

## **Sermon March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2025**

*Our Experiences of God Change Us, Inspire Us into Being the  
Loving People God Creates us to Be*

### **Why do we come to church...**

when so many of our loved ones in our life...

no longer do?

Why do we feel inspired...

to keep the church going...

when at every convention...

we see statistics...

that make it hard for us...

to see a future for the church.

### **For James, John, and Peter,**

I'm sure they are asking themselves...

these same questions...

as they bear witness...

to the challenges Jesus faces...

as he tries to reform his faith community.

“Is Jesus the real deal,

or are we setting ourselves up...

for some great fall?

We have given up everything to follow him.”

“Yes,

we have witnessed some pretty cool miracles,

but we don’t understand...

what Jesus is saying half the time.

We struggle to replicate...

what Jesus is doing.

Sometimes he doesn’t sound like...

the messianic figure...

we had imagined him to be.

Sometimes he hangs out with people...

that make us feel uncomfortable.”

**I wouldn't be surprised if James,**

John, and Peter...

are needing to see...

or hear something...

to help them feel inspired.

Something that will change their hearts...

to believe...

that Jesus has come into the world...

to save it.

To breathe new life...

into their community.

To transform them...

into the loving people...

God created them to be.

**Likewise,**

Moses is dealing with a community...

that is lost...

as they find themselves wandering in the wilderness.

How do they get access to food?

Shelter?

After years of living in slavery,

how do they live as free people?

**Of course,**

a story like the golden calf story...

shows us...

that they are desperate...

to identify themselves...

in this new world.

Desperate...

to try anything...

to matter.

Maybe wondering if this God...

Moses is encouraging them to follow...

has just played a cruel trick on them.

Leading them out into the wilderness to die.

They even reflect on the good old days...

living in slavery.

**In both stories,**

the people are feeling challenged,

lost,

questioning their faith.

Wondering if it is really worth it...

to keep walking down this path...

that seems so uncertain,

so challenging,

so fragile.

**They need something or someone...**

to reassure them...

that this is the best path for them...

to walk down.

That this path...

will lead them into a better future.

And that they do not have to face...

these challenges alone.

**So, what happens next...**

in these two stories?

Well,

they all have an encounter with God...

that impacts them profoundly.

That changes them...

to see things...

from a different perspective.

That inspires them to keep believing.

To keep trying to be the loving people...

God created them to be.

**In the story in Exodus,**

Moses face shines brightly...

after being in the presence of God.

He comes down the mountain...

shiny face and all...

with these tablets in hand.

New guidelines...

that will help shape Israel's community...

in a new way.

Giving them the structure and perspective they need...

to help them love God...

and one another...

as they live in the wilderness.

### **Moses encounter with God.**

The people's encounter with God through Moses,



through the commandments,

impacts them profoundly.

Changes their hearts...

to see things in a new light.

Changes their circumstances...

from being a lost people...

wandering in the wilderness...

to a people...

with an identity,

a purpose.

Gives them hope...

that a future is possible.

Inspires them to be...

the loving people...

God creates them to be.

**In our gospel this morning,**

on a mountain top,

John, James, and Peter...

see Jesus' appearance...

change before their eyes.

Helping them see Jesus in a new way.

Giving them what they need...

to keep following Jesus.

Giving them hope...

that there is a better future out there...

if they keep following Jesus.

That Jesus indeed has come to save the world.

Jesus has come to change their community...

into something new.

Where they can be the loving people...

God created them to be.

**Through Jesus,**

they have an experience of God...

that impacts them profoundly.

That changes how they see Jesus.

How they see Jesus' purpose and mission.

How they see their role...

in living out this purpose and mission.

Through this experience of God,

they are inspired to keep believing.

**Talk about a mountain top experience.**

**Again, I ask.**

Why do you come to church?

Why do you want to keep the church going?

What experiences of God have impacted you,

changed you,

inspired you?

**When I was in seminary,**

I attended a young adult conference.

I have to admit,

we were already seeing the statistics...

of a church in decline.

And I wondered if I this was the right career path...

for me to walk down.

**But seeing a group of young adults...**

inspired to keep the church going...

even when most of their peers...

didn't attend a church...

gave me hope...

that no matter how small our numbers are...

the Spirit of the church is very much alive.

