



## Gifts of the Dark Wood

**Sunday, March 14, 2021**

Fourth Sunday in Lent  
First Lutheran Church - Sandpoint

***“The Gift of Getting Lost”***

Welcome to the season of Lent. This year, our worship will invite us to examine and explore what God might be offering us in the wilderness places of our lives. Before Jesus begins his ministry, the Holy Spirit drives him out to the desert; a time of emptiness, uncertainty, temptation, feeling lost, and prayer. You are invited to explore what the Holy Spirit wants to help you discover in this time of worship. The cross looms before us as Jesus leads us along this path we might not choose for ourselves. Gifts await you along the way.

## WE GATHER

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

### Prelude

### Welcome/Announcements

### Threshold to the Dark Woods

*[Soloist sings]*

*There's a path... though it winds its way through darkness  
We would choose... to avoid it if we could  
We awake... to an unexpected calling  
God says, "come... there are gifts in the Dark Wood"*

*Pastor:* The path of life is rarely clear or straight-forward. We find ourselves lost in a Dark Wood, unclear which direction to go, perhaps having strayed from the path we thought we were on. It is at these times that the gift of getting lost is that we begin to pay more attention than we usually do. Perhaps we are looking for blatant signs when the subtle nudges of Spirit are already right there. Our Lent journey invites us to get quiet and open wide our senses....

*[soloist sings— people whisper the echo]*

*There's a path (echo: **there's a path**) ... though it winds its way through darkness  
We would choose (**we would choose**) ... to avoid it if we could  
We awake (**we awake**) ... to an unexpected calling  
God says, "come (**God says, "come**) ... there are gifts in the Dark Wood"*

### Prayer

Let us pray,

Permeating Love, enter our lives

and open us to the gifts residing deep within the Holy Darkness of our lives.

When we feel overwhelmed by the twists and turns of life,

quiet us,                      open us,

heighten our senses to perceive your nudge toward life.

In your many names, we pray. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn/Song:                    “Be Still My Soul”                    *(sung to Finlandia)***  
***(quietly hum or whisper)***

Be still my soul: the Lord is on thy side.  
Bear patiently the cross of grief or pain.  
Leave to thy God to order and provide,  
who through all changes faithful will remain.  
Be still my soul: thy best, thy heavenly Friend  
through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.

Be still my soul: thy God doth undertake  
to guide the future surely as the past.  
Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake;  
all now mysterious shall be bright at last.  
Be still, my soul: the waves and winds still know  
his voice who ruled them while he dwelt below.

**Litany of Confession and Forgiveness**

God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

Leader: For plunging ahead without listening to You,

**People: Forgive and restore us, O God.**

Leader: For not recognizing Your still small voice within us,

**People: Forgive and restore us, O God.**

Leader: For forgetting to ask for assurance—your greatest gift,

**People: Forgive and restore us, O God.**

*Silent prayers...*

Hear these words of assurance:

God dwells with us, no matter how sure or unsure we are.

God is not uncertain about whether or not we are worthy of love.

God is with you, forgiving and restoring you to wholeheartedness

Through the grace of Jesus Christ, who poured out His love, so you might live.

**Thanks be to God! Amen!**

## WORD

### **FIRST READING: Psalm 42**

As a deer longs for flowing streams,  
so my soul longs for you, O God.  
My soul thirsts for God,  
for the living God.  
When shall I come and behold  
the face of God?  
My tears have been my food  
day and night,  
while people say to me continually,  
“Where is your God?”

The Word of the Lord, **Thanks be to God!**

### **SECOND READING: Ephesians 2:1-10**

*While we were dead in our sinfulness, God acted to make us alive as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus. We are saved not by what we do but by grace through faith. Thus our good works are really a reflection of God's grace at work in our lives.*

<sup>1</sup>You were dead through the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. <sup>4</sup>But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not the result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

### **\*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: (spoken)**

**Let your steadfast love come to us, O Lord.  
Save us as you promised; we will trust your word.**

**\*GOSPEL: John 3:14-21**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

[Jesus said:] <sup>14</sup>“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup>“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

## WE RESPOND

### A Time for Reflection

Leader [*from preacher at end of sermon*]: Each week we will take time to reflect, accompanied by music. “In the Dark Wood, even those who are lost themselves can be gift-bearers to others seeking their way in the dark (pg. 101). This week, you are invited to write a word of encouragement on a rock for someone who may cross the path where you have been, feeling utterly lost.

