

Different Pictures

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 14 March 2021

Preacher: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel

[0 : 0 0] SL SL SL SL SL SL SL SL Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.

[4 : 5 2] Amen. It's good to see you this morning on this beautiful day in the neighborhood.

I have some fun announcements to make. Fish fry, we sold 247. And Carl's going to be on the radio tomorrow at 740 if you want to catch that.

And it just keeps getting better. If you're going to celebrate St. Patrick's Day this week or if you just really love cabbage, there'll be cabbage given away after church.

Mr. Louis Bobscene will be giving it away, small heads of cabbage. So I said, please don't bring it in here. Don't make me hold.

Kelly said, don't make her hold a head of cabbage. I happen to be one of those people that only likes a bite or two of only cooked cabbage. So anyway, it is going to be St. Patrick's Day this week.

[6 : 2 1] And for those of us who have some Irish heritage, anybody else have some Irish heritage? Yeah, a couple, a few. It's a green day.

Maybe it'll be a green day. We hope and pray. So here we are. I'm Kathy Stengel. For those of you who haven't met me, I'm one of the pastoral team here at Pendleton Center in Niagara Falls in the Joshua Connection.

And we welcome those who are watching online as well as those of you who are gathered here in this space. And we come in this fourth Sunday of Lent to hear about how is it that God would use his word to speak into your hearts and to mine.

So let's begin. Has there ever been a year that you wanted spring more than this one? It's felt like a 12-month winter, even though we really know it wasn't.

And it's so hard to keep staying creative when things just keep coming from one direction after another, month after month.

[7 : 4 2] We need spring, a touch of inspiration to awaken us from this long winter we've been in. As we hear in one of this week's healing stories, we need to be woken from our sleep.

We also awaken to the power that you have and I have, we all have, to seek Jesus ourselves. Reaching out to touch the power we know can restore our minds, our bodies, and our spirits.

And we come ready to re-engage with the world, seeking and seeing solutions, creating a different picture of life, renewed, not under the cloud, just as a mosaic artist creates beauty from broken pieces of glass.

So let us acknowledge our need, each of ours, to restore and to repair and to renew our holy and broken selves so that we might be able to create and imagine new possibilities, new responses in our lives together and each.

So let us join in prayer. O God of all possibilities, remind us that we are made in your image. We are your hands and feet in this world you have given us.

[9 : 16] You created us with imagination, the ability to learn and grow. Sometimes we find ourselves tired and without enthusiasm.

The world wants us to be full of ideas, answers, solutions. And we have had to adapt so many times, non-stop.

Forgive us for the times we just don't want to. The times when it feels too hard. The times when we turn away in our overwhelm.

Call us back to care and be cared for in community. Help us, healing God, share your Holy Spirit strength, calm, and comfort.

Our bodies, our spirits, and our relationships and sense of well-being. Amen. Know this, that we are gifted with both the ability and the choice to be both healed and healing in this world no matter what.

[10 : 25] We are not alone. We are not alone. And we can join with one another to find hope. Christ will answer when we call.

When we reach out for what we know can help. For you, for me, and for all. Amen. I'd like to invite you all to stand, if you're able, as we sing together.

Well, or hum together, or sing with a club. Breathe on me, breath of God.

Fill me with life anew. That I may love what thou dost love, and do what thou wouldst do.

Breathe on me, breath of God, until my heart is pure. Until with thee I will, one will, to do and to endure.

[12 : 05] Breathe on me, breath of God, till I am wholly thine. Till all this earthly part of me flows with thy fire divine.

Breathe on me, breath of God, so shall I never die. But live with thee the perfect life of thy eternity.

Please be seated. There are times when other people's words outside of scripture can speak into what it is that we're imagining God has to say to us.

And one reading is anonymous. Curiosity is the first step down the path of awakening. The path of awakening is not about becoming who you are.

Rather, it's about unbecoming who you are not. By Albert Schweitzer. I'm thinking and feeling the song that we just came through.

