



Urbandale
United
Church of
Christ
God is still speaking

“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you are invited and welcome here.”

A Just Peace and Open and Affirming congregation

March 22, 2020

10:00 a.m.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT

PRELUDE

GREETING

Each life is clothed in raiment of spirit that secretly links it to everything else. Though suffering and chaos befall us, they can never quench that inner light of providence.

John O’Donohue, Irish teacher and poet.

CALLING OUR ATTENTION TO THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Take a few moments to look around you. Take care to look behind you. Claim the space you are in as a place of refuge. Know that God is with you in your space. Take refuge for your spirit, not because you are safe, but because with God’s Spirit, we can be courageous and face the world. Take some deep breaths. Call to mind the blessings you experience in the space you are in. Draw strength from the blessings in your space.

SONG OF HOPE

Amazing Grace

SCRIPTURE

John 9:1-41 (The Inclusive Bible)

¹ As Jesus walked along, he saw someone who had been blind from birth. ² The disciples asked Jesus, “Rabbi, was it this individual’s sin that caused the blindness, or that of the parents?”

³ “Neither,” answered Jesus,

“It wasn’t because of anyone’s sin – not this person’s, nor the parents’.

Rather, it was to let God’s works shine forth in this person.

⁴ We must do the deeds of the One who sent me while it is still day –

For night is coming, when no one can work.

⁵ While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.

⁶ With that, Jesus spat on the ground, made mud with his saliva and smeared the blind one’s eyes with the mud. ⁷ Then Jesus said, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” – “Siloam” means “sent.” So the person went off to wash, and came back able to see.

⁸ Neighbors and those who had been accustomed to seeing the blind beggar began to ask, “Isn’t this the one who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some said yes; others said no – the one who had been healed simply looked like the beggar.

But the individual in question said, “No – it was me.”

¹⁰ The people then asked, “Then how were your eyes opened?”

¹¹ The answer came, “The one they call Jesus made mud and smeared it on my eyes, and told me to go to Siloam and wash. When I went and washed, I was able to see.”

¹² “Where is Jesus?” they asked.

The person replied, “I have no idea.”

¹³ They took the one who had been born blind to the Pharisees. ¹⁴ It had been on a Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud paste and opened this one’s eyes. ¹⁵ The Pharisees asked how the individual could see. They were told, “Jesus put mud on my eyes. I washed it off, and now I can see.”

¹⁶ This prompted some Pharisees to say, “This Jesus cannot be from God, because he does not keep the Sabbath.” Others argued, “But how could a sinner perform signs like these?” They were sharply divided.

¹⁷ Then they addressed the blind person again: “Since it was your eyes he opened, what do you have to say about this Jesus?”

“He’s a prophet,” Came the reply.

¹⁸ The Temple authorities refused to believe that this one had been blind and had begun to see, until they summoned the parents. ¹⁹ “Is this your child?” they asked, “and if so, do you attest that your child was blind at birth? How do you account for the fact that now your child can see?”

²⁰ The parents answered, “We know this is our child, blind from birth. ²¹ But how our child can see now, or who opened those blind eyes, we have no idea. But don’t ask us – our child is old enough to speak without us!” ²² The parents answered this way because they were afraid of the Temple authorities, who had already agreed among themselves that anyone who acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. ²³ That was why they said, “Our child is of age and should be asked directly.”

²⁴ A second time they summoned the one who had been born blind and said, “Give God the glory instead; we know that this Jesus is a sinner.”

²⁵ “I don’t know whether he is a sinner or not,” the individual answered. “All I know is that I used to be blind, and now I see.”

²⁶ They persisted, “Just what did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

²⁷ “I already told you, but you won’t listen to me,” came the answer. “Why do you want to hear it all over again? Don’t tell me you want to become disciples of Jesus too!”

²⁸ They retorted scornfully, “You’re the one who is Jesus’ disciple. We’re disciples of Moses. ²⁹ We know that God spoke to Moses, but we have no idea where this Jesus comes from.”

³⁰ The other retorted, “Well, this is news! You don’t know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes! ³¹ We know that God doesn’t hear sinners, but that if people are devout and obey God’s will, God listens to them. ³² It is unheard of that anyone ever gave sight to a person blind from birth. ³³ If this one were not from God, he could never have done such a thing!”

³⁴ “What!” they exclaimed, “You’re steeped in sin from birth, and you’re giving us lectures?” With that, they threw the person out.

³⁵ When Jesus heard of the expulsion, he sought out the healed one and asked, “Do you believe in the Chosen One?”

³⁶ The other answered, “Who is this One, that I may believe?”

³⁷ “You’re looking at him,” Jesus replied. “The Chosen One is speaking to you now.”

³⁸ The healed one said, “Yes, I believe,” and worshiped Jesus.

³⁹ And Jesus said, “I came into this world to execute justice – to make the sightless see and the seeing blind.”

⁴⁰ Some of the Pharisees who were nearby heard this and said, “You’re not calling us blind, are you?”

⁴¹ To which Jesus replied, “If you were blind, there would be no sin in that. But since you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.”

MEDITATION

Sight Restored

Pastor David Sickelka

PASTORAL PRAYER

TAKING STOCK OF OUR BLESSINGS AND RESOURCES

PRAYER OF GRATITUDE:

Holy One, we give you thanks for all of the communities of which we are a part. We give thanks for and ask your blessing upon all of those who work to bring health care, essential services, and some sense of normalcy to us in this time of uncertainty. We thank you for the connections we can maintain via technology, mail, or simply waving from a distance. We thank you for the relationships that make our lives worth living, and for the opportunities we have to express our love and affection for one another. Keep us hopeful and keep us generous, even as we give up some of what is important to us. May it teach us compassion and empathy for those who have little. Amen.

SONG

God Be with You ‘til We Meet Again

BLESSING

POSTLUDE

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“We welcome into this community of faith, and affirm the participation in all aspects of church life, persons of every age, race, gender identity and expression, nationality, ability, and sexual orientation. We will continue our efforts toward inclusiveness, and stand against all forms of discrimination. We will empower ourselves, our children, and one another to be fully present in the world, living in Christ’s image and striving for justice and peace.”

Staff

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Church Office hours are Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

For pastoral care, please contact Pastor Dave at 276-0625 (church office), 720-6389 (cell) or david.sickelka@urbucc.org. Pastor Dave is off on Mondays but will still respond to emergencies if you call or text.