

Bloom Where You Are Planted

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Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

- [0 : 00] Beautiful Lord, wonderful Savior, I know for sure, all of my dreams are held in your hand, added into your perfect man.
- Can they call me into your presence, guiding me by your Holy Spirit, teach me, dear Lord, to live on my life through your eyes.
- I catch a path, your holy calling set me apart, I know you're drawing into yourself, lead me, Lord, I pray.
- Take me, O me, you see, fill me, I give my life to the Father, I give my life to the Father's hand.
- The Father's hand. We're definitely cold, we're definitely blind, by your Holy Spirit, teach me, dear Lord, to live all of my life through your eyes.
- [1 : 59] I catch a path, your holy calling set me apart, I know you're drawing into yourself, lead me, Lord, I pray, I pray.
- Take me, hold me, use me, fill me, I give my life to the Father's hand.
- The Father's hand. The Father's hand. The Father's hand.
- The Father's hand. The Father's hand. The Father's hand.
- The Father's hand. The Father's hand. God. Good morning, Church. It is good to be with you this morning. Greetings to all of you who are in Niagara Falls or here in and around Pendleton Center who are watching us this morning.
- [3 : 19] We pray that it is a good day at your house. And my day is better because you're with me in this way today. And so we proclaim, the Lord be with you.
- Let us give thanks and praise the Lord through singing, This is the Day. This is the Day This is the Day That the Lord has made That the Lord has made Let us rejoice Let us rejoice And be glad in it And be glad in it This is the Day This is the Day That the Lord has made Let us pray.
- Jesus, you are our Savior. Jesus, you are our Lord. We come together to worship in spirit and truth That you might be glorified in this day.
- Lord, we pray for your blessing to come upon us to anoint this time of worship. We pray that this service of worship to you will glorify you, praising your holy name.
- For it's in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen. And now I'd like to invite you all to stand up if you're able. Because we're singing Standing on the Promises.
- [5 : 05] Standing on the Promises of Christ my King Through eternal ages let His praises ring Glory in the highest I will shout and sing Standing on the Promises of God Standing, standing Standing on the Promises of God my Savior Standing, standing Standing on the Promises of God Standing on the Promises of God Standing on the Promises that cannot fail

When the howling storms of death and fear of sin By the living word of God I shall prevail
Standing on the Promises of God Standing, standing Standing, standing Standing on the
Promises of God my Savior Standing, standing Standing, standing I'm standing on the
Promises of God Standing on the Promises of Christ the Lord Bound to Him eternally my
love strong core Overcoming daily with the Spirit's sword Standing on the Promises of
God Standing, standing Standing, standing

Standing on the Promises of God my Savior Standing, standing Standing, standing
Standing, standing I'm standing on the Promises of God Please be seated Good morning
again friends and grace and peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
Welcome to worship at Pendleton Center and Niagara Falls First United Methodist
Churches If you could please take a moment to fill out the fellowship card It'll ask you for
some basic contact information As well as whether you have a joy or concern to share
And the prayer team and others in the congregation will be praying for that along with you
You can also take a moment and download the children's activity sheet If you have some
young ones worshipping with you And they will have lots of fun things to do by taking that
sheet and following along We also have some exciting opportunities coming up

First we want you to know about an opportunity to do a meet and greet with Pastor Kathy
and myself online You should have gotten an email about that But if you haven't there's an
opportunity for you to sign up for one of the dates on the website So if you would take that
moment Pastor Kathy and I would love to spend some time with you Getting to know one
another Talking about how God's moving in your life So please sign up for one of those
dates Also you can contact the office Because small group ministries are coming to
Pendleton Center in Niagara Falls very soon These are opportunities for groups of people
to go much deeper in their faith as they walk along with Christ It's an exciting opportunity
to get to know our Lord and other members of the church better And so we hope that
some of you would be interested in contacting us for more information about that
opportunity Also don't forget that you have the opportunity to give in multiple ways The
realities of ministry continue and the realities of life continue And so we need folks to
continue to offer their gifts to God monetarily You can give through automatic deduction

You can give online or you can continue to send in your gifts directly to the church You
can give online or  of our u are You can give online or use LOUs Thank you.

[10 : 16] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[12 : 46] Thank you. There's a passage in Mark.

That's one of the disciples. And here's what this particular Bible verse says. While Jesus
was climbing into the boat, the one he had healed pleaded with Jesus to let him come
along as one of his disciples.

