

Our Service of Worship for January 30, 2022
FOURTH SUNDAY OF EPIPHANY

Westwood First Presbyterian Church

Cincinnati, OH



Welcome and Announcements

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

During the Prelude, you are invited to take a moment to prepare for worship.

*** Call to Worship (Responsive) and Opening Prayer**

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.

*** Hymn No. 485: “To God Be the Glory” ****

Invitation to Confession

Prayer of Confession (Unison)

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, Personal 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: *Psalm 19:1-6—God's Glory in Creation*

- ¹ The heavens are telling the glory of God;
and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
² Day to day pours forth speech,
and night to night declares knowledge.
³ There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
⁴ yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.

- In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun,
⁵ which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy,
and like a strong man runs its course with joy.
⁶ Its rising is from the end of the heavens,
and its circuit to the end of them;
and nothing is hid from its heat.

Second Reading: *Psalm 121—Assurance of God's Protection*

- ¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills—
from where will my help come?
² My help comes from the LORD,
who made heaven and earth.
³ He will not let your foot be moved;
he who keeps you will not slumber.
⁴ He who keeps Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
⁵ The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand.
⁶ The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.
⁷ The LORD will keep you from all evil;
he will keep your life.
⁸ The LORD will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore.

Third Reading: *Isaiah 40:9-11, 21-26*

- ⁹ Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
“Here is your God!”
¹⁰ See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
²⁵ To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.
²⁶ Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?
He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.

Sermon: “*Perspective*”

Invitation to Offering and Offertory Prayer (Unison)

Generous Lord, Giver of life and Source of freedom, we know that all we have received is from your hand. You call us to be stewards of your abundance, the caretakers of all you have entrusted to us. Help us to always use your gifts wisely and teach us to share them generously. May our faithful stewardship bear witness to the love of Jesus Christ in our lives, for it is in His name we pray. Amen.

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

The Pastoral Prayer and The Lord’s Prayer (Unison)

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. 319:** “*Spirit*” **

Charge and Benediction

* Where indicated (*), those who are able are invited to stand.
** The words to the hymns are included in the bulletin.



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

- ✚ January West-Fed Food Pantry needs: cereal, canned green beans & canned peas.
- ✚ The Annual Meeting of the Congregation and Corporation will be held immediately after worship this morning. There will be an opportunity to ask questions about anything church-related subject or issue.
- ✚ The flowers this morning are given by:
 - ♥ Al Rhein, in memory of Marilyn
 - ♥ Wendy & Steve Beckman in memory of Wendy's parents, Bob & Jessica Nielson, and in honor of our growing family
- ✚ The new program of staffing the church office is temporarily on hold, due to security concerns. If you need to be at the church, please let Pastor Jeff know.
- ✚ Prayers are requested for:
 - ♥ Sandy Morris, who is having surgery Monday morning.
 - ♥ Anna Hedrick, who had been hospitalized two weeks ago with a number of medical issues. She was discharged from the hospital last week 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,



Hymns

To God Be the Glory—Hymn #485

To God be the glory, great things he has done!
So loved he the world that he gave us his Son,
Who yielded His life an atonement for sin,
And opened the life-gate that all may go in.

Refrain: Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord,
Let the earth hear his voice!
Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord!
Let the people rejoice!

Great things he has taught us, great things he has done,
And great our rejoicing through Jesus the Son,
But purer and higher and greater will be
Our wonder, our transport when Jesus we see.
[Refrain]



Spirit—Hymn #319

Refrain: Spirit, spirit of gentleness. Blow through the wilderness, calling and free.
Spirit, spirit of restlessness. Stir me from placidness wind, wind on the sea.

You moved on the waters, you called to the deep,
Then you coaxed up the mountains from the valley of sleep,
And over the eons you called to each thing,
“A wake from your slumbers and rise on your wings.” [Refrain]

You swept through the dessert, you stung with the sand,
And you gifted your people with a law and a land,
And when they were blinded with their idols and lies,
Then you spoke through your prophets to open their eyes. [Refrain]

You sang in a stable, you cried from a hill,
Then you whispered in silence when the whole world was still,
And down in the city you called once again
When you blew through your people on the rush of the wind. [Refrain]

You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes,
From the bondage of sorrow the captives dream dreams;
Our women see visions, our men clear their eyes.
With bold new decisions your people arise. [Refrain]



*I lift my eyes to the hills.
From where does my help come from?
My help comes from the Lord,
who made the heaven and earth.*

Psalm 121:1-2

Moment for Meditation: Isaiah Forty

After thirty nine chapters of narrative, the Book of Isaiah makes a dramatic shift: it becomes a book of poetry. But it makes another, perhaps more radical change: it skips ahead about one hundred and fifty years into the future. Up until this point, Isaiah has spoken about a future exile when the northern kingdom of Israel will be conquered and its people will live in captivity. But from chapter forty to fifty-five, Isaiah is speaking to those who are *currently living* in captivity.

This transition is one of the reasons scholars aren't sure how much the prophet Isaiah actually wrote. But knowing how the context of Isaiah changes in chapter forty helps us understand what it meant when it was written, and what it means for us today. In this moment, the Israelites were plagued with uncertainty and filled with questions only God—or his prophet—could answer. So Yahweh spoke through Isaiah.

Long ago, God promised the Israelites that they would be a great nation. Their cultural identity was deeply tied to their special relationship with the one true God. He had rescued them from slavery and conquered numerous enemies for them. He promised that through them he was going to establish his kingdom on earth. And yet when the Babylonians besieged their capital and took the Israelites captive, God seemed to do nothing. In their worldview, *their* defeat was God's defeat. It was as though Yahweh had been conquered by the Babylonian gods. Was the Israelites' sin too much for him? Had he abandoned them?

Isaiah, in chapter forty in particular, addresses three questions that he knows will be in the minds of those people out there in the future. Does God *want* to deliver us? *Can* He deliver us? *Will* He deliver us? The first verse of Isaiah forty is essentially God's emphatic response to these questions: "Yes."

The word comfort appears all throughout the Bible, but it's a little misleading in contemporary English. For us, in English, comfort is soothing. It eases our pain and makes us feel better. The Hebrew word used here, *nachamu*, means "to strengthen," "to encourage." The Israelites are not done suffering under Babylon—not yet. But God is speaking through Isaiah to bolster them, to give them the strength they need to endure and see his promises fulfilled. The rest of Isaiah 40 expounds on God's ability to provide this comfort and deliver his people, showcasing his authority over *all* nations and rulers and powers. He wants to deliver us, and indeed, as the rest of the chapter tells us, He can deliver us, and He's going to.

~ Dr. John N. Oswalt, <https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/isaiah-40-1>

