

Long Green Valley Church of the Brethren

Long Green and Kanés Rds., near Glen Arm, MD

March 11, 2018

Worship 10:00 am Sunday School 11:10 am

Large print hymnals are available see an usher

This room is equipped with a sound loop for the hearing impaired

Fourth Sunday of Lent

“However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God’s grace!” (Ephesians 2:4-5 Common English Bible)

Beginning with Praise (9:50 am) “There’s a wideness...” 145

Announcements *(with brief video)*

Prelude

*Call to Worship Psalm 107:1-3 *(The Message)*

One: Oh, thank God—he’s so good!

All: His love never runs out.

One: All of you set free by God, tell the world!

All: Tell how he freed you from oppression,

One: Then rounded you up from all over the place,

All: from the four winds, from the seven seas.

*Hymn “Great is the Lord” 87

*Opening Prayer

A Torah Story Numbers 21:4-9 *(Laughing Bird version)*

Responding with Psalm (107:17-22) and Offerings

One: Some of the redeemed were fools because of their sinful ways.

All: They suffered because of their wickedness.

One: They had absolutely no appetite for food; they had arrived at death’s gates.

All: So they cried out to the Lord in their distress, and God saved them from their desperate circumstances.

One: God gave the order and healed them; he rescued them from their pit.

All: Let them thank the Lord for his faithful love and his wondrous works for all people.

One: Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices and declare what God has done in songs of joy!

(Common English Bible)

Offertory Video (Please sign the attendance pad and pass it on)

The Gospel John 3:14-21 *(NRSV)*

Sharing a joy, a concern, a word of testimony or praise
(please be brief, and aware of God’s listening presence)

Hymn “Savior, like a shepherd lead us” 355

Prayer

Scripture Ephesians 2:1-10 *(Common English Bible)*

Message *“The healing promise”*

*Hymn “Amazing grace!” 143

*Benediction

*Postlude

*Rise in body or in spirit

* * * * *

sermon is posted at

<http://rockhay.tripod.com/sermons/2018/18-03-11.htm>

Gathered together to worship God

Announcements

Beginning with Praise (9:50 am)

“There’s a wideness in God’s mercy”

1. There’s a wideness in God’s mercy,
like the wideness of the sea.
There’s a kindness in God’s justice,
which is more than liberty.
2. There is welcome for the sinner,
and more graces for the good.
There is mercy with the Savior,
there is healing in his blood.
3. But we make God’s love too narrow
by false limits of our own,
and we magnify its strictness
with a zeal God will not own.
4. For the love of God is broader
than the measures of the mind,
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
5. If our love were but more simple
we should rest upon God’s word,
and our lives would be illumined
by the presence of our Lord.

last announcement:

Health Kit Project

begins with a 1 minute video

someone from the Witness Commission briefly follows up

Prelude

Hymnal #145
words by Frederick W. Faber, 1854
music by Lizzie S. Tourjée, 1878

Call to Worship

M

Rise, in body or spirit, and join in
the Call to Worship from Psalm 107...

One: Oh, thank God—he's so good!

All: *His love never runs out.*

One: All of you set free by God, tell the world!

All: *Tell how he freed you from oppression,*

One: Then rounded you up from all over the place,

All: *from the four winds, from the seven seas.*

Psalm 107:1-3 from *The Message*
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Remain standing, and let us sing,
“Great is the Lord,” Hymn #87.

“Great is the Lord”

Refrain: Great is the Lord,
he is holy and just,
by his power we trust in his love.
Great is the Lord,
he is faithful and true,
by his mercy he proves he is love.

1. Great is the Lord, and worthy of glory!
Great is the Lord, and worthy of praise.
Great is the Lord; now lift up your voice,
now lift up your voice: Great is the Lord!
Great is the Lord!

Refrain: Great is the Lord,
he is holy and just,
by his power we trust in his love.
Great is the Lord,
he is faithful and true,
by his mercy he proves he is love.

2. Great are you, Lord, and worthy of glory!
Great are you, Lord, and worthy of praise.
Great are you, Lord; I lift up my voice,
I lift up my voice: Great are you, Lord!
Great are you, Lord!

