

Our Service of Worship for January 23, 2022

THIRD SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

Westwood First Presbyterian Church

Cincinnati, OH



Welcome

Prelude: “*Praise to the Lord, the Almighty*”—arr. Robert Hebble

Call to Worship

Rejoice, people of God: this is our Sabbath day.
Rejoice, friends in Christ: this is our time for worship.
God ordained the Sabbath, rest and restoration.
God is worthy of worship, our Creator, Healer, and Inspiration.
So then, let us gather this day to worship the One who created us,
The One who calls us,
The One who equips us,
The One who loves us without end.
With joyful hearts, let us worship God.

Opening Prayer

Gracious, Holy Lord, into your most holy presence we now come. Calm our anxious spirits. Remove the distractions that would keep us from you here today. Break down the walls of separation that we have built to keep you from our hardened hearts. Lead us in joy and celebration of the only reality worth knowing, that you love us as we are. Free us for joyful obedience to your claim and call on our lives this day and every day. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Hymn No. 485: “*To God Be the Glory*”

Invitation to Confession

The act of confessing our sin is not simply a recitation of our faults and wrongs, but also an opportunity to receive God’s mercy and share in that abundant grace. Confident of God’s love for us, let us offer our prayers; first in Prayer of Confession, then in a moment of silent reflection.

Prayer of Confession

Holy God, we ask for your help, your power, your Spirit, so that we can amend our lives and grow more each day into the image of Christ. We confess that we fear what is different. We confess that it’s easier to lock the doors of our community than to receive those who don’t look like or sound like we do. We confess that we have not lived out your call to share in abundant life and unconditional love.

We believe that you have the power to turn us around to a more inclusive way of living, so we ask you to do that. We ask you to give us the courage to change. We ask that you give us the energy, intelligence, imagination, and love to be your people in all we say and do. In Christ we pray. Amen.

A Moment for Silent Confession

Assurance of Forgiveness (*1 John 1:4-7*)

“And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete. And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” This, brothers and sisters—is the good news of the gospel: In the name of Jesus Christ we are forgiven! Thanks be to God! And so—having been forgiven in Christ, may his peace be with you now and forever! Amen and amen.

Prayer for Illumination

First Reading: *Nehemiah 8:1-4a, 5-6, 8-10*

¹All the people gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel. ²Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. ³He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law.

⁴The scribe Ezra stood on a wooden platform that had been made for the purpose; ⁵And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. ⁶Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

⁸So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading. ⁹And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, “This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep.” For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

Gospel Reading: *Luke 4:14-30*

¹⁴Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. ¹⁵He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone. ¹⁶When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, ¹⁷and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

¹⁸“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, ¹⁹to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”



²⁰ And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. ²¹ Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” ²³ He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’”

²⁴ And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. ²⁵ But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶ yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷ There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

²⁸ When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹ They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰ But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

Sermon: “*Afflicted*”

Anthem: “*Prayer of Being*”—Mark Hayes
Chancel Choir Soloists

The Pastoral Prayer and The Lord’s Prayer

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 debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Hymn No. 434: “*Today We All Are Called to Be Disciples*”

Charge and Benediction

Postlude: “*Prelude in Classic Style*”—Craig A. Penfield



Leading Worship This Morning:

Rev. Dr. Jeff Colarossi
Pastor

Heather MacPhail
Organist/Director of Music Ministries

Jason Dennison
Videographer/Director of Technology

Prayer Requests and Announcements

- ✚ PLEASE NOTE: **In-person worship will resume on Sunday, January 30**, the day of our annual congregational meeting. We're asking all attendees to wear a face covering—especially those who've not been vaccinated—and to maintain social distancing.
- ✚ January West-Fed Food Pantry needs: cereal, canned green beans & canned peas
- ✚ The Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation will be held on Sunday, January 30—in-person, as mentioned above. The meeting will be available to be viewed virtually as well, immediately after the service.
- ✚ New Church Office Hours—in addition to Steve Foster's regular Monday church office hours of 10 am—1 pm volunteers will be staffing the church office those hours, Tuesday thru Thursday at least thru the end of February. The office will remain closed Friday.
- ✚ Prayers are requested for:
 - ♥ Anna Hedrick, who was hospitalized last Wednesday with a number of medical issues. She was discharged from the hospital yesterday and returned to Twin Towers for rehab. She is in good spirits, and continues to improve daily.
 - ♥ Barb Nieman still recovering from surgery last week to repair her broken arm.
 - ♥ Rhonda Boddy, still recovering from her car accident.
 - ♥ Dominic, a teen-aged friend of the Zorn's, who will be undergoing open heart surgery at children's next Tuesday for a serious and dangerous heart defect.
 - ♥ DJ Hines, Sandy Morris' brother, dealing with on-going health issues
 - ♥ Tom and Rita Davey, friends of Wendy Beckman.
 - ♥ Susie, a friend of the Kochheisers, undergoing chemotherapy.
 - ♥ Kathy Kiefer, who has been hospitalized with kidney issues.
 - ♥ Linda Kugele who continues to deal with breathing issues.
 - ♥ Betsy Forte, Chancie Brown's sister, dealing with personal issues.
 - ♥ Our homebound members and friends.
 - ♥ The discernment team: Steve Beckman, Mary Ellen Betz, Jane Colarossi, Kent Kochheiser, Ann Regan, Phil Zorn, Bruce Smith, Jan Tepe, Bode Olakanmi.
 - ♥ Session: Beth Kochheiser (clerk), Marc Baverman, Mary Ellen Betz, Chris Beckman, Rhonda Boddy, Linda Gardner, Patti Grace, Jarod Harlow, Janice Kahsar, Julie Lawson, Noelle Scheper,



Moment for Meditation: Jesus Reading from Isaiah 61

If you were a Jew in Israel at the time of Jesus, you were waiting for the long expected Messiah promised in God's word. You would have been familiar with the book of Isaiah which is rich in Messianic prophecies. In the first 3 chapters of Luke we find prophecies of Christ from Isaiah fulfilled.

Some examples: In Luke 1, the angel says Mary will conceive and bear the "Son of the Most High." Isaiah 7 says; "The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and he shall be called Immanuel (God with us)." Then in Luke 2 we read of angels appearing at the birth of the child and singing of the glory of God and peace on earth. Isaiah 9 promised: "Unto us a child is born, to us a son is given," who among other things will be, "Mighty God, Prince of Peace."

Likewise the appearance of John the Baptist in Luke 3 fulfills Isaiah 40:3-5 of “one calling in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.” The obvious unity of prophecies with the person and work of Christ is given by God so that we will believe in Christ. This is God reaching out to us to assure us Christ is the Savior he has sent. In Luke 4, Jesus begins his ministry, in fulfillment of Scripture.

He had become the news of Galilee by all he was doing and saying, so people were very curious about him. He goes into a synagogue in Nazareth, is handed a scroll of the book of Isaiah, finds the place he is looking for, and reads Isaiah 61:1: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jesus then sat down and Luke tells us, “And the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him. And he began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” So the Lord Jesus affirms that he is the one Isaiah and all the prophets wrote of; he announces the salvation of God.

The gospel is the good word of God to us. It reveals the good God to us, and the good Christ. God made all the promises about Christ, and in doing so made himself a debtor to his Word. Christ is the Word of the Father, who reveals all from the bosom of his Father. Therefore he is named ‘the Word.’ The grace of God shines in Christ, and all that is in Christ is conveyed to us by the Word, by the promise. Christ came in the “fulness of time” when the time was right by God’s timing. He will come a second time accordingly, when God’s time is complete.

We see here the essence of the gospel in Christ’s words. He proclaims “liberty to the captives,” and “the year of the Lord’s favor.” When Jesus began his ministry it was the year of jubilee. In the Old Testament all slaves were set free, their debt forgiven at this time. The jubilee was a pattern looking ahead to the spiritual liberty Christ gives to captives. He sets us free from the debt of our sin before God, from the oppression of the devil, and the power of death. He declares a jubilee for the captives. Christ said if he sets you free you will be free indeed.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. Wherever a man resists the gospel of Christ, there you will find bondage. If we would see the gift of life God has blessed us with, it is in Christ. Let this be the year

