

March 2024 Worship Guide

CHERRYVALE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH - 709 CHERRY HILL DR, STAUNTON VA - 540 885 0098

This booklet contains the outline for each worship service during the month of March 2024.

As of the time of going to print, Sunday worship is in person, online and broadcast on the radio (you can listen in your car on FM 87.9, in the church parking lot). If you are not able to attend in person, you can watch online on our website and YouTube channel. Even if we are not worshipping in the same building, we are still one body, one family, we are brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus. Look up the scriptures referenced in the following pages; pray the words, and claim the promises for you and your family. - Pastor Jonathan

Only Through Jesus

Read: John 2:13-25

His disciples had seen Him angry before, but not like this.

His fiery arguments with the religious leaders and naysayers had always been tenuous, but He always seemed to measure His words. But here, today, He had released Himself.

The day had been an emotional one. It started out on a high note with people singing the praises of Jesus as they laid their robes on the ground for the donkey to trod over. Then, as Jerusalem came into sight, He was overcome with emotion and began to cry. His disciples marveled at this, even more than the show of support, for they had all been to Jerusalem before. This time, though, seemed to be different. It was heavy. Weighty. But then the mood changed as they went into the city.

It wasn't that they saw something surprising. There, in the temple complex, in the court of the Gentiles, they saw the same thing they expected to see. Because they expected, they were neither shocked nor angry. But Jesus was.

There were sacrificial animals being sold at ridiculous prices. Exchange booths necessary for foreigners to pay the tax in temple shekels (with a healthy markup, of course). But Jesus exploded into rage. He physically picked up the money-changers and threw them out. He turned over the tables and swept away the money falling to the ground. And when the dust cleared, He stood there. Resolutely. His arms crossed.

Jesus took up a place in that outer court, the court that served as a barrier to those who had come to worship. It was symbolic of the restrictive nature of the temple, a place that ensured only ethnic Jews could go further in, and only those willing to deal with the unjust financial burdens of doing so.

No doubt tomorrow, when Jesus was gone, the same tables would be set up. There would be the same exchange booths, the same animals being bought and sold. But for a few minutes, anyone who wanted to pass beyond the outer court into the inner recesses of the temple complex where God was said to dwell, had no choice but to pass by Jesus. No one came to God except through Him.

Perhaps that image burned into the minds of His followers. The man, so powerful and emotional, equal parts compassionate, joyful and angry, standing there as guard to the presence of God. Serving as the gateway to the inner court. And maybe they remembered that image as they prayed, years and decades later. Once again, no one coming to the Father except through Him.

Continued on P4

March Worship

March 3, 2024

Scriptures to read and meditate on

Exod 20:1-17; Ps 19; 1 Cor 1:18-25; John 2:13-22

Call to Worship

All heaven and earth proclaim the majesty of God's creative power! Praise God for the amazing and awesome beauty. God has given to us codes by which to live together in harmony and peace. In these commandments, God has summed up the ways we must respect God and one another. Rejoice in the goodness of God. Praise God for God's complete and steadfast love for us. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

With hearts of sorrow, we come before you, O God, to confess what you already know; we have failed to keep your laws. Again and again, we have followed our own selfish will, rather than your holy and life-giving boundaries for our lives. We have twisted your decrees and institutions to suit our preconceptions and interests rather than your own. Forgive us, O God, and cleanse us from hidden faults, that the words of our mouths, and the meditations of all our hearts, may be acceptable to you, our Rock and our Redeemer.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