There is something about our faith,

about our church...

that drives us...

to be the kind of people...

God created us to be.

And no statistic in the world...

can change that.

**In Paul's letter to the church in Corinth...**

he is saying this very thing...

as the church tries to survive...

the persecution they are facing...

living in the Empire.

“The Spirit is alive in us...

and will carry us forward.

No matter how stark the future may look.”

**For many of us...**

when we come to worship,

we feel impacted,

changed,

inspired,

renewed...

to keep being the loving people...

God created us to be.

**Through the songs,**

the sermon,

the communion,

the confession,

the prayers,

the fellowship afterwards,

we experience God.

And are inspired to keep trekking,

to keep going...

even if this path...

we are invited to walk down...

comes with uncertainty.

With its challenges.

**For many of us...**

when we get involved in a ministry...

like the breakfast program at St. Andrews Memorial,

or the sock drive,

or the reverse advent calendar,

or the pride parade,

we feel impacted,

changed,

inspired...

to keep trying to be the loving people...

God created us to be.

We feel hope for a better future.

**For many of us...**

when we are comforted by a sibling in Christ...

when someone we love dies.



Or something challenging...

is happening in our life.

We can feel impacted,

changed,

inspired,

by experiencing this act of love.

Or when we are the sibling doing the comforting,

we can feel impacted,

changed,

inspired...

by this act of love.

**Why do we come to church?**

Why do we want to keep this church going.

Because as we experience God...

through the ministries of this church.

Through the kindness and grace...

we treat each other with.

Through the Word of God.

We are impacted,

changed,

inspired...

to keep being the loving people...

God created us to be.

No matter what the statistics say.

No matter where we find ourselves...

when we move out of this worship space.

**No matter what. The Spirit is alive in us.**

And will keep working in and through us...

to reveal God's love for all of God's creation.

The church lives and breathes.

And will continue to do so.

**This belief carried the early believers...**

as they faced persecution, challenges, and threats...

to the life of the church.

This belief carried Christians in all times and places...

as they faced challenges and threats...

to the life of the church.

This belief carries us today and into the future...

as we continue to face challenges and threats...

to the life of the church. **Amen.**

## **Sermon March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

### *God's Generosity and Hospitality*

**This past Wednesday...**

at St. Andrew's Memorial...

or Calvary United,

which ever one you attended,

we were invited...

to receive ashes on our foreheads...

in the sign of the cross.

Reminding us of God's baptismal promise...

that through Christ Jesus...

we are children of God.

Marked by the Cross of Christ forever.

**As well,**

reminding us...

that we are dust...

and to dust...

we shall return.

Or in other words,

life is fragile.

We are fragile.

Subject to suffering.

Subject to death.

**Ash Wednesday,**

the season of Lent,

encourages us to depend on God...

for our wellbeing.

To depend on God...

when it comes to dealing with...

the suffering and death...

we experience in our lives.

To depend on God's promise...

that suffering and death...

do not have the final say over our lives.

God does.

And what God says...

is that through Christ Jesus,

suffering, death, is powerless.

Instead, God breathes new life in us.

**Lent is a season in our church calendar...**

that's created and practiced...

with the intention...

to draw us back to God,

and God's invitation...

to depend on God for our wellbeing.

To let go of that temptation...

to deal with the suffering and death in our lives...

by ourselves...

without God's support and love.

To let go of that pride...

that makes us think...

that we can get through this life...

on our own.

**In our gospel this morning,**

we see that...

in opposition to God...

is this challenge...

to try and make it on our own.

To replace God with our own ego.

To strive for power, greed, and control.

To depend on the self.

Instead of depending on God...

for our wellbeing.

**When these temptations,**

to do it on our own,

get the best of us,

we struggle to welcome God's invitation...

to be generous to others.

To help support people in need.

Instead,

we think...



they should be able to take care of themselves...

like we are taking care of ourselves.

**We struggle to welcome God's invitation...**

to be hospitable to others.

We struggle to break down...

the racial, gender, sexual, economic,

and other barriers...

that make people vulnerable...

to unequal treatment.

Instead, our focus is inward.

Ignoring the inequalities that exist.

As long as our lives are good.

As long as we have what we need.

That is what matters.