But Jesus said, And I think about this story and Jesus sends the man to go tell other
people what Jesus had done for him.

And maybe that's part of the love is in my heart.

So I can love everybody. Who doesn't want to be special?

[15 : 01] Who doesn't want to be special? Who doesn't want to be special? Who doesn't want to be
special? That's why I can't wait to meet you because you are so special. Have you ever
been someplace where you had something to say or you wanted to do something at
school or Sunday school or even when your family was all together?

And you're like, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, oh, pick me. Pick me. Pick me. And you don't get picked. And then you get to do something else. I have felt like that. Now I want to show you, you can see next to me that these are pictures and these are pictures that were made for me. These were made by kids who I was their pastor and they were special to me and I was special to them. I have a really big one here. I don't know if you can see it very well, but that picture was painted by someone during church. They thought about how Jesus sends the Holy Spirit to be like fire, but not the burning kind of fire all around us.

And then of course the cross because it's so important to Jesus. So these pictures, now I didn't make them. When I was little and it came to things like running and climbing and things where you had to be really fast.

I wasn't the best. I could do things, but I would never be on a team like running a race around a track.

I would never be one of those people because that's just not who I am. That's not how my body works. I don't know how to play the piano really well. I can play a few things, but I'm never going to be one of those people who's up front in church playing the piano or somebody at a concert or at school who's going to be playing the piano while other people sing.

[17 : 35] I wish I could. I wish I could be someone who can stand up front and sing. I wish that I could draw.

When I draw things, yeah, they look like sticks, stick figures, you know, line, line, circle for a head, arms.

Not very good. So there have been times when I thought, well, but I want some of those things just like the man wanted to go with Jesus and he couldn't.

I want to be picked to be on the team to run or to throw a ball. I could play basketball.

I could keep people from scoring points and I could play softball some, but I was never going to be the first person picked for the team.

[18 : 36] So I wasn't bad at it. I just wasn't really, really good. And some people can do things really, really well. And when Jesus told this man, no, you can't come with me.

His feelings might have felt a little bit hurt. He didn't get invited to come. Just like I wasn't ever going to be the person that was going to be picked to climb a rope the fastest.

Oh, I could climb it, but not the fastest. I wasn't going to be picked to be the person who was going to sing a song all by myself. But I could sing with other people.

I don't know how to draw. Not really well. But here is one thing that I made.

And I made it by following the directions and just sewing little tiny X's in this whole picture so that it would turn out saying, welcome.

[19 : 55] And when I made it, there was somebody else who saw it. And they said, oh, my goodness.

I wish I could do something like that. But I can't. My eyes aren't good enough. I don't have the patience to do it. And yet that person who said that could sing beautiful songs in front of all kinds of people and make them so very happy.

You see, Jesus didn't pick this man who was feeling so much better to go with him. To go with the disciples in the boat.

But he did give him something special to do. He sent him back to his town where he had come from. And most everybody there knew him as the sick person.

And now he's well. And Jesus wants him to go back to his town and tell people, Jesus made me better. So sometimes I have to remember.

[21 : 09] I can't paint beautiful paintings. I can't make beautiful bowls.

Did you know somebody I made, I know, made this bowl? This glass bowl? They made it to feel like the Holy Spirit. Just like the flames back here.

Only she made it into a glass bowl. I lost something. I can't make this.

You know, somebody I love made this plate. It used to be part of a tree. And if you look close, you can see the lines in it.

Kind of like you can see in a tree. But he turned it into a plate. And it's smooth and it's soft. I don't know how to do that.

[22 : 02] Maybe I could learn. But he gets to do that. I don't know how to make a bowl. But she gets to do that. There are a lot of things that I wish I could do.

I think that when God sent the man back to his town to tell them about Jesus, he said, you can do this. This is what you're supposed to do.

What do you think that Jesus wants you to do that you're supposed to do? Maybe you are the fastest. Maybe you can sing beautiful songs all by yourself.

Maybe you can dance. Maybe you play soccer. And you can score points. And you can help your team. Maybe you play an instrument. My two sons played trumpets.

And one of them played them really, really well. And the other one played well. Just two different boys.

[23 : 09] Maybe you're the kind of person that can cook a fabulous meal. Maybe you're the kind of person who's the best helper that your family ever saw.

