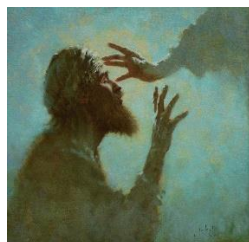


**Moore Presbyterian Churches**  
**April 30, 2023**  
*Fourth Sunday of Easter*



\*Indicates to please stand as you are able.

**God calls us to worship:**

*Call to worship:*

Our help is in the name of the Lord,  
who made heaven and earth. (Psalm 124:8)

Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.  
Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord,  
and He will exalt you. (James 4:8, 10)

O come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!  
For He is our God,  
and we are the people of His pasture,  
and the sheep of His hand. (Psalm 95:6-7)

**We respond in praise and confession:**

Prayer of praise and supplication:

Holy Lord, God of power and might,  
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

On the first day of the week  
you began creation,  
bringing light out of darkness,  
order out of chaos,  
and life out of emptiness.

On the first day of the week  
you began your new creation,  
raising Jesus the Christ out of the darkness of death.

On this Lord's Day,  
as we gather to worship you,  
supply us anew with your grace  
so that we, with the rest of the church  
and the whole of your creation,  
may praise and adore you,  
O God,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
Amen.

\*Hymn: #247 "Christ the Lord is risen today"

Prayer of confession (*unison*):

**Merciful God,  
as we gather to celebrate your gift of love  
we recall the times when we forget you  
and are divided one from the other.  
How often our thoughts,  
our words, and our actions  
have betrayed the goodness  
you have shown to us.  
How often we refuse to believe that you have forgiven sin and  
promise resurrection  
foreshadowed by Christ's own.  
Forgive us, merciful God.  
Mend what is broken.  
Heal what is wounded.  
Restore to us the joy of your salvation,  
and sustain in us a willing spirit.  
Amen.**

We hear the gospel of God's grace:

\*Hymn: #507 "Break now the bread of life"

**God speaks to us:**

Scripture: Acts 2:32-41  
Luke 24:36-48  
Mark 16:9--20

(The response to: "This is the word of the Lord" is, "**Thanks be to God**")

### The Church's Mission, Christ's Ministry

Jesus came to make it known that the heavenly Father is real, good, and able. He came to reveal God and God's kingdom. This was his earthly *mission*.

To prove it Jesus undid the effects of sin. He healed the sick, exorcised demons, and proclaimed forgiveness of sin and reconciliation with our Creator. This was his earthly *ministry*.

Jesus' earthly *mission* was to glorify the Father. He fulfilled his *mission* by performing his *ministry*: healing the sick, casting out demons, announcing God's reign over the power of sin, death, and the devil.

Mission has to do with purpose.

Ministry has to do with service.

As his physical body in this age, gathered in his holy name and animated by the Holy Spirit, the Christian church has the same *mission*.

Those of you raised on the *Westminster Catechism* will surely remember the very first question and answer:

*What is the chief end of humankind?  
To glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever.*

The word *glorify* means to tell the truth about something. To *glorify* God is to truthfully reveal the living, holy, and triune God.

Our *mission*, therefore, is to make it known that there is a God; that this God is a living being, that He is real, holy and triune, good and able.

There's an interesting little detail we need to keep in mind. Jesus did nothing except what the Father told Him. He truthfully revealed the Father because he was fully, trustingly obedient to the Father's words.

Likewise, we can do nothing apart from Christ.

Both of our gospel readings describe scenes in which the apostles were sitting at a table when the resurrected Lord appeared to them.

When someone we love dies, it's not uncommon, in the weeks or months following their death, to see them. Several weeks after my grandfather died, I was at the piano engaged in my studies when I saw him standing by the window looking in and listening. It seemed as real as you and I sitting in the same room. And I've

heard similar stories from other people journeying through grief. Of course, my grandfather wasn't actually there. There was something else going on in my mind as I grieved.

This wasn't what happened when Jesus appeared with his disciples after his crucifixion. He wasn't a ghost. He wasn't a vision. He was resurrected. He was physically, bodily raised from the dead on the third day after he was crucified and buried. His disciples could see him, touch him, eat with him, and smell him.

This Jesus God raised up and has made him both Lord and Messiah! Having forgiven sin, he has overcome death and despair as resurrected Lord and Messiah!

In Mark's account, Jesus appeared while the 11 apostles ate at a table. He commissioned them to go to the whole of creation proclaiming the good news of his resurrection, the forgiveness of sin, and the here-and-now rule of God. And, he told them that what we might call miracles would be commonplace occurrences accompanying everyone who *believed*.

*...by using my name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes in their hands, and if they drink any deadly thing, it will not hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.<sup>1</sup>*

They were to proclaim to the whole of creation that Jesus of Nazareth is the crucified *and* resurrected Lord and Messiah and that His reign supersedes that of the devil's. The proof is that the people who are sick, tired, and distressed will be made whole.