They can take care of themselves.

**This is the temptation we face every day...**

as we try to live out Jesus' invitation...

to be generous,

to be hospitable,

to care for others,

to break down the barriers...

that keep some people...

from experiencing all...

that God has instore for them.

**We are tempted to focus inward...**

on ourselves too much.

**For example,**

sometimes it is tempting...

to take advantage of our privilege.

To skip ahead of the line...

when waiting on a surgery...

because we have money...

or we have this status,

this title,

that gives us access...

to the best care available.

While our neighbour's struggles...

are just as severe,

but they need to wait,

because they don't have money...

or status...

or a title.

## **Sometimes it is tempting...**

to ignore or keep our distance from...

someone who is different,

because we think...

they are threatening to us...

in some way.

Or the people we care about in our lives...

won't like it too much...

if they see us hanging out with them.

## **We know to practice the hospitality...**

Paul talks about...

in his letter to the Romans...

means putting ourselves out there.

Making sacrifices at times.

Facing persecution and pushback.

**Challenging ourselves to rethink...**

some of the stereotypes and caricatures...

we have learned growing up...

about people who are different from us.

So, to, not feel threatened.

Because unfortunately,

it is when we feel threatened,

that we are more vulnerable...

to create barriers to protect us.

**Sometimes,**

it takes an insurmountable amount of trust...

to believe that God will walk with us...

as we show this hospitality...

to others who are different from us.

**Or sometimes it is tempting...**

to think more inwardly...

when it comes time to our finances,

especially during economically challenging times.

We know to practice the generosity...

God invites us to practice...

in our Deuteronomy reading...

means sacrificing some of the things...

we like to have or do.

**Sometimes it takes...**

an insurmountable amount of trust in God...

to be generous...

and hope that we can still pay our bills.

## **Sometimes it is hard to deal with...**

all those inner thoughts...

we grew up hearing,

telling us...

that people will just take advantage of us,

or that they are lazy...

and should get up...

and get a job...

and take care of themselves already.

## **Or as the church...**

as we deal with a changing landscape...

where we don't have the membership...

or financial resources,

we had twenty years ago.

It can be tempting to think inward.

To stop being the generous community...

that reaches out to help others.

Many churches are falling into this temptation.

Cutting their social ministries...

to focus on keeping the building going.

Budget meetings are turning...

from how they can reach out...

to their community in support...

to how can they get money...

to pay for expensive repairs in the building.

**We know to practice generosity...**

means rethinking ministry in a new way...

like we are doing at Redeemer...



with the sale of the property.

And all of us can attest...

to the fact...

that it isn't easy to do.

**In our gospel,**

Jesus faces this temptation...

to do his own thing.

To focus on himself...

and his own needs.

Instead of the needs of the people.

**In response to this opposition,**

Jesus remembers the scriptures,

and uses them to guide him,

to help him handle the temptation...

he is facing.

To remind him to trust in...

the One who sent him.

**Likewise,**

we have been given the scriptures...

to help guide us,

to help us deal with this temptation...

to focus too much on ourselves.

When we hear the words of Deuteronomy...

or Romans...

or Luke,

we remember our calling...

to be generous to others...

because God is generous to us.

We remember our calling...

to be welcoming to others...

because God is welcoming to us.

**Through out the scriptures...**

are stories of how...

God's generosity and hospitality...

help us deal with the suffering and death...

we face in the world.

And these stories inspire us...

to live out this generosity and hospitality.

Helping us reveal the kingdom of God to others.

**Today is the first Sunday in our Lenten journey for 2025.**

As we face the temptations...

that try to get us to think inward too much.

May we hear the Word of God...

that draws us back to God...

and God's purpose for humanity.

To be generous.

To be welcoming.

To be one in Christ Jesus.

To join our ecumenical partners...

in this 40-day journey...

we call Lent. **Amen.**

## **Sermon March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2025**

*Repentance Gives Life to Our Relationships, to Our Lives.*

**Within most Christian communities,**

Lent serves two main purposes.

First, Lent is a time...

where we refocus our attention...

on the practices of our faith.

Drawing us closer to God,

and God's purpose for God's creation.

**For example,**

we spend more time in prayer,

devotion,

worship,

and participating in ministries...

that offer love and support...

to people in need.