God of holiness and grace, we thank you for your boundaries that guide our hearts and lives. We thank you for your grace that write your law upon our hearts. We know the words of your commandments. In our hearts, we know that following them makes life easier, not harder; fuller, not more restricted. We know there is no God other than You, yet we have made the silliest things our gods and have thrown our money and resources after them. As we offer our gifts this day, we thank you for the gift of a savior and the redemption of our rebellious lives. In Christ's name, we trust and pray. Amen

~~~~~

March 10, 2024

**Scriptures to read and meditate on**

Num 21:4-9; Ps 107:1-22 ; Eph 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

## **Call to Worship**

At a time when humankind had exhausted its own efforts to know and be known by God, the Word became flesh and lived among us. (John 1:14.) Jesus came to us; God with us, revealing God to us. Jesus came to us, the ultimate act of hospitality. Jesus remained with us for a time, in spite of our dull understanding and willful acts against God. He emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. He humbled himself and submitted to the humiliation of death on a cross. (Philippians 2:6-8.) Jesus came to us in the ultimate act of self-sacrifice. Jesus came to us as the ultimate expression of love. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."

## **Prayer of Confession**

Gracious and loving God, open our hearts so that we are able to admit to you the fullness of our lives, that which is beautiful and good, and that which is hurtful and hateful. We confess that we do not follow Jesus in all that we do. We love with condition. We quickly judge and condemn. We cast the first stone and keep the logs in our own eyes. We do not turn to You as the source of our healing. Forgive us, we pray. Forgive our sin and empower us to turn our gaze upon you as you are lifted up for our healing.

## **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Great and generous God, our lives are surrounded by things that steal our lives, inflict, and destroy us. Our offering that we share with you this day is a way of keeping us focused not on the things that would take life away, but will renew our lives: hope, love, compassion, empathy. As the Israelites looked to a serpent on a pole for healing, we look to a Savior on a cross to be brought back to life, and we thank you for that gift. In the holy name of Jesus, the Messiah, we pray. Amen.

# March Worship

**March 17, 2024**

**Scriptures to read and meditate on**

Jer 31:31-34; Ps 51:1-12; Heb 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

## **Call to Worship**

The Lord has made a new covenant with the people of God. Here in this place, Christ writes the law of love on our hearts. We are children of the living God. We all know the Lord. The Lord restores the joy of our salvation and gives to us a willing spirit God is so good to us. Let God's goodness change your heart. Together, let us worship the Lord of Love!

## **Prayer of Confession**

Have mercy on us, God, according to your faithful love! Wipe away our wrongdoings according to your great compassion! Wash us completely clean of our guilt; purify us from our sin! Because we know our wrongdoings, our sin is always right in front of us. We've sinned against you, you alone. We've committed evil in your sight. Meet us here today and teach us to recognize the covenant of justice, peace, and love that you have written on our hearts. Create a clean heart in us; put a new, faithful spirit deep inside us! May our desires become your desires, our work become your work, and our community the place where you are sought and found.

## **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

God of compassion, we express our gratitude to you for your boundless compassion. Despite our shortcomings in upholding your commandments and rebelling against the path that leads to peace and happiness, your love for us remains immeasurable. You have graciously given us a new covenant, one that is not carved on stone tablets, but engraved upon our very hearts. In our giving, and in all our offerings, may it be our lives, our love and devotion that we bring to your altar. May we always bear in mind that your love for us was so immense that you willingly sacrificed your Son on the cross, a price beyond measure. Our gifts are meager in comparison, but let them remind us of what you gave first. In Christ, our Savior and Redeemer, we pray. Amen.

~~~~~

Worship March 24 - Palm Sunday

Scriptures to read and meditate on

Mark 11:1-11; Ps 118:1-29 ; Isa 50:4-9a; Ps 31:9-16;
Phil 2:5-11; Mark 14:1-15 Mark 15:1-39

Mark 11: 1-11

¹ When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Bethphage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples ² and said to them, "Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it. ³ If anyone says to you, 'Why are you doing this?' just say this: 'The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately.' " ⁴ They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, ⁵ some of the bystanders said to them, "What are you doing, untying the colt?" ⁶ They told them what Jesus had said, and they allowed them to take it. ⁷ Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it, and he sat on it. ⁸ Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! ¹⁰ Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!" ¹¹ Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the temple, and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Most Gracious and Merciful God, we give you thanks for what you have done for us in Christ Jesus. We humbly repent of our sins and turn to you seeking forgiveness. Let these gifts that we now offer to you be a part of our acts of penitence, expressing our desire to follow and love you with our whole heart, mind, soul, body, and strength, as well as loving our neighbor as ourselves. We thank you for your forgiveness. May we strive to know you deeper and deeper through this Holy Week as we journey with you to the cross. Through Christ our Savior we pray. Amen.

