

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPRINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, APRIL 6th, 2025**

Ministry of Caring: The Whole People of God
Ministry of Pastoral Care & Worship: Rev. Peggy Bartlett
Cell: 905-317-5275 Email: info@hsupc.ca
Website: www.hsupc.ca
Church: Hagersville- 905-768-5863 Springvale- 905-768-1501

.....

Lent 5 - Following Jesus Through the Wilderness

“Reflecting on Jesus' call to discipleship, the wilderness of faith, and the impact of Jesus' final days as we move toward Palm and Passion Sunday.”

OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious God, we offer these gifts as signs of our gratitude and devotion. Use them to further your work in the world and to guide us in the way of Christ. Amen.

PRELUDE AND WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS, BIRTHDAYS AND CELEBRATIONS

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: The Lord is making a way in the wilderness!

People: Streams are flowing in the wasteland; God is doing a new thing!

Leader: Those who sow in tears shall reap with joy.

People: We come with open hearts, ready to follow where Christ leads us.

OPENING HYMN: #142 Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross

1 Jesus, keep me near the cross;
there a precious fountain,
free to all, a healing stream,
flows from Calvary's mountain.

2

[Refrain:]

**In the cross, in the cross,
be my glory ever,
till my raptured soul shall find
rest beyond the river.**

2 Near the cross, a trembling soul,
love and mercy found me;
there the bright and morning star
sheds its beams around me. **R**

3 Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
bring its scenes before me;
help me walk from day to day
with its shadow o'er me. **R**

4 Near the cross I'll watch and wait,
hoping, trusting ever,
till I reach the golden strand
just beyond the river. **R**

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, in this season of Lent, we walk with Jesus through the wilderness of faith. Open our hearts to hear his call and to trust where he leads. May we be strengthened by your Spirit as we follow him to the cross and beyond. Amen.

ANTHEM: When We Are Living Arranged by Hal Hopson

CHILDREN'S TIME

CHILDREN'S VIDEO

LITANY: FOLLOWING JESUS THROUGH OUR LENTEN JOURNEY

Leader: Lord Jesus, you have led us on this Lenten journey, calling us to follow you more deeply. As we look back on the past weeks, we remember the lessons you have taught us.

People: We have walked with you, Lord. Continue to guide our steps.

Leader: On the First Sunday of Lent, you led us into the wilderness, where you faced temptation and showed us the power of God's Word.

People: In our own wilderness moments, help us trust in your strength and your promises.

Leader: On the Second Sunday of Lent, you took us to the mountaintop, where you were transfigured before your disciples, revealing your glory.

People: Open our eyes to see your presence, even in unexpected places.

Leader: On the Third Sunday of Lent, you met the woman at the well and offered her living water, a wellspring of grace that never runs dry.

People: Quench our thirst, Lord, and fill us with your life-giving Spirit.

Leader: On the Fourth Sunday of Lent, you healed the man born blind, showing us that in you, the eyes of faith are opened.

People: Remove our spiritual blindness, that we may walk in your light.

Leader: And now, on this Fifth Sunday of Lent, we draw closer to the cross, reflecting on your call to discipleship, the wilderness of faith, and the path that leads to your passion.

People: Strengthen us, Lord, to walk with you in faith, even when the road is hard.

Leader: As we prepare for Palm Sunday and the journey to the cross, we ask for courage, wisdom, and hearts that are ready to follow.

People: Lead us, Lord Jesus, through this holy season. May our lives reflect your love and our hearts be ready to receive your grace.

Leader: Come, let us walk with Christ, who goes before us.

People: We will follow him, now and always. Amen.

CHORUS: #227 Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Turn your eyes upon Jesus

Look full in his wonderful face

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

In the light of his glory and grace x2

SCRIPTURE READINGS: Isaiah 43:16-21, John 12:1-8

Isaiah 43:16-21

¹⁶ This is what the LORD says—

he who made a way through the sea,

a path through the mighty waters,

¹⁷ who drew out the chariots and horses,

the army and reinforcements together,

and they lay there, never to rise again,

extinguished, snuffed out like a wick:

¹⁸ “Forget the former things;

do not dwell on the past.

¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing!

Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?

I am making a way in the wilderness

and streams in the wasteland.

²⁰ The wild animals honor me,

the jackals and the owls,

because I provide water in the wilderness

and streams in the wasteland,

to give drink to my people, my chosen,

²¹ the people I formed for myself

that they may proclaim my praise.

