



Worship Celebration

March 5, 2023

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WORSHIP GUIDE

Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, something to write on and with, your computer/connected device (if you intend to listen to music online), etc. Feel free to adapt this worship guide in any way that makes best sense to you and those you might be gathered with. (Consider inviting someone – a friend, a family member – to worship with you.) Commit to spending the next hour with God.

PRELUDE – Listen and sing along to a song or hymn that blesses and centers your spirit! Listen [here](#) for a gift featuring Lucca and Anne.

OPENING HYMN – “Shout to the Lord” TFWS #2074
Listen [here](#) for a gift featuring Lucca, Anne, Rod, Brian, Ysrael and those in the building.

OPENING PRAYER - Listen [here](#) for the Opening Prayer led by Steve.
Let us join our hearts and spirits in prayer.

God of love, we are tempted by many things, many urges, voices and powers. Help us listen to you, trust you and serve you. As we hear your Word, we return to you. Help us always to return to you, in the Spirit and the company of Christ.
Amen.

Source: Rev. Steve Garnaas-Holmes, [Unfolding Light](#)

SCRIPTURE READING – Luke 7:36-39 and Luke 8:1-3 (NSRV) led by Marjorie.

Luke 7:36-39 NSRV

³⁶ One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and when he went into the Pharisee’s house he reclined to dine. ³⁷ And a woman in the city who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸ She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair, kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment. ³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner.”

Luke 8:1-3 NSRV

Soon afterward he went on through one town and village after another, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him, ² as well as some women who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene,

from whom seven demons had gone out,³ and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered to them out of their own resources.

LISTEN – Sermon– *You can listen to the sermon from Pastor Akesa [here](#).*

We continue this second Sunday of Lent; the season in the church calendar leading up to Easter considered the 40-day period of spiritual preparation. This because we can use this time to evaluate where we are in our own spiritual journey and be honest about what can be next if we would be open to let the Holy Spirit lead us in an opportunity of self-reflection and deepening our journey with Christ.

If you would be willing to be curious this Lenten season by allowing yourself to learn more about Jesus, I think you will be surprised because it is in this time of Lent that we have an opportunity to seek to know Jesus more, know his messages, his life, and his resurrection. This is our season to grow our understanding of Christ and grow and strengthen our relationship with Christ what you will sometimes hear referred to as a time of renewal in the wilderness.

When I think of time in the wilderness, it is a time for retreat to rest, pray, listen for what God may be inviting you to consider but yet it is hard to hear because of the noisiness of our busy lives with full calendar schedules, constant dinging phones with not just with text messages, phone calls, email notifications, but there's the notification from the Amazon delivery, from the Dasher who is delivering groceries or dinner, the Instacart delivery, the CNN late-breaking news, the ding of your Ring security camera whenever someone crosses along the front of your house.

You get the idea—so much going on— and not just with the little computers in our hands but with every part of our lives. So the idea of the 40-days of Lent being in the wilderness or a time for spiritual preparation is an opportunity for intentional prayer, fasting, and renewal or strengthening our faith.

As you have heard me say this Lent here at Twin Towers we are looking at the Gospel of Luke in depth with a Monday book study, a 40-day reading plan using the Gospel of Luke, and my messages for Lent which will also be from Luke. It is my prayer, hope and invitation to you to engage in one of these areas of conversation and reading.

Why am I inviting you to participate? Because I want you to get to know Jesus more through seeing and knowing more about his life and what he was like when he walked this earth over 2000 years ago and to get to know him more. I say this because Sunday mornings are not enough. We get to know others and areas of interest to us by spending time to learn more about the people and the subjects that are important to us. As your pastor, I know that the more you get to know the love of God through the life of Jesus, the more you will notice a change in your personal relationship with God.

There is a shift in our lives as our faith grows so that the result is that when we face challenges on the journey, as we can all attest they happen. And when that happens be it in

our health, finances, relationships, work life, friendships, and the list is long; you will find that the anxiety and worries may not seem so overwhelming.

The more we move more towards a space of contentment that even in the face of major life challenges and even illnesses, we can still experience gratitude, hope, and peace. And even when we experience a life of faith that helps us cope better, there are days when we need our faith to be in a stronger place to help us in those dark and overwhelming moments. But once you experience and know how that feels where there is an extra boost, you will want more of it.

How many of you are familiar with the Fast & Furious movies starring Vin Diesel, his female friend character named Letty Ortiz, the Rock, the late Paul Walker and so many other actresses and actors where the movies are about racing cars with other story lines attached to them? They are popular movies since 2001 and there are over 10 of them. In a scene that is consistent in most of their movies, there is a moment when the star of the movie is driving a fast car and in a situation where the car needs to go faster for various reasons. In that moment, you see the driver push a button in the car and you see how added power makes the car go faster. What is being pushed is nitrous oxide what they refer to in the movies as NOS which enables the car to go faster and therefore, win the race.

