



**First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia**

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**Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor**

**Sunday Worship Service**

**March 23, 2025**

\*All who are able, please stand.

**Announcements & Prayer Concerns**

Finance Committee will meet this Tuesday (March 25) at 7pm.

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (March 26) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (March 26) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (March 30) at 9:15am. We will be covering Chapter 3 "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, you are in control of our lives and all creation and nothing can escape from your grasp. You give us all the wonders of the world so we might master and practice your goodness before others. Teach us what we can do to be the best, and most beneficial, toward the issues which surround us. **Amen.**

**Prelude    Come Ye Sinners Poor and Needy    arr. Shearing**

**\*Call to Worship (Psalm 63)**

O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

**Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory.**

For your steadfast love is better than life itself; my lips shall give you praise.

**So will I bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name.**

My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips, when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches.

**For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.  
My whole being clings to you; your right hand holds me fast.**

May those who seek my life to destroy it go down into the depths of the earth; let them be thrown upon the edge of the sword, and let them be food for jackals.

**But the king will rejoice in God; all those who swear by God's name will be glad;  
for the mouth of those who speak lies shall be stopped.**

**\*Hymn #399    *We Walk by Faith and Not by Sight***

We walk by faith and not by sight;  
No gracious words we hear  
From Christ Who spoke as none e'er spoke;  
But we believe Him near.

We may not touch His hands and side,  
Nor follow where He trod;  
But in His promise we rejoice,  
And cry, "My Lord and God!"

Help then, O Lord, our unbelief;  
And may our faith abound  
To call on You when You are near  
And seek where You are found:

That, when our life of faith is done,  
In realms of clearer light  
We may behold You as You are,  
With full and endless sight.

**\*Prayer of Confession**

All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. And we often choose the most unbeneficial words, thoughts, actions, beliefs, and solutions to the problems which plague us:

**LORD, our Father, in your goodness and mercy you have given us the whole of your creation to tend and live in. The whole of reality reflects this fact, but we tend to retreat into our own ways for security and meaning. Help us to step out, embrace the world you have made, and demonstrate what is possible when we stop looking to ourselves alone. Amen.**

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

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

The LORD is a helper, and a very present help in times of uncertain and disbelief. But he provides in ways beyond imagining, and Jesus Christ helps us to see.

**Our beings wait in anticipation for how the LORD will tend to us, and what he will speak and grow from our circumstances.**

### **\*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:

Isaiah 55:1-13

**55** <sup>1</sup> Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. <sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. <sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. <sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. <sup>5</sup> See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. <sup>6</sup> Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; <sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake

their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. <sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. <sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts. <sup>10</sup> For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, <sup>11</sup> so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. <sup>12</sup> For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. <sup>13</sup> Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall be to the Lord for a memorial, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.

### 1 Corinthians 10:1-11:1

**10** <sup>1</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. <sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. <sup>10</sup> And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. <sup>12</sup> So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. <sup>13</sup> No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. <sup>15</sup> I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. <sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar? <sup>19</sup> What do I imply then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup> No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be partners with demons. <sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. <sup>22</sup> Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? <sup>23</sup> "All things are lawful," but not all things are beneficial. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. <sup>24</sup> Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other. <sup>25</sup> Eat whatever is sold in the meat

market without raising any question on the ground of conscience, <sup>26</sup> for “the earth and its fullness are the Lord’s.” <sup>27</sup> If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. <sup>28</sup> But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you, and for the sake of conscience— <sup>29</sup> I mean the other’s conscience, not your own. For why should my liberty be subject to the judgment of someone else’s conscience? <sup>30</sup> If I partake with thankfulness, why should I be denounced because of that for which I give thanks? <sup>31</sup> So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. <sup>32</sup> Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, <sup>33</sup> just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, so that they may be saved. **11** <sup>1</sup> Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

### Luke 13:1-9

**13** <sup>1</sup> At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. <sup>2</sup> He asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?” <sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?” <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.” <sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ <sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’ ”

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

### **Sermon    *The Third Sunday of Lent***

When Jesus speaks, he can cut right through everything we think we believe. But everything he says is not just to make us uncomfortable, uncertain, or doubtful (although it can certainly have that effect). It is to make us aware, make us see the world around us differently, and how we view and value others. The journey to the cross is not just a journey of individual salvation, but also communal salvation. The LORD is saving the relationships between each other and giving us means to be proper neighbors and loved ones to those we are with. We are given the means to cut through the superficiality around us and see what really matters and what will make a true difference.

