



Unbind Me

by Lauren Wright Pittman inspired by John 11:1-45

Christ Church **UNITED CHURCH**
OF CHRIST

Rev. Dan Stark

www.uccmke.org

(414) 481-3530

March 29, 2020

On this fifth Sunday of the season of Lent, we continue our journey into our sermon series on *The Wilderness*. Today's Old Testament reading comes from Ezekiel 47:1-14 – the story of the Valley of Dry Bones. The Gospel reading from John 11:1-45 tells the story of Jesus raising his friend Lazarus from the dead. In both scriptures, the Wilderness leads to life in unexpected places – and death does not have the final word.

Words of Welcome

A Song for Today

[Dem Bones Dem Bones Dem Dry Bones](#)

Delta Rhythm Boys

Call to Worship

One: We have been in the wilderness—

All: Discerning and working, seeking and dreaming.

One: We have been in the wilderness—

All: Grieving and wondering, praying and hoping.

One: We have been in the wilderness—

All: Longing and running, creating and waiting.

One: We have been in the wilderness, but we have not been alone; for God walks with us, every step of the way.

All: So let us worship the God of our darkest nights and our brightest days.

One: Let us worship Holy God.

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

A Time for the Child in All of Us

Old Testament

Ezekiel 37:1-14



The book of Ezekiel covers prophecies, visions and symbolic actions of the Prophet among the Jews during the time of exile in Babylon. In this extended allegory, Ezekiel prophesies to a valley of dry bones. The bones are covered in flesh, given breath and come back to life. In a sense, this story is about the resurrection of Israel from death by God, as God promises to bring the exiles back to Israel. God has power over death, leading to life in unexpected places.

"Ezekiel and the Valley of Dry Bones" (1979), Richard McBee, artist.

Wilderness Poem

A Place of New Life

Sarah Are

I used to think the wilderness would never end.
I called my mom and asked—
“Does time really heal all wounds?
Do the pieces ever fall back into place?
Does the wilderness go on forever?”
So she told me about the horizon.
She said, “There is an edge,
Where the earth meets the sky.
And when you’re there,
You will see daisies in the sidewalk
And the sun after the rain.”
I asked her to draw me a map
And she cried,
Because she knew this road was mine to walk,
But she promised to wait for me,
Day in and day out,
For as long as the wilderness raged.
So I walked.
And it felt like forty days and it hurt
like forty nights.
And I waved to the people I passed there

in the wilderness.
We tipped our hats to one another,
Silently recognizing the weight we
each carried,
Until one day, I realized—
The earth always kisses the sky.
And this wilderness has turned into a garden,
And I have made it out alive.
And my mother hugged me,
There at the earth’s edge.
And she whispered in my ear,
That God was that gardener,
And that I had nothing to fear.
So if you ever ask for a map,
Know that God and I will be planting seeds,
Hoping to turn your wilderness into a garden.
For as long as the wilderness rages on,
I will never stop looking for you
Where the earth kisses the sky.

New Testament

John 11:1-45

John’s Gospel begins with the announcement that God’s Word, which brought all things into being, became flesh in Jesus. During his ministry, Jesus reveals God’s power by performing seven miraculous signs. In this scripture, Jesus raises his friend Lazarus of Bethany from the dead. When Lazarus becomes ill, his sisters, Mary and Martha, sent word to Jesus. Lazarus is dead by the time Jesus arrives to see him. Mary and Martha confront Jesus about Lazarus’ death. Before Jesus raises Lazarus from the grave, he grieves the loss of his friend. The Wilderness is a place of new life.

Sermon

The Wilderness: A Place of New Life

Prayer Requests and Pastoral Prayer

Prayers for...

Nancy Jonucuchi's sister, Sandy, in NY. For her continued good health.

Julie’s nephew, who works in NY at Riker’s Island as a prison doctor.

Peggy’s daughter, Amy, who is a nurse in MN.

Laura and her family as they mourn Todd’s passing during this tender time.

Prayers for us all during this pandemic.

Prayers for more love everywhere.

Prayers for our Earth: climate change, animals.

Prayers for innocent beings: children, animals and pets.

Prayers for Alex Zorro-Kluck

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 protection, comfort, and healing for Barb's friend Alfonso and his family
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

Gracious God,

You invite us to plant a garden of love and harmony, but we grow weeds of prejudice and hatred. You invite us to sow joy and gratitude, but we scatter seeds of greed and envy. You call us to tend the soil of fear and denial, but instead we close our eyes and let the earth suffer. Forgive us. You invited us to plant a garden, and we lost ourselves in the wilderness. Clear our hearts.

Breathe life into these weary bones and grant us a fresh start.

Gratefully we pray, amen.

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

Words of Assurance

A Song for Sending

[Be Thou My Vision](#)

Nathan Pacheco, artist

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.

--

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.

You can make your offering to Christ Church through [PayPal](#) or by mailing a check to Christ Church,
915 East Oklahoma Ave, Milwaukee, WI, 53207.

