



Gifts of the Dark Wood

Sunday, March 28, 2021

Palm Sunday

First Lutheran Church - Sandpoint

“The Gift of Misfits”

Today, we enter the holiest of weeks in the Christian tradition. Our 40 days in the Dark Wood has brought us to the Festival of Passover in Jerusalem. Along the way, we have explored what God might be offering us in the wilderness places of our lives. Gifts discovered primarily during times of emptiness, uncertainty, temptation, feeling lost, and prayer. The cross looms before us as Jesus leads us along this path we might not choose for ourselves. May this story stir a new creation within and among you this week.

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"*

As our exploration of the Gifts of the Dark Wood begins to come to a close, we look around us to acknowledge the kin-dom—the family—that has always and is already right here with us. Sojourners in the Dark Wood do not go it alone but are blessed with the presence of others who help us see, reflect with us and discover together with us the riches of a life lived with intention. As Jesus comes into Jerusalem at the beginning of that fateful week, he is surrounded by those who will live the uncertainty, temptation and emptiness right alongside him

Gathering Song: All Glory Laud and Honor (ELW 344 verse 3 & 5 with refrain)

Refrain

All glory, laud, and honor to you, redeemer, king,
to whom the lips of children made sweet hosannas ring

The multitude of pilgrims with palms before you went.
Our praise and prayer and anthems before you we present.

Refrain

Their praises you accepted; accept the prayers we bring,
great author of all goodness, O good and gracious king.

Refrain

Prayer

Let us pray,
Journeying Jesus, enter our lives
and open us to the gifts residing deep within the Holy Darkness of our lives.
Help us to be with and for each other
as the crowds that day offered their presence for you.
In your many names, we pray. **Amen.**

**Hosanna, Jesus is coming
Hosanna to the Prince of Peace.
Hosanna, Jesus is coming
Hosanna to the Prince of Peace.**

***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.

For hesitating to join the parade of life with our whole selves,

People: Forgive and restore us, O God.

Leader: For letting fear keep us from walking alongside our neighbors,

People: Forgive and restore us, O God.

Leader: For shying away from struggle even when we know what is right,

People: Forgive and restore us, O God.

Silent prayers...

Hear these words of assurance:

God continues to invite us to this parade... it is never too late.

God asks us to be companions—and we can... it is never too late.

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

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 50:4-9a

The image of the servant of God is one of the notable motifs in the book of Isaiah. Today's reading describes the mission of the servant, whom early Christians associated with Jesus. Like Jesus, the servant does not strike back at his detractors but trusts in God's steadfast love.

⁴The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.

Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.

⁵The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.

⁶I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.

⁷The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

⁸he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.

Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.

^{9a}It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Philippians 2:5-11

Christ did not act to attain status and glory but was obedient to God even to the point of death. Following Christ's example, we do not seek personal status or glory but care for others as God cared for us in Christ's death.

⁵Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.
⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: (spoken)**

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

***GOSPEL: Mark 11:1-11**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, [Jesus] sent two of his disciples ²and said to them, “Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³If anyone says to you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ just say this, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.’” ⁴They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵some of the bystanders said to them, “What are you doing, untying the colt?” ⁶They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it. ⁷Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, [*The people are prompted for this part*]

“Hosanna!

Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!

¹⁰Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!

Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

WE RESPOND

A Time for Reflection

Leader [*from preacher at end of sermon before the music begins*]: Each week during Lent we have taken time to reflect, accompanied by music. This last week, you are invited to write a thank-you note. Thank someone who has been part of your “misfit” community—someone who has been with you at times in the Dark Wood journey of your life.

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**

*Or, He descended to the dead.

***Prayers of the People** “Come and Rest” (sung by soloist, then echo, then harmony)

*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). X2

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

In Jesus you came among us as a suffering servant. Give your church humility. Redeem your people from pride and the certainty that we always know your will. And, remind us you are with us when we don’t think we are enough and shame creeps in. Heal us and empower us to confess Christ crucified.

God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

In creation, life springs from death. Redeem your creation awaiting resurrection: restore lost habitats and endangered species. Create new possibilities for areas affected by climate change (*especially*), grant relief from natural disasters (*especially*), and nurture new growth. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Let us lift up places and names of those who need our prayers...