Or at least we try to.

**In fact, the original intent of Lent...**

was a time...

to instruct people...

in the practices of faith...

to prepare their hearts and minds for baptism,

which would take place...

during the early morning hours on Easter.

**So, for many of us,**

Lent is a time...

where we make a concerted effort...

to refocus our attention...

on those valued practices...

that draw us closer to our Creator.

**Second, Lent,**

invites us into a time of reflection...

on the fragility of our human condition.

The challenges we face...

as we try to imitate Christ...

in our daily lives.

And the importance of repenting...

when we fall short...

of imitating Christ in our lives.

**In our gospel this morning,**

Jesus talks to us about repentance,

and how important it is...

for our wellbeing as individuals,

and as a community...

to repent...

when we fall short of imitating Christ.

**In fact, Jesus says...**

that if we don't repent,

we will perish.

We will struggle to live out the life...

Jesus invites us to live out.

Loving God and neighbour.

**Now at face value...**

this saying of Jesus...

sounds a little harsh.

If we don't repent, we perish?

**But if we flesh this out a little...**



or reflect back on some times...

in our own lives...

when we have struggled to repent,

we can start to see...

where Jesus is coming from.

**For example,**

when we are in a loving relationship...

with someone else...

it is almost impossible...

not to hurt each other...

from time to time.

We sometimes say or do something...

or forget to do something...

that can hurt our loved one.

Have you ever forgot an anniversary...

or a birthday...

or another special milestone?

Have you ever let your anger...

get the best of you...

and say something you wish you didn't?

Have you ever done something...

that hurt your loved one...

that you regretted...

the moment you did it?

**Then to make matters worse,**

we don't repent.

We don't ask for forgiveness.

We don't promise to try hard...

to do or say things differently...

next time.

Instead,

we rationalize our actions...

or minimize our loved one's feelings.

**And unless the offense is really bad,**

we usually can get away with this reaction...

at least a few times.

But eventually without genuine repentance,

the relationship starts to deteriorate.

Until it perishes.

**Or, let's say you are dealing with an addiction...**

or you have been taught...

to treat a group of people...

in a way...

that marginalizes them,

that oppresses them

(the residential schools...

and how we have treated...

the Indigenous people of this land,

or the slave trade...

and how this impacted black people...

and other people of color,

or how we have treated...

people in the LGBTQIA2+ community...

with practices like conversion therapy).

**If we don't repent for these actions,**

our guilt eventually turns to shame.

And then we end up denying these actions...

or rationalizing them in some way.

Over time we start to see ourselves perishing...

as the shame fuels our addictions,

our harmful self-destructive behaviours,

our hateful thoughts.

We start to no longer recognize ourselves...

as we live opposite to the person...

God created us to be.

**Jesus is so strong...**

when he calls us to repent,

because he knows what happens to us...

and our relationships with one another...

when we don't repent.

## **Repentance frees us...**

to be the people God created us to be.

People who are created to love God...

and one another.

People who are created...

to treat one another...

with respect and dignity.

## **We cannot truly love someone...**

if we are stuck in a cycle of shame.

We cannot treat people...

with the respect and dignity they deserve...

if we keep hurting them...

without any intention...

to change our behaviour,

our path.

**Repentance frees us...**

to be the people God created us to be.

**It allows us to let go of the guilt,**

and to make strides...

towards doing things differently in the future.

Giving life to our relationships,

to our lives.

**Now I make it sound too easy.**

Of course, repentance is easier said than done.

Sometimes our stubborn pride gets in the way.

**For example,**

you get in a fight with your child...

over something...

you think your child should do.

And though they give you some good reasons...

why they think you are being unreasonable.

In the moment,

you are stuck in your anger.

You don't want to give in.

Your stubborn pride takes over.

And you dig in your heels.

**Only after you have talked privately...**

with your spouse...

do you eventually come around...

to apologize to your child...

for being unreasonable.

**It can go the other way too,**



where your parent probably...

is right in the situation,

but your stubborn pride kicks in...

and you go ahead...

and do the thing...

your parent warned you about.

And then you find out the hard way.

Eventually coming around...

and apologizing to your parent...

for not listening.

**Or you get in that big fight...**

with your spouse/partner over something.

