

Knox Presbyterian Church
Rev. Emma Duncan
March 30, 2025

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT



Greetings

Call to worship (PWS&D Lenten Liturgy) Susan Malcolm

One: Like the prodigal son, we sometimes waste our lives

All: running toward arrogant and unthinking excess.

One: Like the older brother, we sometimes lose our way

All: resenting the blessings others receive.

One: But to all, Christ offers grace - a new creation and a reconciled world,

All: so let us be glad and rejoice in the steadfast love of the Lord.

Music: Open my eyes, that I may see (#500, all verses)

Prayer of Lament (including The Lord's Prayer)

This week's lament is based on Psalm 22, which Jesus cried out from the cross according to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark.¹ He cried – My God, my God, why have you forsaken me! This Psalm is hauntingly beautiful because it gives voice to the darkness that we have all experienced. But I want you to remember that after Psalm 22 comes the hopeful words of Psalm 23, which is our responsive Psalm today. Together these two Psalms are deeply moving for people of faith.

Let us pray from wherever we are.

Hello God – it's me, Emma again. Sorry to bother you, but I'm here again with your children. We have gathered together in-person and online, to worship you on the fourth Sunday of Lent. Time stops for no one and it feels like the weeks are flying by! In this past week of ice storms and earthquakes and trade wars, we want to feel your presence. Do not be far from us, O my God. Come quickly to our aid and deliver us.

¹ Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34

In a world of fake news and false prophets, we don't know who to trust. Should we put our trust in politicians who are wooing us for our votes? Should we trust lawyers and business leaders who want our money? Should we trust celebrities and social media influencers who want our likes?

Who is telling the truth?

O God, do not forsaken us! We cry out to you by day, but you do not answer. By night, you are silent. Don't you hear us? Can't you hear the words of our groaning?

In a time of silence, hear our cries of confession...

Thank you, Lord, for listening. You are not bothered by our lament at all. Indeed, you brought each one of us out of our mother's wombs and you do not disappoint us! As we put our trust in you, open our eyes to see your truth so that we may be delivered from our sin. Rescue us from our enemies. Save us from ourselves so that we may declare your name to the nations and praise you all the days of our lives.

We now pray the prayer of Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd, 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

People of God – hear these words of hope from Psalm 23:

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

And I will dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Mercy is something that we need because we are all sinners who fall short of the glory of God. Receive the Good News of the Gospel – that because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have received mercy. We are forgiven. Rejoice and be glad as we celebrate God's amazing grace! Amen.

Announcements

1. Welcome!
2. Join us in the Fellowship Hall after worship for refreshments and conversation.
3. Thank you to Susan Malcolm, Richard Duncan, and Dawn Flood for participating in our worship service.
4. Volunteers needed to host coffee fellowship. Sign-up sheet is in the Fellowship Hall downstairs.
5. Anniversary Planning group – meeting after church today. Grab your coffee and head to the Edrie Elder Room.
6. Upcoming Events

Saturday April 12, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Easter Eggstravaganza

Sunday May 4 after worship service

Annual General Meeting

Sunday May 25 in the afternoon

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

Music: When Jesus the healer passed through Galilee (#203, verses 1, 4, 6, 7)

Children's Time: Here's mud in your eye



Prayer of Illumination:

Let us pray. Almighty God, in you are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Open our eyes that we may see the wonders of your Word; and give us grace that we may clearly understand and freely choose the way of your wisdom. We pray this in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Old Testament reading is taken from the Book of Psalms and we will be reading Responsively Psalm 23.

Leader: The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

People: He makes me lie down in green pastures.

Leader: He leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul.

People: He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.

Leader: Even though I walk through the darkest valley.

People: I fear no evil.

Leader: For you are with me.

People: Your rod and your staff—they comfort me.

Leader: You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

People: You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Leader: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.

People: And I will dwell in the house of the LORD my whole life long.

Amen.

Dawn

Richard and I will be reading the whole 9th chapter of the Gospel of John. The words are not on the screen. Let us listen to God's most holy Word.

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Richard:

Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent).

Dawn:

Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am he." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

Richard:

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight.

Dawn:

He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

Richard:

Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the Sabbath." Others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

Dawn:

He said, "He is a prophet."

Richard:

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"

Dawn:

His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

Richard:

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."

Dawn:

He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

Richard:

They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

Dawn:

He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

Richard:

Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

Dawn:

The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Richard:

They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Dawn:

He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."

Richard:

Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."

Dawn:

He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.

Richard:

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment, so that those who do not see may see and those who do see may become blind."

Dawn:

Some of the Pharisees who were with him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?"

