

Outline of Worship Lent 4 March 30, 2025

Worship leaders: Jan at SUC Holly at NUC Pianist: Julie at NUC

PRELUDE

WELCOME

Jan

WE GATHER

NUC- Holly

ONE: Today is the fourth Sunday of Lent

ALL: A time to go deeper

ONE: A time to prepare

ALL: A time to commit

ONE: The last three weeks we contemplated our preparations, our commitment to making a difference, to taking action.

Today we hear Jesus tell a parable. It was what we've come to know as the prodigal son. But it also includes his father, and his older brother who stayed home and helped their dad on the family farm.

Jesus tells parables to share a truth that others are not able to see or understand.

We are invited to learn something from this story and put into action the learning to make this a better world, to make a difference.

ALL: This Lenten journey is a time to contemplate, to reflect on the way of Jesus, a time to commit and prepare for action.

ONE: As we ponder and prepare on this fourth Sunday of Lent, we light these candles to remind us that actions count. (*Pause*).

(Second person lights four Lenten candles and then the Christ candle)

We light the Christ candle, symbolizing that throughout it all, the Sacred will be with us.

SONG: MV8 And on This Path vs 1(remain seated)

Words copyright © 2000 Lynn Bauman Music: Linnea Good copyright © 2003 Borealis Music from Ancient Songs Sung Anew: the Psalms as Poetry.

And on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide,
And on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide,
And on this path, the gates of holiness are open wide.

LIFE AND WORK of our churches and communities

Holly /Simba

SONG: VU373 As Comes the Breath of Spring vs 1-4

Words: David Lakie Ritchie Music: Charles J. Dale Public Domain

As comes the breath of spring with light and
mirth and song,
so does your Spirit bring new days brave, free
and strong.

You come with thrill of life to chase hence
winter's breath,

to hush to peace the strife of sin that ends in
death.

You come like dawning day with flaming truth
and love,
to chase all glooms away, to brace our wills to
prove
how wise, how good to choose the truth and its
brave fight,
to prize it, win or lose, and live on your delight.

You come like songs at morn that fill the earth
with joy,
till we, in Christ newborn, new strength in
praise employ.

PRAYER “Be Still ... “

Jan

THEME TIME: “Be as Leaven”

Jan

SONG: VU361 Small Things Count vs 1-3

Words: Shirley Erena Murray 1990 copyright © 1992 Hope Publishing Company. Music copyright © Jillian Bray 1993

Small things count, so Jesus said:
cups of water, crumbs of bread,
small things done because we're kind
count as big things in God's mind.

You come to rouse the heart from drifting to
despair,
through high hopes to impart life with an
ampler air.

You breathe and there is health, you move and
there is power,
you whisper, there is wealth of love, your
richest dower.
Your presence is to us like summer in the soul,
Your joy shines forth and then life blossoms to
its goal.

puffs that fill a big balloon,
notes that make a happy tune.

Small things make the big things grow:
grains of yeast inside the dough,

Every hair that's on our head,
every sparrow, Jesus said,
God takes care of, counts and knows.
God loves us from top to toes!

A MOMENT TO PONDER: *Reflection on “The Return of the Prodigal Son” by Rembrandt*

Jan

SONG: MV12 Come Touch Our Hearts vs 4 (remain seated)

Words and music: Gordon Light copyright © 2002 Common Cup Company Arrangement copyright © 2002 Andrew Donaldson

Come touch us in the moments we are fragile,
and in our weakness your great strength reveal;
that we may rise to follow and to serve,
steady now our nerve,
come touch and bless our wills.

SCRIPTURE READING: Luke 15:1-3;11b-32

NUC-Holly

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinner and eats with them.” So he told them this parable:

There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.’ So, he divided his assets between them.

A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. So, he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." So he set off and went to his father.

But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in.

His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.

SONG: MV62 There is Room for All x2 (*remain seated*)

Words and Music copyright © 2004 Bruce Harding, www.evensong.ca Based on Ps 91:1-2.

There is room for all in the shadow of God's wing;
there is room for all, sheltered in God's love.
And I rejoice and sing,
"My refuge and my rock, in whom I trust."
There is room for all,
there is room for all!

REFLECTION

Jan

This Sunday we will explore the teaching of Jesus known as "The Parable of the Prodigal Son". Perhaps a better name would be "The Parable of the Loving Father", because that's where Jesus directs our attention. There is much to learn from this story about how we deal with broken relationships, resentment, forgiveness, and ultimately, how we are all held in the embrace of God who is Love.

CONTEMPORARY READING: "Kin" Steve Garnaas –Holmes in "Unfolding Light" SUC-Dennis Chamers

How easy it is to fall into a selfish religion,
a faith based on what we want from God.
One son says, "Give me my share of the
property."
The other says "You never gave me so much
as a goat."
Neither wants their father, just his stuff.

Selfish faith wants things, not relationship.
Both sons break their relationship, betray their
kinship,
remove themselves from the family.
"Treat me as one of your hired hands."
"I worked for you like a slave."