And you know you probably should apologize...

for the way you acted...

during the fight...

but that stubborn pride kicks in.

You start rationalizing...

instead of apologizing.

Digging yourself a much deeper hole...

to try and climb out of.

**Or, sometimes we dig ourselves...**

such a deep whole...

with the people we love...

when we are struggling with an addiction...

or with the people...

we were taught to look down at...

that we find it almost impossible...

to climb out of.

Sometimes these problems...

seem so overwhelming to overcome.

**However,**

as Jesus goes on to say...

in our gospel this morning,

God is a gracious God.

Who when we struggle to bear fruit,

gives us support,

and love,

to help us repent.

God digs a trench around us...

so that we can better receive the water...

we need...

to bear fruit,

to experience life,

to overcome our stubborn pride.

**Whether this is a story in scripture...**

that helps us see...

that we need to repent...

or a loving spouse...

or partner...

or friend...

who helps us see...

the errors of our ways.

Whether it is the confession and forgiveness...

we participate in on Sunday mornings...

or the gentle encouragement...

of a sibling in Christ...

that helps us in our repentance journey.

Whatever it is,

God offers to help us...

in whatever way we need...

to move us to repent,

so that we can experience life.

Experience healthy relationships...

with one another.

So, we can live our lives...

imitating Christ.

Loving God and neighbour.

**Amen.**

**Sermon March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

*God Meets Us Where We Are*

**In our gospel this morning,**

we hear one of Jesus's most popular,  
and most thought-provoking parables.

**Whenever we listen to this parable,**

we find ourselves empathizing or relating...

with at least one of the characters,

if not,

all three characters.

**We can feel the anger and frustration...**

that the older son feels...

when his dad decides...

to throw a huge party...

for his younger brother...

who abandoned him.

Who left him...

to take care of the family farm...

and their aging father...

on his own.

Who has never received a party...

of this magnitude...

himself,

even though he has given everything of himself...

to keep the family farm going.

**We too are frustrated by this unfairness.**

By the fact...

that it seems...

at least at face value...

that the older son...

is being taken for granted.

Shouldn't the one who works hard...

and does the right thing...

be rewarded with a big party.

**When I hear this parable,**

I think about the adult child...

who stays close to home...

to care for their aging parent...

while their sibling or siblings...

have moved away.

And how the child who stays...

gets to deal with all the anger and frustration...

their parent is feeling...



from the challenges of aging.

While the other sibling or siblings...

fly in on occasion...

to visit...

and are treated differently.

Like rockstars.

They can do no wrong.

The parent is overjoyed to see them.

I've seen this scenario play out...

a lot in families.

***When we listen to this parable,***

we can feel the humility,

shame,

that the younger brother feels...

after squandering all his inheritance.

We all have messed up royally...

at one time or another,

and have felt this shame,

this humility.

**And how often like the younger brother,**

do we feel shocked,

surprised,

when the person we hurt...

actually forgives us...

and reconciles with us.

Wanting to throw us a party.

**When I think of the younger son,**

I think of something...

that happened to me...

in the summer...

between grade four and five.

It was 1991.

They had decided to cancel...

one of my favorite television programs...

ALF.

Michael Jackson...

and the whole white glove thing was big,

which could be good or bad...

depending on who you ask.

My parents were finalizing their divorce.

My best friend was moving across the city.

My teacher had said...

before I left for the summer...

that the best I could ever do with my life...

was work for a diaper cleaning service.

**My life was in chaos.**

Hurt and confused,

and not wanting to say goodbye to my friend.

We decided to travel across town...

on our bikes...

to his new home.

**You are probably all thinking:**

Did I ask my mom...

if this was okay?

No.

I just asked if I could go out to the park...

with my friend.

**So, off we went.**

Travelling on our bikes.

Heading North.

We were ten years old...

and thought it would only take...

a couple of hours at most.

Instead,

we didn't even make it halfway...

before dark.

I realized I needed to get home...

before my parents began to worry.

**I remember us heading back,**

not knowing where we were.

Or if we were going in the right direction.

Travelling at night...

made it harder for us to navigate.

**I remember a car pulled up to us.**

It was my dad.

I guess my dad,

my uncle,

the police were all looking for us.

