

**HAGERSVILLE UNITED CHURCH &
SPINGVALE UNITED CHURCH
SUNDAY, MARCH 22nd, 2020**

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REGIONAL COUNCIL PRAYER CYCLE

Erin Mills

Fourth Sunday in Lent:

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS AT THE CROSS: THE MAN BORN BLIND

CALL TO WORSHIP

When the world is dark and full of hate and fear,
when we cannot see God

we will turn on the light.

When we cannot find our way back to love and peace

we will turn on the light.

When our vision dims due to the darkness within

we will turn on the light.

Christ opens our eyes with the gift of sight.

The light of the world is Jesus Christ.

Come and worship the one
who brings sight to the blind.

Hallelujah! Praise God, the light of the world!

***OPENING HYMN: #345** Come, Children Join to Sing

1 Come, children, join to sing: Hallelujah!
Praise to our Servant King: Hallelujah!
Let all with heart and voice,
saved by God's gracious choice,
now in this place rejoice: Hallelujah!

OPENING PRAYER

Gracious God, who created us in God's own image, we are grateful for all that you have done for us, for all that you are doing in us, and for all that you will do through us. Open our eyes to see your presence among us, moving in powerful ways at all times and in all places. Open our ears to hear familiar words in new ways—ways that will change us and challenge us to become the people you created us to be. Grant us the power and the courage to come out of the darkness and into the light of Jesus Christ, that we may serve you by serving others. We love you with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Forgiving God, in a world filled with so much pain, we would rather shut our eyes and be blind than see things as they really are. Grant us the courage to face the reality of our world, and give us the strength to bring your light to those who walk in darkness. Help us see others as you see them, and forgive us when we do not trust you enough to open our eyes to the possibilities before us. Heal our self-inflicted blindness, O God, and lead us in the footsteps of the Light of the World, who reveals your glory in his life, his teachings, and his love. In his holy name, we pray. Amen.

SCRIPTURE READINGS: PSALM 23

23 The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.
3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

READERS' THEATER: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS AT THE CROSS: THE MAN BORN BLIND - based on John 9:1-41

Narrator: As Jesus walked with his disciples, they saw a man who had been born blind. The disciples asked Jesus whether the blindness was the fault of the man or of his parents. Jesus responded that it was the fault of neither the man nor his parents but stated that this would be an opportunity for people to see God's work in this man.

Jesus: I am the light of the world. See, I have spat on the ground, have made a paste with the soil and saliva and have placed it on your eyes. Now, go and wash yourself in the Pool of Siloam.

Narrator: And the man did as Jesus instructed, and immediately his sight was restored. The people who had seen the man begging at the corner were astonished and asked how this would be possible.

Blind Man: There was this man, Jesus, who made the mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." And I went and washed and received my sight. I do not know where he is right now.

Narrator: Now it was on the Sabbath day when Jesus had performed this miracle; and they brought the previously blind man to the Pharisees to show them what had happened. The man told them about the miracle, but the Pharisees were divided on their understanding. Some thought he might be from God because of the miracle; but others said that he could not be from God, because he had performed the miracle on the Sabbath. The man however was convinced that Jesus was, indeed, a prophet. They went to the parents of the man and asked if he had always been blind. They were afraid of the Pharisees, but answered truthfully that he had always been blind. They did not know how he received his sight or who gave it to him.

Blind Man: I don't know what else to tell you. I was born blind. I have never had eyesight, and yet this man, this Jesus, made the mud, spread it on my eyes, told me to go and wash in the Pool of Siloam. I did. And I received my sight. That's the honest truth. Perhaps you might want to become his disciples because of the miracle he did. It is an astonishing thing! You do not know where the man comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world

began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.

Narrator: The Pharisees were so upset over the man's words that they drove him out of the Temple.

Jesus: Do you believe in the Son of Man?

Blind Man: And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.

Jesus: You have seen him, and the one who is speaking with you is he.

Blind Man: Lord, I believe. (takes the blue cloth and places it over the cross and walks away)

Jesus: I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.

Narrator: Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and asked him if he thought that they were blind.

Jesus: If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see," your sin remains.

MESSAGE FOR THIS WEEK – This is very thought provoking about what is happening in the world and God's response to it.

Peggy

"IT'S TIME TO REST ..."

Society: What about my plans?!

God: My plans for you are always better than your own. Don't worry. I'm going to work this all out for your good.

Society: We're not going to get anything done!

God: That's the point. You know how you keep spinning your wheels—always working, moving, doing—but never feeling satisfied? I've given you permission to stop. I've cleared your calendars for you! Your worth isn't tied to busyness or accomplishment. All you have to do is take care of each other.

Society: What does this all mean?

God: It means I'm in control. It means you are human and I am God. It means I've given you a wonderful opportunity to be the light in a dark world. It means you are going to learn to rely on me.

