

Moore Presbyterian Churches January 15, 2023



*Indicates to please stand as you are able.

God calls us to worship:

*Call to worship (*responsive*):

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same
My name is great among the nations,
and in every place incense is offered in my name,
says the Lord. (Malachi 1:11)

**Arise, shine; for your light has come,
and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.** (Isaiah 60:1)

Jesus said, 'I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.' (John 8:12)

*Hymn: #370 "Hallelujah! sing to Jesus"

We respond in praise and confession:

*Prayer of praise and supplication:

God, our Creator and Redeemer,
your faithfulness endures forever.
You offer us new life in Christ Jesus and call us to follow him.
You challenge us to bring life and hope to the world you love.
In you we find strength and courage to face every challenge,
until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ arrives.
And so we offer our praise and gratitude to you, O God,
with Christ and the Spirit, one God, now and always. Amen.

Prayer of confession (*Responsive. Psalm 51*):

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin.
You desire truth in the inward being;
therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and put a new and right spirit within me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation,
and sustain in me a willing spirit.

We hear the gospel of God's grace:

(Pour water into the baptismal font and then say:)

Let us rejoice, for God has put a new song in our mouths! Trust in God's enduring love and mercy, washing over us every day. Remember your baptism, and know that forgiveness is yours through the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*Hymn: #712 "Arise, your light is come"

God speaks to us:

A New Song

Within the context of his much larger book, Isaiah wrote four poems that are known as the "Servant Songs." These four poems describe an unnamed servant who is chosen and appointed by the Lord God to be the agent of God's grace and salvation in the world.

The servant was understood in two ways. In one, the servant was understood to be a corporate servant. It was understood to be the nation of Israel: God's holy body of humanity, set apart to be His light – to be the communal agent of God's grace and salvation in a world full of non-living deities, idols, and human-centric concerns.

At the same time, the servant was also understood to be a single person. Someone anointed by God (which is the meaning of "Messiah") to be His agent of salvation for Israel.

In other words, God would send this servant to redeem and restore Israel so that they could in turn fulfil their original purpose which was to reveal the truth of the Living Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and thus be agents of His grace for the people around whom they lived.

Over the next few weeks, along with the Sermon on the Mount, we'll hear the four servant songs and see what the Holy Spirit wants to teach us through Isaiah's words.

READ MATTHEW 4:23-5:16
ISAIAH 42:1-12.

The song begins with the voice of God, speaking through Isaiah, presenting His chosen servant for the salvation of His people.

Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights...

It then proceeds to explain that the Lord God has anointed this servant with his very spirit. The Hebrew word is *ru'ah* which refers to the wind or one's breath. Because without breath you can have no life, *ru'ah* refers to the invisible thing that brings oxygen into our bodies, expels the toxic CO₂ and animates the soul.

It was the divine breath that swept over the chaotic primordial waters and brought forth order and beauty and life at the beginning of creation.

In other words, the Lord God has breathed into this servant, so that he would come alive and, with the tenderest compassion such that he will not break a bruised reed nor snuff out a dimly burning wick, nor feel the need to shout or lift up his voice, he will tirelessly "bring forth justice to the nations."

Here's another bit of word study. The word rendered "justice" comes from the Hebrew word *mishpaw* which, in the simplest form, means judgment. It means to judge and choose according to what God deems to be right, good, and holy. In verse 4, the word "teaching" comes from the Hebrew word *Torah* which means law and typically refers to the first 5 books of our Old Testament.

Taken together, this Servant is chosen by the Living Lord God who created the heavens and the earth and gives breath to those walk upon it. The Servant is authorized and equipped by the presence and power of the divine life source – the Holy Spirit to bring the right teaching/understanding of the Lord God's law to the nations.

The Servant is chosen, authorized, and equipped by the power of the Holy Spirit to bring the Lord God's teachings of what is good, holy, and right to the Gentile nations as well as to the descendants of Abraham.

When Jesus spoke to the crowds on the mountain, he spoke to Jews from Jerusalem and Judea, and he spoke to Gentiles from the Decapolis (a collection of 10 cities north-east of Judea), as well as from the lands beyond the Jordan. After describing the character of those who know the blessings of God, and after reassuring them that because of Jesus, they will be persecuted and hated, He told them:

You are the light of the world.