While highly explosive and dangerous, it is getting the added boost that I wanted to draw your attention. That is what it means to intentionally grow your faith. In those moments when life's journey is filled with challenge after challenge, it is easy to be overwhelmed. Having a faith that you can count on in Jesus is my personal shot of NOS. This because you then know you are not alone and can pray for strength, clarity of thought and guidance for the situation at hand. However, I have known when my faith was uncertain or in a place of lacking because I would pray but rather than waiting and discerning the leading of God through the Holy Spirit, I come up with the actions I felt I needed to take and would execute on those actions.

While some have worked well, in reflecting back and seeing how things turned out, I can see where God's leading would have resulted in a less painful journey. That is why I feel my call to help others experience the love of Jesus and grow personal relationships with Jesus which strengthens your faith so you can be better equipped to deal with life's challenges and also help others.

I want your faith to be grounded so well in your relationship with Jesus that you are able to receive the support and love of others who reflect the love of God because they too are compassionate, empathetic, and are a source of encouragement and strength when you may need it most—the blessing of being in community with others. And because of your own personal experience, you can't help but want to do the same for others. That my friends is the secret sauce that is a result of a personal relationship with Jesus; what we hear is a faith built on solid foundation. That is my hope for you during this season of Lent.

Before we take a look today's scripture and the focus of my message for today, I wanted to note that next Wednesday, March 8, is International Women's Day. I would like you to reflect and consider the important women in your lives. Those who have taught you, nurtured you, led you; those important to you. You may think of your wives, mothers, aunts, sisters, daughters, or granddaughters. Or perhaps we think of leaders, mentors, allies, coworkers, teachers, Sunday school teachers, female pastors or other women and "sheros" who have been important in your lives.

International Women's Day is an annual celebration across the world that honors the social, economic, cultural and political achievements and contributions of women, while challenging the discrimination and oppression women still experience. In 1909, 15,000 women protested in New York City for the first National Women's Day. They were fighting for labor and voting rights.

International Women's Day was honored for the first time in March 1911 and the date was fixed on March 8 two years later in 1913 (exactly 110 years ago).

In 2011, International's Women's Day celebrated its 100-year centenary and celebrations took place in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland; the same countries that held the first event 100 years earlier.

While the United States has come a long way toward equality for women, we still have a long way to go. On average in the U.S., women make 80-84 percent what men make for performing the same job. Less than 30 percent of our nation's senators and representatives are women. In The United Methodist Church, only 5 percent of senior pastors in the largest churches are women. Violence and harassment against women is a problem in the U.S. and across the world. In our journey through the Gospel of Luke, you will find that this Gospel highlights the valuable role of women in Jesus' ministry. Jesus shows us a better way; one that values women and treats them as equals. Jesus valued women, taught them, ministered with them, and lifted them up.

It is helpful to understand some of the historical context for the way women were regarded and treated in the first century. In two ancient Jewish sources, Philo of Alexandria and Josephus, women were regarded as less than men. Philo thought women were weaker and less able to understand things than men, and Josephus believed the testimony of women was not credible and should not be admitted in court.

Some first-century rabbis believed women should not be taught the Torah, and in general women were not permitted to be rabbis or priests. This is typical of the ancient Greco-Roman world as well as the Bible. Men are named far more often than women, by a factor of more than ten to one. Understanding these factors, what we hear in Luke about women is quite noteworthy and amazing. The Gospel of Luke shows us how women were involved in the ministry of Jesus. Luke mentions women by name more often than any of the other Gospels. It contains more stories about women and has women speaking more lines.

Luke often tells a story involving a man, followed by a similar story involving a woman, as if to balance the narrative with men and women.

We hear this example from one of this morning's scripture in Luke 8:1-3 that women were among those following Jesus and learning from Jesus, including Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, "and many others." These women were an important part of Jesus's ministry. At least some of these women "provided for them out of their resources" (as we heard from Luke 8:3), meaning they helped make Jesus's ministry possible by supplying funds for the work of ministry.

From the second of this morning's scripture in Luke 7:36-39, we hear about a man named Simon the Pharisee who invites Jesus to his home to eat with him, and when Jesus went into the Pharisee's house he reclined to dine.³⁷ And a woman in the city who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment.³⁸ She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair, kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.³⁹ Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner."