[13 : 43] Breathe on me, breath of God. And when I think of breathe on me, breath of God, how does that leave me?

It leaves me wanting to be available. Wanting. I'm thinking and feeling the song that we're doing. I'm thinking and feeling the song that we're doing. Wanting. What it is that God has breathed onto me to find a home somewhere.

And so it is that here I am and here you are. My prayer is that as we go through this time of reflecting on our offering, even though we don't pass a plate, that we might reflect on how is it that God has breathed on you that reveals what it is you bring to this space and to God's holy work of being the hands and feet of Christ.

And I say thank you, Jesus. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

[15 : 55] Thank you.

Thank you. Bye. Bye.

Bye. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[17 : 54] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you. Let's open our hearts and go to God together in prayer.

[20 : 30] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. you for the ways in which you move tenderly among us, Lord, and you know the ways in which we also need that tender touch today. For those whose hearts may be heavy for any reason, for those who might need that comforting embrace from your spirit, for those who need strength poured into them as they face a challenge that seems too great. We thank you for the ways in which you move so tenderly among your people. But Lord, we are also aware that there are times we need you to move mightily among your people. And we face mountains that seem so high, valleys that seem so far and dark, and we need you to move mightily in these circumstances.

We continue to need your touch as we see so many who need healing, those who are still battling the COVID virus, those who are still seeking healing with other health concerns, those who are dealing with broken hearts and broken relationships.

There are situations, Lord, as we continue our movement towards beloved community and true justice in your world. Those who are in deep need, we see such deep need across our community and across your world. Lord, continue to move in your people. Continue to inspire us to love as Jesus loved, to give as Jesus gave, and to pour out ourselves as he poured out himself for us.

But Lord, whether you work through your people or whether you work in us, let us see your hand move mightily. Because there are things that are clearly beyond our ability to do.

[22 : 42] Places where we cannot reach. Knowledge we do not have. So Lord, we humble ourselves before you, praying that you will move mightily in those places we need your touch.

Lord, help us to see your will. Help us to understand it. Give us the courage to walk in it. That we might indeed lift you up as you want to be lifted up.

For a world that is broken and hurting and needs what only you can give it. And Lord, as we know, we lift up the one who makes all things possible.

Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. The one who taught us. The one who saved us. The one who leads us still. And it is in his holy name we pray this morning.

Amen. Thank you.

[24 : 02] Thank you.

While he was saying this, a synagogue leader came and knelt before him and said, My daughter has just died, but come and put your hand on her and she will live.

Jesus got up and went with him and so did his disciples. Just then a woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years came up behind him and touched the edge of his cloak.

She said to herself, If only I touch his cloak, I will be healed. Jesus turned and saw her. Take heart, daughter, he said.

Your faith has healed you. And the woman was healed at that moment. When Jesus entered the synagogue leader's house, he saw the noisy crowd and people playing pipes.

[25 : 20] He said, Go away. This girl is not dead, but asleep. But they laughed at him. After the crowd had been put outside, he went in and took the girl by the hand and she got up.

The news of this spread through all that region. This is the word of our Lord. Thanks be to God. I'm thinking, what is it about this life?

From the time we're born until the time we are joined with Jesus, what is a spectator sport?

Is life a spectator sport? Is church a spectator sport? Is our sports spectator sports?

Well, maybe if it was me, it would be a spectator sport. But I'd be still watching all the people. The stories this morning teach us that, and the stories of all of these miracles teach us, there is no such thing as a spectator sport in this life.

[26 : 45] The glory and the miraculousness of each and every one of us coming into this world at all is enough to make it not a spectator sport.

People often think about their relationship with God, with Jesus, as kind of a passive. Yeah, I believe.

And that's the end of the story. The stories that we have been reading and this morning around miracles indicate to us that there is no such thing.

And this morning's miracle stories talk about how one who is like a servant or a slave and one who is a leader in the synagogue both come to Jesus.

To seek the answer to their brokenness, their cry for healing. We hear of people just reaching for Jesus, touching the hem of his garment and being healed.

