
HOPE HEADLINES

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Confession, Trust, Mercy, Hope: The Journey of Lent

*O LORD, do not enter into judgment with your servant,
for no one living is righteous before you
(Psalm 143:2).*

Psalm 143:2 is very striking! Often in psalms like this, the one who prays makes a *declaration of innocence* (this is also true, for example, of Job). The poet says in effect, “I’m not at fault,” as the reason God should go easy on him/her. However, in this case, the petitioner asserts to God a *declaration of universal imperfection*: **No one living is righteous before you!** The psalmist’s “defense” is that everyone is guilty of something; that’s what it means to be human. Is this taking personal responsibility or avoiding it? In any event, the *declaration of universal imperfection* is intended to motivate God to intervene on behalf of the petitioner and deliver her/him from the threats of enemies.

No one living is righteous before you qualifies as an indirect **confession**. Most importantly, behind the assertion, the psalmist **trusts** that **God is merciful** towards imperfect humanity and towards each imperfect individual—including him/herself.

And **mercy** is a different animal than **fairness**. The poet **trusts** that there is more to how God operates in the world than upholding the rules and punishing offenders. And that gives the psalmist **hope**.

The Spirit has put into the heart and words of the petitioner that God has **hope** ... **for sinners!** ... good plans ... for offenders! These are God’s “higher ways,” a phrase from our thematic verses for Lent 2022 (**Isaiah 55:8-9**). And so, **Isaiah 55:1-2** sends God’s broad and **hopeful** invitation to *everyone*, to *imperfect humanity*, “Come to the waters, *all* who are thirsty. Come and drink ... without money or cost.” God’s **hopeful** invitation even includes, “Let the *wicked* forsake their way and the *unrighteous* their thoughts and let them return to the LORD, so that the LORD may have **mercy** on them ... for our God will abundantly pardon” (**Isaiah 55:7**).

In **Lamentations 3:19-24**, the poet’s **hope** lies in the God whose **mercies** are renewed *every morning*. Great is the LORD’s **faithfulness** (also in **Psalm 143**), which is certainly beyond “balancing the ledger.” In **Psalm 86:5**, the poet’s **hope** lies in the God who is predisposed/naturally inclined/hard-wired to be *forgiving*. Indeed, the **hope** of a sinful humanity before a righteous God is found in another divine quality, an outrageous, out-of-bounds quality, called **mercy**.

This Lent we can give thanks for and embrace God’s higher ways which never fail us on our journey!

Blessings,
Pastor Dave



SUNDAY SCHOOL IN MARCH

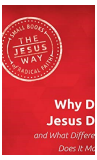
The preschool & elementary classes will meet each Sunday in March.

The youth class will meet on March 6 & 20.

The adult class will begin a Lent series “Why did Jesus die and what difference does it make?” on each Sunday in March.

*Bits
&
Pieces*

*Jon and Abby Pinkerton moved to Lille, France in February for Jon's doctorate degrees in Digital Humanities and English Literature. Jon will be doing research through Lille University in France and Kent University in Canterbury England. They expect to be in Europe for three years. Jon is the son of Randy and Joanna Pinkerton.



Why Did Jesus Die? And What Difference Does It Make?

Written by Michelle Hershberger

It has been said that “Jesus died on the cross to save us from our sins.” But it has not always been said that way.

In 412 AD Augustine of Hippo claimed that all of humanity inherited the sin of Adam. Augustine believed this idea from the scriptures of Paul. He referenced the writings of Paul in Romans 5:12. Augustine believed that original sin from Adam was transmitted to all Adam’s descendants. This lead Augustine to believe that as infants, the only way to erase the sins we inherited for Adam was through baptism. Baptism by water. In Augustine’s view all of humanity was present in Adam when he sinned and therefore all of humanity has sinned.

No matter what we think about original sin, there is no doubt that salvation for all of us is connected to Jesus’s death on the cross.

The word Michelle Hershberger uses is “Atonement” to describe the work of Jesus. Atonement describes why Jesus died on the cross and how the rest of Jesus’s life is connected to that event.

The Central question is. What does the death of Jesus mean and how does that death affect individuals, communities and the whole world.

The view of atonement acts like a stone skipped on the water. It has a ripple effect over the entire theological pond.

Questions we may have.

1. Is the character of God consistent with the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus?
2. Why did Jesus come to earth?
3. How does the cross work to save us?
4. What does it mean to be saved?

Atonement is complicated, but if we invite God into our ponderings and search the scriptures together, we can trust that God will help us understand.

Two stories I hope can help understand atonement better.

Once there were two families who lived with alcoholism. In both families, one member got drunk every Friday night, came home, and verbally abused and sometimes beat the other members of his or her family.

The first family every Saturday morning reacted by forgiving the drunken family member. They loved her and they listened to her pleas for forgiveness and accepted them. But the next Friday night, she would go out and get drunk again. When she was put in jail, the family paid her

bond. This pattern stayed the same week after week after week.

The second family also loved their family member who was an alcoholic. And they also forgave him. But one Saturday morning, they decided to open a way for him to get sober. They offered to get him into a treatment center where he could get help. He got sober, he found healing. He didn’t drink anymore. He was not only forgiven; he was set free.

The first family offered forgiveness. The second family offered forgiveness and healing. You could say the second family gave their loved one a fuller salvation than the first family.