Hymn# 87
Text and music copyright © 1982 Meadowgreen Music Co.

Opening Prayer

M - God of ever-flowing love, with trust in your overflowing grace we gather together this day. By faith we come before you not as strangers but as friends. By faith in your grace we worship you, knowing that you do not belittle our patchy praise. By faith in your grace we expect to hear your Word, and by faith we hope to fulfil it. Encourage us, loving God, to be bold in our trust, enthusiastic in worship, and humble in our service. Through Christ Jesus our Redeemer. Amen!

A Torah Story
Numbers 21:4-9

(L – Pete, N – Meghan, 1&2 – chosen ahead)

L - A story - from the Torah during the wilderness wandering of those who were once slaves in Egypt, but had been set free and sent toward the promised land. Do remember, it took a LONG time to get there. As you listen, ponder your own complaints along the way of your present walk. If you were to speak aloud some of what bothers you today, what might you say? ... For now, pay attention to the story.

(pause)

N - *The people of Israel wanted to skirt around the land of Edom, so when they set out from Mount Hor they took the Red Sea track. As they travelled, the people began losing the plot and mouthing off against God and Moses. They were whining,*

(2 'whiney' voices from the congregation, with mics)

1 - *“Why did you bring us out of Egypt if we are just going to die out here in the desert?”*

2 - *There is no food. There is no water. And we can't stand this lousy stuff we've got to eat.”*

N - *At that, the LORD let loose some dangerous snakes among the people. The snakes had a fiery venom and many people were bitten and died. The people came to Moses and pleaded with him, saying,*

(2 sorrow-filled voices from the congregation, with mics)

1 - *“We were wrong to mouth off against the LORD and against you.*

2 - *Please ask the LORD to get rid of the poisonous snakes that are plaguing us.”*

N - *So Moses prayed for the the people, and the LORD spoke to him, saying,*

L - *“Make a statue of a poisonous snake, and set it up on a pole where the people can see it. Whenever anyone is bitten, they are to look at the statue of the snake, and they will survive.”*

N - *So Moses made a snake out of bronze, and set it up on a pole. Whenever anyone was bitten by one of the snakes with the fiery venom, they would fix their gaze on the bronze snake, and they would live.*

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Responding with a Psalm

M - We began worship with the beginning of a psalm that pilgrims sang as they climbed the long steep hill to Jerusalem to worship at the Temple. It was like a song we might sing on a long car trip today. Each stanza sings out about particular episodes in the journey of God's people. Let's read responsively another portion of that Psalm about some travelers who sound a bit like those we just heard about from the book of Numbers... The words are both in your bulletin and on the screen.

Please join me...

One: Some of the redeemed were fools because of their sinful ways.

All: They suffered because of their wickedness.

One: They had absolutely no appetite for food; they had arrived at death's gates.

All: So they cried out to the Lord in their distress, and God saved them from their desperate circumstances.

One: God gave the order and healed them; he rescued them from their pit.

All: Let them thank the Lord for his faithful love and his wondrous works for all people.

One: Let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices and declare what God has done in songs of joy!

Psalm 107:17-22

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Responding with Offerings

P - It is in response to God's faithful love that we give our offerings. It is in the light of this love that we are able to see our sins and not be overwhelmed by them. It is from the perspective of God's grace that we can name how we stumble and fall, with the assurance that we will be able to rise and walk again.

As the ushers collect our offerings, I invite you to take out the bulletin insert with a cross and the words, "Jesus died to forgive us," printed on it. Use this to identify ways you may be struggling right now. Perhaps you are angry over something beyond your ability to control, and you find your inner self full of complaints that don't get you anywhere. Maybe you've made a mistake that continues to bother you, even though you've tried to make things right. Possibly you feel guilty over a sin that you need to let go. Perhaps a broken relationship in your life needs mending that feels beyond you. It could be something altogether different that needs attention and relief. Whatever it is, somehow put it in the cross on that bulletin insert. Write some words or draw something that help you identify it. Later, as we sing a hymn, we'll place this paper on the cross up front, so please don't put your name on it.

Ushers, please come forward and help us return our offerings as we ponder the "marvelous grace of our loving Lord."

