



First Presbyterian Church of New Philadelphia

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Rev. Joseph Svancara, Pastor

Sunday Worship Service

March 9, 2025

*All who are able, please stand.

Announcements & Prayer Concerns

Tonight is our monthly Friends of the Homeless Dinner at 6pm. A sign-up sheet for volunteers is available in the church office. While funds for the meal are good, please consider donating toward our other Friends of the Homeless efforts (General Fund or Jack's House of Hope).

Bible Study will be this Wednesday (March 12) at 10am.

AA will meet this Wednesday (March 12) at 8pm.

Our Sunday Morning Study Group will meet on Sunday (March 9) at 9:15am. We will be covering Chapter 1 "Foxe's Book of Martyrs". See Rev. Joe if you wish to attend!

Join us for our Tables of Eight Dinner on March 15 at 6pm! RSVP is required and the cost is \$10 per person. Sign-up sheet is available in the church office, or you may RSVP to Carolyn Berry.

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, the gift of Jesus Christ gives us assurance of your protection and deliverance from evil. But also leads us into great and many things with the promise of your salvation. Teach us how we must act, and how our devotion to you reflects the devotion we should have for each other. **Amen.**

Prelude *Jesus Walked This Lonesome Valley* arr. Wood

***Call to Worship (Psalm 91)**

You who dwell in the shelter of the Most High, who abide in the shadow of the Almighty—

you will say to the LORD, “My refuge and my stronghold, my God in whom I put my trust.”

For God will rescue you from the snare of the hunter and from the deadly plague.

God’s wings will cover you, and you will find refuge beneath them; God’s faithfulness will be your shield and defense.

You shall not fear any terror in the night, nor the arrow that flies by day; nor the plague that stalks in the darkness, nor the sickness that lays waste at noon.

A thousand may fall at your side and ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.

You will only have to look with your eyes, and you will see the reward of the wicked.

Because you have made the LORD your refuge, and the Most High your habitation, no evil will befall you, nor shall affliction come near your dwelling.

For God will give the angels charge over you, to guard you in all your ways.

Upon their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone. You will tread upon the lion cub and viper; you will trample down the lion and the serpent.

I will deliver those who cling to me; I will uphold them, because they know my name.

They will call me, and I will answer them; I will be with them in trouble; I will rescue and honor them. With long life will I satisfy them, and show them my salvation.

Hymn #132 *Come, Great God of All the Ages

Come, great God of all the ages,
Make your earthly mission known;
Speak through every deed and person,
Let Your way and will be shown.
Guide the church to true commitment,
Give direction now, we ask;
Fit us for the work of building,
Dedicate us to the task.

Come, Christ Jesus, flesh and spirit,
Sure foundation, cornerstone,
Help us form the church eternal,

May Your vision be our own.
Send a message to each follower,
Lead all people to Your way.
Urge us to strong faith and action
As we build the church today.

Come, great Spirit, in and with us,
Tune our ears to hear Your call;
Through the moving of Your presence,
Let redeeming love recall
Ministry in dedication,
Love embodied in our deeds;
Challenge us to do Your bidding,
See Your purpose, fill all needs.

Come, O Come, in celebration,
Household of the one true God,
In commitment and rejoicing
Let us go where Christ has trod;
As we act in faith and reverence,
Let us, Lord, the future see;
Place us in the church triumphant,
Now and for eternity.

***Prayer of Confession**

Our worship and devotion to the LORD does not stop with us, but we act like divine salvation is only for our good. But the LORD reminds us how his worship unites all together:

LORD, our Father, we bring you the best of what we have and do but act like it is only for us. We fail to see how our efforts influence the Church, impact the fellowship, and the mission we are charged with. Remind us by your Spirit how your people can work, and how you enable us to resist evil in all forms. Amen.

***Silent Confessions and Prayers**

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

By the resistance of Christ against the devil we are shown who can enable us to overcome all evils we face.

We resist the devil in all its forms, and confess the LORD as the only sovereign in all creation!