Like the second family Jesus wants to deliver us from whatever hold us in bondage. Atonement is a word that describes how Jesus does that.

In Atonement Jesus both saves and heals us. With atonement Jesus not only forgives us but he makes a way for us to get “sober” from our sins. As we are going to see this atonement comes to us not only by Jesus’s death but by his birth, life, teachings, and resurrection. Atonement is not just about what happened on the cross but more broadly as the work of Christ.

What makes atonement necessary? Sin, and the book of Genesis offers us 4 stories that help explain sin.

1. Story of Adam and Eve. They disobey God by eating the forbidden fruit. This breaks their relationship with God. Adam and Eve blame each other thus illustrating how sin breaks our relationship with other people. In their lostness they realize they’re naked. This symbolizes shame which is a broken relationship with our inner self. Finally the ground is cursed which means our relationship with the physical world is destroyed. So Adam and Eve’s sin broke their relationship with God, other people, their selves and the physical world. But it’s important to remember that God doesn’t abandon Adam and Eve, God is there up close and personal with sinful humanity.
2. Other stories in Genesis are Cain and Abel, the flood, and the Tower of Babel. In all of these stories the four relationships are broken through sin. With God, self, others, and physical world.

Atonement is the how of salvation. If sin breaks these four relationships then salvation needs to heal these four relationships, and Jesus provides that healing.

Zoom Etiquette for Church Services

You may have wondered what zoom etiquette is appropriate for church? Should I mute? When do I show my video? When is my face being shown in the sanctuary? Here are a few guiding principles for our zoom etiquette:

- Our primary worship space is the sanctuary. We hope when possible you can attend in person. We value your friendship, fellowship, and presence. We want our worship service to be as welcoming and worshipful as possible. It also brings us joy to know that others are worshipping with us who can't be in attendance.
- Zoom has become the best alternative for numerous members who have difficulty attending, are traveling, or attend from a distance. We want our zoom attendees to "feel like I'm there" in person. Many zoomers get ready for church the same way as if they would be in attendance.

Suggestions for your best worship experience:

- Zoom is displayed in the sanctuary at specific times: Before and during the prelude, during the announcements and sharing time, and again after the benediction.
- Zoom is muted in the sanctuary at all times except announcements, sharing time, and unavoidable transitions.
- Zoomers hear sanctuary audio beginning at the prelude until after the postlude.
- What about my camera? Feel free to have your camera on during the fellowship time before and after the service. You are invited to turn your camera on during the sharing time as well. The sanctuary screen always defaults to the entire zoom gallery of attendees.
- When the prelude starts, please be mindful to mute your device and turn off your camera. Remember, in the sanctuary, while our focus may be on each other before the service, the prelude gives us time to focus on the worship experience. A rotating ceiling fan, moving video, person, or pet moving across the screen can be quite distracting when seen at the front of the sanctuary.
- If you need help with your zoom settings, please reach out to the zoom host for the week.
- Our worship time is Holy time for Hope and home together. Our fellowship time before and after the service connects us as individuals whichever attendance option you choose.

~~Worship Committee

Zoom Meeti



Library News...

Here are some of the interesting new titles that have been processed into our church library in the last few months. Check them out from the display table near the library door, or in the library!

For adults:

Who Will Be a Witness: Igniting Activism for God's Justice, Love, and Deliverance by Drew G. I. Hart

Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation by Latasha Morrison

Separated by the Border: A Birth Mother, a Foster Mother, and a Migrant Child's 3,000-Mile Journey by Gena Thomas

Thou Shalt Not Be a Jerk: A Christian's Guide to Engaging Politics by Eugene Cho

Now It Springs Up: Spiritual Insights for Every Day by Carol Duerksen, Michele Hershberger, Laurie Oswald Robinson

Counter Cultural Parenting: Building Character in a World of Compromise by Lee Nienhuis

The House at the End of the Moor by Michelle Griep

The Fifth Avenue Story Society by Rachel Hauck

For Children:

Different Like Me by Xochitl Dixon

Arlo and the Great Big Cover-Up by Betsy Childs Howard

God Gave Us Christmas by Lisa Tawn Bergren

Shine On: A Story Bible





March Reminders...

Ash Wednesday service

Worship Leader-Pastor Dave
Song Leader-Galen
Tech-Scott

Sunday School Helper Preschool-Alison

Sunday school Superintendent-Delaine

Coffee

March 6-Randy & Joanna
March 13-Todd & Debbie
March 20-Chris Bellar
March 27-Greg & Dawn

Lent 1-March 6

Worship Leader-Mike V.
Scripture-Margaret
Pianist-Amy
Song Leader-Jared S.
Tech-Scott
Zoom host-Lee

Lent 2-March 13

Worship Leader-Mike V.
Scripture-Wendy
Pianist-Laurie
Song Leader-Lowell
Tech-Scott

Lent 3-March 20

Worship Leader-Amy
Scripture-TBA
Pianist-Cynthia
Song Leader-Galen
Tech-Scott

Lent 4-March 27

Worship Leader-Lori M.
Scripture-TBA
Pianist-Ruthie
Song Leader-Kendrick
Tech-Scott

Worship Prep

March 6-Lori M.
March 13-Ruthie
March 20-Cynthia
March 27-Heidi

March