

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 14, 2021

Prelude

Christopher A. McCroskey

Centering Words:

Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992, The United Methodist Publishing House, 326.

Call to Worship:

Lead Me, Guide Me

Lead me, guide me, along the way,
for if you lead me, I cannot stray.

Lord, let me walk each day with thee.

Lead me, O Lord, lead me.

From *The Faith We Sing* Copyright 2000, Abingdon Press, 2214.

Prayer of the Day:

O God, that we may receive your blessing, touch our brows, touch our heads, and do not look upon us in anger. In a hard year, offer us mercy; in a year of affliction, offer us kindness; dark spirits banish from us, bright spirits bring close to us; gray spirits put away from us, good spirits draw near to us. When we are afraid, offer us courage; when we are ashamed, be our true face; be over us like a blanket, be under us like a bed of furs. We pray in the name of Jesus who taught us to pray.

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992, The United Methodist Publishing House, 500.

The Lord's Prayer:

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. Amen.

Affirmation of Faith: Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ His only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead; He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick 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.

Prayer of Illumination:

Open our ears that we may hear and our hearts and minds that we may receive your word O Lord our rock and redeemer.

(After each reading take two to three minutes to reflect upon the meaning of the passage to you today.)

New Testament Reading Ephesians 2:1-10

Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22

Old Testament Reading Numbers 21:4-9

Special Music

Gospel Reading John 3:14-21

Sermon

Love Darkness or Light

Hymn:

I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light

1. I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.
God set the stars to give light to the world. The star of my life is Jesus.

Refrain:

In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

2. I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Jesus.
Clear Sun of Righteousness, shine in my path, and show me the way to the Father.

Refrain

3. I'm looking for the coming of Christ. I want to be with Jesus.
When we have run with patience the race, we shall know the joy of Jesus.

Refrain

From *The United Methodist Hymnal* Copyright 1989, The United Methodist Publishing House, 206.

Benediction:

God be in your head, and in your understanding.

God be in your eyes, and in your looking.

God be in your mouth, and in your speaking.

God be in your heart, and in your thinking.

God be at your end, and at your departing.

From *The United Methodist Book of Worship*. Copyright 1992, The United Methodist Publishing House, 566.

Response:

God Be with You till We Meet Again

God be with you till we meet again;

by his counsels guide, uphold you,

with his sheep securely fold you;

God be with you till we meet again.

From *The United Methodist Hymnal*, Copyright 1989, The United Methodist Publishing House, 673.

Leading in Worship Today

Pastor: John D. Jordan AV Assistant: K. C. Warble
Choir Director: Christopher A. McCroskey
Church Musician

“AS MEMBERS OF THIS CONGREGATION, WE WILL FAITHFULLY PARTICIPATE IN ITS MINISTRIES BY OUR PRAYERS...”

Lynn Martin Pam Hook Oren Edwards Patsy Shuler Dean Frye
Steve White Latson Lewis George Taylor Steve Aiello

Shut-Ins: Shirley Butler; Esther Carter; Carolyn Hardee; Francis & Gillett Hipp; June Hutto; Georgeann Pace; Shirley Padgett; Jean Raynor; Claudia Sineath; Wayne Tallon; Irvin Wells