He didn't say "You will become the light of the world if you do this, that, and the other." He was speaking *descriptively*, not *prescriptively*. He said "You *are* the light of the world."

Because of the Servant, Jesus; because of salvation; because of the Holy Spirit whom the Lord God has breathed into everyone who is baptized, we *are*, with Christ, the light of the world.

Just as mirrors reflect the sun, Christians reflect Christ. We reflect His grace, His mercy, and His understanding and practice of the Law: of what is good, right, and holy as set by the Sovereign of Creation.

The Lord God didn't send the servant with a new law book. He sent his servant to open the minds of his people so that they would understand what the Law truly means.

The Sermon on the Mount is often taken as Jesus' summation of the teachings of the various covenants. By placing it near the beginning of his gospel, Matthew made the claim, that if we can live by Jesus' interpretation of the law contained therein, we will do good works in such a way that our Father in heaven is glorified.

Yet, even in this sermon, Jesus didn't bring forward new ideas. He taught God's law.

We're not given a new law book by which to live.

What makes our song new is not so much the words we sing or the melody to which we sing them, but the attitude with which we sing them.

We can sing "Holy, Holy, Holy" and make it sound like we've sung it a thousand times before and are bored to tears with it. Or, we can sing it and it sounds like we've sung it a thousand times before and with each singing there's something unseen yet powerfully real within us inspiring us with faith, hope, love, and joy.

The prophet Jeremiah wrote that under the New Covenant, the Lord God would write his law on the people's hearts. He didn't say he'd give us a new law. Rather, as David prayed in Psalm 51, he'd create in us a clean heart and a right spirit so that we could understand the law; so that we could know God truly, live lives rightly, and be restored in the joy of God's salvation.

That is the light. That is the revelation which Jesus brings to us Gentiles and equips us as light and salt in the world, to bring to those with whom we live, work, and play.

We have a rare opportunity to sing a new song to the Lord. To confess that He is Sovereign of Creation. To trust that His Scriptures *will* guide us in the way of righteousness – even if such a way is different from that of the society in which we live. To learn from the Servant God’s ways of justice and thus reflect His healing and igniting light into a world of broken reeds and dimly burning wicks.

We respond by affirming our faith, offering our tithes, and prayer:

*The Apostle's Creed (*unison*):

*Offering:

(*Offering plates are presented at the Communion Table while congregation sings:*)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;

praise him all creatures here below;

praise him above, ye heavenly host;

praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost

Prayer of dedication

Prayers of thanksgiving, intercession, and the Lord's Prayer:

God of purpose and promise,

we open our hearts to you in prayer, trusting in your mercy to bear the burdens we carry.

We thank you for the work and witness of your Church, bringing your Good News into many lives and situations throughout the earth. Today we pray for congregations that are struggling financially, for churches caught up in conflict, and for all those church members who are tired and need your renewing Spirit.

(Hold a few seconds of silence.)

Guide them with your grace.

We thank you for the healing that comes from your hand, O God, in times of reconciliation when your forgiving love is at work, and in times when pain is eased and grief is comforted.

Today we pray for those whose emotions are raw, for those whose bodies are weakened in this winter of sickness and for any whose minds are troubled in any way.

(Hold a few seconds of silence.)

Give them hope for new life with you.

We lift to you people around the world who work for justice and unity to prevail in the midst of division: in nations where conflict has broken out or repression rules, in places facing poverty, famine or destruction from disaster, and anywhere racial and ethnic disparities weaken common life.

We pray for Canada in this time when resentments simmer and differences deepen.

(Hold a few seconds of silence.)

Send your justice to bring relief and your peace to help understanding prevail.

As the followers of Jesus, give us the courage to unite not only in prayer but also in action for the needs of this world.

Strengthen us to work together, despite our differences, so others may see what it means to follow you in Christ's name.

And so we join in the prayer Jesus taught us:

The Lord's Prayer

God sends us with God's blessing:

*Hymn: #641 "One more step along the world I go"

Benediction

Congregational Amen