God of covenant, of Love, Glorify us through Your love. Draw us to you, into you. Anoint us with your peace. Write your compassion in our hearts that we may love as you love. Amen.

**In our prophetic reading today, we hear of God’s promises to the chosen people returning to exile. As we listen to these words from Jeremiah, let’s reflect on our own personal times of exile, and the promises we have for renewal in God and the promise of a life following Christ.**

## **Words of the Prophet    Jeremiah 31:7-14 CEV**

The Lord says: Celebrate and sing for Israel, the greatest of nations. Offer praises and shout, “Come and rescue your people, Lord! Save what’s left of Israel.”

I, the Lord, will bring my people back from Babylonia<sup>[a]</sup> and everywhere else on earth. The blind and the lame will be there. Expectant mothers and women about to give birth will come and be part of that great crowd.

They will weep and pray as I bring them home. I will lead them to streams of water. They will walk on a level<sup>[b]</sup> road and not stumble. I am a father to Israel,<sup>[c]</sup> my favorite children.

Listen to me, you nations nearby or across the sea. I scattered the people of Israel, but I will gather them again. I will protect them like a shepherd guarding a flock;

I will rescue them from enemies who could overpower them.

My people will come to Mount Zion and celebrate; their faces will glow because of my blessings. I’ll give them grain, grapes, and olive oil, as well as sheep and cattle. Israel will be prosperous and grow like a garden with plenty of water.

Young women and young men, together with the elderly, will celebrate and dance, because I will comfort them and turn their sorrow into happiness.

I will bless my people with more food than they need, and the priests will enjoy the choice cuts of meat. I, the Lord, have spoken.

## **Scripture Video**

### **Jeremiah 31:7-14**

### **Israel Will Return To Its Own Land**

Lectionary bible reading

<https://youtu.be/yxkHSLyv3D0>

## **Message – *Coming Home***

It's good to be home. A feeling I'm sure we can all identify with. You go on a trip, or take a vacation, and while you may enjoy your travels, you get to the point where you yearn to be back in the safety and familiarity of home. That place where you can relax and unwind, where you are most comfortable, where you truly fit in and can be yourself. Yet our perception of “home” can change over time, can't it?

When many of us think of our childhood homes, we often wistfully remember good times growing up, and the familiar surroundings of our neighborhood and communities. Yet when we travel back and visit, we often find things have changed from what we remember. New neighborhoods and streets replace the green places we used to play, and many of the familiar faces of our youth are gone, in one way or the other. What was once our safe, comfortable, and secure home has changed, and I would wager to guess, so have we. It's a part of the process of growing up and maturing.

We often start our lives as independent adults by moving out and away on our own, forging our own lives and identities. While we may at times yearn for the simplicity and security of our youth and childhood home, most of the time we come to the realization that we can't go back, at least not to the same life and home that we once knew. Places change and move forward, and so do we. And while we may choose to stay or return to where we grew up, there is still that sense of difference, of things not being as we remember them, as they used to be.

I took the opportunity to be an interim pastor in the small rural valley where I spent my early childhood. It's a place where my family has deep roots, and I've always wistfully remembered it as being a little “slice of heaven” on earth. But returning many years later, I quickly discovered that it wasn't the same place I remembered. My path had led me in a different direction, as my hometown had also evolved over time, and I no longer “fit in” as I once did. As an adult, I was also aware of the imperfections and problems that I was oblivious to as a young child. While it was nice to spend time with my extended family and the comfort that time offers, it was clear that it was not the safe, relaxed home of my childhood.

In our reading from Jeremiah this week, we have a people who are likewise looking to return back “home.” Like many of us, they have been living their lives away from home, striving to make it on their own. The difference for them is that theirs was not a voluntary move, but one of exile. Though for some of us, we may be able to identify with that sense of exile, of not leaving home of our own volition. Over the past year, we can all relate to being isolated, or not away from many of the familiar parts of our lives that give us comfort and security. Yet God is offering them the opportunity of returning home, the opportunity for a better life.

In our readings over the last several weeks, we have seen that the reality of their return did not necessarily meet those expectations. There is the sense that the home that they

returned to was not what they expected. Things had changed. Much of what was, was now destroyed and gone: their homes, the temple, all of those things that once offered comfort and security were no more. They had to start from square one.

Zechariah points out that the temple restoration was less than desirable. It seemed that people were more focused on themselves and making better places for themselves than attending to what God desired for their lives together. Which you could argue is what got them exiled in the first place, focusing on themselves at the expense of their relationship with God, conforming to the world's ways instead of God's ways. Things will certainly be different. The question they have, is will they seek God's lead in how they begin again, or will they seek their own guidance and counsel? Will they try to recapture those wistful, naive memories of days gone by, or will they embrace the new changes God has in store for them?

History and later scripture make it clear they chose their own path. They reestablished the unjust structures of their past. They focused on the grandeur of the temple building instead of the truth and message it was meant to contain. And it all came crashing down yet again, and many found themselves exiled again from their home. It's certainly something we can identify with.

Over the past year, we have also had our ups and downs. Just when the numbers go down and we get the opportunity to return to some of what brings us comfort, the situation worsens and we are back in exile again. Yet we have reason to hope now. We finally have a vaccine and we seem to be turning a corner. This Easter, we will finally be returning to our sanctuary for the first time in over a year. But like the ancient Judeans, what we are returning to will look different from what we left behind. Gone for the foreseeable future is the unrestrained singing and fellowship, the hugs and embraces, the communal sharing of food. We will be greeting each other masked, from a safe distance. But also like our faith ancestors, God is giving us the opportunity to create something new from the remains of what was.

As Jesus reminds us in our gospel lesson this morning, new life often emerges from the shell of what was. If the grain seed doesn't break down and die, new wheat won't grow. As we "come home" to our sanctuary in a few weeks to celebrate Easter, what is the "home" we are returning to? Is it the old ways and familiar surroundings with which we surround ourselves? Or is it the promise of the new growth that can come from the remains of what was? Do we seek the promise and hope that Christ's death and resurrection offer, and seek to share that hope with others in new ways to fit our new reality? Or do we just try to go back to what was and is no more?

As we come to the end of our Lenten journey and approach Holy Week, I hope we all take advantage of the remainder of this season of reflection to seek what God is leading us to, what new growth God is bringing forth that we can foster and join in, and take advantage of the comfort and promise that our new life in Christ offers, and what it truly means to "come home" to Christ. 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, we listen to the following song, *Inspired by Love and Anger*, let's give some thought as to what inspires us to make positive change, and how can we make positive change in our own lives, and the lives of others in the coming week.

## A Time for Reflection

### Reflection on the Word [video]

### *Come Home Running*

Chris Tomlin,

used and reported under CCLI Streaming License 20261246

<https://youtu.be/AM3sMpxPZu8>

## The Prayer of Thanksgiving

Jesus, teach me to be generous, to serve you as you deserve: to give without counting the cost, to fight needlessly of the wounds, to work and not seek for rest, to toil and not seek for reward, save the reward of knowing I am doing your will.  
Amen. ~ *St. Ignatius of Loyola* ~

## Blessing/Assurance

Go now, to serve Christ and follow him. Let your old life fall like a grain of wheat into the earth so that you may bear much fruit as you allow God to reshape your heart and live in obedience to the law written within you.

And may God centre you in truth and steady your spirit. May Christ renew your joy and strengthen your will. And may the Spirit teach you God's hidden wisdom and fill you with songs of rejoicing.

We go in peace to love and serve the Lord, **In the name of Christ. 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 - *He***

music by Jack Richards

played by church musician Annie Center,

<https://youtu.be/kG1xLThqXFM>