

Knox Presbyterian Church  
Rev. Emma Duncan  
March 16, 2025

## SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

### Greetings

### Call to worship (PWS&D Lenten Liturgy) – The Springs

One: As we seek your face, O God, on our Lenten journey,

All: may we remember your covenant of grace with your people.

One: Give us eyes to see your compassion and glory in Christ  
Jesus

All: that we may be astounded by your greatness.

One: Help our hearts to take courage as we wait for you, O God,

All: so that together we can sing and make melody.

Music: Out of my bondage, sorrow, and night (#193, all verses)



## Prayer of Lament (including The Lord's Prayer)

For the past 4 years, I have done something different for the opening prayer during the season of Lent which I will do again this year. Instead of writing a prayer of Adoration and Confession, I will write a prayer of Lament each week based on a Psalm. The Bible teaches us that God is not afraid of our anger and grief. The ancient practice of lament provides a sacred space to have an honest conversation with God. In our lament, we give voice to our pain, sorrow, and what we have lost, and then to look to God for help. This week's lament is inspired by Psalm 42.

Hello God, it's me Emma Duncan. I'm here with your people, still gathering in person and online. It's that time of year again – the season of Lent. It's come so fast this year! Almost three months ago, it was Christmas and we were singing Joy to the World, the Lord is come! And here we are travelling towards the cross with your Son.

I offer you this prayer of lament, O God, on behalf of your people. As we mark the 5<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of the start of the pandemic in this region of the world – I'm not gonna lie to you, Lord...it's been a long and hard road. We thought that when the pandemic would be over that we would shout for joy, but this hasn't happened. With the effects of climate change, the rising cost of living, and the awful state of our world, there is little joy to be found.

Like the Psalmist said so many years ago, we are like a deer that longs for flowing streams. Our souls thirst for the living God. Our tears have been our food day and night while our friends taunt us and say, "Where is your God?"

We try to defend you, Lord, but secretly we ask the same question as our friends – where are you, God? When shall we see your face? Have you forgotten us in our misery? Have you abandoned us in our great time of need? We pour out our souls to you. We are cast down. We grieve the loss of so much.

Hear our prayers of lament, Father. Collect our tears. Wipe our eyes. Help us to remember who you are and what you have done for us.

As we sit in silence of our prayers, O God, we begin to hear a still small voice that says I am here. This voice – your voice - is our song in the season of Lent. It gets louder and louder as we remember that you have never left us. You are our help and our rock. Your steadfast love is ever near and because of your love, we can hope. We can praise you once again. You are the God of our lives – in good times and in bad times – and even in the midst of our lament, we offer you glad shouts of thanksgiving.

All these things we pray in the faithful name of Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying...

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, for ever and ever. Amen.

### Assurance of Pardon

In a few minutes, we will be reading Psalm 26 together. In this Psalm, we hear King David pray these words - Redeem me, and be gracious to me.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, receive the Good News of the Gospel – through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have been redeemed from our sin. God is steadfast and faithful to all those who call on his name. Sing for joy because we are forgiven in the name of Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship for refreshments and conversation.
3. Thank you to Marlene Bray, Janice and Bill Spring for participating in our worship service.
4. Call to Worship during Lent

If you and your family or friends would like to read the responsive Call to Worship during Lent, please speak with Rev. Emma.

**Dates available** – March 30 and April 13

5. Upcoming Events

Saturday April 12, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Easter Eggstravaganza

~~Saturday May 10, morning~~

~~Second Time Around sale~~

Sunday May 25 in the afternoon

Concert - Circle of Harmony women's *A Capella* choir

Music: One more step along the world I go (#641, all verses)

Children's Time: Camping with God

**Prayer of Illumination:**

Let us pray. O Holy One, as we hear the Word of God proclaimed today, we confess that we struggle like the crowds – doubting that Jesus is the Messiah. Send your Holy Spirit into our hearts and minds and give us faith. Help us to see that Jesus is who he says he is. To you be all honour and glory. Amen.

**Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 26.**

Leader: Vindicate me, O Lord,

**People: for I have walked in my integrity,  
and I have trusted in the Lord without wavering.**

Leader: Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and mind.

**People: For your steadfast love is before my eyes,  
and I walk in faithfulness to you.**

Leader: I do not sit with the worthless, nor do I consort with hypocrites;  
I hate the company of evildoers, and will not sit with the wicked.

**People: I wash my hands in innocence, and go around your altar, O Lord,  
singing aloud a song of thanksgiving, and telling all your wondrous deeds.**

Leader: O Lord, I love the house in which you dwell,

**People: and the place where your glory abides.**

Leader: Do not sweep me away with sinners,

**People: nor my life with the bloodthirsty, those in whose hands are evil devices,  
and whose right hands are full of bribes.**

Leader: But as for me, I walk in my integrity; redeem me, and be gracious to me.

**People: My foot stands on level ground; in the great congregation I will bless the Lord.  
Amen.**

**Our Gospel reading is taken from the Gospel of John chapter 7 verses 1-29. Let us listen to God's most holy Word.**

**Rev. Emma:**

<sup>1</sup> After this Jesus went about in Galilee. He did not wish to go about in Judea because the Jews were looking for an opportunity to kill him. <sup>2</sup> Now the Jewish Festival of Booths was near.

**Marlene:**

<sup>3</sup> So his brothers said to him, "Leave here and go to Judea so that your disciples also may see the works you are doing, <sup>4</sup> for no one who wants to be widely known acts in secret. If you do these things, show yourself to the world." <sup>5</sup> (For not even his brothers believed in him.)

**Rev. Emma:**

<sup>6</sup> Jesus said to them, "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. <sup>7</sup> The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify against it that its works are evil. <sup>8</sup> Go to the festival yourselves. I am not going to this festival, for my time has not yet fully come." <sup>9</sup> After saying this, he remained in Galilee.

**Marlene:**

<sup>10</sup> But after his brothers had gone to the festival, then he also went, not publicly but, as it were, in secret. <sup>11</sup> The Jews were looking for him at the festival and saying, "Where is he?" <sup>12</sup> And there was considerable complaining about him among the crowds. While some were saying, "He is a good man," others were saying, "No, he is deceiving the crowd." <sup>13</sup> Yet no one would speak openly about him for fear of the Jews.

**Rev. Emma:**

<sup>14</sup> About the middle of the festival Jesus went up into the temple and began to teach. <sup>15</sup> The Jews were astonished at it, saying, "How does this man have such learning, when he has never been taught?"

**Marlene:**

<sup>16</sup> Then Jesus answered them, “My teaching is not mine but his who sent me. <sup>17</sup> Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. <sup>18</sup> Those who speak on their own seek their own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing unjust in him.

<sup>19</sup> “Did not Moses give you the law? Yet none of you keeps the law. Why are you looking for an opportunity to kill me?”

**Rev. Emma:**

<sup>20</sup> The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is trying to kill you?”

**Marlene:**

<sup>21</sup> Jesus answered them, “I performed one work, and all of you are astonished. <sup>22</sup> Because of this Moses gave you circumcision (it is, of course, not from Moses but from the patriarchs), and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. <sup>23</sup> If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath in order that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry with me because I healed a man’s whole body on the Sabbath? <sup>24</sup> Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment.”

**Rev. Emma:**

<sup>25</sup> Now some of the people of Jerusalem were saying, “Is not this the man whom they are trying to kill? <sup>26</sup> And here he is, speaking openly, but they say nothing to him! Can it be that the authorities really know that this is the Messiah? <sup>27</sup> Yet we know where this man is from, but when the Messiah comes no one will know where he is from.”

**Marlene:**

<sup>28</sup> Then Jesus cried out as he was teaching in the temple, “You know me, and you know where I am from. I have not come on my own. But the one who sent me is true, and you do not know him. <sup>29</sup> I know him because I am from him, and he sent me.”