[28 : 05] But it happened when they reached, when they touched, when they asked, in relationship.

Because some of them, their faith had taken them to a place where they knew the only way they could find any comfort or restoration or healing was to come to Jesus.

We're all so different. Right? We're all so different. I think about the things that are simple.

Like being able to reach the top shelf. Not reaching the top shelf. And having a husband who, when I say, can you reach the top shelf?

Yes. Yes. Well then come and get this for me. It's a joke and we still do it. I think about the differences in my children.

[29 : 24] When our children were small, we lived near Darien Lake and we had a season pass there because it meant we could go there for a couple of hours or all day or just after dinner.

And we had one child who basically willed himself to grow taller so we could go on the fastest, highest rides.

Anybody resemble that? Yeah, like I am tall enough. And I think by sheer will sometimes he met the line.

And then we had two children that were like, not in a hurry. Maybe never in a hurry. We are also so very different.

We're so different in our faith, in our space, in our health, in our abilities, and in our attitude. And one of the things I have always loved about the story of the woman who was bleeding was because what did she do?

[30 : 40] She did what she could. She did what she had the power to do. She could not jump in front of Jesus and grab his arm.

She would be taken down. As surely as if someone had done that to the president. All she could do. And she had faith that if she just touched, maybe it was the end of his sleeve.

Maybe she knelt down and touched the hem of his garment. But she believed that if she simply made contact with him, she would be healed. And then you have the leader in the synagogue.

Not a rabbi, but a leader. Important person. Maybe he gave the most money. Maybe he did the most work. Maybe he had the most influence.

Who came to Jesus and interrupted him while he was having dinner. And told him that his daughter was sick. And he knew that if Jesus came, that she would be healed.

[31 : 48] It ended up being a resurrection story. A resurrection. But it didn't happen just because Jesus existed.

It happened because the people involved in the stories did what they had the power to do. They chose not to be a spectator and just wave to Jesus from afar.

They had needs. They had deep needs. They had broken heart needs. They had doctor after doctor after doctor kind of needs.

And they came to Jesus. They didn't wait for him to come and seek them out. They came to Jesus.

Asked. Touched. Reached. These stories are an invitation for us, for you and for me.

[33 : 04] To imagine or just think or ponder. What is in your life that could use the hand of Jesus?

What relationship? What body experience? What home experience? What employment experience? What family or child or parent or grandparent thing in our lives?

Can we find that needs Jesus? Now, I'm sure that you may be thinking the same thing that I'm thinking.

If only Jesus were here. If only I could see him here. If only I could touch the hem of his garment or stand in his presence and speak.

If only. If only. If only. If only. If only. And Jesus' response throughout the scriptures. I will be with you always.

[34 : 16] I will be with you to the end of the age. And he didn't mean just me the pastor or the pope or the important people.

Whoever they might be. Because the other thing this story teaches us is that whether you are laying on the ground completely unable to do anything.

Walk. Crawl. Or whether you are someone of great power and speed and thought and word.

Jesus shows no partiality. No sense that the leader in the synagogue is more important than the woman.

And it was a culture where everyone was more important than women. Even animals that were owned were more important than women because they could be taken to the temple and sacrificed.

[35 : 23] Whereas a woman could not. Jesus didn't see that.

And he still doesn't see that. He doesn't see any of us as more important or less important than anyone else.

We sometimes defer. And we think, well, you know, some of that faith stuff, that's for them. I'm glad we have good and faithful people to do that because I'm just going to sit back because maybe I don't feel it.

Maybe I don't know it. Maybe it doesn't feel vitally real to me personally. So I'm just going to sit and watch.

Friends, you were not born into this world for your faith to be a spectator sport. And yet, you were also not born into this world to do everything that someone else is doing in their relationship with God.

[36 : 36] We are not the same. So you may, along the day in your week in your world, you may think of someone's name you heard who might maybe could use some help.

And you think you just remember their name. And that's a prayer. Some may not be able to rearrange the sanctuary and put tables together and be working in the kitchen at the fish fry.

