

Siloam

by Lisle Gwynn Garrity inspired by John 9:1-41

Christ Church **UNITED CHURCH**
OF CHRIST

Rev. Dan Stark

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On this fourth Sunday of the season of Lent, we continue our journey into our sermon series on *The Wilderness*. Today's scriptures come from the much-beloved Psalm 23, which tells us about the Good Shepherd who watches over their sheep with care – even in the darkest place imaginable. Our Gospel lesson from John 9:1-41 is the difficult parable of the “man born blind.” In this time of social disruption, the 23rd Psalm reminds us that God abides with us in the dark valley of fear, anxiety, and confusion. God calls us to walk alongside one another in the valley. John reminds us that Jesus' teachings bring disruption to the social order with which we are familiar.

Words of Welcome

A Song for Today

[Shepherd Me, O God](#)

Marty Haugen

Call to Worship

One: God is in the water that restores our soul.

All: And God is in the night when we lose our way.

One: God is in today and tomorrow, raising up leaders, prophets and dreamers.

All: And God is in the wilderness with us— every step of the way.

One: So with confidence we declare—

All: If God is in those spaces, then God is surely here.

One: Let us worship the God of creation.

All: Let us worship the God of wilderness spaces.

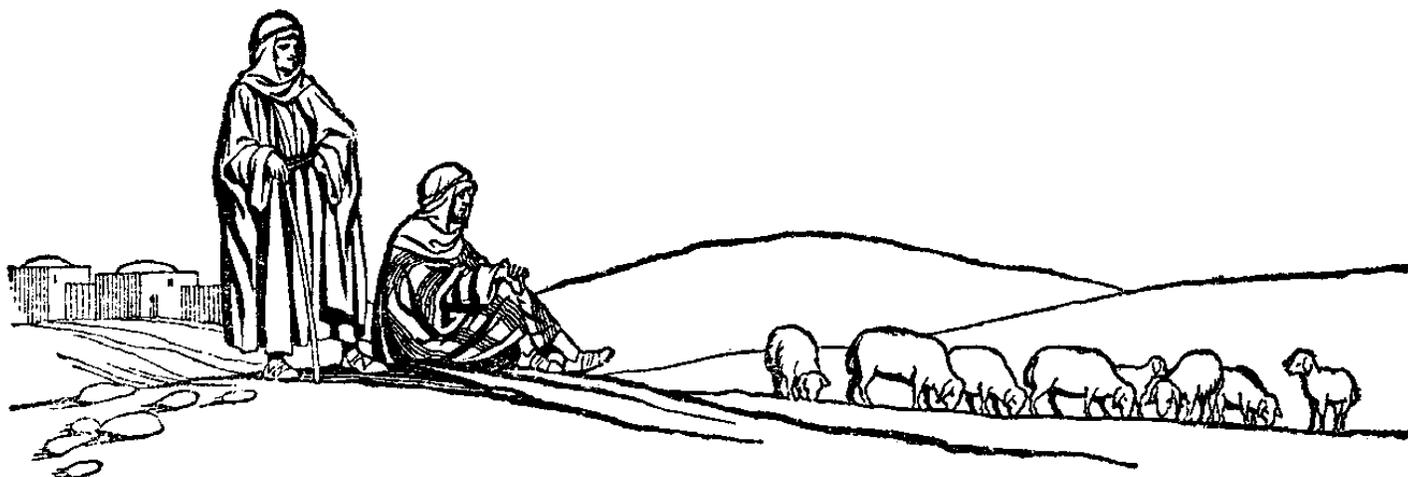
Prayer by Sarah Are / A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

A Time for the Child in All of Us

Old Testament

Psalm 23

This beloved reading has long been attributed to King David, although scholars are uncertain who wrote it. This psalm is an ancient song of comfort and assurance of God's presence – not just for the good times in life, but always. The psalm speaks of God as a Divine Shepherd who guides, nurtures, cares for, protects, and walks with their sheep. During the deepest and darkest valleys, God the Shepherd is with us. In this time of social disruption and crisis, we, too, can be assured that the Good Shepherd abides with us.