**This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

## Reflection: Festival Drama

Since January, I have been preaching through the Gospel of John and we are only on chapter 7. John's Gospel has 21 chapters and as you can imagine, there is no way we will be get through the whole Gospel by Easter! So...I have to be selective in the passages that I pick each week. The story that you just heard Marlene and I read from chapter 7 is often skipped over. In fact, for congregations whose ministers use the Revised Common Lectionary – which is a three-year cycle of Scripture passages to preach on each Sunday – they would NEVER hear a minister preach on this story because it's not in the Lectionary at all.

So why did I choose this passage?

We are here because Easter is 5 weeks away.

The Season of Lent is a time for Christians around the world to reflect on what Jesus went through on his journey towards the cross. It's a time for us to ponder what Christ's sacrifice means for us. As individuals, there are many ways in which Christians walk through Lent – some people spend more time in prayer and spiritual reflection while others fast or give up something in their lives. Others commit to serving others in their community. Or all of the above. As a community of faith, the tone or 'mood' of our worship services changes during this season. From more somber music to different prayers to special readings, together we ponder what it means to be followers of Jesus Christ in our complex and anxious world.

Our passage from John chapter 7 reminds us that from early on in his ministry, Jesus was destined for hardship and persecution. And he had many critics. People talked about him behind his back. They gossiped about him – he's a good man. No, no, no...he is a liar and a fake. Even his own brothers weren't sure that he was the only begotten Son of God.



Can our older brother – the one who we played with as children – really be the Messiah? They, like many others who followed Jesus wherever he went, wanted proof. Perform some miracles. Raise a few people from the dead and we'll believe you.

That's why they wanted him to go to this festival with them. As I mentioned in my children's time, this Festival of Booths – in Hebrew it is called Sukkot - is a 7-day holiday that is celebrated in the fall each year. It is one of three pilgrimages that Jews are supposed to make to the Temple in Jerusalem where they give thanks for the harvest and remember their dependence on the will of God.<sup>1</sup> The shelters that have been built throughout the millennia symbolize not only the need for shade during the harvest – they also remind them of God's protection when their ancestors wandered in the wilderness for 40 years.

For them, this would be a perfect time for Jesus to show up – and show off.

After all, people who want to be famous usually don't want to hide their talents.

**Come on, brother, let's go!**

But Jesus doesn't comply with their request. Once again, he says - **my time has not yet come.** (John 7:5)

And yet, part way into the Festival, Jesus does go to Jerusalem. But he goes on his own terms, in secret. He goes on God's time, not as an ordinary pilgrim, but as the Messiah.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sukkot#:~:text=Sukkot%2C%20also%20known%20as%20the,to%20the%20Temple%20in%20Jerusalem>.

Once Jesus begins teaching at the Festival, he boldly declares to the crowds that he comes from God the Father - my teaching is not mine but his who sent me. Anyone who resolves to do the will of God will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own. Those who speak on their own seek their own glory, but the one who seeks the glory of him who sent him is true, and there is nothing unjust in him.

In other words, Jesus was proclaiming that he was there not to perform miracles or any fancy party tricks for his brothers, disciples, or anyone else for that matter. He was there because of God's will, proclaiming God's glory, not his own. And speaking directly to his critics, he said if you don't like it, too bad. Aren't you trying to kill me? Well here I am – come and get me – I dare you! (John 7:16-19)

If we were to continue reading this story in chapter 7, you will learn that the religious leaders did indeed try to arrest Jesus during this Festival. But it wasn't the right time...yet. That time would come soon enough.

This story from chapter 7 marks a transition in Jesus' ministry as recorded in the Gospel of John. From now on, Jesus would face greater scrutiny and deeper hostility. The religious leaders were starting to understand just how much of a threat Jesus was becoming – a threat that, one day, would need to be silenced for good.