Nor may you want to. That's okay. Because God has something else. And God wants to speak into your life the same as God wants to speak into the Pope's life or the Bishop's life or anyone else's life.

But at the end of the day, one of the best and worst things that God gave us was the choice of how we are to live our lives.

When I was in college and then again when I was in seminary, we took these classes that were about family systems. Anybody know about family systems? And we had to map out our family.

[38 : 12] And indicated in that family, in this map, that my daughter had to make one when she went to college and it had little marks and pins and strings and things that were broken and you have cutoffs and you have divorce and marriage and births and deaths.

And there was one of our students, because we had to present them.

And there was one student who presented their genogram, that's what it's called. And people could even see from the way that it was laid out that there was a part that kind of jumped off the page.

And so the professor said, well, tell me about this. And the student said, I've been thinking, what is it about this part of the family?

The student stepped back and realized those were all the people who were connected to faith. that they were the people who stayed connected unless it wasn't safe.

[39 : 38] Those were the people who did what they had the power to do. Those were the people that were remembered. And they might have been cousins or a part of the family that that person wasn't even aware of had such influence.

People who do what they have the power to do for their own well-being and for the well-being of others. Because if I reach for Jesus while I am flat out on the ground, and experience some sense of healing or restoration in that relationship that doesn't live on its own.

Because I don't live in a bubble. So it creates energy that is energy for my family, for my friends.

Because we all know when the people we know are flat out on the ground. When they've lost their sense of self.

When they've lost their place. When they don't feel seen anymore. One of the things that our youth did recently on the retreat was to send cards to people that are often most likely to feel as if they aren't seen.

[41 : 07] Aren't as well known. Maybe feel forgotten. And in God's world there is no such person. You.

There is not one of you present or listening who is one of those people. Do we all get cards? No. I said my card didn't say that and I was joking because my card said thank you for what I did at the retreat.

So we don't all get the same thing. We don't all get the same attention from each other or from me and yet we reach if we ask if we pray.

Jesus is right there. I will be with you until the end of the age. So I'm going to let the Holy Spirit do the work.

Because if you are in a space where you think God has lost you forgotten you or is just a distant name.

[42 : 29] then my prayer is that you will hear somewhere somehow how important you are wherever you are wherever you are whatever you've done wherever you came from whatever doubts whatever anger whatever disappointment you bring it doesn't matter to God.

It matters that you might be hurt or need healing but that does not separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Romans 8 proclaims to us that nothing nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

not evil not illness not death not the powers and principalities of evil and destruction in this world nothing will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

May we go to our graves remembering that that is true and I pray that you have the courage to reach to ask to beg maybe on your own behalf maybe on someone else's behalf because God is listening it's not like that it's not always like that but it doesn't mean that God isn't there so let's pray Lord I pray that the movement and the power of your Holy Spirit might move among us might touch the brokenness or the boredom or the sense of this isn't for me and I'm not sure and I don't really care Lord send your Holy Spirit to move among all who listen and all who are present that in our disappointment or grief or relationships or our thoughts about you you will find us and always be present always looking for us and for the very best of life and faith and hope in our lives move our hands to reach our voices to ask and our minds to surrender in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit all those who seek after Christ are welcome at the table it's an action a choice to open ourselves to the grace of Christ that is freely offered to each and every one so let's celebrate that together the Lord be with you lift up your hearts let us give thanks to the Lord our God it is right and a good and joyful thing always and everywhere to give thanks to you

Father Almighty in the beginning you breathed life into raw materials creating and animating containers of beauty and goodness we your holy vessels were fired in the kiln of love until we shined with your light susceptible to shattering we find ourselves broken unable at times to remember your promise of repair you remind us time and again that though broken we are held in your presence and made whole by your grace and so with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn holy holy holy Lord God of power and might heaven and earth are full of your glory Hosanna in the highest blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord Hosanna in the highest holy are you and blessed is your son