John 12:1-8

Jesus Anointed at Bethany

12 Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ² Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. ³ Then Mary took about a pint^[a] of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴ But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, ⁵ “Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages.^[b]” ⁶ He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷ “Leave her alone,” Jesus replied. “It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. ⁸ You will always have the poor among you,^[c] but you will not always have me.”

MESSAGE: "Where Is Jesus Leading You?"

Life is a journey. Sometimes, we feel like we're on solid ground, walking with confidence and purpose. Other times, we find ourselves

lost in a wilderness, uncertain, struggling, or even feeling distant from God.

Lent is a season that acknowledges both realities. It invites us to slow down, reflect, and ask, *Where is Jesus leading me?* It's not always an easy question to answer.

In today's Gospel reading, we meet Jesus just days before his crucifixion. He is having dinner with his friends, and something unexpected happens. Mary, one of his closest followers, takes a jar of expensive perfume, breaks it open, and pours it onto Jesus' feet. It was an extravagant act of love. It was also a moment of deep understanding ... Mary knew Jesus was about to face suffering, and she chose to honour him in the moment.

But not everyone saw it that way. Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, was quick to criticize her. "Why was this perfume wasted? It could have been sold, and the money given to the poor!" It sounded like a reasonable argument, but Jesus saw right through it.

Jesus defended Mary. "Leave her alone. She has done this to prepare me for burial."

This moment teaches us three important lessons about our faith journey, whether we feel strong in our faith or are struggling to believe.

I would like to explore this statement "When We Don't Know Where We're Going"

Some of us today are in a wilderness season. We don't know where Jesus is leading us. Maybe we're dealing with loss, uncertainty, or doubt. Maybe we feel like our prayers aren't being answered, or God feels distant.

Mary probably had her own questions and fears, too. She had seen Jesus perform miracles. She had seen him heal the sick, feed the hungry, and raise her own brother, Lazarus, from the dead. But now, she sensed that something was about to change. Jesus kept talking about his death. The road ahead wasn't going to be easy.

Maybe that's where you are. Maybe faith feels more like a struggle than a comfort right now. But here's the good news: Jesus doesn't abandon us in the wilderness. Even when we can't see the way forward, he is walking with us. The wilderness is not the end of the journey—it's a place of transformation.

If you are in a season of doubt, don't be afraid to bring your questions to Jesus. He is big enough for them. And if you feel lost, know that Jesus is still leading you, even if you can't see the path yet.

As we explore this passage a little further we see that faith requires sacrifice. Mary's act of love cost her something. That perfume was worth a year's wages. It was her security, her savings, her future. Yet she broke it open and poured it out for Jesus.

Faith is like that sometimes. It requires trust. It asks us to give up control and follow Jesus, even when we don't understand the road ahead.

For some, this means letting go of old hurts and embracing forgiveness. For others, it might mean stepping out in faith to serve, even when we feel unqualified. For some, it means trusting God in the middle of hardship.

Jesus didn't promise an easy road. He promised that following him would require sacrifice. But he also promised that it would be worth it. When we discover Jesus and the love that embraces us on a daily basis, we want to give Jesus our best.

For Mary, and I am going to step put on a limb when I say this ... but this is how I feel Mary's love for Jesus was personal. She didn't just know about him, she knew him. She had experienced his power in her own life. So, when she had the chance to show him love, she didn't hold back.

That's what faith looks like when we trust Jesus. It moves from obligation to devotion. It stops asking, *What do I have to give?* and starts asking, *What can I offer in love?*

- Maybe Jesus is calling you to deeper prayer, to spend time with him, not out of duty, but because you want to.
- Maybe he's inviting you to serve in a new way, to give your time, your talents, your heart to something greater.
- Maybe he's calling you to simply sit at his feet, like Mary did, and rest in his presence.

Faith isn't just about rules or rituals, it's about relationship. And like any relationship, the more we give of ourselves, the deeper it grows. As we approach the road ahead Palm Sunday and Passion Week, we are reminded that Jesus is leading us somewhere. He is leading us to the cross, but beyond that, to resurrection.

Maybe you are in a season of struggle. Maybe you are in a season of devotion. Maybe you're somewhere in between. No matter where you are, Jesus is calling you forward.

So, where is Jesus leading you? Will you trust him? Will you follow?

Will you, like Mary, offer him your heart?

The journey isn't over yet. And the best is still to come.

Amen.