March Worship

Worship March 28 - Maundy Thursday

Scriptures to read and meditate on

Exod 12:1-14; Ps 116:1-19; 1 Cor 11:23-26; John 13:1-35

Call To Worship

Come, you with dirty feet, aching backs, and weary souls. We come bearing a heavy load of worry, frustration, and isolation. Come, you who are hungry, thirsty, longing to meet the one who will feed you, body and soul. We come with emptiness in our stomachs and our hearts, desperate to be filled. Come to meet Jesus who kneels to wash our dirt and grime, who feeds us with bread and with love that never ends. We come to receive the balm for our anxiety, the provision for our hunger, the antidote for our loneliness. Come to receive a new commandment: love one another as Christ has loved you. We come to embrace this new commandment so that everyone will know we are disciples of Jesus Christ, God Incarnate who came to live and love among us. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Merciful God, we have failed to be obedient to your Word, we have not done your will, and we have broken your law. Most merciful God, we your Church confess that often our spirit has not been that of Christ. Where we have failed to love one another as he loves us, where we have pledged loyalty to him with our lips and then betrayed, deserted, or denied him, forgive us, we pray. By your Spirit make us faithful in every time of trial, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Eternal God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit, to give ourselves for others, as we are known by our love that we follow you. Amen.

Worship March 29 - Good Friday

Scriptures to read and meditate on

Isa 52:13-53:12; Ps 22; Heb 10:16-25; John 18:1- 19:42

PRAYER OF GOOD FRIDAY

Almighty God, graciously behold this your family, for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed into the hands of sinners, and to suffer death upon the cross; who now lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, One God, for ever and ever. Amen.

A separate booklet for Good Friday is enclosed.

Continued from front cover.....

No Christ Without The Cross

Many of us dearly love the teachings of Jesus with all their rebellious love, extravagant grace and audacious freedom. And yet often we don't want to talk about the cross. It's an unfortunate end to the story of our great teacher, and so we play up the teachings and play down the blood and the guts and the death.

But there is no "Christ" without the cross. Jesus said so himself:

"When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven ...'" Matthew 16:13-17

March Worship

March 31, 2024 - Resurrection Sunday **Scriptures to read and meditate on**

Acts 10:34-43; Ps 118:1-24; 1 Cor 15:1-11; John 20:1-18; Mark 16:1-8

Call to Worship

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Prayer of Confession

O Lord, your wondrous birth means nothing unless we are born again, your death and sacrifice mean nothing unless we die to sin, your resurrection means nothing if you be risen alone. We confess that we too often have chosen to remain captive to doubt and fear and ways that lead to death. By our thoughts, words, and actions, we have scorned your love, diminished the lives of others, and defaced your image in us. Father, forgive us for Jesus' sake, and enable us by His resurrection power to live no longer for ourselves but for Him who died and rose again for us.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Almighty and Everlasting God, we give you thanks for this holy mystery in which you have given yourself to us. You Thank you, O Christ, for this feast of life. We are fed by your love and we are strengthened by your life. Thank you for taking our Sin upon the cross to be crucified. Thank you for dying our death so that we may rise with you to new life. Bless what we have offered to you this day so that your Kingdom may spread to the ends of the earth. Grant that we may go into the world in the strength of your Spirit as we are sent forth to live your life and share your joy, as we give ourselves for others. For Christ is Risen as our Lord and Savior, Alleluia! Amen.

No Christ Without The Cross - continued

Well done, Peter. That's the right answer.

