



"A Community Of Many Faithing Communities Where All Belong!"

Living Waters Contemplative Life Center | Divine Intervention Ministry to the Homeless
Tippecanoe just.good.food Garden | Food Justice Site PCUSA
Arts and Science Literacy Camps for Children

Welcome To Worship

March 19, 2023

9:30 a.m.



Welcome to this time of being with God and each other.

"Restored in the Wilderness" Rev. Trish Eckert

✧ **Prelude: Zo Trembley**

✧ **Welcome and community news**

We welcome you to join us at 6 pm tonight on Zoom for Centering Prayer, and also to our weekly Monday worship at 6:30 pm on Zoom, in which we reflect on the Bible Wisdom teachings that we'll be exploring here on the following Sunday morning. It's a great way to connect early in the week, develop connections with others from our community as we walk along our faith journeys, and let the sacred texts settle on us more deeply.

I'm seeking 5 readers for a special worship service for our Palm Sunday morning service, please let me know if you're interested.

✧ **Readying Ourselves for Worship**

Surely God is in this place, Holy Ground!
Surely God is in this place,
Holy Ground!

✧ **A Blessing as we Center Ourselves in this Moment**

~ The Wilderness is a Place of Disruption

My grandfather was a good man,
But he believed
That wilderness emotions
Were not to be seen.
Cry with the door closed,
Don't dwell on the negative.
Chin up, kid,
We've been here before.

My grandfather was a good man,
But I'd like to say—
The wilderness is here to interrupt your
previously-scheduled programming.

Like water in the desert
And setting the slaves free,
The wilderness might be
The very thing we need,
The very thing we dream,
The very thing we plead
For.

I guess what I'm trying to say is—
It never seems appealing to let a bird
in the house,
But if you do,
Then you might as well
Open every window and door.

And if you do,
Then you just might find yourself
Basking in the light,
Dancing in the breeze,
Overwhelmed with the beauty
That an open door brings.

So I'm opening my door
And inviting in the wind,
To rustle up my heart
And start over again.

For sweeping the truth under the rug
Has never gotten us far.
So may the wilderness be like a
Bird in your house.
Throw open your doors.
The truth must come out.

Prayer by Sarah Are | A Sanctified Art LLC |
sanctifiedart.org

✧ **Becoming Present to God and Each Other - Our Check-in**

~ **The Joy of Passing the Peace** ~

✧ **Kid's Time** ~ *the wisdom of nature*

✧ **Gathering as God's People: Our Theme**

Lent begins in the wilderness. The Spirit guides Jesus into the wilderness where he comes face to face with temptation and struggle. Yet, in his forty days of fasting, resisting, and wandering, Jesus is shaped and formed for ministry. Similarly, through the wilderness of Lent, we are invited to surrender to the wild leadings of the Spirit. We rarely enter the wilderness willingly, but hopefully through our wandering we remember who we are and whose we are. The wilderness can become sacred even if it remains dangerous. There is no wilderness space too harsh or threatening for God's love.

I want to share with you a reflection written by Slat's Toole, a minister, writer, and musician. You might be able to relate to what they share, here: "Growing up, I always heard 'wilderness' spoken of in hushed tones, with a sense of fear and foreboding. It was not a place anyone would go voluntarily. I was warned away from the wilderness, told to avoid it at all costs. As I've gotten older, many of the things that I've been told are evil have shifted and transformed as I've begun to see the beauty within them. Those things which we find strange or uncomfortable are not always malicious—in fact, they are often the exact places where God works. God calls us to wilderness to use our discomfort to stretch us, challenge us, and equip us to more completely reflect God. The number of biblical texts that point us toward the wilderness helps me remember that I am not a failure when I wander into wilderness spaces. I didn't fail at avoiding the wilderness. Rather, I am a child held in God's hand, brought to the wilderness to encounter the Spirit in ways I could never have imagined. I am led to the wilderness to let go of the self I cling to so fiercely, to be re-formed into a more vibrant disciple."