I think the message from Jesus is that we should always try to do whatever it is that we want to do.

But sometimes, sometimes, just like the man who didn't get to go with Jesus, it's not a bad thing.

But you have something special. And that man's something special was to go and tell people who didn't know how powerful Jesus' love was.

What a difference Jesus could make in people's lives. People didn't know that. So they couldn't have God's love in their heart. So they could love everybody.

[24 : 07] Somebody's going to do that. That's one of the jobs that Jesus gave me. And maybe Jesus gave that to you, too. When you get older, or maybe even the next time I see you, you'll be the one who tells me a story that shows me that you know how much God's love means to you.

Which helps me to know it. Some of us get to know it's a good thing. We all get different gifts. And we don't all get to do the same things. Some of us don't get to be captains.

Or quarterbacks. Or whatever people want to do. We don't get to be pitchers or catchers. Some of us get to make things.

Some of us get to say things. Some of us. Maybe it'll take a long time to figure it out. It's okay.

Jesus says you do what's important. And no matter what you do, if you're doing it with God's love in your heart and loving the people around you, then it's a good thing.

[25 : 32] And maybe you'll get to do all the things. Maybe you have all the gifts. I can't wait to see. But for today, we're glad that different people get to do different things.

And so when I don't get to do the things that I thought I wanted to do, you know what I get to do? Yay! Hooray! I get to cheer for the people who do get to do it.

Because that's what we want, right? If I can't sing, then hooray for somebody who can. If I'm not going to be the pitcher or the batter, then I can cheer for whoever it is that is doing that.

And that's the same with the man that Jesus said no to. He didn't say, no, you can't do anything. He just said, no, not this.

Not now. But you have work to do. So you go tell people. I hope that this week, maybe you can think about it when you're running as fast as the wind or when you're drawing an incredible picture.

[26 : 44] I hope you can think, this is what God wants me to do for today. Maybe you're the best reader. Maybe you do the best math.

That's not my thing. God made us all and God gave us different gifts. And I'm glad for yours. And I'm glad for mine.

And it's okay that I don't get to do everything. So think about it this week. What do you think is the one thing or the 10 things that you get to be really, really good at?

And if you think of something that you want to be good at, but you're not, well, you can practice. Maybe you can get to be good at it. Or you can say, it's okay that I can't do that.

Because I can do this. Because that's how God made you. No matter who you are. No matter where you are. You are who God wanted you to be.

[27 : 48] Let's pray. This is me. This is God. Nothing in between. Oh God, thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you that I have these treasures that other people have made me.

Thank you for their gifts. For making them do things that are so beautiful and incredible. help me to know that telling others about Jesus and Jesus' love, I get to do that.

So help me say thank you. Thank you, God, that I get to do that. that I get to make bread and do sewing and create pictures that don't have any pens or crayons or anything like that.

God, I thank you for everyone who's watching because you gave them something incredible. And I hope we will be able to see all that that is sometime soon.

In Jesus' name, amen. So, if anybody in your world wants to send me a note and tell me just how good you are at what you do, take pictures of your drawings, take pictures of a trophy or a belt that you got from Taekwondo or karate or something like that, I would really love to see it because I think that you're incredible and I know God does too.

[29 : 41] Thanks, everybody, and have a great day. Have a great day. They're great. Have a great day. When I'm worried and I mess up When people count me out I may stumble, but I'll get up Nothing can keep me down Cause I know who you say I am You say I am yours It doesn't matter what I feel And you I am secure I will trust in you Don't have to worry anymore

Cause I am yours I am yours I am yours I am yours I won't hide And I'm afraid No matter what I face I am strong I am brave I can do anything Cause I know who you say I am You say I am yours It doesn't matter what I feel And you I am secure I will trust in you I will trust in you You don't have to worry anymore Cause I am yours I am yours I am yours I am yours Come on Come on then I fall down I'll get up And all your love I can't get enough I know in your blood

I can't get enough You are strong You are Lord And I am brave Cause I am yours I am yours When I fall down I'll get up And all your love I can't get enough I can't enough. You are strong.

You are Lord. And I am brave. Cause I am yours. I know who you say I am. You say I am yours. It doesn't matter what I feel.

For you I am secure. I will trust in you. You don't have to worry anymore. Cause I am yours. I am yours.

[32 : 18] I am yours. I am yours. I am yours. I am yours. I am yours. We know that one of God's great gifts to us is the ability to come to God in prayer.