Society: What are we supposed to do when we can't leave our homes?

God: Rest. You are always so busy and overwhelmed, crying out to me weary and exhausted. Can't you use a break from your fast-paced and over-scheduled lives? Go ahead and rest. Pray. Love your families. Be still and spend time with me.

Society: You mean we're supposed to stay home with our kids all day, every day?

God: Yes. And you're going to be just fine. This time together is a rare gift. The rush of daily life has come to a halt. Play games. Bake cookies. Work on projects you've never had the time for. Teach them kindness and grace. Show them how to endure difficult circumstances and steer them toward me.

Society: We better start hoarding anything we can get our hands on!

God: Prevention, yes. Precaution, yes. Preparedness, yes. But after that, it's time to put the needs of others before your own. When you see someone in need, help them. Offer up what you have. Do not worry about tomorrow! Haven't I always taken care of you? Now, go take care of someone else.

Society: Why is this happening?

God: To remind you that I'm in control. To bring your attention back to me. I'm bringing you together as families and neighbors. I'm showing you patience and perseverance. I'm reminding you of your purpose and priorities. Now is the time to learn and teach your children what this life is really about.

Society: We don't know who to believe.

God: Believe in me. Trust me. Ask me for wisdom and I will surely give it.

Society: We're scared!

God: I've got this and I'm with you.

***HYMN: #605 Jesus, Teacher, Brave and Bold**

1 Jesus, teacher, brave and bold,
let us serve you, young and old.
Let us faith-filled workers be,
all around, your wisdom see.
Let us play and dance and sing,
your goodness find in everything.

PASTORAL PRAYER

Lord of life, we surely are a stubborn people. We wail and whine about the darkness that seems to claim our lives, yet we persist in creating that darkness to cover our mistakes and our misdeeds. You are merciful and will pardon and heal us. But we are afraid because we cannot forgive ourselves for our own transgressions. Help us let go of the need to continually hide and punish ourselves. Free us from the angry spirit that dwells so deeply in us and in our land. Give us courage and confidence to be people of love, hope and peace; for we ask this in Jesus' Name. AMEN.

LORD'S PRAYER

***CLOSING HYMN: #589 Lord, Speak to Me**

1 Lord, speak to me that I may speak
in living echoes of your tone;
as you have sought, so let me seek
your straying children lost and lone.

SENDING FORTH

Go into the world, carrying the light of Christ into the darkness!

We go, with hearts full and eyes open!

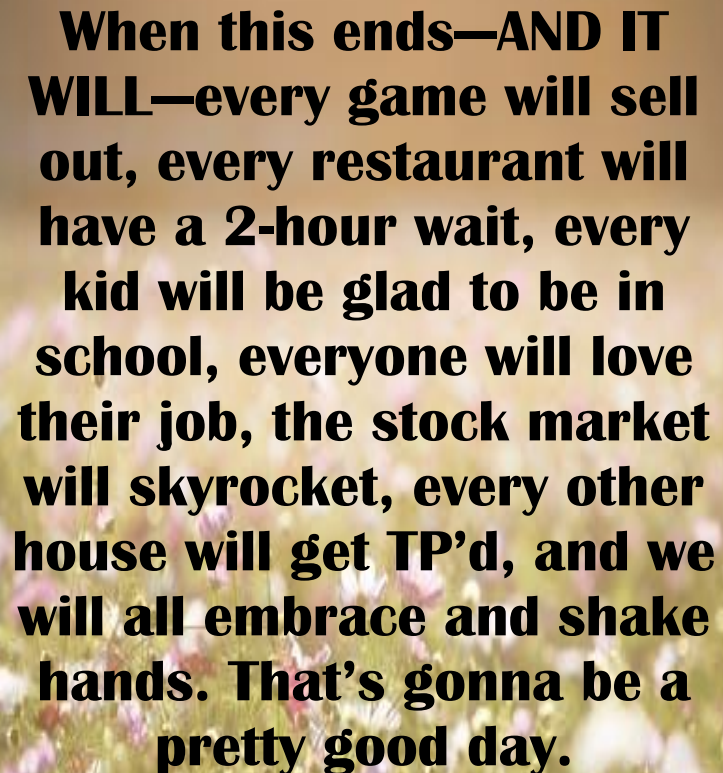
Receive God's love and care, and share that love and care with others!

We go, with eyes reflecting God's light and hands open to share it!

May you walk in the light of Christ all the days of your life!

We will follow Christ wherever he leads us! Amen!

CHORAL AMEN



**When this ends—AND IT
WILL—every game will sell
out, every restaurant will
have a 2-hour wait, every
kid will be glad to be in
school, everyone will love
their job, the stock market
will skyrocket, every other
house will get TP'd, and we
will all embrace and shake
hands. That's gonna be a
pretty good day.**

Hang in there, World.