Pharisees were a sect of ancient Judaism who prioritized following the Torah. They had much in common with Jesus and his disciples, but they also experienced tension with him as well. Some of the Pharisees were drawn to Jesus. Some of the Pharisees also found his observance of the law not rigorous enough. The Pharisees sought to separate themselves from sinners or people whom society labeled as outsiders, while Jesus befriended those that society did not see or want to see.

This is the context for the story in Luke 7. Simon the Pharisee is drawn to Jesus and invites him to dinner but is taken aback by Jesus's reaction to the woman who washes his feet. Luke describes the woman as "a woman from the city, a sinner" (Luke 7:37). We don't know what exactly her sin was, or why she had come looking for Jesus. There is room for speculation here which I will speak to very shortly.

Note Simon's reaction to what happens. He sees the woman as a sinner and assumes Jesus does not know about her background. He determines that Jesus must not be a prophet, otherwise he would recognize who this woman was. Thing to note here is that Simon did not treat Jesus consistent with the hospitality extended to guests. Perhaps Simon did not have high regards for Jesus as he did not provide the typical welcome that was extended to respected guests which would have been a kiss on the cheek. Nor do we hear of Simon providing a basin of water for Jesus to wash his feet as he entered the home because at the time, sandals were worn and the streets were dusty and a person's feet were very dusty and dirty.

In addition, Simon did not provide scented oil that was customary to respected guests so they can freshen up after a long day. Appears that Simon intentionally did not extend common hospitality to Jesus as a subtle way to perhaps put Jesus in his place.

However, we do not hear Jesus say anything; he sits down at the table as the meal started and participated in the conversation.

But we hear that there is a woman who is identified as a sinner, but we are not told what she has done. Pastor Adam Hamilton who wrote the book called “Luke” that is being used for our Monday book study reminds us that we do not know why she is called a sinner. Was she an alcoholic, an addict, an adulterer, a thief or as some have thought her to be a prostitute? Hamilton thinks that she had heard Jesus speak before where she heard him tell of stories of God’s mercy and love for people who have made mistakes or poor choices in their lives. So on this day she hears that Jesus was going to this Pharisee’s home and she is determined to see him close up.

I imagine it took a lot of courage and determination for this woman whom society at the time labeled as sinful to go into Simon’s home especially since he was a Pharisee whom she had to know how she would be seen. She then stands behind Jesus weeping and began to wash his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair, kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

We heard in verse 39 where Simon, the host who invited Jesus, must have been shocked as he says to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner.” Jesus knowing what Simon was thinking and saying to himself, proceeds to tell Simon a story called a parable of two debtors—two people who owed money where both have been forgiven of what they owe the lender. One was forgiven the larger amount they owed compared to the second person who also owed money to this same lender. And Jesus notes that the person who owed more will have greater love for the lender who forgave the debt because this person’s debt was so large. Simon agrees with how this story ends; that the person who owed the most would be so grateful for this gift of mercy and grace.

Jesus then asks Simon something profound in verse 44, “...Simon, do you see this woman?” Where Simon sees a sinner, Jesus sees a woman in pain, possibly broken and ashamed. Jesus sees a person, a child of God, not a sinner. Jesus sees her, someone who needs grace and not judgment. Hamilton says that Jesus saw a dearly loved daughter of God. That is how Jesus sees us; you and me. He sees you and me as a child of God, and he sees our need for grace. No matter what you or I have done, Jesus does not see us as the world may see us based on our gender or what we have done in the past.

Jesus does not see you as your family or friends may see you; in fact, Jesus does not see you and me as we may have even seen ourselves. Jesus sees you and sees me in our struggles, uncertainty, our hurts, and brokenness. Jesus sees each of us as a person; as God’s beloved. That as we journey through this season of Lent, a time of preparation and renewal; an opportunity to engage in ways to develop and strengthen our personal relationship with God by learning more about Jesus and his life in the Bible, spending more time in prayer and reflection.

So let me ask you to recall the women you thought of at the beginning of my message. What would not have happened or what would have been possible, without the valuable contributions of these women in our lives? What would they never have known? What would they never have done? What would never have come to fruition without their leadership and teaching and faithfulness?

As we remember International Women's Day next week, we work to recognize the contributions of the many amazing women in our lives and from whom have made a difference and those that we can be a source of encouragement and support. The reminder of Jesus' words to Simon, "do you see this woman?" The reminder to value the contributions of the women among us and the need to treat each other with dignity and sacred worth. Please Lord, may it be so. Amen.

HYMN of RESPONSE – "Jesus, Remember Me"

UMH #488

Listen [here](#) for a gift featuring Lucca, Anne, Rod, Brian, Ysrael and those in the building.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE – *Spend time in prayer. What did you hear for yourself through today's scripture and reflection? Talk to God about it. Then lift up the joys and concerns that are in your heart. You might write them down, speak them aloud, or pray for them in silence.*

We would be honored to pray with you and for you.

