

The Presque Isle Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
March 19, 2023

Prelude

Barbara Merryman

Gathering Music

*You Are Welcome Here*¹

Words of Welcome

Melissa Vance

Introit

*O Christ, Lamb of God*²

Call to Worship

Once you lived in darkness.

Now the light of God has shone upon us.

Find what is pleasing to God and follow God's ways.

The acts of darkness are left behind as we journey to God's light.

Thanks be to God who gives us the light.

Open our eyes and our hearts to receive your light of salvation.

Opening Prayer (unison)

Source of Light, God of great mercy and love, we come to you this day seeking restoration of our sight. Clear away our blindness, and give us a new vision of all that we can accomplish in your name. Give us strength and confidence to truly witness to your abiding love and faithfulness. For we offer this prayer in Jesus' Name. Amen.

Opening Hymn

*As the Deer*³

Prayer of Confession: (unison)

Healing God, we have languished in our blindness. We have chosen to hide in darkness in order to avoid reaching out and risking acceptance. We are afraid of the light, and yet we crave it. In your light, there is healing and hope, restoration and transformation. Forgive our lack of faith and our fearfulness, O Lord. Give us courage to reach out to the light and accept its healing rays. May our lives be transformed by your mercy, for we pray this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

Assurance of Pardon

Even though you have lived in darkness, God's light is being poured out for you. Accept the light and love that is freely offered, and be transformed by its healing mercies. AMEN.

Two-Minute Message with Hymn

*Shine Jesus Shine*⁴

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⁴ *Shine Jesus Shine*. (Lord the Light of Your Love) Graham Kendrick © 1987 Make Way Music. Video offered for Worship by Vineyard Worship USA. Permission OneLicense #A-726652. All rights reserved.

Jesus heals a blind man

9 As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. 2 Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?" 3 Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in him. 4 While it's daytime, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. 5 While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6 After he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man's eyes. 7 Jesus said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (this word means sent). So the man went away and washed. When he returned, he could see.

Disagreement about the healing

8 The man's neighbors and those who used to see him when he was a beggar said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" 9 Some said, "It is," and others said, "No, it's someone who looks like him." But the man said, "Yes, it's me!" 10 So they asked him, "How are you now able to see?" 11 He answered, "The man they call Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes, and said, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and then I could see." 12 They asked, "Where is this man?" He replied, "I don't know." 13 Then they led the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees. 14 Now Jesus made the mud and smeared it on the man's eyes on a Sabbath day. 15 So Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. The man told them, "He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see." 16 Some Pharisees said, "This man isn't from God, because he breaks the Sabbath law." Others said, "How can a sinner do miraculous signs like these?" So they were divided. 17 Some of the Pharisees questioned the man who had been born blind again: "What do you have to say about him, since he healed your eyes?" He replied, "He's a prophet."

Conflict over the healing

18 The Jewish leaders didn't believe the man had been blind and received his sight until they called for his parents. 19 The Jewish leaders asked them, "Is this your son? Are you saying he was born blind? How can he now see?" 20 His parents answered, "We know he is our son. We know he was born blind. 21 But we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who healed his eyes. Ask him. He's old enough to speak for himself." 22 His parents said this because they feared the Jewish authorities. This is because the Jewish authorities had already decided that whoever confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue. 23 That's why his parents said, "He's old enough. Ask him." 24 Therefore, they called a second time for the man who had been born blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner." 25 The man answered, "I don't know whether he's a sinner. Here's what I do know: I was blind and now I see." 26 They questioned him: "What did he do to you? How did he heal your eyes?" 27 He replied, "I already told you, and you didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" 28 They insulted him: "You are his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. 29 We know that God spoke to Moses, but we don't know where this man is from."

30 The man answered, "This is incredible! You don't know where he is from, yet he healed my eyes! 31 We know that God doesn't listen to sinners. God listens to anyone who is devout and does God's will. 32 No one has ever heard of a healing of the eyes of someone born blind. 33 If this man wasn't from God, he couldn't do this." 34 They responded, "You were born completely in sin! How is it that you dare to teach us?" Then they expelled him.

Jesus finds the man born blind

35 Jesus heard they had expelled the man born blind. Finding him, Jesus said, "Do you believe in the Human One?" 36 He answered, "Who is he, sir? [b] I want to believe in him." 37 Jesus said, "You have seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you." 38 The man said, "Lord, [c] I believe." And he worshiped Jesus.

Scripture Reading (Continued)

Jesus teaches the Pharisees

39 Jesus said, "I have come into the world to exercise judgment so that those who don't see can see and those who see will become blind." 40 Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, "Surely we aren't blind, are we?" 41 Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you wouldn't have any sin, but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

Choral Anthem

*Down to the River to Pray*⁵

PIUCC Choir

Proclamation

Daniel Jackson

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Our **Creator***, 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 sins as we forgive those who sin 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

**Please use whatever name is most familiar/comfortable when you pray to God.*

Closing Hymn

*Open My Eyes, Lord*⁶

Community News and Announcements

Benediction

Postlude

Barbara Merryman

Departing Song

*We Go (A Nunc Dimitis)*⁷

⁵ Down to the River to Pray. Text and music: American folk song; "The Good Old Way," attr. to George H. Allan, fr. Slave Songs of the United States, 1867. Contributors: Scot Crandal, American folk song, American folk song. Permission OneLicense #A-726652. All rights reserved.

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