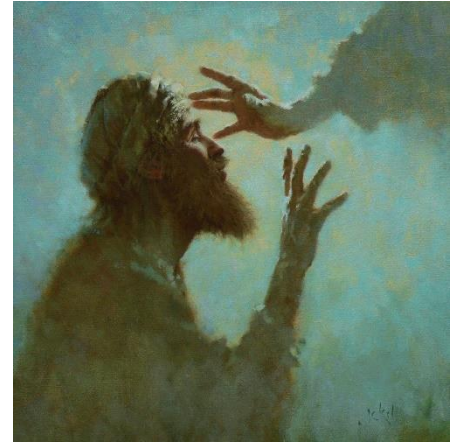
Richard:

Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

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

Reflection: Spiritual Blindness

Time is running out. Despite great opposition, Jesus is trying to reach as many people as possible to show the world that he is the Messiah, the Son of God. As they were walking along, his disciples point out a blind man who is begging on the side of the road and they ask him – who sinned? This



blind man or his parents? Jesus answers them – no one has sinned. This blind man is here at this moment so that I can heal him and God’s glory will be displayed. And so, Jesus makes some mud and puts on the man’s eyes and gives him some instructions. The man obeyed and was healed.

As we saw last week in John chapter 8, Jesus continues to go against the teachings of the Law of Moses and heals – yet again – on the Sabbath. His pronouncement that no one has sinned also goes against the rabbinical teachings of the day because they believed that physical ailments were caused by sin. Some rabbis even believed that an unborn child could sin in their mother’s womb, causing sickness or disabilities.

Now to our modern ears, this belief is horrifying. Modern medicine and science are so advanced now that we know that this is NOT true! But even though we know that blindness is NOT caused by sin, we have to acknowledge that our understanding of what is ‘truth’ is very subjective. What I believe to be true is not necessarily what you believe to be true. I may believe that the earth is round and you may believe that it is flat. I may believe that vaccines save lives and you may believe that they cause far worse diseases than COVID or the measles. I may believe that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and you may simply call him a prophet.

Ultimately, the story that Richard and Dawn just read for us is about truth. Who is telling the truth here? It is Jesus? Or the disciples? The man who was healed? His parents? The Pharisees? What about all the people in the background? Were *they* telling the truth? This cast of characters were all speaking from different perspectives and so, their understandings of the truth about Jesus' miraculous healing were all different.

Think about it...

The disciples were trying to discover what truth Jesus believed about sin.

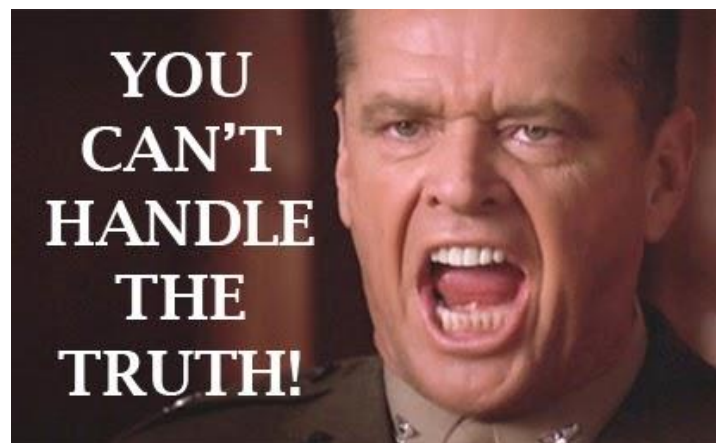
The healed man's neighbours debated the truth about who he was.

This man's parents were telling a truth that would keep them safe.

The Pharisees were looking for a truth that would punish Jesus.

They are all telling different truths.

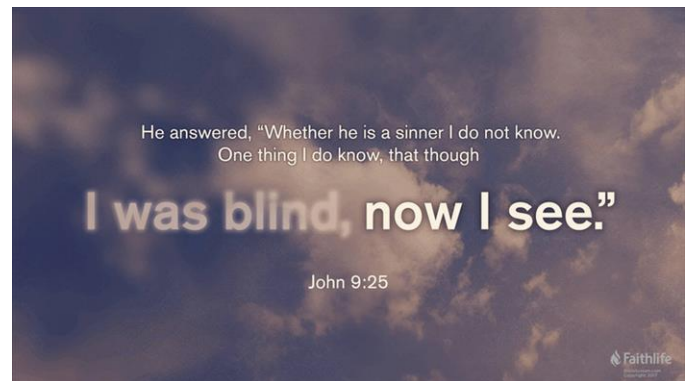
As I was reflecting on this passage and what does truth really mean, there were a LOT of examples from the news that I could have shared with you. But I found myself thinking about a great movie from the early 1990s called "A Few Good Men" with an excellent ensemble cast including Tom Cruise, Kevin Bacon, Demi Moore, and the legendary Jack Nicholson. The plot follows the court-martial of two U.S. Marines charged with the murder of a fellow Marine and the tribulations of their lawyers as they prepare their case. If you like court room dramas, this is a great film! And like our story from John chapter 9, there are many characters telling their own version of the truth. The climax of the movie takes place in the courtroom when Tom Cruise's character, a military defense lawyer, confronts Jack Nicholson's character, a Colonel in the Marine Corps, and Nicholson's character yells the now classic line – **you can't handle the truth!**



I'd love to show you the clip of this movie², but it's against the copyright rules and there is swearing in it, so it's not appropriate for a worship service!