Please send a note via text, mail, or email or give a call to our Healing Prayer Team.

SHARING OUR GIFTS

How might you offer yourself and all that you have to God this week? How are you being invited to practice generosity? Spend a moment listening for God's direction.

You are invited to contribute financially towards the purpose and ministry of TTUMC. We are a congregation committed to being conduits of God's healing in our neighborhood and beyond, and in so doing, impact the last and the least. You can contribute by mailing in a check, dropping off cash, or giving online (visit www.twintowersumc.org).

CLOSING HYMN – "Freely, Freely"

UMH #389

Listen [here](#) for a gift featuring Lucca, Anne, Rod, Brian, Ysrael and those in the building.

BENEDICTION

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST'S PEACE!

Please make note of the following updates and invitations:

Celebration of Gary Brown's Life, Saturday, 3/11/23 – Gary's Memorial Service will be at 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. on Saturday, March 11. You are invited to please come and support his family in honoring his life and service. The Memorial Service will also be available via Zoom by clicking [here](#). If you have challenges with the above link, here are the Zoom log-in details:

Meeting ID: 876 4332 8347

Passcode: Brown

Lenten 40-Day Reading Plan on the Gospel of Luke – You are invited to join in reading the Gospel of Luke as part of your Lenten practice this year which each Sunday's message will be based, as well as the book study. The 40-day Gospel of Luke reading plan is available [here](#).

Lenten Time of Prayer Wednesdays – during Lent you're invited to join P. Akesa on Wednesdays between 12:15 and 12:45 p.m. to connect and pray via Zoom by clicking [here](#). If you have challenges with the above link, here are the Zoom log-in details:

Meeting ID: 827 9929 9325

Passcode: Prayer

Refreshment Sign-ups After Sunday Morning Worship – Those of you who attend worship service in person are invited to please stop by for a cup of coffee and fellowship in the Wesley Room after Sunday services around 10:30ish. Brian has prepared and posted a sign-up sheet if you'd like to bring a favorite refreshment to share with others during our time of fellowship. Please click [here](#) to see where the sign-up sheet is posted in the Wesley Room. Thank you!

Dine & Connect on Monday, 4/3/23 – Volunteers needed on Monday, 4/3/23, 12pm-3pm Cooking & Plating; 4pm-5:30pm Serving & Cleaning Up. We serve the first Monday of each month, where we will be preparing and serving 150 dinners. If you can help on 4/3/2023, please click [here](#) for more information and please sign up.

This past Monday, 3/6/23, Twin Towers served 150 dinners along with clothing, socks, toothbrushes, and toothpaste. What was needed are washed and gently used men's clothing of jackets, pants and sweaters—please bring any of these items that you may no longer need.

So very grateful for our volunteers that included Deacon Judith, Neva, William (Alameda Diehard Basketball team), Lynette (Buena Vista UMC), Donna (Water's Edge Lodge),

Pastor Bob, Deacon Mike & Lee, the cleaning trio of Calixto, Shirley & Cristina, our cookie bakers in Yan, Neva, and Baby Siotame's parents, and our co-chefs in Brian & Siotame—thank you all so much!

Midway Shelter Needs Our Help – We support Midway Shelter, the only women and children shelter operating in Alameda, by providing 30 meals twice a month (2nd Tuesday and 4th Wednesday of each month). Donors can participate as financial donors or as meal preparers. To participate, please complete the information by clicking [here](#) and we will contact you. We can really use more help with this critical ministry. Thank you!

Alameda Warming Shelter – The shelter is currently open 7 nights—and days—a week through April 2023 and need volunteers in two areas. First, to staff days in two shifts: 8 am – 12 pm and 12 – 4 pm; with 2 people per shift. There is coverage for evenings and nights (by paid staff from the Housing Coalition of the East Bay and the Village of Love). Second area where help is needed is by providing dinners and breakfasts. If you are able to volunteer for either of the shifts available through the end of March 2023, please sign-up by clicking [here](#). If you would like to provide dinners or breakfasts, please sign-up by clicking [here](#). The Warming Shelter is hosted at Christ Episcopal, 1700 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda., entering via the parking lot on Grand Street. To learn more, contact 510-832-1382 x123, warmingcenter@hceb.org, or Christ Church at stephen@christchurchalameda.org.

Need help with groceries – If you or you know of anyone who needs help with groceries once a week or once a month, the Alameda Food Bank has a Community Market available for individuals who live or work in the City of Alameda. Please click [here](#) for the QR code and for more information.