May we seek ways to be more vibrant in our discipleship, and stay alert this week to the aspects of wilderness that are revealed in this morning's Bible Wisdom teachings:

The wilderness is a place of disruption

The wilderness is disorienting

The wilderness gives us new perspectives

The wilderness is a place to participate in healing

Through the wilderness, God shepherds and comforts us

✧ **Gathering Hymn 819 *Be Still My Soul***



✧ **Opening Ourselves to God's Grace**

One: God is in the water that restores our soul.

All: And God is in the night when we lose our way.

One: God is in today and tomorrow, raising up leaders, prophets, and dreamers.

All: And God is in the wilderness with us—every step of the way.

One: So, with confidence we declare—

All: If God is in those spaces, then God is surely here.

One: Let us worship the God of creation.

All: Let us worship the God of wilderness spaces.

✧ **Sharing our Innermost Lives with God**

Jesus of Nazareth,

There are stories of you healing the blind all over scripture.

You were constantly opening people's eyes.

So today we confess that we often choose to keep our eyes closed.

We turn away from injustice in our world, worried you might ask us to work for change.

We close our eyes to our privilege because the truth is uncomfortable.

We avoid eye contact with those who are suffering to avoid identifying with their pain.

Forgive us for failing to be your Church in the world.

Guide us from the depths of our wilderness into your light. Amen.

✧ **Special Music** *Open the Eyes of my Heart* played by Rosie Rain

✧ **Prayer of Intention**

✧ **Bible Wisdom Teachings**

Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.

 God makes me lie down in green pastures;
God leads me beside still waters;
 God restores my soul.
God leads me in right paths
 for God's name's sake.

Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
 I fear no evil;
for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff—
 they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me
 in the presence of my enemies;
you anoint my head with oil;
 my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
 all the days of my life,
and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord
 my whole life long.



Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
 I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
 your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

DailyVerses.net

John 9: 1-8, 13-17, 28-41

9 As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 His disciples asked him, ‘Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?’ 3 Jesus answered, ‘Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. 4 We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.’ 6 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, 7 saying to him, ‘Go, wash in the pool of Siloam’ (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. 8 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?’

13 They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. 14 Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 15 Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, ‘He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.’ 16 Some of the Pharisees said, ‘This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.’ But others said, ‘How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?’ And they were divided. 17 So they said again to the blind man, ‘What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.’ He said, ‘He is a prophet.’

28 Then they reviled him, saying, ‘You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. 29 We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.’ 30 The man answered, ‘Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.’ 34 They answered him, ‘You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?’ And they drove him out.

35 Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ 36 He answered, ‘And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.’ 37 Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.’ 38 He said, ‘Lord, I believe.’ And he worshipped him. 39 Jesus said, ‘I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.’ 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, ‘Surely we are not blind, are we?’ 41 Jesus said to them, ‘If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, “We see,” your sin remains.

One: May we hear anew the origin stories of our faith and draw from the roots of our tradition.

All: **Thanks be to our God.**

✧ Message “Restored in the Wilderness”



✧ Reflection Questions

In this Lenten week, how are you seeing? Is there anything you need to clear from your field of vision so that you can see more clearly? How grounded are you these days? Where do you perceive the presence of Christ in elemental, earthy things? ~ Queries from Rev. Jan L. Richardson, excerpted from her blog, *The Painted Prayerbook*

✧ Short period of silent reflection



✧ Sharing Our Wisdom

✧ Hymn 649 *Amazing Grace*

✧Community Prayers & the Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer

O most Compassionate Life-giver,
may we honor and praise you;
May we work with you to establish your new order of justice peace and love;
Give us what we need for growth,
And help us, through forgiving others, to accept forgiveness.
Strengthen us in the time of testing, that we may resist all evil,
For all tenderness, strength and love are yours, now and forever.
Amen.

✧Benediction

Go now to follow the way of Jesus:
see others as he did;
dare to give freely as he did;
and to love unconditionally as he did.
Go, embraced by the Source of life, love and hope;
in the company of the Word of life;
encouraged by the Breath of life. Amen

Now that the worship has ended, may the service truly begin.

✧Our Response:

Holy One, now we your servants go in peace. Your Word lives on in us.

✧Postlude

