

HOUSEHOLD WORSHIP – MARCH 22

The following liturgy is adapted from Calvin Institute for Worship, *The Worship Sourcebook*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013)

A Prayer of Preparation

Dear God, silence all voices within our minds but your own.
Help us to see and be able to follow your will.
May our prayers be joined with those of our sisters and brothers in the faith,
that together we may glorify your name and enjoy your fellowship forever. Amen.

[Spend a moment in silence to calm your heart and mind.]

Call to Worship (based on Psalm 103:1-8; 118:24)

[Speak this out loud.]

This is the day the Lord has made

Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

We come to worship—the God of creation,
of salvation, of time and eternity;
the God of all peoples, of all nations,
of all conditions of people everywhere.

Praise the Lord.

All that is within me,

Praise God's holy name.

Praise the Lord and remember all his kindnesses:
in forgiving our sins;
in curing our diseases;
in saving us from destruction;
in surrounding us with love.

The Lord is full of mercy and compassion

**The Lord is slow to anger
and willing to give us gifts of love.**

Praise the Lord!

Oh, all that is within me, praise the Lord.

Prayer of Confession

[As we gather to worship, we are aware of our need for forgiveness. But we also know that we have a God who loves us, who forgives us, and who offers us new life. Trusting in that promise, pray together the prayer of confession.]

Merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.

We have not loved you with our heart and mind and strength.

We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.

In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us amend what we are, and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.

Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen

Assurance of God's Pardon

[Speak these words to one another.]

Through Jesus Christ, we have redemption, forgiveness of sins.
The riches of God's grace have been poured out upon us.

Praise be to our God,

who has chosen and made us his own.

Praise be to our God,

who forgives and cleanses us.

Praise be to our God,

who blesses us beyond our imagination!

[Share words of peace with one another.]

Prayer for Illumination

[Having praised God, acknowledged the truth about ourselves, and heard God's promise of forgiveness, we are ready to hear what God has to say to us. Decide who will read each of the scripture passages, then select one of your number to lead the Prayer for Illumination.]

Guide us, O God, by your Word and Spirit,
that in your light we may see light,
in your truth find freedom,
and in your will discover your peace,
through Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Amen.**

Psalm of the Day - Psalm 23 (KJV)

[Read this familiar passage slowly, and pause for a moment at the end to reflect on God's presence in your lives.]

The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

[Share with one another, or name out loud an image or phrase from the psalm that is most meaningful to you.]

Gospel Reading - John 9:1-41

As [Jesus] 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.

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?" Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. 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."

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. 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."

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him.

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Scripture Meditation

[Think quietly about the following questions, then share your reflections with others, or write them down (perhaps to be shared with others at a later time)]

Read the following excerpt from a sermon Pastor Hancock preached on this passage:

“We typically think of this as a healing story, but the healing takes place in the first few verses. Most of the story is about what the healed man does next – explaining, defending, interpreting what has happened to him. Telling people what Jesus has done.

And here’s the really interesting thing: The blind man does this – the explaining and defending and interpreting – he does all of this, pretty much, on his own.

It seems to me that this man’s story is a lot like many of our stories. You don’t wake up one day with all the theological answers. You grow into it, from “I don’t know” to “I believe.” And it all starts at the sending pool. You wash, and then go out to explain and defend and interpret Jesus to the world. You know you don’t have the answers. You just know that Jesus has touched your life – that once you didn’t see but now maybe you do.

The man in our story doesn’t know anything except who gave him sight, so he’s sticking up for Jesus, even when he’s all by himself, even when it gets him in trouble to do it. For the blind man, it all starts with that one step: He washes in the sending pool, and he’s off on a whole new life.

You wash in the sending pool, and it changes everything. And you never know, for sure, where you will be sent as an apostle of Jesus, just that you are supposed to go.”

What Good news can be overheard in the drama of John 9?

How do you understand your baptism?

What does it mean to think of yourself as someone who has been sent by God? And what do you think God is sending you to do?

Music for Meditation

[Click on the link provided in the email introducing this liturgy for a beautiful setting of Psalm 23.]

Offering Ourselves to God

[In response to the Word, consider what gifts you have to share, especially in this extraordinary time. Make a commitment to send your usual gift to the church at the conclusion of the liturgy. Name some of the things for which you are thankful and your commitments with one another.]

Prayers of the People

[Say this prayer out loud, pausing to name specific concerns.]

Loving God, you have promised to hear us when we pray in the name of your Son. Therefore, in confidence and trust we lift up our prayers.

We pray for the world. [name specific concerns]

We pray for the church. [name specific concerns]

We pray for the community. [name specific concerns]

We pray for those in need. [name specific concerns]

We pray for those who have died and those who mourn. [name specific concerns]

We pray for ourselves and our ministry. [name specific concerns]

Lord, you have called us to serve you. Help us to minister in your name, with your love in our hearts, your truth in our minds, your strength in our wills, until, at the end of our journey, we know the joy of our homecoming and the welcome of your embrace. We ask these things through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray, saying, Our Father . . . Amen.

Charge and Benediction

[Speak these words out loud.]

As God's own, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, and patience, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, and crown all these things with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

God the Sender, **send us,**
God the Sent, **come with us,**
God the Strengtheners of those who go, **empower us,**
that we may go with you
and find those who all you
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.