As we open our hearts for our conversation with God this morning, we want to keep the families of Anna K. Anderson and Richard Loring in our prayers as they have both passed away. And we want to cover those who are grieving for them as they take that journey.

Would you join me in prayer? Almighty and gracious God, we are gathered before you today. Gathered before you today appreciating all of your good gifts and who you are.

You are the one who has given us the gift of each new day. The gift of the ability to experience so many new things.

As we wake up and we experience every step, that first sip of our beverage of choice, those first conversations with friends or loved ones, those opportunities to do work that has meaning and brings you glory.

[33 : 39] We know that all of these are gifts and graces you share with us each day. So, Lord, we come saying thank you. Thank you for those gifts.

Thank you for the people around us. Thank you for the journey that you have put us on. Thank you for the people around us.

Thank you for the people around us. Thank you for the people around us. Thank you for the people around us. Our prayer is that you would bring strength and bring comfort and peace quickly to them as they go forward into their new days.

For all who are experiencing that sense of loss, we pray these things. Lord, we also pray for those who need healing, whether it be from COVID or whether it be from some other physical challenge.

We know that you and you alone are the author of our healing. So, Lord, we come to you, laying them at your feet. We pray for those medical teams and medical professionals around them and other hospital staff that provide care and support.

[35 : 15] Lord, we pray for those who are caring for loved ones at home as they recuperate. But, Lord, we know that this springs from you.

So, we are coming hoping that you might work in a way that would bring these loved ones back to wholeness and happiness and health. But, Lord, we also know that sometimes your will takes us places that we are not prepared to go.

So, Lord, if the struggle is longer than we would expect, or if the outcome is not what we would hope, let our hearts be open to your will as our sovereign God and help us to understand how you are moving and working in these people's lives.

Lord, we also pray for those who are suffering economically, whether it be from this economic challenge we are facing because of the virus or some other circumstance in their lives.

There are people who are experiencing such deep need, looking for jobs, looking for help with food, looking for homes. God, we know that these challenges take so many forms, but we, your people, are ready and able to serve as you call.

[36 : 34] We also know that you can work in your own ways. But, Lord, for those whom we see in such suffering, those whom we see in such need, we pray that you would move quickly to resolve the challenge in front of them.

And, Lord, we also know that there is such challenge in our society and in our nation. how we are talking to one another, how we are relating to one another, and the ongoing need for justice, the ongoing need for true equality.

So, Lord, for those voices that are raised as they speak from their experience, Lord, please let them land in the hearts of others.

Let them be received with truth and with grace, and let us journey together along the path that Jesus modeled for us. Let love be our guide. Let love be our way.

Let love be our lives. And so, Lord, in all things, we know that you continue to lead. You continue to take us to different places.

[37 : 45] You continue to give us new experiences. Sometimes those experiences challenge us in different ways, but help us to bloom as we are planted.

Help us to thrive where you set us. Sometimes those moments, sometimes those places don't always feel like what we wanted.

But, Lord, as the stories we study today and the scriptures before us show that your plans for us are good, even if we don't always see, even if we don't always understand, your plans for us are good.

So help us to listen to your direction. Help us to trust in your will. Help us to rely on your strength and your power. Because you have shown us who you are. The giver of every good gift.

And your plans for us are good. So give us the resolve. Give us the faith. And give us the deep, abiding love to bloom as we are planted in whatever season or moment of life.

[38 : 52] All this we ask in the name of Jesus, who makes all things possible. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Good morning.

[39 : 52] The first Bible verse today is from the book of Jeremiah, chapter 29, verses 4 through 7. This is what the Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, says to those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon.

Build houses and settle down. Plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters. Find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage so that they too may have sons and daughters.

Increase in number there, do not decrease. Also seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it because it prospers and you too will prosper.

The second Bible verse is from the book of Mark, chapter 5, verses 18 through 20. As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him.

Jesus did not let him, but said, Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you. So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him.

[41 : 15] And all the people were amazed. This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. One of the questions that comes up every day somewhere, whether it's on social media, in conversation, I hear the question, When is the church building going to be open?

When can people come inside for worship, for small groups, and things like that? I think that's a question we have all asked ourselves over and over these past several months.

Friday, I drove over to the other side of Williamsville to be with a friend and was surprised on my way back through Main Street to find how many churches were announcing that their buildings would be remaining closed until after Labor Day.