What would you say to them? What would God say to them?..

**Song of the Day:**            *Amazing Grace*

*play after instructions are given while people reflect and write*

### **Apostles’ Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.**

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit  
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

**He descended into hell.\***

**On the third day he rose again.**

**He ascended into heaven,  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen**

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\*Or, He descended to the dead.

**Prayers of the People** *[Dr. Marcia McFee sings the prayer chant with no echo first time through, with echo second time through, then leads the congregation in the echo.]*

*Come and rest (echo: **come and rest**)*

*Come and listen (echo: **come and listen**)*

*Lay the fullness of your lives before the Maker (echo is a canon)*

*Repeat*

There are many people who are walking the Dark Woods for various reasons.

Give your church throughout the world a spirit of humility and repentance; teach us to trust always in the good news of your salvation. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You sustained your people in the wilderness. Give courage to all who lead in times of crisis and scarce resources.

Prosper the work of those who aid victims of famine and drought.

Let us lift up names of places in this world that need our prayers...

*[allow time for this and when the naming stops...]*

Bring peace in places where scarce resources cause violence. Hear us, O God.

God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

Your mercy endures forever. Deliver all who cry to you, especially those who are hungry or without homes. Give life in places where death seems triumphant; give healing to those who are sick and comfort to those who mourn (esp. ...)

God, in your mercy,

**hear our prayer.**

By grace we have been saved. Fill this congregation to overflowing with that grace, that we show mercy to others. Guide and call any who are lost. Give us patience and courage as we help each other follow in your way.

God of mercy,

**Hear our prayer.**

*Additional petitions may be included here.*

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord offering the words he taught us, 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,  
forever and ever. Amen.**

**\*PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.  
**And also with you.**

*The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace,  
and may say, "Peace be with you," remaining in your pew.*

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**\*Sending Song - "Will You Come and Follow Me" (ELW 798, v 1 & 5)**

1 "Will you come and follow me  
if I but call your name?  
Will you go where you don't know  
and never be the same?  
Will you let my love be shown,  
will you let my name be known,  
will you let my life be grown  
in you and you in me?"

5 Lord, your summons echoes true  
when you but call my name.  
Let me turn and follow you  
and never be the same.  
In your company I'll go  
where your love and footsteps show.  
Thus I'll move and live and grow  
in you and you in me.

## \*Blessing

Please speak the words in bold when we get to them:

May the Spirit of the Living God,  
Made known to us most fully within life's Dark Wood:

**Go before you** to show you the way;

**Go above you** to watch over you;

**Go behind you** to push you into places you may not necessarily go yourself;

**Go beneath you** to uphold and uplift you;

**Go beside you** to be your strong and constant companion;

And dwell within you to remind you that you are surely not alone,  
And may the fire of God's blessing burn brightly Upon you, and within you,  
Now and always.

**Amen.**

## Benediction Song

*There's a path (**there's a path**) ... and it leads us out together  
To the wood (**to the wood**) ... where the darkness hovers still  
We are sent (**we are sent**) ... and the Spirit goes before us  
God says, "go (**God says, go**) ... be my presence in the world."*

## OFFERINGS

*Offerings may be placed in the plates as you go out from this worship to live in service to  
God throughout the week.*

*Or you can give online <https://firstlutheransandpoint.breezechms.com/give/online>.*

## Postlude

### Worship Notes:

Series based on *Gifts of the Dark Wood* by Eric Elnes

All liturgy by Marcia McFee, [www.worshipdesignstudio.com](http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com)

"There's a Path" & "Come and Rest," words by Marcia McFee, music by Chuck Bell.