But do you want to hear something that is fascinating? Do you know who was in the crowd that day quietly advocating on behalf of Jesus? Nicodemus. Remember Nicodemus? The religious leader who went searching for Jesus in the middle of the night in John chapter 3 and who heard Jesus say – for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life? (John 3:16) Within this context, Jesus showed his authenticity because what he said in private to one person, he also said in public to the crowds. I am the Son of God, the

Messiah, the Christ and I am here because of God's love for the world. I am going to continue teaching, preaching, and healing on the Sabbath because I am not afraid of your threats, accusations, and festival drama. I know that I am following the will of God, my heavenly Father.

As we spend the next 5 weeks moving towards the brutality of the cross, John is telling us with this story that Jesus wasn't afraid about his future. He knew what God had planned for him and he continued on this path in hope and faith.

And we need to do the same.

There is no doubt that our world is full of anxiety and fear. All you have to do is turn on the news. And yet, as people of faith, we need to look to the example that Jesus provides in his own life and ministry. He trusted in the divine will of God the Father and proclaimed the Good News of the Gospel even in the midst of hardship, criticism, and persecution. He understood that God's love was so strong, so absolute that nothing could separate him from it. Later in chapter 14, he would tell his disciples just after he predicted his own death – *peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.* (John 14:27)

Over and over again, Jesus teaches us to live in hope and faith, not in fear. Even in the season of Lent when we fast and pray and lament, there is still hope. The hope that we have in Jesus Christ does not disappear in Lent – in fact, it gets stronger because our faith teaches us that there is no need for us to be afraid of what tomorrow will bring. Our Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is already there, preparing us the way in hope and faith.

To God be the glory. Now and always. Amen.

## Dedication of our Tithes and Offerings

We will now sing our song of thanks, - Holy, holy, holy (#303, verse 1)

Holy, holy, holy.  
My heart, my heart adores you!  
My heart is glad to say the words:  
You are holy, Lord

Let us pray. (Not written in advance)

## Prayers of the People

This week, I will be leading you through a guided prayer. Throughout this prayer, I will leave space for silence so that we can all offer our prayers to the Lord.

Let us pray from wherever you are.

Faithful God, who fulfilled the promises made to the generations before us, thank you for your compassion, forgiveness, and saving grace. We praise you for your blessed presence and for sending Jesus Christ to teach us how to live in hope and faith. Christ went to the cross on our behalf knowing that you were with him. Just as you were present with him in that dark time, be with us as well. Let your glorious Spirit fill the Church and all people of faith with hope in these anxious times. Give us the courage to boldly proclaim your love.

Creating God, we admit that there is much that is broken in our world. From the beginning of time, you have called us to be good stewards of your creation, but we have failed miserably.

In the silence of our hearts, we pray for our planet and all creatures both great and small...

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Compassionate Saviour, we pray for all of your children. We pray for the regions of our world where peace is just a dream. Send the peace of Christ into these situations so that war will be no more. Be with injured and afflicted. Comfort those who mourn. Give strength to all of the helpers. We pray for our nation in this time of political and economic turmoil. May leaders everywhere work for healing, reconciliation, and justice.

In the silence of our hearts, we pray for the situations in our world that cause us great concern...

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Guiding Spirit, we pray for Christ's bride, the Church. We pray for ministers, Elders, teachers, and all believers who have accepted your call upon their lives. We pray for all who seek to worship and serve you. We remember those who are persecuted for their faith.

In the silence of our hearts, we pray for Christians around the world...

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Triune God, we pray for the people in our lives who are struggling. Heal the sick. Send Christ's peace to the bereaved. Give hope to the anxious and fearful. Send your presence to the lonely. Dry their tears.

In the silence of our hearts, we pray for our family and friends...

O Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers.

Today we remember your children by name...

Heavenly Father, make us channels of your peace. Anoint us with courage and strength to be followers of Jesus Christ in our broken and complex world. Strengthen our resolve in this season of Lent to journey with Christ towards the cross, knowing that nothing can separate us from your love. In Christ's most blessed name we pray. Amen.

Music: Abide with me (#794, verses 1, 3, 4)

Blessing (Romans 8:38-39)

Sung Amen