

St Paul United Church of Christ
5312 Old Blue Rock Road
Cincinnati, Ohio 45247
Allen M. Fluent, Transitional Pastor
Order of Worship for The Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 21, 2021

(Although we are now holding worship in our building, we are conscious of the ongoing challenge of in-person worship while the coronavirus persists, and the need many feel to avoid the possibility of contagion. Therefore, we will be continuing the practice of sending a worship bulletin to all who are on our mailing lists for email or hard copy. Those who will be worshipping from home and who have computer access will also be receiving a recorded version of the service that will be sent out by email on Sunday afternoon and also can be seen on our Facebook page. We welcome your participation in any way that is convenient for you, and we encourage you to share our worship service with any person you know who may appreciate receiving it.)

Morning Announcements and Prayer Requests

Prelude (recording begins)

The Prophetic Testimony: Isaiah 53

*Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should
desire him.*

*He was despised and rejected by others; a man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity;
and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account.
Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken,
struck down by God, and afflicted.*

*But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.*

***Hymn**

“Hallelujah! What a Savior!”

#301

vss. 1-4

***Man of sorrows, what a name for the Son of God who came
ruined sinners to reclaim! Hallelujah! What a Savior!***

***Bearing shame and scoffing rude, in my place condemned he stood;
sealed my pardon with his blood: Hallelujah! What a Savior!***

***Guilty, vile and helpless, we; spotless Lamb of God was he;
full atonement, can it be? Hallelujah! What a Savior!***

***Lifted up was he to die, “It is finished,” was his cry;
now in heaven exalted high; Hallelujah! What a Savior!***

Opening Prayer: from Psalm 51:10-13, 15 (Responsive)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.

Do not cast me away from your presence, and do not take your holy spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

O Lord, open our lips, and our mouths will declare your praise.

***Hymn**

#316 (3 verses)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!

Christ is Savior, Alleluia, Christ is Savior, Alleluia, Christ is Savior, Alleluia,

Christ is Savior, Alleluia!

I will praise God, Alleluia, I will praise God, Alleluia, I will praise God, Alleluia,

I will praise God, Alleluia!

Gospel Lesson: John 12:23-25, 31-33

Shortly before the time of his arrest, Jesus spoke these words to some of his disciples, interpreting for them the meaning of his crucifixion for the life of the world:

The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life....

Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.

***Hymn**

"Were You There?" vss 1-3 in Hymnal, and vs 4

#283

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they crucified my Lord?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?

***Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the tomb?***

***Were you there when he rose up from the dead?
Were you there when he rose up from the dead?
Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when he rose up from the dead?***

In the time of Jesus, Judea was a colony of the Roman Empire. The governor of Judea was a Roman named Pontius Pilate. Religious affairs were under the authority of the Jewish high court, called the Sanhedrin. However, in Jesus' day, the Sanhedrin and the Roman authorities worked in collusion with each other to maintain order in the province and put down potential acts of treason against Rome. This morning, Paula, Rachel and Marilyn are going to portray the wives of three members of the Sanhedrin, who are trying to understand the drama of Jesus' final hours and the strange events that took place afterward:

Reader's Theater: "Three Wives and the Resurrection," by Kathy Applebee
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Musical Interlude

Jake Rizer

Pastoral Prayer

Amazing God, you awaken us to the gifts of surprise and wonder as you take the often harsh and cruel realities of our human world and turn them into signposts of your truth and opportunities for the victory of love. As we consider the questions raised by the women portrayed in our reader's theater this morning, we find ourselves wondering, "Would I have understood? Would I have discerned what you were doing in the midst of so much suffering and wrong? Would I have thought about the man who died at all, or considered that someone rejected as he was, might be the one we'd all been searching for, who could heal our wounds and restore us in the fellowship of peace? We confess that we see ourselves in the women of this story. We know how hard it is to see the world beyond the bounds of our own limitations – our station in life, our fear of the unknown, our prejudices, our trust in the way things are, and our doubts about the wonders God can do. Yet we also see in these women an effort to understand, and a desire for a better day, and the barest glimmer of hope that the Gospel story is really true. May we also find that hope alive within us, so that our hearts may come to believe in the power of the risen Christ to overcome the cynicism and despair that continue to afflict our world.

Holy One, encourage us to converse like these ancient women, to share our experiences with one another, and to search for the message of the risen Christ within the troubles of this present time. Amen.

As Jesus has taught us, so we pray:

Lord's Prayer

**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 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.**

Closing Hymn

"Now Let Us Leave This Holy Place

**#715
(words modified)**

*Now let us leave this holy place, renewed in body, mind and soul;
with Christ we die and rise again, his selfless love has made us whole.*

*With minds alert, upheld by grace, to spread the Word in speech and deed,
we follow in the steps of Christ, at one with all in hope and need.*

*To fill each human house with love, it is the sacrament of care;
the work that Christ began to do we humbly pledge ourselves to share.*

*Then give us grace, Companion God, to choose again the pilgrim way;
and help us to accept with joy the challenge of tomorrow's day.*

Benediction

*Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the
Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.*

Postlude