It was close to 10:00pm at night...

when my dad found us.

**I thought my dad was going to yell at me.**

Being a father now,

I am shocked he didn't yell at me.

Instead, he pulled me into his chest,

gave me a big hug,

and told me that he loved me.

I don't know what I did...

to deserve this gracious response,

but there it is.

I felt so surprised,

so shocked.

**Of course,**

when my dad did return me to my mother,

all hell broke lose.

I think I set the record...

for the amount of time...

I was grounded for.

That response I could understand.

**Has someone in your life...**

ever shown you the kind of grace...

the younger son receives...

in this parable?

How did you feel...

being a recipient of this grace?

**As we listen to this parable,**

we can feel the joy...

when someone we love...

that we have become estranged from...

comes home.

Whether it is our adult child...

struggling with addiction...

who is now in recovery.



Or a parent or sibling or friend...

we had a falling out with...

years ago...

calls us up out of the blue,

and after a long heart to heart conversation,

we are able to reconcile.

Or someone who left our church community...

years ago...

decides to come back...

and be part of the community again.

More than likely,

we have identified with...

all three of these characters...

over the course of our lives.

**However,**

often times we get so caught up...

in the characters of this parable,

especially, the two boys,

that we miss out on the point...

Jesus is trying to make.

This parable is more about the loving Father...

then about the prodigal son.

**This parable is more about a loving God...**

that will meet us where we are at...

then an ungrateful child...

who squanders all the wealth...

that their parents worked so hard...

to earn.

Or an older unforgiving resentful son...

who isn't ready to reconcile...

with his younger brother.

**The character that represents God...**

in the story...

meets the younger child...

where they are at.

Knowing the shame and pain...

they are feeling...

from failing.

They don't need to be scolded or judged.

They need to be embraced,

to be shown...

that despite all their mishaps,

they are still loved.

They still have value.

### **The character that represents God...**

in the story...

meets the older child...

where they are at.

Knowing the anger and frustration they are feeling.

Reassuring them...

that their hard work...

will not go unnoticed.

“I have left the party...

to stand by you,

to hear your anger,

your frustration,

and reassure you...

that you have value in my eyes.

This party may be for your brother,

but what is mine is yours.

I care about you too.”

**God meets us where we are at.**

Loving and embracing us...

when we are at our worst,

our best,

and even when we are somewhere in the middle.

Loving us when we praise God,

when we lament in frustration,

and even when we need to walk away for a little while.

God meets us where we are at.

**As we continue on our Lenten journey.**

May we feel comfort and at peace in hearing this parable...

that reassures us...

that God meets us where we are at.

That God is not waiting for us to be a certain way...

or do certain things...

before God is willing to reconnect with us.

That God is willing to walk with us...

as we doubt,

as we express our frustration and anger,

as we work through our shame,

as we are active in the church.

God meets us where we are at.

**Amen.**

## **Sermon April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025**

### *Turbulence*

**Over the winter months,**

many of us jump on an airplane...

and head to warmer climates.

Avoiding the coldest stretches...

of our beautiful Canadian winter season.

**We get on that plane...**

with the expectation...

that it will get us to our planned destination,

and that it will be...

for the most part...

an uneventful experience.

**But from time to time,**

we find ourselves on a flight...

where we experience a lot of turbulence,

or inclement weather...

that in some cases...

diverts our plane...

from its original destination.

Throwing off our well-made plans.

Or at least it makes the flight...

a lot more interesting...

and nerve racking...

if the plane is able to still reach its destination.

Sometimes the flight path...

can come with a few surprises and challenges.

**When this happens,**

some of us freak out,



we get angry,

frustrated,

scared.

We may even have a panic attack.

**Some of us completely shut down,**

paralyzed to do or say anything,

and then when we finally land...

avoid flying all together in the future.

**And then there are some of us...**

who find a way to adapt to the situation...

and remain calm for the most part.

“Eventually we will arrive at our destination”

we think to ourselves.

“Or maybe this detour will be good for us.

We never know...

what God has instore for us.”

There are some of us...

who seem to do really well...

in the midst of chaos.

**Likewise,**

when Jesus invites his disciples to follow him,

he warns them...

that sometimes the path they walk down...

will be turbulent,

will come with a few surprises and challenges.