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:

Deuteronomy 26:1-19

26 ¹ When you have come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, ² you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the Lord your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³ You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our ancestors to give us." ⁴ When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the Lord your God, ⁵ you shall make this response before the Lord your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. ⁶ When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ⁷ we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸ The Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹ and he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰ So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O Lord, have given me." You shall set it down before the Lord your God and bow down before the Lord your God. ¹¹ Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the Lord your God has given to you and to your house. ¹² When

you have finished paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year (which is the year of the tithe), giving it to the Levites, the aliens, the orphans, and the widows, so that they may eat their fill within your towns, ¹³ then you shall say before the Lord your God: “I have removed the sacred portion from the house, and I have given it to the Levites, the resident aliens, the orphans, and the widows, in accordance with your entire commandment that you commanded me; I have neither transgressed nor forgotten any of your commandments: ¹⁴ I have not eaten of it while in mourning; I have not removed any of it while I was unclean; and I have not offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the Lord my God, doing just as you commanded me. ¹⁵ Look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our ancestors—a land flowing with milk and honey.” ¹⁶ This very day the Lord your God is commanding you to observe these statutes and ordinances; so observe them diligently with all your heart and with all your soul. ¹⁷ Today you have obtained the Lord’s agreement: to be your God; and for you to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, and his ordinances, and to obey him. ¹⁸ Today the Lord has obtained your agreement: to be his treasured people, as he promised you, and to keep his commandments; ¹⁹ for him to set you high above all nations that he has made, in praise and in fame and in honor; and for you to be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he promised.

Romans 9:30-10:21

³⁰ What then are we to say? Gentiles, who did not strive for righteousness, have attained it, that is, righteousness through faith; ³¹ but Israel, who did strive for the righteousness that is based on the law, did not succeed in fulfilling that law. ³² Why not? Because they did not strive for it on the basis of faith, but as if it were based on works. They have stumbled over the stumbling stone, ³³ as it is written, “See, I am laying in Zion a stone that will make people stumble, a rock that will make them fall, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.” **10** ¹ Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. ² I can testify that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. ³ For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God’s righteousness. ⁴ For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. ⁵ Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that “the person who does these things will live by them.” ⁶ But the righteousness that comes from faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ down) ⁷ “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’ ” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). ⁸ But what does it say? “The word is near you, on your lips and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹ because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰ For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹ The scripture says, “No one who believes in him will be put to shame.” ¹² For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³ For, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”

¹⁴ But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? ¹⁵ And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" ¹⁶ But not all have obeyed the good news; for Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our message?" ¹⁷ So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes through the word of Christ. ¹⁸ But I ask, have they not heard? Indeed they have; for "Their voice has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world." ¹⁹ Again I ask, did Israel not understand? First Moses says, "I will make you jealous of those who are not a nation; with a foolish nation I will make you angry." ²⁰ Then Isaiah is so bold as to say, "I have been found by those who did not seek me; I have shown myself to those who did not ask for me." ²¹ But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

Luke 4:1-13

4 ¹ Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ² where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³ The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'" ⁵ Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶ And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷ If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours." ⁸ Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" ⁹ Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰ for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,' ¹¹ and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" ¹² Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³ When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

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

Sermon *The First Sunday of Lent*

Our journey with Jesus to the cross has begun, and it will not be a journey of normalcy or continuing life as is. Everything which Jesus does, is doing, and will do is meant to make us look up and witness the unfolding of the LORD's salvation. The opportunity to see what it means that evil is defeated, and how all people can call on the name of the LORD to experience that help.

Luke 4:1-13, the story of Jesus tempted by Satan, is traditionally used to demonstrate what this period means. A time to see and resist evil in all of its forms and come close to the LORD and the Christ he reveals himself through. But evil often disguises itself, veils itself under uncertainty and doubt, and makes us question what is real or not. The

power of the accuser, the adversary, the tester is to blind our perceptions and understandings. He does not have the power to actually pull us one way or another—eliminating the excuse of “the devil made me do it!” But only confuses us enough to cause our own self-destruction. So can we truly resist by our own means and what we think is true?

Jesus being tempted in the wilderness can be seen as a test, but also a confirmation that this one chosen has the ability to overcome those attempts. Jesus’ mind was so dependent and trusting in the LORD alone before anything else he could not be swayed. Even when Satan purposefully twists Scripture and the LORD’s promises Jesus does not yield. This is an assurance we can escape, but only if the way is demonstrated and exemplified first.