Sometimes I get the impression that all the churches are open, except for ours, and it's not true. Many are open.

Many are providing in-person worship. And also many are not. I just want you to know that our advisory team is working.

[42 : 23] The one at Niagara Falls First and the one here are doing their due diligence to make sure that legal things are satisfied, property things are cared for, documentation, safe practices, all of that.

We are working very hard, even though you may not see it or hear nearly enough about it. One of the things that we do know about some of the churches that have opened is that they have a partial or half of or a full army of volunteers who make that possible, ready to help make it happen on the day that it has happened or the day it will happen.

Friends, it's time to build our team of people. If we are going to open these buildings for you to come in, first for worship and then for other opportunities, we are dependent on your help.

There is nobody here who can take care of all the things needed to welcome people safely into our building. So if you remember, and some of you are too young for this, there used to be a poster long even before my time, and it was Uncle Sam saying, we need you.

Well, here we are, friends. We need you in order to make this happen. That's part of what we're waiting for. So please, email the office, call the office, whatever you would like to do to convey to us that you're ready and willing to be on site helping us on these occasions when we can open our church buildings.

[44 : 04] Thank you and know that for many of you, I know it's not safe and it won't be safe. And that's okay. You're where you should be. If you're one of the people who can, I pray and hope that you will.

Thank you. You might have thought that I'd already asked you a hard question, but that's not the hard question the message is about this morning, although it could be found in there somewhere.

I am so grateful to be with you, but based on our scriptures this morning, I'm going to ask you a couple of really hard questions. The first one, how do you respond when you don't get what you want?

We're all different. Think about it. The second question is, how has your life been affected by disappointment in terms of where you saw yourself and where you find yourself?

Both of the readings this morning invite us to a conversation and to open ourselves up to what God may be saying to us when we actually want to hear something different.

[45 : 18] In Jeremiah, as we've been talking about how God's plan for us is for good and for hope, remember that the people of Israel have been captured by the Babylonians.

The Jerusalem they loved is behind them. The thoughts and dreams of where they would be and when they would be there don't really feel so close to them anymore.

And what does God say through Jeremiah? His words bring not the news they expected. His message is the last thing that maybe they even wanted to hear.

No announcement of imminent deliverance. Let's just sneak this way and we'll get to the land of milk and honey. No just poofing everybody up and placing them someplace else.

Indeed, there's no announcement of deliverance at all. At least not the way we read it. Instead, they are instructed to put down roots, build houses, build homes, plant gardens, have families, and pray for and seek the welfare of the city.

[46 : 32] Wait. Did God just say that we're supposed to pray for the Babylonians and the well-being of this city that we've been captured in?

We might initially think, you or I might initially think, I can't even imagine being in that place. I can't imagine being there and have God ask me to do those things.

I'm just ready to run. We can't imagine ourselves having to stay in captivity and bloom where we are planted, make a home in a place that we never even imagined would be our home and don't want to imagine it will be our home.

But then again, haven't each of us found ourselves in a place that we really don't want to be in? A job that feels like it takes more out of us than it ever gives, leaving us angry and disappointed, and yet we are held captive by our need for income and benefits to support us or to support a family or just to pay the mortgage or the car payment.

Having to take in the reality of addiction, maybe ours, maybe that of a loved one, knowing that this is our new reality.

[48 : 02] Because while a person can find healing on their addiction journey, it is a part of their life forever. There is no beaming up or out of the truth that we now know or experience.

Being a single parent by separation, death, or abandonment. Fathers and mothers realizing that their new life is light years away from where they imagined themselves being.

And here's one for all of us. The captivity of COVID-19. The captivity of others thinking that simply by our race or our gender that we are less qualified and less worthy of trust.

The captivity of serving in law enforcement and people assuming that we are all terrible human beings with no respect for life and for the sanctity of all lives when we know that that's not who we are.

Not all of us. A dear friend learned after the birth of her son that he would never meet the milestones. She pushed through the challenges alongside her loving and supportive husband and they saw their son achieve unbelievable things.

[49 : 24] He'll never walk. He walked. It took him 10 years. He'll never eat. Yes, he did eat. And there are many milestones that he will never make.

They cherished him. They still do cherish him as a young adult. About once a year she would have the realization kind of fall on her shoulders.