Songs:

"Be Still My Soul" by Kathrina von Schlegel. Public Domain.

"Will You Come and Follow Me?" Text: John L. Bell, b. 1949

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Blessing from *Gifts of the Dark Wood* by Eric Elnes.

## **Announcements:**

**Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. - Exploration of Prayer** on Zoom. The invitation is recurring. If you have not received it or would like to join the conversation, let Pastor Lori know. You can join by phone or computer.

**Holy Week and Easter - March 28 - April 3:** We will let you know the worship options for Holy Week, by next Sunday. We need help transforming the worship space for Easter. It involves an easy craft project, using children's umbrellas. Let Pastor Lori know if you would like to help.

For Maundy Thursday, we need volunteers to read monologues (recorded ahead of time, audio only). Let Pastor Steve know if you can help. Most smart phones have a voice recorder on them.

**New Members** - The pandemic delayed several family units from joining the church around this time last year. We are looking at a Sunday in April to welcome those still interested. If you have questions about what membership is or are curious about how to get more connected with the community, let Pastor Lori know.

Thank you for the generous donations for the recording system, new sign, and replacement of our fire alarm control board. At our recent Council meeting, it looks like we have enough designated offerings to cover these needs. We are running behind on our general offerings for ministry by about \$7500.

**Prayer List:** Jenn VanVolkinburg (brother Eric, and upon the death of her grandmother) Michelle Thurston, George Marker, Lynn Franck, Chris Ingham; Randy Petersen; Charles Shobe Sr., Nicky Schripsema; Wendi Lies; Gerda Burke; Debbie Haberlock; Kara Schripsema; Kai Haberlock; Tom Taylor; Hunter Taylor; Eugene Kurwicki; Mike Shobe; Marguerite Suttmeier, Sylvia Greenwood; Janet Merrill, and those on your hearts and minds today.

We include prayers for Luther Park - its staff, residents, wisdom as we continue to learn how to live with Covid-19. All pastors and leaders within the church, planning and preparing for Holy Week and how to continue to serve during the now and not yet of the pandemic.

See page 11 for a coloring page prayer as we mark one year since the Covid-19 virus changed our lives and our ways of being together.

# WONDERWORKER

in this  
**YEAR**

WHEN everything CHANGED,

when we felt

WORRIED AND WEARY

when we wailed and wondered,

YOU GAVE US A PROMISE.

**— NOTHING —**

can separate us from

**YOUR LOVE.**

And nothing will be wasted.

**WITH YOU AT WORK,**

LIGHT, LIFE, LOVE, & LIBERATION

**ALWAYS WIN.**

amen.

Please note the following things to support you in your worship:

- First, thank you for adjusting to and heeding the precautions we have put in place to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus, while we gather.
- In addition to wearing face masks, remaining 6' apart from other family groups or friend cohorts, staying home if you do not feel well, and refraining from shaking hands or hugging:
  - The Children's Playroom and Nursery is not available for use.
  - We ask that you meditate on or hum the songs as the music plays, rather than singing.
  - During the passing of the peace, we invite you to wave, show a peace sign, extend your arms in a gesture of blessing, etc. as you remain in your pew.
  - At the end of the worship, please remain seated until the ushers dismiss you by rows. The upright piano side of the sanctuary will leave through the door up front. The lectern side will exit the way you came in.
  - Fellowship is encouraged with social distancing, once you are outside of the building.
  - We requested your name and phone number in case we need to notify you of a potential exposure to Covid-19. We will heed HIPAA laws if or when the need arises.
  - On Sundays, the fellowship hall door that leads out to the Ontario St. parking lot will be exit only for anyone who might be seated in the overflow seating. The Main Ontario St. door and the doors nearest the church office will be the only doors unlocked for entry.
- Even with all of this, we cannot eliminate the risk of contracting the Covid-19 virus while gathering indoors. Therefore, we will record each worship and post for those who choose to stay home. Yes, the Holy Spirit connects us all together wherever we are, with the saints today, and all those who have gone before us in the faith.