Jesus in Luke 13:1-9 is confronting people using the events of his day, using their reactions to measure and give visibility to what they believe. Much like in our time, natural and un-natural disasters alike were prevalent. The same issues we face today

are no different than the ones faced thousands of years ago, and perhaps longer! Pilate was a military ruler who used the armies to keep order and put down rebellions, and it was often the innocent civilians who faced that wrath. Accidents such as structural collapses take the lives of those unfortunate enough to be there. But they often cause those left behind to try and theorize, piece together, a reasonable explanation as to why they were spared. Survivors' guilt is real and is simply our way to make sense and order out of what we see as evil. But Jesus does not use this opportunity to politically rabble rouse or give a lecture on the nature of good and evil. He uses it as a call to repentance, to examine life in the face of mortality, and confess what is of more importance. Those who died tragically did not do anything different than the rest of us, but we could use that event to decide what we will do next going forward. Perhaps that is the big pile of manure the LORD Gardener uses to make us blossom and bear fruit, if only to show we are not defeated by chaos.

That direction, that change in how we choose to love our neighbor, is articulated by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11:1 by his call for unity and oneness in the fellowship.

Everything the LORD gives, everything Jesus has worked for, is meant to bring all people together for one mission and purpose. To live a common, singular life together as was imagined by the divine at the beginning. But we put up so many walls around each other, come up with wild explanations as to why things are what they are, and even wilder proposed solutions so things will be finally 'perfect' in our eyes. We are warned in Israel's history that a lack of consideration, thoughtfulness, and empathy caused the people to act in the way they did. This lack of consideration caused a break with each other, fractured the covenant with the LORD, and led to their own problems. While the covenant was there to repair that breach and lead them into a new means of thinking.

"All things are beneficial, but not all things are helpful." The LORD has given us considerable freedom to live and think, and there is wide latitude by which to serve and live out our calling. But it comes with the stipulation that we think, consider, and know what the covenant asks of us. That is how we can consider what is true immorality apart from what can be claimed as such. That is how we can separate what a destructive action and a loving action, when it does not build up and enable others to live and enjoy as we do. Our calling is to prepare and welcome others into the one body of Christ, the one nation of the LORD, and the common love which does exist for those who need it.

That life is illustrated by the prophet in Isaiah 55:1-19, and is a life defined by the LORD according to his ways, his mind, and his knowing. Our creator knows what we are capable of, since we are made in his image. He knows we have the ability to love, care, and create systems and communities by which it can be known and lived out. But only when we do not take it for granted, recognize how it can be misused, and resist the temptation in thinking like those trying to prove whatever point they imagine. That is

what should separate the LORD's fellowship from everything else, where instead of choosing a side we look for how we can help within all circumstances and situations.

The journey to the cross is a journey of not just discovering and understanding the LORD, or the teachings of Christ, but also ourselves. Not just what separates us from the divine but can connect us and allow us to live in harmony. Every time we commune together, eat the bread and drink the cup, remember our baptism, and confess "the earth is the LORD's and all its fulness", we discover what is true and can be lived. All that we are shown and promised is within our grasp, so long as we allow nothing else to dictate or reason what 'should be.'

### **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 ways of explaining and rationalizing the world are many and our way of using the minds and intelligence you have blessed us with. But the decisions we make do not come from how much knowledge we have, what experiences we have, or what talents and capabilities we possess. They come from how we see you, how we view and know our neighbors, and what we desire to see come out of them. When our minds are set on power, ownership, or control we use the best of your gifts for purposes not intended. And then breaking and destroying them, or ourselves, in the process. But when our minds are set on selfless example, leadership without power, like Jesus we can bring attention to new and better ways. We can heal our relationships, guide our communities, give consideration to society at large, and find fulfillment for ourselves with you. Help us to let go of actions and intentions that focus on having material ability and see how we might be leaders and examples through humble and simple means.

Everything is an opportunity to see and demonstrate you, even the joys and problems we will encounter in the journey of life. From what we offer to you from our hearts help clarity and focus shine...*Reading the Prayer List*...May your Spirit sweep through and breath new life and opportunity into ongoing problems.

*Moment of Silence*

All of reality is yours, and your salvation brings ability to see around us with clarity and realization. To accept things as they are, as you deem them, and not as we deem them. Help us to resist conformity and make us able to stand out as the messengers of your renewed hope, as your prayer teaches:

### **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**

The earth and its fulness is the LORD's, to do with what he sees best. From our share of this beautiful crop let us contribute in the LORD's efforts of growth and prosperity for all!

**Offertory    *Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me*    arr. Bish**

### **\*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, all that is in the world belongs to you to do with what you deem best. Our possession is a sign of your trust that we can give to and grow what will aid the world. Accept our efforts and show us what is possible from faithful desire. **Amen.**

### **\*Hymn #411    *Arise, Your Light Is Come!***

Arise, your light is come!  
The Spirit's call obey;  
Show forth the glory of your God,  
Which shines on you today.

Arise, your light is come!  
Fling wide the prison door;  
Proclaim the captives' liberty,  
Good tidings to the poor.

Arise, your light is come!  
All you in sorrow born,  
Bind up the broken hearted ones



And comfort those who mourn.

Arise, your light is come!  
The mountains burst in song!  
Rise up like eagles on the wing;  
God's power will make us strong.

**\*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 *Largo* arr. Lau**

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

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