Amidst the wealth of confusion about the identity of Jesus, you nailed it. So right are you, in fact, that your answer could not have come exclusively by your own intuition or intellect—it was a gift from God Himself. But Peter did not understand the implications of calling Jesus the Messiah, or the Christ:

"From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 'Never, Lord!' he said. 'This shall never happen to you!' Jesus turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns'". Matthew 16:21-23

Peter wanted a cross-less Christ. A great teacher. A charismatic leader. But a dead one? A suffering one? Unthinkable. That can't be right. But according to Jesus, the very idea that He might be Christ and yet not face the cross is blasphemous. An idea with demonic origins. It cannot be so. Jesus won't stand for it.

If you take the cross away from Jesus, you strip Him of His mission. You devalue His life. You nullify His authority. And you stand against His crowning triumph and glory.

Jesus withstood the taunts of the soldiers. He was silent before the mocking crowd and the preening government officials. But He will not remain silent when someone tries to separate Him from the very reason He came to earth in the first place. There is no such thing as a cross-less Christ.

Continued on back page

Mark 16: 1-8 Word Search

Just for fun, or use as a teaching aide with your younger family members.

G J S E J D S A K A E H F Y E Z Q L S G G A E S U K R T D U
Z Y V L Z A Q M M J G H I A G D U A Y D R T H D W D O E I B
S E C Z B E S P I C E S R W Z N I E B O R E T I H W L R A C
P X F B X H W K O K K V S A K D I S A W K I H Y V Y L R R W
D L A G B A E E C Y S G T L A D X H T L C R P T X K E O F R
F T X T F G A W M C H Q D L Y T N I T H N Y O T O K D R A Q
H L X G Q N H P Y X S O A O J P Y H D O G O M X Z M B Q E P
R B E F R I H M N I Z Y Y R S M H D P X N I M G A K A B R B
N E D D P O J T V B O I O Y H Z W E G G H D R M K I C D E D
L L H X F G A Z M U K B F H W K Q M G R P N I S F B K B W H
I W R T E R X B N V L T T Z M M D R D J E S H A V U L L T L
X B L Y O U O G A B L J H D R W K A B T Q T B T S T K E A E
A O E Y S N M M Y V E X E B M O T L L O O K E D U P R I C W
L Q T E Z A A D T Y M E W K J K O A W F U K L P A A D N S E
I T P F N E Z E B H M D E W I L L S E E H I M M Z H A P X K
W O H P M R E D N C E O E L V N L V T U G I A A I R R T I J
Y E Q O B Z A H G O F T K M O Q W K X I S Z N M T C M B W Y
E T L Z M K M I J X S K O I Y I U L E R E F H N E U A X X C
Y A Z F Y Q R Q S P N P L M P P Q S C M O O E O R A F Z M D
S N P Y X A P B T E V P K W B S C W E S N Y D T N N X C F K
C T J Q X T E A V U D B C D L U U N U K H H A H C H G A I O
I I W M F B Y O K D P L P K D F T S F V F A S E K F W B I X
V P Z C S C W K R O N P S H G A E A F X D V L R G U L L D T
R H K S E L P I C S I D A K Y J E U N Z S I Y E H L S C N T
F Y O D M L M B W G L D A D M E H T D E Z I E S V X K T I G
E N E L A D G A M Y R A M N L D X G O S W V E F N T T H H Y
I E E L J S X I H I E J Q I O Q C B O P T C R U C I F I E D
V A O D O Y K T S E W U L O X I F M F H G O D H J Y X P V J
A F D G R X O E X O G A Q A D T N Z T E E B N K V C N M G K
E T C C I J N B Y D G P D O L C N T P X I I Y E S N P Z R S