Romans 9:30-10:21 confronts us in how salvation is brought about in this exemplary manner. St. Paul writes to tell the church not to get too smug about the former ways of Israel because of their past sins. The Gentiles stumbled as well, fell prey to the same traps and confusions of evil, so they have no business putting themselves on a pedestal either.

“Calling on the name of the LORD” is not a sign of superiority or greater ability than another, it equalizes all people and brings them together in common need. Before they were separated out and left alone and wandering by sin, but the Spirit brought vision and direction so they might live as a common family. The Word is near not just for our sakes and immediate troubles, but to bring us in contact with those whose hurts can be answered by our witness. Only by our going out, our traveling, and our contact can the salvation visited to us take root as it must for change to happen.

Deuteronomy 26:1-19 demonstrates this intent even under the former system of worship. When the good of the LORD is received by the people, it is meant to be shared and a source of life to those who could not obtain. It was not meant to just sit and rot on the altar but be a sign of where others could come in their desperation. It did not fix the problems of individual circumstance, but brought those into contact and community with those whose hurts could be a support. And allow those to see the depth of evil inflicted upon others. To tear off the blinders and make know what can happen when we all seek the divine equally.

Evil often exacerbates the differences between groups of people. It plays on the made up, and twisted, narratives to create distrust and disunity. Jesus going into the wilderness is his path to see through these conflicting lies and create space by which the uniting truth is heard loud and clear. Not discovered, as if it only was found now. But which has always been there and ‘conveniently’ looked over because of what it means.

The Word made clear and is close to us, the identity of the LORD demonstrated to us, should make us reexamine all narratives, assumptions, and excuses. On either side of wealth, class, race, ideology, and religion are reasons to keep things the way they are.

But never a confession as to who is really in charge of it all. Will we continue to let those other narratives and reasons guide what we consider worthy and see salvation as only for us? Or will we go with Jesus to the wilderness, confess the absurdities of all we listen to, and allow the LORD to unite us into a fellowship of need? A realized vision of his salvation from ancient past and made complete by one willing to confess the LORD's protection before all else.

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, this time and season of the year is a chance to reflect on our lives and the influences we allow. We claim you as our God and only king, the only power which can accomplish anything we need. So many give you the desires and needs of their hearts and lives in the hope you will answer them, which you do in ways beyond imagining. That is why your holy Church exists, your realized Israel, your fellowship of generosity to reach out and include those close to your heart. The orphan, the widow, the sick, the immigrant, the criminal, and all who need recognition, so they no longer have a poverty of love. May all that our fellowship does, offers, and accomplishes be for the creating of a single people under your watchful gaze.

While we cannot fix the complications of others' lives, we can save them by offering a presence which leads to the one who can save. We ask you to help us realize that duty through the joys and concerns we bring...*Reading of the Prayer List*...By your Spirit, make known who and how we can bring your first fruits too.

Moment of Silence

You are gracious and generous to deal with us, LORD. A people who can be distracted and wayward at times, but have a place to return to that we might fulfill our life's purpose. A purpose set out, and reminded, by the prayer gifted to us:

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

When we bring forward our tithes and gifts, we recognize they are not just given to the LORD but all who are close to the LORD's heart.

Offertory *These Forty Days* arr. Powell

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 we bring is in thankfulness for the bounty and opportunities you have placed in our lives. A sign of what you made possible at our lowest. We give back to you, in the hope and acknowledgment, that you know who to bless by our efforts. **Amen.**

Hymn #130 *Let Every Christian Pray

Let every Christian pray,
This day and every day,
Come, Holy Spirit, come!
Was not the church we love
commissioned from above?
Come Holy Spirit, come!

The Spirit brought to birth
The church of Christ on earth
To seek and save the lost:
God never has with drawn,
Since that tremendous dawn,
The gifts at Pentecost.

Only the Spirit's power
Can fit us for this hour:
Come, Holy Spirit, come!
Instruct, inspire, unite,

And help us see Your light:
Come, Holy Spirit, come!

***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 *Improvisation on the Passion Chorale* arr. Spong**

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

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