[47 : 20] Jesus Christ holy you are for being a divine presence on earth your spirit anointed him as a container of grace in the form of preaching good news to the poor proclaiming release to the captives recovering of sight to the blind setting at liberty those who are oppressed and announcing that the time had come when you would save your people he healed the sick fed the hungry and ate with those considered too broken for company by the baptism of his suffering death and resurrection you gave birth to your church you gave birth to the path of healing and recovery delivered us from our despair and isolation and made with us a new covenant by water and the spirit when Jesus ascended he promised to be with us always in the power of your word and holy spirit we are not alone on the night in which he gave himself up for us he took the bread he gave thanks to you he broke the bread and gave it to his disciples and said take and eat this is my body given for you do this in remembrance of me and when the supper was over he took the cup he gave thanks to you he gave to his disciples and said drink from this all of you this is my blood of the new covenant poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins drink of this often remembering me and so in remembrance of the healing life transforming acts in Jesus Christ we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice in union with Christ's offering for us as we proclaim the mystery of faith

Christ has died Christ is risen Christ will come again pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here and on these gifts of bread and wine make them be for us your healing spirit through Christ so that we may be for the world the body of Christ healing agents in a broken world offering the lifeblood of hope by your spirit make us one with Christ one with each other and one in ministry to all the world until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet through your son Jesus Christ with the Holy Spirit in your holy church all honor and glory is yours almighty father now and forever amen and now let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us 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 from evil for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever amen and now if you'll carefully remove your mask on the bottom of our little chalice is the bread as I'll take the bread the body of Christ given for you and on the other side the blood of Christ shed for you may we continue to experience the healing grace of Christ our eternal river by the time for him thank you for having me and on the one and on the other side to him films for him he he he he he

Every eye on twofold, I know you're satisfied. I am empty, but I know your love is not gone dry.

So I'll wait for you, so I'll wait for you.

I'm falling on my knees, offering all of me. Jesus, your heart is what is living for.

[53 : 11] Broken eye on twofold, your arms open wide. I am weary, but I know your touch restores my life.

So I'll wait for you, so I'll wait for you. I'm falling on my knees, offering all of me.

Jesus, your heart is what is living for. I'm falling on my knees, offering all of me.

Jesus, your heart is what is living for. Amen.

Please be seated. Hello.

[54 : 48] Hello. My name is Dana Thompson, and I'm the chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee here at Pendleton Center United Methodist Church.

And on behalf of the Bishop and the Cabinet of the Upper Niagara, the Upper New York Conference, I have been asked to announce that effective July 1st, 2021, Pastor Sherry Mehar has been appointed to Delta United Methodist Church, as well as Rome First United Methodist Church.

This announcement comes to you after much prayer and discernment on the part of the district superintendents, Bishop Mark Webb, and Pastor Sherry.

It's the hope of the SPRC that everyone will prayerfully support and encourage Pastor Sherry in her ministry she has worked so hard to get to, and celebrate her as we send her off at the end of June, and also acknowledge the loss that all of us will feel at her leaving.

If you have any questions, you can ask myself or any other member of the SPRC, and we'd be happy to talk to you about it. Thank you so much. I invite you to stand for these words of benediction.

[56 : 16] Sometimes we may feel as if we are falling on our knees. Sometimes we may feel as though we're crying out.

Sometimes we may feel as though we are rejoicing and giving thanks. In all these things, and all of these places, God is present.

Jesus is saving, and the Holy Spirit is surrounding us, you and I and all.

So we go in peace, not in pieces. We go with sadness and also joy. We go in hope, while sometimes broken.

Go and reach and ask and feel the presence of God. Amen.

[57 : 19] Thank you. Thank you, so much for all the many. Amazing Lord. Most of us. For us is affected by, no nature.

Anyways, continue to be will quasi. If you are going up to a season of mercy, its presence and■■■■ Queer Neil burrus will be doing this wonderful job. Imagine doing this wonderful work or frightfulyife.pu- hospital is not as chairman. I am afraid of it.

someäaca■■■z. Your junior inspiration Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[59 : 16] Thank you.

Thank you.