To both of them alike the father leaves his home,
and goes out to his distant sons —
one geographically distant, and the other
emotionally distant,
both of them having removed themselves—
and he invites them back in.

Sometimes it's a gift - responding to *"Treat me as your slave"*
with *"Put a ring on his finger."*

Sometimes it's a challenge - responding to
"that son of yours"
with *"this brother of yours."*
But always it's an invitation to join the party.

God does not give us things,
God gives us relationships.
When Jesus heals people he restores them to
community.

Let what you seek bring you deeper in
to your kinship with all people, and all creation.
It is only as kin that we can truly pray,
and that we truly receive.

SONG: VU427 To Show by Touch and Word vs 1-3

Words: Fred Kaan 1974 copyright © 1975 Hope Publishing Company Music copyright © 1974 Ron Klusmeier

To show by touch and word
devotion to the earth,
to hold in full regard
all life that comes to birth,
we need, O God,
the will to find
the good you had
of old in mind.

Renew our minds to choose
the things that matter most,
our hearts to long for truth
till pride of self is lost.

For every challenge
that we face
we need your guidance
and your grace.

Let love from day to day
be yardstick, rule, and norm,
and let our lives portray
your word in human form.
Now come with us
that we may have
your wits about us
where we live.

OFFERING INVITATION:

Jan

We are invited to offer our gifts ... our time, our talents, our financial resources. May we do so with glad and grateful hearts.

SONG MV191 What Can I Do? x2

Words and music copyright © 2005 Paul Rumbolt and Michele McCarthy www.paulrumbolt.com

Arrangement copyright © Alan C. Whitmore

What can I do? What can I bring?
What can I say? What can I sing?
I'll sing with joy. I'll say a prayer.
I'll bring my love. I'll do my share. X2

OFFERING PRAYER

Loving God, Source of all that is, we offer these gifts with the best of intentions, trusting that they will be blessed and used in a good way, for the work of the church in the world. Amen.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE: Mission & Service Stories **Breaking Barriers: Women in Theology & Leadership**

NUC-Holly

In India, social and cultural factors limit access to theological education for women in comparison to men. The Rev. B. Silpa Rani is actively encouraging women to pursue theological education and engage in leadership roles.

When Silpa started her first degree in Theology, she spent two years as the only woman in a class of 16. Now, years later, as she works on her doctoral dissertation, she has seen a gradual increase in the enrolment of women in theological programs. While this is encouraging, Silpa recognizes that there is still a long journey forward. While she seeks to empower modern women, she is also working to shed light on the experiences of women and minorities of the past.

Silpa was the recipient of a theological education scholarship, which paved her way to join the faculty at Bishop's College, Kolkata. She has been exploring the unique identity of the Qumran community within the context of the Dead Sea Scrolls. She is actively researching to identify the women, children, and minority groups of the society, drawing parallels between the Qumran context and contemporary Indian context.

Your **Mission and Service** gifts provide support to leaders like Silpa, who are actively working to empower women and change the world.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Jan

Wise and Gracious God, Holy Mystery, Breath of Life, by whatever name we know you, we have responded to your call to be the church ... to continue the story of Jesus in our time and place. And so, here we are, a community of broken but hopeful believers, loving what he loved, living what he taught, praying as he prayed, striving to be faithful followers of his way.

As our ancestors in faith bequeathed to us their experiences of faithful living, so do we continue to discover our own experiences of living as people of faith in this ever-changing world, seeking to live in harmony with all who share this sacred Earth.

We name before you our own concerns and hopes for ourselves and others ...

We call to mind the things for which we are grateful ...

the people and circumstances that we worry about ...

the questions that have no clear answers ...

In the midst of unrest ... we pray for peace.

In the midst of fear ... we pray for reassurance and trust.

In the midst of confusion ... we pray for understanding and patience.

And now we pray the prayer that Jesus taught
as those who call upon God as Our Creator, Our Mother,

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, the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

SONG: VU586 We Shall Go Out With Hope of Resurrection vs 1-2

Words: June Boyce-Tillman Words & Arrangement copyright © 1993 Hope Publishing Company, Stainer & Bell Ltd.

Music: Traditional Irish melody

We shall go out, with hope of resurrection;
we shall go out, from strength to strength go on;
we shall go out and tell our stories boldly;
tales of a love that will not let us go.
We'll sing our songs of wrongs that can be righted;
we'll dream our dreams of hurts that can be healed;
we'll weave a cloth of all the world united
within a vision of new life in Christ.

We'll give a voice to those who have not spoken;
we'll find the words for those whose lips are sealed;
we'll make the tunes for those who sing no longer,
expressive love alive in every heart.
We'll share our joy with those who still are weeping,
raise hymns of strength for hearts that break in grief,
we'll leap and dance the resurrection story,
including all in circles of our love.

BLESSING

Jan

We go now from this time of worship, this gathering of faithful souls. Whatever the circumstances that await us as we leave here, let us open ourselves to the peace that passes understanding, not as the world gives with shallow promises but the peace that Jesus spoke of; a deeper peace that comes from knowing that we are held by Holy Love, now and always. Amen