**For some of the disciples,**

they really wrestle with this turbulence.

Some freak out,

get angry.

Some choose to walk away for a while.

And some find away to remain calm...

and come to some acceptance of the turbulence.

Trying to stay focused on the end goal.

**In our gospel this morning,**

Jesus is in the last days of his ministry.

He is preparing his disciples...

to continue the work...

he has been doing after he dies.

In fact, he has been talking about...

his impending death with them...

on more than one occasion.

**This new path...**

Jesus is inviting people...

to walk down with him...

is risky.

Is dangerous.

The winds are picking up,

causing a lot of turbulence.

Unfortunately, one of the results of this turbulence...

is watching their teacher, mentor, friend,

suffer and die.

**None of the disciples could foresee this...**

when they accepted the invitation...

to follow Jesus.

Jesus is the Messiah.

The one who has come to liberate them...

from Roman oppression.

No way should he be subject to suffering,

let alone dying.

**Can this turbulence...**

really bring down the plane?

**In response to this turbulence,**

Mary one of Jesus' disciples...

decides to use a really expensive perfume...

to anoint Jesus...

for his upcoming burial.

**Mary is one of the disciples...**

who stays calm...

when the turbulence is rattling the plane.

She has accepted the situation...

and believes...

that even if Jesus faces suffering and death,

that God is going to work in this situation...

to liberate them.

Some how with all this turbulence,

Mary still believes...

that she will get to her destination.

**Judas, on the other hand,**

has a freakout.

A panic attack.

He is struggling to stay on the flight path...

as the turbulence gets rough.

He is shouting

“land the plane,

land the plane.

Before we all die.”

**Some of the other disciples...**

will abandon the path for a little while...

when the turbulence gets so rough...

that they need to land the plane...

and wait out the storm.

**We can relate.**

Sometimes the path Jesus invites us to walk down...

surprises, challenges us.

We experience a lot of turbulence...

along the way.

**For example, we are walking to work,**

and as we walk past a bus stop,

we see someone really struggling,

and in need of help.

We could keep walking...

so we can get to work on time,

but Jesus has a different idea,

and in this case,

maybe stirs up a little turbulence...

to make it hard for us...

to keep going.

And so, this turbulence diverts us,

and we end up coming to the aid of this person.

Trying to help them in whatever way we can.

Sometimes Jesus redirects us...

with a little turbulence...



so that we can do the work...

Jesus invites us to do.

**Or sometimes we are invited to walk with people...**

as they face oppression,

as they face mistreatment and abuse.

Sometimes the turbulence...

can get pretty rough...

as we walk with these people.

Sometimes instead of redirecting us,

Jesus gives us what we need...

to keep flying to our destination.

**As we see during the Easter season,**

the disciples eventually come back...

to the ministry of Jesus,

as they bear witness to the resurrected Christ.

As they see...

that turbulence doesn't stop God...

from doing what God needs to do.

**As we see during the day of Pentecost,**

the disciples eventually feel empowered...

to continue the ministry,

because Jesus breathes on them the Holy Spirit,

helping them...

deal with the turbulence they face...

as they continue to be Jesus' hands and feet...

in the world.

**When we came together as a congregation...**

71 years ago,

we didn't think...

we would experience so much turbulence...

along the way...

that we would come to this day...

where we need to reroute the plane,

where we need to re-envision...

what ministry will look like...

without our church building.

That Jesus is redirecting us down a new path...

after worshipping in this space...

for most of those 71 years.

**We can relate to the disciples.**

Dealing with turbulence...

can be very difficult.

It challenges us.

Sometimes we need a Mary...

to enter the scene...

and reflect that acceptance and calmness needed...

to travel through the turbulence.

Someone to remind us...

that God is still at work...

even in the suffering and dying...

we experience.

**When Mary anoints Jesus,**

she is letting go of that fear...

that turbulence often brings to oneself.

She is accepting...

that the path Jesus is walking down...

may get rough,

but it won't stop God...

from doing what God needs do.

**May we be inspired to let go of our fears...**

from the turbulence we are experiencing.

May we believe...

that even as we face suffering and death...

along this path...

Jesus invites us to walk down,

that this turbulence won't stop God...

from doing what God needs to do...

through us.

**Amen.**