The key piece we must remember is what comes next.

When Jesus' church believes in the efficacy of his sacrifice and the truth of his resurrection, trusts His Word, and acts accordingly,

*...the **Lord** worked with them and confirmed the message by the signs that accompany it.<sup>2</sup>*

Healing is not done by our powers and abilities.

It is a mistake to talk about the *church's* ministry, much less about individual Christian's ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 16:17-18

<sup>2</sup> Mark 16:20

We are not a service organization like the Shriners, or the Rotary, or any number of other organizations that exist to serve the community.

The church is the body of Christ, the physical and temporal expression of Christ in the present age, gathered in worship of Him and empowered by His Holy Spirit.

We have a *mission* but we have no *ministry*.

Rather, Christ continues *his* ministry through his church.

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*The church's mission is to be the body through which the Lord and Messiah Jesus continues His ministry in the present age. Jesus' ministry is to undo the effects of sin in the world God created and loves: heal the sick, cast out demons, and proclaim that God has forgiven sin.*

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It often seems as though we in the church assume that the world outside our walls needs to change and return to God.

Sunday sports need to cease, as does Sunday business. The Lord's Prayer needs to be returned to schools and parliament. The Ten Commandments need to be well-rehearsed in every home and family.

There's probably some validity to that assumption.

However, it also seems as though we often assume that we in the church don't have to change.

When Jesus appeared to his disciples and apostles in both Mark and Luke's accounts, the first thing he did was to open their eyes and soften their hearts to their own doubt.

These were men who knew Jesus first-hand. They loved him and devoted their lives to him.

And yet, they were in danger of allowing their doubts to control their minds and hearts and restrict Christ's ability to continue his ministry through them.

*Jesus said to them, 'Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts?'*

*...he upbraided them for their lack of faith and stubbornness, because they had not believed...*

For his church to be what Jesus needs his church to be, doubt must be addressed, and trusting and obedient belief must be encouraged!

Jesus has forgiven sin.

He has defeated the devil.

He has taken our hurts upon himself on the cross.

He has risen from the dead.

He has overcome all that threatens the life God loves.

“...these signs will accompany those who believe ...”!

If the message is not reaching the hearts of the weary; if the sick are not being healed and the poor are not receiving good news; if demons are not being cast out of hearts and minds, then perhaps it is time to ask if we are allowing Christ to continue his ministry through us. Perhaps it is time to re-introduce *repentance* into our vocabulary.

*Repentance* is a good word. It's a word of grace.

It's a word that opens us to the boundless promise of the indwelling Holy Spirit made possible because Jesus has forgiven sin by the cross.

It's a word that opens us to the peace that's beyond understanding which the resurrected Jesus offered his disciples as they sat at supper.

And it's a word that prepares us to participate in Christ's ongoing ministry to bring a broken and hurting world into the state of sin-forgiveness: of healing and of peace in His name and for God's glory.

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

\*The Apostles' Creed

\*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, the Lord's Prayer:

Wise and generous God, shepherd of our lives,  
we are thankful this day for all you provide to sustain us.  
You call our weary souls to rest when the world seems busy.  
You bless us with the promise of new life  
as pastures around us turn green, announcing another spring.  
You gather us around tables of friendship to draw strength from one another.  
Thank you for signs of your goodness and mercy we can treasure each day.

Loving and Listening God, shepherd of the world,  
we bring you our prayers for others, friends and enemies, neighbours and  
strangers alike.

We pray for people who are struggling with illness, loneliness, grief or  
sadness:

*Hold silence for 15 seconds.*

Walk with them through dark days and steep valleys.

We pray for people in countries and communities  
where it is not safe to live out their faith or express their views openly.

*Hold silence for 15 seconds.*

Walk with them through dark days and steep valleys.

We pray for victims of discrimination and acts of hatred,  
and those who fear violence day by day.

*Hold silence for 15 seconds.*

Walk with them through dark days and steep valleys.

We pray for journalists and advocates for justice  
who live under threat for telling the truth.

*Hold silence for 15 seconds.*

Walk with them through dark days and steep valleys.

We pray for churches, local organizations and businesses  
that face difficulty reorganizing and the pressure of economic challenges.

*Hold silence for 15 seconds.*

Walk with them through dark days and steep valleys.

We pray for our families, friends and for ourselves,  
as well as those in the news whose situations tug at our hearts.

*Hold silence for 15 seconds.*

Walk with us all through dark days and steep valleys.

We offer these prayers and our unspoken concerns to you,  
in the name of the Risen Lord who taught us to pray:

**The Lord's Prayer**

**God sends us to serve and witness with God's blessing:**

\*Hymn: #365 "This is the threefold truth"

Benediction

Congregational Amen