Find the **36 bold** words or phrases from Mark 16: 1-8

When the **Sabbath** was over, **Mary Magdalene** and Mary the **mother** of **James** and **Salome** bought **spices**, so that they might go and **anoint** him. And very early on the **first day of the week**, when the sun **had risen**, they went to the **tomb**. They had been saying to **one another**, “Who will **roll away** the stone for us from the **entrance** to the tomb?” When they **looked up**, they saw that the **stone**, which was very large, had already been **rolled back**. As they entered the tomb, they saw a **young man** dressed in a **white robe** sitting on the **right side**, and they were **alarmed**. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for **Jesus of Nazareth**, who was **crucified**. He has **been raised**; he is **not here**. Look, there is the place they **laid him**. But go, tell his **disciples** and **Peter** that he is **going ahead** of you to **Galilee**; there you **will see him**, just as he told you.” So they went out and **fled from the tomb**, for **terror** and **amazement** had **seized them**, and they **said nothing** to anyone, for they **were afraid**.

Approach The Father

Yahweh. We say it now with some casualness. It's another name for God, albeit in another language. It's become a helpful tool for sounding smart or spiritual; more of an official title for deity. Not so to the Hebrews. This was a holy name. **The** holy name. The name that was so holy, so separate that it was never uttered. Never completely written. In fact, we might even be pronouncing it incorrectly because it was never said out loud in ancient times.

Then you can imagine the outright scandal that occurred when some upstart Rabbi showed up on the scene in first century not using this name. Instead he referenced the God of this name with utter and complete familiarity. Jesus called Him "Abba." Daddy. A term of affection. No wonder they called Him a blasphemer. The gospels record again and again Jesus calling God His Father, all the while the onlookers marveled: Where is the fear? Where is the respect? Where is the reverence?

Oh, they were all there, but something else was there too. There was love. Both given and received. But there is one instance when Jesus didn't use this name for God. There was one moment when "Abba" became "My God." As Jesus was suspended in the air, nailed to two cross beams, He felt the broken relationship with His Father as sin was thrust upon Him. The unthinkable happened, and Jesus responded by quoting Psalm 22:1: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

"Abba" became "My God" at the cross. But gloriously, "My God" also became "Abba" at the cross. The unthinkable happened.

Those held at a distance from God because of their sin suddenly had access into the unseen realms of glory. The far were brought near. The alienated were brought inside the house. The enemies became children.

And we now cry, "Abba, Father," precisely because He cried "My God."

Jesus Defeats Death

John 11 records the raising of Lazarus from the dead, one of the best-known miracles of Jesus. And yet when you read the story in its entirety, you see the great detail John recorded in order to put us in Bethany that day. Take, for example, the fact that Lazarus had been in the grave for four days. That's pretty significant; a detail that John purposely included.

Jewish folklore said that the soul would hover above the body for up to four days after death, looking for signs of life and a chance to return. But after four days of death, there was no hope. Decomposition sets in, and the body begins to decay. Oh, the smell. Maybe that would have been the worst part. It would have been putrid. Abhorrent. Disgusting. The body would be sealed inside a tomb to keep the smell of the dead away from the living. The smell of rotteness and lifelessness. It's a sensory reminder that the situation was beyond repair.

But Jesus wasn't afraid of that smell. He strode boldly to the tomb and commanded that the stone be rolled away. But there were protests. "Lord, he already stinks. It's been four days," said the grieving sister. "Don't roll the stone away. It's going to stink. Let us leave him alone; what good is there in confronting that smell? The smell of death?"

But Jesus isn't afraid of that smell. He inhales it deeply and then breaths it back out. He's not afraid of it because He won't abide it. He reaches into the smell of death and produces the fragrance of life. He did it with Lazarus; He did it with me; and He's doing it countless times every day. We recoil at the smell of death. Our stomachs turn. Bile comes up in our throats. But Jesus? Jesus beats back the stench of death with the fragrance of life. And the dead come forth ...

Where is your sting, death? That's what Paul asked. He asked because the sting is nowhere to be found. Jesus confronted it and won. Because He did, He's not repulsed by the seeming stench of death. In that smell, Jesus sees the potential for new life.