



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

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**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service**

**March 16, 2025**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Session will meet this Tuesday (March 18) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (March 19) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (March 19) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (March 23) at 9:15am. We will be covering Chapter 2 "Foxe's Book of Martyrs". See Rev. Joe if you wish to attend!

During the season of Lent, consider donating toward the PCUSA's "One Great Hour of Sharing"- to benefit the denomination's hunger, disaster, and development ministries.

Donation envelopes and literature are available on the back mission table.

**Opening Prayer**

LORD, our Father, through Jesus Christ you tell us not to be afraid for you are our shield. Help us to wait on you, dwell with you, and see the world you wish to offer us instead of what devours us. **Amen.**

**Prelude**    *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*    arr. Whitworth

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 27)**

The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

**When evildoers close in against me to devour my flesh, they, my foes and my enemies, will stumble and fall.**

Though an army encamp against me, my heart will not fear. Though war rise up against me, my trust will not be shaken.

**One thing I ask of the LORD; one thing I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life; to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to seek God in the temple.**

For in the day of trouble God will give me shelter, hide me in the hidden places of the sanctuary, and raise me high upon a rock.

**Even now my head is lifted up above my enemies who surround me. Therefore I will offer sacrifice in the sanctuary, sacrifices of rejoicing; I will sing and make music to the LORD.**

Hear my voice, O LORD, when I call; have mercy on me and answer me.

**My heart speaks your message— “Seek my face.” Your face, O LORD, I will seek.**

Hide not your face from me, turn not away from your servant in anger. Cast me not away—you have been my helper; forsake me not, O God of my salvation.

**Though my father and my mother forsake me, the LORD will take me in.**

Teach me your way, O LORD; lead me on a level path, because of my oppressors.

**Subject me not to the will of my foes, for they rise up against me, false witnesses breathing violence.**

This I believe—that I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!

**Wait for the LORD and be strong. Take heart and wait for the LORD!**

**\*Hymn #265    *Great God, We Sing That Mighty Hand***

Great God, we sing that mighty hand  
By which supported still we stand;  
The opening year Your mercy shows;  
That mercy crowns it till it close.

With grateful hearts the past we own;  
The future, all to us unknown,  
We to Your guardian care commit,  
And peaceful leave before Your feet.

In scenes exalted or depressed,  
You are our joy, and You our rest;  
Your goodness all our hopes shall raise,  
Adored through all our changing days.

### **\*Prayer of Confession**

When it comes to living we often choose the most popular ideas, flashy gimmicks, and wider doors. But it comes at the price of losing the assurance we most need:

**LORD, our Father, the world tries to predict and dictate what it is we need. But instead of fulfilling us it leaves us starving for truth and assurance. Help us to stop trusting in the guarantees and theories of others and trust you will reveal what we need by our desire to come close to you. Amen.**

### **\*Silent Confessions and Prayers**

#### **\*Assurance of Forgiveness**

As numerous as the stars of heaven, and vast as the heavens themselves, so is the love and grace offered by the LORD.

**Because of Jesus Christ the door is opened, we are stripped of the world's fallacies, and ready to receive that which we starve for.**

#### **\*Hymn #579 *Gloria Patri***

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;  
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,  
World without end. Amen. Amen.

#### **The Apostles' Creed**

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.  
Amen.**

#### **Reading of the Scriptures**

*All Scripture lessons come from the Revised Common Lectionary. Prescribed lessons are underlined, with pastoral inserts to preserve the integrity of the passage.*

Hear the Word of the Lord:

Genesis 15:1-21

**15** <sup>1</sup> After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” <sup>2</sup> But Abram said, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” <sup>3</sup> And Abram said, “You have given me no offspring, and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir.” <sup>4</sup> But the word of the Lord came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; no one but your very own issue shall be your heir.” <sup>5</sup> He brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven and count the stars, if you are able to count them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” <sup>6</sup> And he believed the Lord; and the Lord reckoned it to him as righteousness. <sup>7</sup> Then he said to him, “I am the Lord who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.” <sup>8</sup> But he said, “O Lord God, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” <sup>9</sup> He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” <sup>10</sup> He brought him all these and cut them in two, laying each half over against the other; but he did not cut the birds in two. <sup>11</sup> And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. <sup>12</sup> As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and a deep and terrifying darkness descended upon him. <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord said to Abram, “Know this for certain, that your offspring shall be aliens in a land that is not theirs, and shall be slaves there, and they shall be oppressed for four hundred years; <sup>14</sup> but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. <sup>15</sup> As for yourself, you shall go to your ancestors in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. <sup>16</sup> And they shall come back here in the fourth generation; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” <sup>17</sup> When the sun had gone down and it was dark, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. <sup>18</sup> On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, <sup>19</sup> the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, <sup>20</sup> the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, <sup>21</sup> the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites, and the Jebusites.”

