

At-Home Worship Resource from Hillside Christian Church, KC

For the week of March 22nd, 2020

Dear friend,

The following homily was delivered online via Facebook Live and YouTube, by Rev. Beck on Sunday, March 22nd, from his home, during our in-person worship service suspension. We provide it here, along with the At-Home communion liturgy for your personal use for devotion and worship.

For links to future online worship experiences, visit our website:

<https://www.hillsidecc.com/home-resources.html>

-Rev. Andy Beck

Scripture Readings: Psalm 23, John 9:1-7

Psalm 23 The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures; he leads me beside still waters; he restores my soul. He leads me in right paths for his 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.

John 9:1-7 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?" 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). Then he went and washed and came back able to see.

This is part of the story of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. AMEN.

PRAYER: May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing to you, O God, our rock and our redeemer. AMEN.

HOMILY

Take a minute, and let's just breathe. In through your nose, out through your mouth like you're about to whistle. Count to 3 as you breathe in and out. Breathe deep again. Know that you are calm, you are loved, you are whole. You can repeat that for yourself: "I am calm, I am Loved, I am whole."

If you get anything out of this worship today, I hope it's this: that you become more aware of God's presence with you during this season.

In John 9, Jesus heals a blind man on the sabbath, and people freak out about why the man was born blind. They ask who was at fault for his blindness? Did he sin? Was God punishing him for sin? Did his parents sin? Was God punishing him for his parents sin?

The man says, "look, all I know is that I was blind, and now I see." He points to the healing act of Jesus. He's only concerned about what Jesus did for him. After the healing, the only thing that matters to the man is God's good work in his life. By his own testimony, he isn't worried about whose fault his blindness was, or even why he was healed, but *THAT* he was healed.

Jesus says that the man was born blind so that God's goodness would be shown. I don't know if that means God caused the man's blindness, or not, and maybe that doesn't matter. To Jesus, he's not worried about that either. But what it does mean is that God is doing something good through this man's condition. Whatever his situation, God is working goodness as a result.

I wonder if that's the kind of "seeing" Jesus is really talking about. Opening not our optic receptors, but opening our awareness of God working good in and around us.

Psalm 23 helps envision God's goodness working around us.

And for a church that's kind of in the wilderness right now, I think the 23rd Psalm gives us plenty to be comforted by when it comes to recognizing God's goodness, even in the midst of isolation, loneliness, and anxiety.

I've spoken to several folks this week about feeling alone, and I know it is a strange and troubling feeling to have to practice social distancing and sheltering at home.

Listen to what God does:

- God makes us lie down – we get to rest! For those with anxiety and fear, you get to breathe in the calming presence of God. For those who are already restful, congratulations, you're already doing the thing!
- God LEADS us – God is our trustworthy guide, we can rely on God to help us.
 - WHERE? Beside calm springs – still waters – doesn't that sound peaceful and comforting? God leads us beside the calming waters that assure.
 - And what happens by those still waters? We are restored. Perhaps this time of sheltering in place, there's an element of resting beside still waters to be restored.
 - I think of those little background noise machines that play sounds like waves or a bubbling brook, and I imagine laying on the couch, with the sun coming through the window, and the sounds of a little water flowing in the background. That sounds restorative for the spirit.
- When we walk through the darkest valley – we are not called to fear, because God, remember God is with us. Leading, guiding, shining holy light.
 - The Psalmist says God's rod and staff are comforting. When you're walking or hiking, many folks take a hiking stick. The comfort there is because it helps lighten the load, can act as an extra contact with the ground to keep stable, and can test areas where the footing may not be so sure.
 - So God's rod and staff are a comfort because we know God is carefully plotting the way forward, safely laying out each step and foothold.
- God prepares a table for us – provision and sustenance for the journey.
 - The communion meal is one of those tables prepared. Perhaps there are other table settings that God has prepared for you. Maybe this time is a time of preparation for you that God has guided you to. The Prepared Table can take many forms, and we are invited because God is the host.
- God anoints – God prepares, calls and equips people into Godly lives. Maybe like this blind man in John, Jesus kind of anoints his head, not with oil but with mud, and then in his healing he is equipped to proclaim a good news, "First I was blind, now I see with new vision."
 - The result of God's anointing presence is that God's goodness and mercy shall be with us, that we will dwell in God's house.
 - I think we're all about to get really good at dwelling in our houses. Maybe even sick of it after a while. But remember the comforting words of this Psalm, and how God is present with people in times of wilderness.

Know that you're loved, by God and by this congregation. Because God has loved us, we must love one another. The blind man was healed, and God's goodness was shown. The

Psalm reminds how God is present and loving to those feeling sad and worried. Let's be the kind of people who nurture goodness, to share the loving kindness of God. AMEN.

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I want you to know that I am praying for you, our community and our congregation. If you have any need that I can assist with, please contact me at my cell phone, 405-990-7482.

While in-person services are suspended, the ministry and outreach of Hillside Christian remains strong. We're offering online worship experiences and are already seeing an increase in viewership! Our weekly online bible study on Facebook is taking off, and we're sending weekly resources to our home-bound folks.

Giving to Hillside Christian Church can continue through the mail, or via our secure online platform at www.hillsidecc.com/give. Please do not come to the church to drop off tithes and offerings. I am working exclusively from home, as is Judith King, our office administrator. Calls to the church office are being forwarded to Judith at home. We're keeping this going for you, and you can trust that our ministry is continuing in this new space.

Be well, share peace, and remember God's love.

-Rev. Andy Beck

Hillside Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Kansas City, MO

Communion Liturgy for At-Home Worship

This resource is written in the first person. Please adapt as needed for group setting.

As you enter the time and space of holy communion, gather the supplies you may need. This could include:

- Elements like bread and cup
 - Use what works for you, Jesus did
- A candle or some way to recognize light
 - Open a window shade
- Something sacred to you that you can use to reflect on in remembrance

Call To Communion

Jesus was no stranger to awkward situations; And celebrating communion at home kind of feels strange. Especially if it's just me. But I am not alone; I celebrate communion

with siblings in faith the world over. This meal symbolizes unity in Christ, and I am thankful.

Reading (from *Chalice Hymnal*)

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Remember Me

Upon the loaf and upon the cup of the Lord, in letters which speak not to the eye, but to the heart of every disciple, is inscribed, "When this you see, remember me." Indeed, the Lord says to each disciple, when he receives the symbols into his hand, "This is my body broken for you." The loaf is thus constituted a representation of his body—first whole, then wounded for our sins. The cup is thus instituted a representation of his blood—once his life, but now poured out to cleanse us from our sins.

— *Alexander Campbell, 19th-century Disciples forebear*

Prayer

Loving Creator, in the midst of fear and anxiety about viruses and public health, you meet me in simple forms. Here, I'm reminded of your provision; not that I would only hope for miracles, but that in your grace, you call me to prepare and provide. Because I'm made in your image, and you have provided, so I can also provide. That these elements would be for me a reminder of Jesus and his way of living, God I ask your blessing. AMEN.

Scripture 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NRSV

[Please feel free to read from your bible if preferred]

- The Institution of the Lord's Supper

23 For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for[a] you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- Partake of the elements, remembering Jesus and his way of living.

Conclusion: Option to conclude your communion time with music that reminds you of God's love.