This is forever. This isn't going to go away. He's never going to get a driver's license. There's never going to be an honor society induction or a sport to play.

And for a period of time most years she would become depressed. Not permanently but periodically. Why? Because she was captive to what was not what she imagined.

What she imagined for their son. What he would have. What he wouldn't have. And the story doesn't end there. What is God calling us to do in this world when there are so many different kinds of captivity.

[50 : 39] What would God have us do when not only are the things around us not the same not necessarily thriving but we are facing disappointment after disappointment including our church buildings not being open.

What would God have us do? Let's back up from that. How might God ask us to respond to any one of these experiences?

Let me begin by proclaiming as I always will that God welcomes all of our feelings all of our responses to the challenges that we face as long as they are safe and as respectful as possible.

After all read the Psalms I always point people towards the Psalms towards the Psalms when they are afraid that being angry isn't right when they are afraid that being desperate isn't a right way of feeling because when we read the Psalms what we read where are you God?

What is the purpose of this suffering God? How could you God? And why me? Psalm after Psalm also loudly proclaim praise acknowledgement of the wonder and glory of God who gave us life.

[52 : 02] What did the people of Israel do? How did they respond? I'm almost 100% positive that their responses were the same as ours.

I'm not doing this. I don't accept this. I bet there were people who said that and felt that. Expressing fears or disappointment through anger at others.

If it's not right for me I'm going to make sure it's not right for you either. Others probably went into their tents or wherever they were finding shelter and just tuned out the reality.

Finding temporary solace in Oreos cookies and Doritos or something else. They couldn't watch Netflix or binge on sports back then.

History tells us that in the coming months and years decades and even a couple of centuries what did the people do? They did what God asked them to do.

[53 : 06] They established homes. They had families. They planted gardens and established deep roots. they found ways to establish temples for worship and they educated their children in the ways of faith.

To the best of their ability they kept their faith even when they were not where they wanted to be. They would never see the lives they had left behind.

They wouldn't likely ever live in the homes they dreamed of living in. And yet and yet they made a way where they thought there was no way.

In the gospel of Mark the man possessed by demons has just been healed. Maybe for the first time in his life he feels alive. He can feel joy.

His life before his healing had been one of violence and torture both inside and outside. Completely feeling of not being able to control what he did what he said even to himself.

[54 : 17] He imposed his torture on others and suffered great consequences. And now this man is overwhelmed with gratitude for Jesus healing.

This is the promise of a new life that I don't even know if he could dream might happen. he had been forced to live among the tombs an unclean life.

No one would have him in their homes or even on the public streets. No one would talk to him or touch him in any way that would look like care or affection.

And now healed. Healed. And now he has the beginning of a life he never imagined. So doesn't it make perfectly good sense that he would run after Jesus when he was going to get in the boat to leave and say please please can I be one of your disciples take me with you.

That's not really surprising. Can I come? I want to be where you're going. If there was ever a person on fire for Jesus it was this man in this moment.

[55 : 39] His faith was bigger than life and it was life changing. He wanted to follow the source of that change and learn from him follow him hear his teachings and Jesus turns to him and says no.

No. Jesus had other plans for him. Jesus wanted him to do something amazing where he was.

Jesus wants him to preach and teach and share the good news not only of what happened to him in this healing but who happened to him in the amazing presence of Jesus Christ.

The Bible says absolutely nothing about how that moment felt for him but I think we can probably relate. we all hang our hopes on something that we get fired up about a new idea a new way of doing things a new job a new relationship.

We might feel so passionate that we go wherever we need to go and say sign me up I'm in. Bloom where you're planted God says through Jeremiah make something good where you are do amazing things where you are.

[56 : 59] it's not about accepting defeat. It's not about trudging through days you didn't want to have. It's about figuring out how can I be fruitful?

How can I be a witness? How can I give thanks? How can I even find joy? With all the things that God has given us where we are with what we have and the lives that we have.

the man healed? He was going back to people who wouldn't have anything to do with him before. They wouldn't sit with him speak with him eat with him.

So who has the greatest chance of changing their perspective on this new way of life that Jesus is trying to teach that Jeremiah was trying to teach?

The one who was changed and the one who stayed where he was to use those gifts to make a difference. Don't misunderstand me because if any of us, if any of you are in places that are dangerous, not healthy, places where you're living in fear, that is not the place where God is asking you to bloom where you're planted.