What this classic line reminded me of is that when people speak the truth about who Jesus is, there are many different reactions to this truth. In our story, it is the blind man who received healing from the Lord who says – you can't handle the truth. Listen again to what he said when the Pharisees questioned him – **Whether or not, [Jesus] is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know; I was blind but now I see!** (John 9:25) You can persecute Jesus as much as you want, but I know what happened to me. I know what I believe.

The truth that he spoke that day is that Jesus Christ, the Messiah, offers sight to the blind. And just as we saw last week in our story about the woman caught in adultery, Jesus isn't afraid to replace the laws of judgment and condemnation with the laws of



love and forgiveness. Jesus does not care that he is healing on the Sabbath – he is not committing a sin because he is the divine Son of God.

This man's truth is the REAL truth. The ABSOLUTE truth.

But the religious leaders rejected this truth. Even his parents were reluctant to accept it for fear of being banished from the synagogue, the centre of Jewish life. The characters in this story all had their own versions of the truth and for various reasons, they could not see the truth which was right before their eyes. **They were spiritual blind.** Not only were they blind to the truth, they were also unwilling to change their

² https://youtu.be/9FnO3igOkOk?si=l_UatJwKHZAj-Yim

perspective, their version of the truth. Believing in Christ was not something that they were prepared to do.

But for the man who was healed, this was their loss. Because he believed, his life was transformed and by the end of the story, he worshipped Christ with joy.

At its core, this is a hopeful story. For us today, we are reminded to open our eyes to the truth that is Jesus Christ. In these Lenten days, it is good to read through the Gospel of John where we read story after story about how amazing Jesus really is. He turned water into wine, he told a religious leader in the middle of the night that God so loved the world, he offered living water to the Samaritan woman at the well, and he saved a woman from being stoned. And so much more! And the love and forgiveness that he gave to these people is also available to you and to me. We too can be healed when we believe in Jesus Christ.

But this story also contains a warning. For those who do believe, we need to be on guard against fake news and false truths. We need to be aware that there are false prophets out there who do not speak the truth in love. We need to protect ourselves from spiritual blindness through prayer and reading God's Word; through worship, service, and fellowship with other believers. All of these things prepare us to defend our faith and say, I can handle the truth that Jesus is the Messiah. Can you?

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

O Creating God, we are your sheep. The Bible teaches us that you provide for every need, you guide along the right path, you are present in darkest valleys, you protect us from our enemies, and your nourishment is beyond measure. In the fullness of time, you sent part of yourself to earth in the form of Jesus, the Messiah. He is our Good Shepherd. He shines light into the darkness - opening eyes that are blind, exposing prejudice and fear, offering forgiveness and mercy, and giving us new truths. After he poured himself out of the cross and defeated the bonds of sin and death, you sent your Spirit to remain with us until Christ comes again.

To you, O Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – we offer our worship and praise today!

Hear our prayers on behalf of your people and the world that you love so much.

Heavenly Father, we pray for the world. We lift up to you those places where violence dominates every aspect of life. We continue to pray for peace in Ukraine and the Middle East. We pray for the people who are impacted by the trade war in North America. Give courage and strength to all those dealing with the earthquake in Myanmar and other climate disasters. Let the peace of Christ descend into these places.

Redeeming Saviour, we pray for your people. Be with those who live on the margins of our society. The poor and unhoused. Those who have to beg for their food and shelter. Those who face everyday challenges because of disabilities. The widow and the orphan. The victims of war and oppression. Comfort and strengthen them, O God. Be their Shepherd. Open our eyes to see the marginalized as you see them – as your beloved children who are equally loved and forgiven.

Nurturing Spirit, we pray for your Church. In a world where truth is hard to come by, strengthen people of faith to share the truth that Jesus Christ is indeed the Messiah, the Son of God. We pray for church leaders, missionaries, aid workers, and countless volunteers who are serving in Christ's name. Be with the millions of Christians around the world who are persecuted for their faith in Christ. May their witness be a bold testimony for the Gospel.

Compassionate Lord, we pray for your children who we name before you...

Lord Jesus, you are the Source of light and love, rest and nurture, hope and peace. Open our eyes to your goodness. Empower us to live as children of light, bringing people to you in truth and hope. Enlighten us to see the world through your eyes of love so that all people may know your goodness and mercy; through Jesus our Lord we pray. Amen.

Music: Amazing Grace (#670, verses 1, 3, 5, 6)

Blessing (Ephesians 6:11-17)

Sung Amen