My grandfather was a good man,
 But he believed
 That wilderness emotions
 Were not to be seen.
 Cry with the door closed,
 Don't dwell on the negative.
 Chin up, kid,
 We've been here before.
 My grandfather was a good man,
 But I'd like to say—
 The wilderness is here to interrupt your
 previously-scheduled programming.
 Like water in the desert
 And setting the slaves free,
 The wilderness might be
 The very thing we need,
 The very thing we dream,
 The very thing we plead
 For.
 I guess what I'm trying to say is—
 It never seems appealing to let a bird

in the house,
 But if you do,
 Then you might as well
 Open every window and door.
 And if you do,
 Then you just might find yourself
 Basking in the light,
 Dancing in the breeze,
 Overwhelmed with the beauty
 That an open door brings.
 So I'm opening my door
 And inviting in the wind,
 To rustle up my heart
 And start over again.
 For sweeping the truth under the rug
 Has never gotten us far.
 So may the wilderness be like a
 Bird in your house.
 Throw open your doors.
 The truth must come out.

New Testament

John 9:1-41

Slats Toole

The story of the man-born-blind from John's gospel is about a miraculous healing story, but in many ways, it is not about that healing at all. One must be cautious when reading this story from the perspective as a well-intentioned, able-bodied reader, because it is not meant to be dismissive or condescending to disabled people. Blindness is not the wilderness in this story. The confusion that the community experiences is the true Wilderness. The concept of confusion is central to this story. What is clear, though, is that Jesus disrupts the order the community knows. The Wilderness is a place of disruption.

Sermon

The Wilderness: A Place of Disruption

Prayer Requests and Pastoral Prayer

Prayers for healing in the name of Jesus

Prayers for a young family, who have been living at a motel awaiting permanent housing

Prayers for one's oldest brother, for good health and a speedy recovery

Prayers for healthcare workers, scientists, caregivers, nurses, doctors, and those who cannot stop working

Prayers for the homeless, for they have nowhere to go with libraries, restaurants, and government buildings closed

Prayers for pastors as they find themselves navigating through uncharted territories

Prayers for teachers who must learn how to teach remotely, and for parents at home with their students.

Prayers for the military, those who are being called to active duty, and those who are serving right now

Prayers for the vulnerable; those whose support meetings are cancelled

Prayers for support personnel; healthcare, fire fighters, EMTs, and the helpers

Prayers for our military, our government leaders, for doctors, nurses, fighting evils seen and unseen

Prayers for all – no matter who you are, whatever your age, gender, race, beliefs, whether you are working or retired, during this time

Prayers for Barb Well's brother-in-law in Arizona for comfort and peace as his cancer is now advanced and prayers for Barb's sister, his wife, during this this difficult time

Prayers for Howard Fritsch and Brian Fritsch as Howard is now home from St. Luke's ICU

Prayers for Robert Kroening as he continues cancer treatments and for his family as they journey with him

Prayers for Noelle Simons as she navigates through health issues

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, the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

Jesus of Nazareth,

There are stories of you healing the blind all over scripture.

You were constantly opening people's eyes.

So today we confess that we often choose to keep our eyes closed.

We turn away from injustice in our world, worried you might ask us to work for change.

We close our eyes to our privilege, because the truth is uncomfortable.

We avoid eye contact with those who are suffering to avoid identifying with their pain.

Forgive us for failing to be your Church in the world.

Guide us from the depths of our wilderness into your light.

Amen.

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Words of Assurance

Rev. Mindi Welton-Mitchell

God is our Good Shepherd, who restores our soul, who leads us in the path of righteousness.

Though we are in the valley of the shadow, we will fear no evil. We know that God is with us,

and that God has prepared a table before us. Surely goodness and mercy will be with us all our days. Go with this good news of God's love and forgiveness, for we shall dwell with God forever.

Amen.

A Song for Sending

[Abide With Me](#)

Henry Francis Lyte, 1847

(Recorded by King's College Choir, Cambridge, UK)

Blessing

Joanna Harader

Whatever wilderness the Spirit has brought you to:

walk in boldness, as a beloved child of God

walk in peace, under the shelter of the Most High

walk in faith, knowing Christ walks with you.

Amen.

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If you should need to contact the Pastor, please email pastor@uccmke.org or call 507-951-2856
If you should need to contact the Church Office, please email office@uccmke.org or call 414-481-3530.

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