[58 : 18] Those are places that we as people of faith are called to help you get out of. Please hear that loud and clear. This man possessed by demons was now to preach his liberation, tell the story of his healing.

Jeremiah's message to the people of Israel is a familiar one to us. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be children of your father in heaven.

Do you think that man who'd been possessed wasn't going to be facing people who hated him, who thought he was evil and terrible and wouldn't want to have anything to do with him?

No matter how changed he looked, would they believe that he was changed within? Before Jesus ever spoke those words, Jeremiah was telling the people of Israel the same thing.

Jeremiah's letter reminds us that the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ is the God of unexpected news.

[59 : 39] It would be impossible in this short space to be able to tell all of the unexpected news that goes from cover to cover in the Bible.

The news that came to Noah, to Abraham, Isaiah, Jeremiah himself, Mary and Joseph, Saul of Tarsus.

We have learned to call it good news, this invitation to the kingdom of God. Even when sometimes we're not sure we recognize it as that.

back to my friend and her son. I said that wasn't the end of the story and the story is not over yet because they're still living and working and trying to make the best of things.

But what they did discover was that as people of means, people of education and connections and resources, they were not only able to get for their son all the services that are appropriate for him.

[60 : 45] They began to be aware that they could be voices for the people who didn't know the language of insurance, who didn't know the language that it took to get a new wheelchair, to get accessories for their home to try to help their child or their young adult who was differently abled than others.

They began to use their gifts in great ways across the county and across the state and maybe someday across the country. Bloom where you're planted.

Use what you've been given. Healing and hope and resurrection have always been a part of our faith story. And the Bible is an example to us of people being faithful and in general being really, really faithful.

people. And yet things didn't always go the way they hoped or expected. And there is no doubt about the fact that it's hard to be disappointed, to feel like you're in a box that somebody else has the key to, that you can't open the door and get what you want because other people are somehow preventing you from that or something about the place you live, the skin color you live in, the abilities you have or you don't have.

Hear these words of hope and prayer. Even when you are physically alone, you are not alone. I am here.

[62 : 26] We as your pastoral team, we're here. And there are others. we are here for each other, even in the dark nights.

Second, the place you find yourself feeling trapped. I may have never been in that place. Maybe no one you know has. But we all know what it feels like to be trapped.

So let's be in those spaces together. Not deciding whose box is better or worse or whose ideas are right and whose are wrong.

But being together, recognizing that God has a plan for us and it is good. Three, so many things may not be going your way or the way any of us would choose.

Hear these words from Maya Angelou. While I know myself as a creation of God, you might not, but I invite you to know that you are a beloved creation of God.

[63 : 38] And having said that, she says, I am also obligated to realize and remember that everyone else and everything else, they are also God's creation.

We're not the same. We're not better, worse, we are God's creation. And we don't always get what we want.

And we don't always agree with each other. But it doesn't change the reality that we are each and together God's creation. For we are each trying to walk through this chapter of life the very best we can.

And I know that you and we and pastors and leaders of churches and parishioners all across the land. They're exhausted.

Exhausted from trying to bring good news in a time when it's hard to find. To bring worship when the pews are empty. To bring the proclamation that God is still here.

[64 : 53] Even when we can't be together. together. Let's keep being people of hope. If you have resources that I don't then bring them on.

If you don't have resources and your neighbor has resources then let them share. Don't divide on shoulds and shouldn'ts and can's and can'ts and right and wrong.

remember the people of Israel. The man who was healed. He did what he was asked to do.

Where he was asked to do it. And it required doing it in community. We can acknowledge that people don't feel or think the way that we do.

And that's okay. but what we can acknowledge one God one faith one savior one baptism one Lord of all who will walk with us you and me together and apart all the days of our life and into eternity.

[66 : 05] And that my friends is the good news that comes wherever you are in this place of life.

Would you pray with me? Wonderful God I know where I am. Well most of the time I know where I am.

And I know what I'm called to do and to be. And it's a journey. And it's a journey of finding great joy and feeling great sadness.

I can't know where everyone is who hears this prayer. But oh God you know where everyone is and you hear our voices you hear our cries you hear our thanksgivings.

may we share one thing in common you your love your grace and your call for us to use our gifts.