HYMN: Where He Leads Me, I Will Follow

1. I can hear my Savior calling,

I can hear my Savior calling,

I can hear my Savior calling,

"Take thy cross and follow, follow Me."

Refrain:

Where He leads me I will follow,

Where He leads me I will follow,

Where He leads me I will follow,

I'll go with Him, with Him all the way.

2. I'll go with Him through the garden,

I'll go with Him through the garden,

I'll go with Him through the garden,

I'll go with Him, with Him all the way. [Refrain]

3. I'll go with Him through the judgment,

I'll go with Him through the judgment,

I'll go with Him through the judgment,

I'll go with Him, with Him all the way. [Refrain]

4. He will give me grace and glory,

He will give me grace and glory,

He will give me grace and glory,

And go with me, with me all the way. [Refrain]

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Leader: Loving and merciful God, as we journey through this Lenten season, we ask: Where is Jesus leading us? Open our hearts and minds as we lift our prayers before you.

Leader: Lord, in the wilderness, you call us to trust in you even when the path is uncertain. For those who feel lost, weary, or burdened, give them strength and assurance that you are walking beside them.

People: Lead us, Lord, in your mercy.

Leader: Jesus, you call us to deeper discipleship, to follow you in love and service. For those wrestling with doubt, fear, or hesitation, give them the courage to take the next step in faith.

People: Lead us, Lord, in your grace.

Leader: You call us to open our eyes and see the needs of the world. For the hungry, the homeless, the sick, and the lonely, may your Church be a beacon of hope and compassion.

People: Lead us, Lord, in your love.

Leader: You walked the road to the cross with humility and obedience. For those facing suffering, grief, or hardship, may they find peace in your presence and hope in your resurrection.

People: Lead us, Lord, in your peace.

Leader: Like Mary, may we pour out our love for you with our whole hearts. Teach us to give generously, love extravagantly, and follow you without hesitation.

People: Lead us, Lord, in your truth.

Leader: As we prepare for Palm Sunday and the journey to the cross, make us ready to follow wherever you lead. Shape us, transform us, and use us for your glory. And now may we pray the prayer your Jesus taught us so long ago, a prayer that has lead us in our lives and will continue to do so.....Our Father which art in Heaven.....

THE LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING HYMN: #560 O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee

1 O Master, let me walk with Thee
in lowly paths of service free;
tell me Thy secret; help me bear
the strain of toil, the fret of care.

- 2 Help me the slow of heart to move
by some clear, winning word of love;
teach me the wayward feet to stay,
and guide them in the homeward way.
- 3 Teach me Thy patience, still with Thee
in closer, dearer company,
in work that keeps faith sure and strong,
in trust that triumphs over wrong.
- 4 in hope that sends a shining ray
far down the future's broadening way,
in peace that only Thou canst give,
with Thee, O Master, let me live.

SENDING FORTH

Go forth, knowing that Christ leads us even in the wilderness. May the love of God, the grace of Jesus, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always. Amen.

CHORAL AMEN

POSTLUDE

.....

Announcements

Wednesday, April 9th: Church Council meeting at Hagersville at 2pm.

Wednesday, April 9th: Ham & Turkey Supper at Springvale from 4-6pm. Takeout only. Cost is \$25 for adults and \$12 for children. Text or call Shirley at 905-981-5455 to reserve your tickets.

Sunday, April 13th: Palm Sunday & Communion

Tuesday, April 15th: Coffee Tuesday at Springvale beginning at 9:30am. All are welcome!

Friday, April 18th: Good Friday Joint Service at Hagersville beginning at 10:30am. Join us after worship in the C.E. Wing for fellowship & hot cross buns.

Sunday, April 20th: Easter Sunday. Springvale will host their Easter Breakfast beginning at 8:30am with worship to follow.

Please bring in paper products for the Hagersville Food Bank! ☺

SPRING HUMOUR

1. What is Spring's favorite kind of pickles? Daffo-dills.
2. How does the sun listen to music? On his ray-dio.
3. What is a baker's favorite garden? A flour garden.
4. What do you call a well-dressed lion? A dandy lion.
5. Why did the farmer plant a seed in his pond? He was trying to grow a watermelon.
6. How does a bee brush her hair? With a honeycomb.
7. What kind of bean never grows in the garden? A jellybean.
8. What do bees need in order to fly in the rain? Their yellowjackets.
9. Why couldn't the flower ride its bike? It lost its petals.
10. What is the best place to plant a spring garden in school? In kinder-garden.