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

God, in your mercy,

hear our prayer.

You called followers to tend Jesus' body in death. Sustain hospice workers and funeral directors. Bless this congregation's ministries at times of death: those who plan and lead funerals, those who prepare meals, all who offer support in grief. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You inspired the centurion to confess Jesus as your Son. We praise you for the faith you have given to people of all places and times. We thank you for the Spirit's nudges and for companions to help us hear and see your way in the Dark Wood. 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.*

THE DESCENT DEEPER INTO THE WOODS

Leader: Fellow travelers, we have come through the six weeks of Lent, recognizing the gifts that can come to us anytime we find ourselves in the Dark Woods.

Uncertainty can help us let go of our fear of the unknown.

Emptiness can leave room for new possibilities.

Thunderstruck moments can offer insight.

Getting lost invites us to heighten our awareness.

Temptation can help us know our true path.

And reaching out to other "misfits" on the journey
enriches our experience of life and love.

Today we begin a descent deeper into those woods as we move into the holiest of times of remembering how Jesus himself walked the way of frustration, anger, despair, betrayal—all because of his passion for the liberation of all people.

The last gift of the dark wood is the Gift of Disappearing. This gift comes when we "disappear" for a while into a "thin place" where the human and divine seem particularly close. That, indeed, is the experience of Holy Week. I invite you to journey with us Thursday night, the beginning of what we call "The Triduum," meaning three days where the Dark Wood was especially deep in the life of Jesus. Jesus has been there... the Dark Wood of life... and is with us as well. Let this moment carry us into the time "between"—a "liminal" space, where all is possible through the presence of God.

SENDING SONG: *Were You There* (ELW 353, three verses)

- 1 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?
- 2 Were you there when they nailed him to the tree?
- 3 Were you there when they pierced him in the side?

***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>.

Music for Going Out

Worship Notes:

<https://youtu.be/p1BAWGWEMPY>

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

All liturgy by Marcia McFee, www.worshipdesignstudio.com

“There’s a Path” & “Come and Rest,” words by Marcia McFee, music by Chuck Bell.

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

Worship Leaders:

Pastor Lori Morton and Pastor Steve Neuder

Piano Accompanist: Colleen Culwell

Ushers and Greeters:

AV Techs: Don Farnham and Scott Youngren

Prayers of Intercession and cover image From sundaysandseasons.com.

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Prayer List: Serve Wilson, 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.

Frank Cafferty, upon the death of his mother Rita Beehler.

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.

Holy Week: *More Details to come*

Palm / Passion Sunday - March 28th “The Gift of Misfits” (9:00 a.m. worship)

Maundy Thursday - April 1st service at 7:00 p.m. “The Gift of Disappearing”

Good Friday - April 2nd two online options for your worship and reflection.

Easter - April 4th: Three Offerings (Recording will be made available)

8:00 a.m. - Gather Outside on the front lawn. Bring a lawn chair. The service will include Holy Communion.

10:00 a.m. - In main worship space with organ.

Umbrella Wreaths for Easter

The main focal point for Easter and the 50 day season that follows, will be umbrellas. You can help by creating one or more of the following wreaths and bringing them to the church by Friday, April 2nd. Or if you have old rain galoshes, they can be transformed to hold flowers too.

What You'll Need:

- - An umbrella — The more colorful, the better! Important note: a **child size umbrella** will work best for this wreath project - full-size umbrellas will likely be too large. Trish Thurston found them through Hobby Lobby or Target.
- - Flowers — Fresh flowers are lovely, but artificial ones will last much longer. The Dollar Store has many varieties.
- - Ribbon for tying — Any kind of craft ribbon will likely do here. You may also want some robust twine to help with tying.
- - Gift tissue paper — Stuffing the umbrella will give it a fuller look.
- - Hot glue gun — (optional) Helps keep your flowers in place as you wish them to be arranged in the bouquet.
- - Wire cutters — Handy for cutting twine and ribbon.
- This is a tutorial on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BdrdIAeqG8>