Family and Friends: Lisa Baghdady (a friend of Edwa Meek); Joyce Richards (wife of Boots Morgan's cousin); Chip Hooker (Wayne Hooker's father); Robert Bradley (Business Associate of Simon Ross); Mildred Hart (mother of Dee Senn); Dave Burrell (Business Associate of Tommy Gleaton); Gene Odom (grandfather of Mark Branham); Gary Becton (friend of Mark Branham); Audrey Cassidy (sister-in-law of Mary Louise Robinson); Rusty Browning (friend of Erin Derrick); Monnie Tiller, Mrs. Miles, Jerry Fowler (friends of Chris Derrick); Donna Walker (coworker of Jack Stevens); Kelly Knapp (wife of Laurie Knapp's nephew); Paul Kidney (son-in-law of Charles & Jackie McNeill); Ruby Pennington (friend of Laurie Knapp); Sara Krisnow (niece of Marty Johnson); Rick Baldwin (nephew of Tommy Johnson); Judy Bauer (cousin of Marty Johnson); Iris Turlington (aunt of John Zeigler); Betty Jean Newton (sister-in-law of Mary Kamoroff); ; Tonya Spires (friend of the Derricks); Vivian Almendinger (great-niece of Christopher McCroskey); J. B. & Stephanie Martindale (cousins of Christopher McCroskey); Linda Hargett (stepmom of Christopher McCroskey); Ollie Shelly (friend of the Derricks); Brenlee Carnes; Danielle Spotts (co-worker of Kathy White); Vickie Edwards (neighbor of Kathy White); Robert Holladay (brother of Carolyn Hardee); George Duke, Vicki Beatty, Connie Mason, Brenda Grier (friends of Lynn Martin); Diane Kelsey, Erma Ruff, David Price & Family, Mark Leonhart, Ty Moore, Julie Stroud, Fran Huck, George Dorn (friends of Kay Jordan); Teddy Derrick (uncle of Arvan Derrick); Haidee Baehr (friends of Ruth Frady); Dianne Schmotzer (sister-in-law of Gale Frady); Dan Connor, Denise Paul (cousin of Gale Frady); Billy Johnson, Max Johnson (friends of Gale Frady); Ray Culbreth's Group House; Nellie Gantt (mother of friend of Ray Culbreth); Amelia Zinski (great-niece of Linda Maloch); Wayne Blair (son of Dot Johnson); Xavier Crane (grandnephew of John Ballentine); Janet Beck (friend of Jo Ann Heiting); Vera Von Glahn (sister-in-law of Jo Ann Heiting); Michael Carter (son of Esther Carter); Adam Lavender (son of Phil Lavender)

If you have a friend or family member on the Prayer List, we ask you to please keep us updated. If no word is received, we will trust that our prayers have been answered and remove the name. To update us, please call the office or e-mail us at trinityumcwc@sc.rr.com.

OUR PRESENCE ...

In-Person Attendance 03/07 Worship: 27

OUR GIFTS ...

General Fund 03/07 \$ 8,095.00

OUR SERVICE ...

OUR WITNESS.”



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|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| Ministers | The Congregation |
| Pastor | John D. Jordan |
| Resident Bishop | Jonathan Holston |
| District Superintendent | Rev. Dr. Cathy Jamieson |

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

Our vision is to Connect, Nurture, Inspire and Transform

Fourth Sunday
in
Lent

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John 3: 14-21

This passage is a continuation of Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus. Nicodemus is confused when Jesus says that one must be "born again." Nicodemus wonders about the logistics of this and asks, "Can one reenter the mother's womb?" But Jesus is not talking about a physical rebirth, he is talking about a spiritual rebirth. Jesus is talking about new life that will be revealed through him.

This new life is revealed by the exaltation of Jesus on the cross. Jesus parallels his crucifixion with the story we read from Numbers. As the people are wandering in the wilderness they once again start whining against God. They don't like the food God has given them. There is not enough water. So, God sends poisonous serpents into the camp. People get bitten and die.

The people change their minds. Better to be hungry and thirsty than to get bitten by a serpent and die. God offers them a means by which they can be saved. All they have to do is to look at the bronze serpent Moses lifts up on a pole, and they will live.

Likewise, those that look up to Jesus' exaltation on the cross will live. They will be born again and gain eternal life. Those that believe in Jesus will not perish but have eternal life. Contrary to the usual belief, this eternal life is not something we receive in the sweet by and by waiting for the roll to be called up yonder. Eternal life begins at the point when we look up and see God's love for us and all creation revealed in the exaltation of Jesus on the cross. Jesus is the light that has come into the world, the light of God's word made flesh.

God gave the Son to the world to give eternal life. God did not send the Son to condemn the world but in order to save the world. Jesus was sent not just to save individual souls but the whole of creation. God sent Jesus to heal the brokenness of humans, individual souls, but also the soul of all humanity. Jesus was sent not just to heal broken people but to also heal broken social and political structures.