#### Philippians 3:1-4:1

**3** <sup>1</sup> Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard. <sup>2</sup> Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! <sup>3</sup> For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— <sup>4</sup> even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup> circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup> as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. <sup>7</sup> Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup> More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based

on faith. <sup>10</sup> I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup> if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead. <sup>12</sup> Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup> Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup> I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. <sup>15</sup> Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. <sup>16</sup> Only let us hold fast to what we have attained. <sup>17</sup> Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. <sup>18</sup> For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. <sup>19</sup> Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. <sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>21</sup> He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself. **4** <sup>1</sup> Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

#### Luke 13:22-35

**13** <sup>22</sup> Jesus went through one town and village after another, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> Someone asked him, “Lord, will only a few be saved?” He said to them, <sup>24</sup> “Strive to enter through the narrow door; for many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able. <sup>25</sup> When once the owner of the house has got up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, open to us,’ then in reply he will say to you, ‘I do not know where you come from.’ <sup>26</sup> Then you will begin to say, ‘We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.’ <sup>27</sup> But he will say, ‘I do not know where you come from; go away from me, all you evildoers!’ <sup>28</sup> There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out. <sup>29</sup> Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup> Indeed, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last.” <sup>31</sup> At that very hour some Pharisees came and said to him, “Get away from here, for Herod wants to kill you.” <sup>32</sup> He said to them, “Go and tell that fox for me, ‘Listen, I am casting out demons and performing cures today and tomorrow, and on the third day I finish my work. <sup>33</sup> Yet today, tomorrow, and the next day I must be on my way, because it is impossible for a prophet to be killed outside of Jerusalem.’ <sup>34</sup> Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! <sup>35</sup> See, your house is left to you. And I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.’ ”

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

**Sermon    *The Second Sunday of Lent***

Jesus leading us with him to the cross is not just giving us a vision and discovery of what to expect but also what is around us as well. The shadow of the cross is meant to make us see everything in life much differently, because the LORD's salvation is restorative to who we were always meant to be. Our restored humanity makes us aware of what is around us, what we are holding onto, and if it serves any use in our day-to-day lives. Because we have the bad habit of picking up things we believe are essential and give us safety, but turn out to be garbage at best and harmful at the worst. It is the tendency that is within all people to worship the created rather than the creator and believe what appears powerful and capable. Jesus taking us by the hand and inviting us to join him is divine wisdom showing what is essential and what must be left behind.

In Luke 13:22-35 Jesus is traveling through the villages and towns on his way to Jerusalem, and during those travels pointed out the discrepancies between power that is healing and destructive. Society and culture would have been under the influence of the Romans, who brought in technologies and practices to that part of the world as a means of uniting their empire. The vast roads and highways connecting the world like never before for commerce and communication, but also to exercise military control. Jesus uses the image of the "door", which can also be translated as "gate"- as in the gate in a city wall.

The purpose of a city gate was to provide military security for a city against invasion, as well as to project wealth and civic status. For the Romans, they would have built a system of gates and fortifications into Jerusalem. A main gate which opened to the main avenue leading into the city, a wide highway able to accommodate a lot of foot traffic. But these wide and open gates also served another purpose, they were wide enough to accommodate a Roman legion marching in formation. It gave access to the city in the event of invasion or rebellion by the local populace. A smaller, "narrower", gate would have served civilian foot traffic into the city but was much harder to enter due to how small it was to block and delay enemy soldiers.

To Jesus, the wide and open gate represented a reliance on something else to serve life's needs which left one estranged from the LORD. The smaller and narrower gate did represent a way of inconvenience, of hardship, and eventual persecution. Choosing a way not based on power and control places one at a disadvantage as far as the world is concerned, but also confesses a reliance and recognition of a power the world does not see. Jesus laments Jerusalem choosing worldly power, and ignoring divine guidance, which is the eternal struggle of humans. But also looks forward to the day when people will recognize the way Jesus is taking as pointing out the fallacies in all worldly powers and how the LORD truly saves. About how to lead others back into true trust and communion with the LORD.

And the LORD has always been in the business of leading creation back from worship of itself and into communion and life with him. The journey of Abraham in Genesis 15:1-21 is the LORD exerting his sovereignty and control amid a world so wrapped up with itself. Abraham came from a world, a civilization, that was the most advanced of its time- as far as archeological evidence shows. Ur was the capital of the Sumerian Empire, one of the first technologically advanced civilizations in that region. The Sumerians developed complex social structures, writing, trade, and culture which allowed human life to flourish. It was estimated that approximately 65,000 people lived in Ur- an amazing feat as far as we are concerned! But it also possessed beliefs that were destructive to human life, such as the idea that barrenness and infertility were a curse from the gods. So a clan without an heir had no power or standing in the society. But the LORD led Abraham and his clan out of that world to show them a life available if they simply had trust in the right things. Meaning to let go of the conveniences and power which appeared to give much but robbed others of the chance to enjoy the same peace and prosperity. Abraham's journey of trust would make him recognize a being willing to treat him as an equal, and even willing to set aside his own divinity for the change to demonstrate that way.