[67 : 22] So bless us heal us and open us in the name of Jesus Christ we pray. blessed be your name the land that is plentiful your streams of abundance flow blessed be your name blessed be your name when I'm found in the desert place while I walk through the wilderness blessed be your name every blessing you pour out and turn down to praise when the darkness closes in light still I will stay blessed be the name of the

Lord blessed be your name blessed be the name of the Lord blessed be your glorious name blessed be your name when the sun is shining down on it and the world's all known as it should be blessed be your name blessed be your name oh road heart with suffering and his pain in the offering blessed be your name every blessing you pour out and turn back to praise when the darkness closes in light still I will stay blessed be the name of the horn blessed be your name blessed be the name of the lord blessed be the glory yes blessed be with his wonderful and e free

You give and take away You give and take away My heart will choose to say Lord, blessed be your name You give and take away You give and take away My heart will choose to say Lord, blessed be your name Blessed be the name of the Lord Blessed be your name Blessed be the name of the Lord Blessed be your glorious name Blessed be the name of the Lord

Blessed be your name Blessed be the name of the Lord Blessed be your glorious name Blessed be your name I'm casting my cares inside I'm leaving my past behind I'm setting my heart and mind on you Jesus I'm reaching my head to yours Even there's so much more Knowing that all you have in store for me is good That's good

Today is the day you have made I will rejoice and be glad in it Today is the day you have made I will rejoice and be glad in it And I won't worry about this tomorrow Crossing in what you have made What you say Days are the day of when I am Oh oh oh oh Oh oh oh oh Oh Didn't you miss me To the verse where you live Did you miss me Go on I'm listening to the φ It matters in my ■ And ■ I'm giving myself a strong I'm thinking I'll teach you I'm pushing my fears desire I'm getting my hope to relative I'm playing in your friends I am serving my dreams I am dreaming to be Jesus I am reaching my head to yours I'm reaching my hand to yours And there's so much more No matter all you have in store For me it's good It's good Today is the day you have made

[72 : 51] I will rejoice and be glad in it Today is the day you have made I will rejoice and be glad in it I won't worry about tomorrow Trust in what you say Today is the day you have made I will stand upon your truth I will stand upon your truth All my days I live for you And all my days I live for you I will stand upon your truth I will stand upon your truth And all my days I live for you And all my days I live Today is the day you have made I will rejoice and be glad in it

Today is the day you have made I will rejoice and be glad in it I won't worry about tomorrow I'm giving you my fears and sorrow I will follow Trust in what you say Today is the day Today is the day Today is the day If we were all gathered here in person This would be the time when we would come to the Lord's table Bread would be broken and offered And the cup would be raised and praised And we would share

I know that it breaks hearts that we cannot do that right now But soon and very soon we pray I'd like to offer you these words that are not mine As a call to where we are And where I hope we'll be Begin again Life whispers In our ears Some days are beginning days Some days are designed to be the day We try again And on those days The sun rises On all days The sun rises For you On those days The birds sing For you On those days God is cheering For you That's just the way God and beginnings Work For when your heart

Is broken And your life Is in pieces Or when the addiction Or the depression Have found their way Back into your bones Or when you lose sight Of the person You were called to be The wilderness Will sing to you again Begin again Begin again With the person You want to be Begin again With the person You want to love Begin again With the knowledge Of your faith Begin Again In the confidence That all of us Every day And sometimes more than once A day Begin again Let us come before God With the prayer That Jesus taught us To pray Saying 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 Deliver us from evil For thine is the kingdom And the power And the glory Forever And ever Amen We are tossed and driven down The restless sea of time Summer skies And howling tempests Don't succeed

[77 : 58] A bright sunshine In the blend of the day When the mist Is rolled away We are understanding Better by and by By and by Triumphs of God And every hand Where we can understand All the ways that God Will lead us to that Blessed promised land And He guides us With His eye And we'll follow Till we die For we'll understand It better By and by By and by When the morning comes

When the saints Are gone together Go We'll tell The story How we overcome How we overcome A way to understand It better By and by By and by Brothers and sisters In Christ Wherever your day Takes you Wherever the days Ahead take you Take this with you The God of grace The God of glory The God who gave us Jesus Christ A Savior For all the days Of our lives Goes with you May the Holy Spirit Hold you And heal you On this life's journey Wherever you find Yourself In the name of the Father, the Son And the Holy Spirit Amen God of grace■■■■ Elam God of grace Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen

Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Esp■■ cream Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen Amen.