All who believe in Jesus will have eternal life. To believe is to have confidence and trust in Jesus. To believe in Jesus means to entrust Jesus with your life. Thus, you come from the darkness and into the light, the light that comes into the world through Jesus.

This light that was revealed through Jesus came into the world 2000 years ago. If the light is in the world, why is there still so much darkness? Why is there a virus that has killed over two and a half million people world-wide? Why is there so much social and political unrest? Why are there so many people in poverty? There is still so much darkness.

That is because there are those who do not believe, that is, do not entrust their lives completely to Jesus. They prefer darkness to the light. But if the light gives eternal life and darkness death, it makes no sense to love darkness more than light. For many the darkness does seem preferable to the light.

The last few years that my mother lived alone in Americus, the thing she hated the worse was for an overhead light bulb to go out. As she got closer to 80 than 70, she did not feel comfortable climbing the step stool to change an overhead bulb. Though there were several young men in her Sunday school class who were willing to come over and change a light bulb for her, she hated to ask someone to go out of their way to change one light bulb.

So, one by one all the light bulbs in the house would go out. When there would be one little bulb flickering in the kitchen, Mom would call someone to change the light bulbs for her. She would flip the switch and the rooms would be nice and bright instead of dim and dismal. She would be so happy until she looked around.

The light would reveal that she did not clean the kitchen counter as well as she thought she did the night before. The floors would show places she missed with the mop. The furniture had a lot more dust on it than she thought. The light revealed that her house was not as clean as she thought, because she could not see the dirt and dust in the darkness.

That may well be why we do not love the light more than the darkness. The light reveals to us the dirt and dust in our lives. The light shows us the attitudes, the thoughts, and the behaviors that keep us from entrusting our lives to Jesus. We have gotten content with the way things are, even if they are dirty and dusty. We choose not to see the dirt and dust in our lives.

Mom could have turned the lights off so she did not have to see the dirt and dust in her house. She could have gone back into the dim and dismal life, ignoring the dirt and dust, and staying in the dark. But then there would be so many things she would not be able to do. She would not be able to read. She would not be able to crochet. She would not be able to cook. She would not be able to have friends over because they would want to turn on the light and there the dirt and dust would be seen.

But Mom would get out the mop and bucket. She would get out the sponge and Mr. Clean. She would get out the dust cloths and Pledge. She would start cleaning until all the dirt and dust was gone. Sure, her back might ache. Her shoulder would hurt. Her knees would swell. But she could read, crochet, cook and have friends over with the lights on and no dirt or dust would be seen.

We have the choice. We can love the darkness that does not reveal the dirt and dust in our lives. We can keep the dirt and dust in our lives, not entrusting Jesus to change us, to cleanse the dirt and dust from our lives. We can refuse the healing of our broken attitudes, thoughts and behaviors and stay in the dark, loving the darkness.

In *The Last Battle*, the last book of C. S. Lewis' classic series *The Chronicles of Narnia*, the characters pass from this life to the next through a stable door where they are greeted by Aslan, the great lion. The dwarves who enter through the door gather in a circle where they see only other dwarves. They eat the things you would find in a stable- hay, old turnips, raw cabbage- even though there is a scrumptious feast around them and a flagon of fine wine on their right hand. The dwarves love the darkness and do not see the rich life available to them.

We can choose to love the light. We can let the light reveal to us all the dirt and dust within us. We can let the light of Jesus shine on the dirt and dust in our lives, not to condemn us for being dirty and dusty, but to cleanse us from being dirty and dusty.

Jesus reveals the brokenness and woundedness in our lives and in the world so our wounds may be cleansed and healed. Healing is not easy. Healing is often painful. Growing up, whenever we would scrape our knees, Mom would come to us with that little bottle of Mercurochrome. She would paint the scrape with that red stuff and it would burn like the fires of hell for about one minute. Then the burning would abate. The pain would ease and more importantly any infections were killed. Our knees would then heal and the wound would go away. We would go back outside and play.

The light does reveal the dirt and dust in our lives. As we entrust our lives to the light of Jesus and love the light, the light also cleans and heals. The light cleans away the dirt and dust in our lives, healing us and enabling us to enter into eternal life in perfect relationship with God.