St. Paul in Philippians 3:1-4:1 writes to warn the church about the temptations to go back to beliefs and explanations which seemed to make sense, which promised security, but were also empty. The church in Philippi was confused by the conflicting teachings of the Jewish teachers who stressed the importance of circumcision and other human rituals to show their belonging to the covenant of the LORD. But St. Paul explains that belonging to the covenant has already been assured by the actions of Jesus, and the dogs (or vultures) circling them were not there for their benefit. These ones have been tempted by power and control, just like St. Paul was in his previous life which caused his own destruction. But while that past indicated what the LORD's salvation led him out of it also did not identify him anymore. Now was a way and manner by which St. Paul could live and work, and a hope which could give what worldly institutions and means could not. The way of Jesus is a way which transforms, redefines, and opens new opportunities to live better if we are willing to admit what all else lacks.

Going through the narrow door, the servants' entrance, the less-auspicious gate into the less glamorous parts of the city, will allow us to see what power and grandiosity have blinded us too. We fill our lives with the promises of others and hinge our beliefs on what others can do for us, only to be disappointed when the reality is revealed. All of us are creatures with limited ability, doing the best we have with what we have, and use power and control to compensate and bluff others for the sake of popularity. To reject that mentality is to free ourselves of control and manipulation, leave us open to unique possibilities, and make room to become who we were always meant to be and not as how someone else wants us.

## **Prayers of the People**

*Let us remember in prayer:*

*Dominic Aquino, Tom & Amy Aquino, Mary Ellen Beans, Terry Carpenter, Fritz Chambers, Michelle Chamberlain, Mary Jane Dougherty, Don Eberheart Jr., Allison Folly, Kay France, Jamie Frank, Judy Hass, Alice & Errol Jacobs, Barry Jacobs, Victoria Kasten, Amber Loftis, David Mackey, Breanne Mathias, Peg McIntire, Will Long, Tom Netting, Ruth Patrick, Bob Pierre, Carol Phillips, Porter Family, Mark Preusser, Stefani Seth, Josh Shaeffer, Marlene Singhaus, Cindy Smith, Derrick & Mandy Smith, Janis Stover, Bill Titley, Dean & Heidi Unzicker, Ruth Joyce Zimmerly, Simone Villarruel, Jay Watt, The Friends of the Homeless of Tuscarawas County & The Homeless of Tuscarawas County.*

LORD, our Father, our lives are filled with so much and contain so much. People and things and ideas we value, trust, and make us feel safe. We believe they give us meaning and purpose and fulfill what we have been placed in this world for. But we fail to understand how these things can distract as well as fulfill. We believe possession is the answer and ownership will empower us, but they drive us away from your calling and leave us to the mercy of the world's vultures. Only by letting go of these fallacies, unclenching what we believe makes us unsafe, and step through the narrow door to you can we understand what we truly need. Give us the courage to step away, to let go of our fears and anxieties, and be confronted by truth faith and ability.

You have met your servants in this manner, being with them in their lowest and most uncertain times. Through all we give up to you, all joys and concerns, may we receive the wisdom to be a comfort to those we love...*Reading the Prayer List*...May your divine spirit make a way, and show us where you can be found in whatever we face.

### *Moment of Silence*

We thank you LORD for walking with and guiding us toward your promises, and living out your guarantees through Jesus Christ. In all we witness him doing and teaching, help us to take in and follow. So the prayer of your kingdom becomes a lifeline in what we can do:

### **The Lord's Prayer**

**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.**

### **Offering our Gifts**

All that we have in this life does not get us closer to the LORD, but can demonstrate how closely we listen to his direction.



**Offertory    *Jesus, I Will Ponder Now*    arr. Bach**

**\*Hymn #592    *Doxology***

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. Amen.

**\*Prayer of Dedication**

LORD, our Father, you have given us the vastness of creation for our use and demonstration of your faithfulness. It alone does not fill us but motivates us to see how you will act for our good. Accept all we give so others might experience how you fill all in all. **Amen.**

**\*Hymn #281    *Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah***

Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,  
Pilgrim through this barren land;  
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;  
Hold me with Thy powerful hand;  
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,  
Feed me till I want no more,  
Feed me till I want no more.

Open now the crystal fountain,  
Whence the healing stream doth flow;  
Let the fire and cloudy pillar  
Lead me all my journey through;  
Strong deliverer, strong deliverer,  
Be Thou still my strength and shield,  
Be Thou still my strength and shield.

When I tread the verge of Jordan,  
Bid my anxious fears subside;  
Death of death, and hell's destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan's side;  
Songs of praises, songs of praises,  
I will ever give to Thee,  
I will ever give to Thee.

**\*Benediction**

Hear now, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind; you will love your neighbor as yourself.

With the gospel of Jesus Christ guiding you, go into the world to live this sole purpose.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**\*Postlude    *God Is Working His Purpose Out*    arr. Wyton**

Be blessed in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ wherever you may go!

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