Offertory Video

"Marvelous Grace"
(Instrumental Piano by Trevor Olfert)

The Gospel
John 3:14-21

¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

from the *New Revised Standard Version* Bible,
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Jesus died to forgive us

Sharing a joy, a concern, a word of testimony or praise

As we share our prayer concerns along with our joys this morning, you may wish to add to your cross bulletin insert the names of persons or situations that are mentioned. Feel free to write them down in the space around the cross within which some of your own present struggles are identified. All of this we will turn over to the One who *“so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”*

Joys and Concerns

As the first part of our morning prayer, I invite you to do something physical. First, fold your insert however many times you wish. Then, as we sing the next hymn, get up out of your seat and bring it forward. If this is a problem, hand it to someone else headed that way and quietly ask them to help. There are small nails and some hammers for you to nail your paper to the cross. Perhaps someone tall might remain up front to assist by reaching a spot on the cross you cannot. If it takes longer than 3 verses, Kay will continue playing. Hum along with her. Then we'll pray.

“Savior, like a shepherd lead us”

1. Savior, like a shepherd lead us,
much we need thy tender care.
In thy pleasant pastures feed us,
for our use thy folds prepare.
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus!
thou hast bought us, thine we are.
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus!
thou hast bought us, thine we are.
2. We are thine, do thou befriend us,
be the guardian of our way.
Keep thy flock, from sin defend us,
seek us when we go astray.
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus!
hear, O hear us, when we pray.
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus!
hear, O hear us, when we pray.
3. Early let us seek thy favor,
early let us do thy will.
Blessed Lord and only Savior,
with thy love our spirits fill.
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus!
thou hast loved us, love us still.
Blessed Jesus! Blessed Jesus!
thou hast loved us, love us still.

Hymn #355
words are anonymous, 1836
music by William B. Bradbury, 1859

Prayer

Shepherd of our souls, with your staff you have led us to this moment. Whether through dark valleys or green pastures and still waters, you guide us. We seek to more fully sense your healing presence, anointing our wounds; and behold your feeding table, providing goodness and mercy all of our days. You know our struggles even before we are able to name them. You are answering our pleas for help even before we speak them. You are forgiving our sins even before we confess them. You have lifted up what we need to be made whole, that we might look upon the cross and know that you are our salvation. You empower us through your Holy Spirit to rise and walk by faith, following your Son – whom you have given out of your great love for all the world, not to judge but to deliver us from evil and lead us to your promised land.

We trust that what we have mentioned in our sharing this morning is somehow, in some way, already in your hands. We pray this knowing that we may be, through you, the answer to some of our prayers – called to be part of your presence in this world. Help us not to grow discouraged by what we see, or don't see, happening around us. Rather, focus us upon your promised inner spirit of power, love, and sound mind, instead of the spirit of fear so prevalent in this world. Through the rest of this service of worship, and the through the week ahead, may the words we speak, and what we hear and ponder and act upon, be pleasing to you, for you are our rock and our redeemer.

We pray this in Jesus' name. AMEN

Ephesians 2:1-10

¹ At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. ² You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God's will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. ³ At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.

⁴⁻⁵ However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God's grace! ⁶ And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. ⁷ God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

⁸ You are saved by God's grace because of your faith. This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. ⁹ It's not something you did that you can be proud of. ¹⁰ Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

Message

“The healing promise”

Hymn #143

“Amazing grace!”

1. Amazing grace! how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.
2. ‘Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.
3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come.
‘Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.
4. Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
a life of joy and peace.
5. The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
the sun forbear to shine;
but God, who called me here below,
will be forever mine.

6. When we’ve been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise
than when we’d first begun.

Hymnal #143
text (v.1-5) by John Newton, 1779
(v. 6 – anonymous, 1790)
American folk melody, 1831

Benediction

One: As you leave this place,
remember you are God’s community in the world:

All: *for God’s love endures forever!*

One: As you leave this place,
remember you are alive with Christ:

**All: *for Christ’s light shines
in the deepest shadows!***

One: As you leave this place,
remember the gifts God offers to you:

**All: *for the Spirit fills us with good works to do,
and glad songs to sing to the world!***

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Postlude