

Straight from the "Hart"

Worship Service from March 7, 2021



Call to Worship (R1 = Reader 1, R2 = Reader 2)

R1: We continue our Lenten "season of recovery" as we focus on wholeness derived from our spiritual health. Those who collect beach glass often become "archeologists"—seeking out any markings or clues as to the story of the original piece. It often takes much time to bring out the truth behind it, metaphorically speaking -- its brokenness and its transformation. This week we recognize that there is much healing power in the hearing and telling of our stories.

R2: Yet there is so much during the day that clamors for our attention. Friends, family, work, classes, household tasks. And the noise! We are bombarded with sound..... from the clock that wakens us to the telephone that texts and rings, the radio, television, the casual conversations that we have or overhear. Where then..... and when then..... can we carve out the time and place for us to speak and listen deeply to each other? How do we create the time and space to listen for the still, small voice of God?

R1: Sometimes it seems that God would have to speak in a whirlwind to be heard above all that clamor! And yet most often we must separate ourselves from the whirlwinds of our lives before we can really listen. Listen *now*..... there is a place of quiet rest.... and it is the place where God dwells *within* each of us. Close your eyes---- be aware of that place.

R2: In Lent, we journey to the parts of ourselves known only *by* God---beneath the clamor of it all. There are stories that have shaped our lives, leaving us without the ability to see who we truly are in the eyes of God and leaving us without the ability to speak the depth of our stories of struggle. Let our story, and the story that Jesus has to tell us reach us there---in that quiet place. Let it teach us the wisdom in these secret hearts of ours. We focus on the importance of recovery of mental health, reclaiming our sense of who we are and being able to proclaim new redemptive stories of divine worth.

Confession

R1: Open your eyes and focus on the altarscape. As we see the broken glass being transformed into something beautiful, we also acknowledge our need to restore, repair, and renew our holy vessels through a time of confession....



Let us pray: Centering and Calming Divine Breath of God, You gifted us with amazing minds, capable of so many things. You gave us the ability to think and feel, filling us with the potential for discernment of thought and emotion. Like our physical bodies, sometimes this mental aspect of our selves is beleaguered. We struggle under the strain of disappointment, despair, and delusion. So many are suffering now, God, weary and distraught, grieving and at the end of their rope. We cannot fathom the proportions of loss and so we look away, sometimes even from the need in our own community, and even from ourselves – hiding our pain, afraid of what others might think of our difficulties in managing or moving forward, even in the face of devastating circumstances. Too often we perpetuate the stigma of a less-than-perfect state of mind by shaming ourselves and others. Millennia of misunderstanding compounds our fear. We label and belittle, all the while turning the hatred upon ourselves, for no one is immune from troubles of the mind at some point. As we extinguish this third light, acknowledging the darkness caused by the inability to listen and to have a meaningful voice in our world and its resulting pain and even violence.



R2: Help us, Healer. Show us our capacity for compassion. Forgive our inattention. Inspire us to move one step at a time toward greater care for one another. Draw us together in your love, O God. May our restless hearts not resist you...but continue to search until they find their rest in you. *In this next moment of silence*, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness.

Silence, instrumental underscoring, then *Holy Vessels*.

Vessels, holy and whole,
broken, needing the One.

Open, body and soul Healer --- Come.

It may help to close your eyes again. Over the last few weeks, I have invited you to imagine and search for a feeling of warmth that is deep within the core of each of us. The fiery spark of our soul. There are times we won't sense it -- it may feel dull, even cold. If that is how it feels, that is okay. We are not to judge ourselves. Or maybe you do feel that warmth – a contented satisfaction because all is right with the world, or in spite of the fact that it is not. That is okay too. Either way, it is where we are. You will not always feel how you do now. This is not a right or wrong, a good or a bad – it just is, and it is what makes us human. Last week I said we have multiple pieces of sea glass because we are not alone. Perhaps we can imagine the warmth coming from someone else whose presence fills us with comfort. See it radiate from them to you, as it does when you need it most. Know

that you are accepted. No matter what. Accepting the truth of our difficulties is part of the journey of recovery. Sharing our stories of difficulty can open the way for healing. For you, for me, for all of us. Take a deep breath in to let this truth fill you... and breathe out with the relief of assurance. Let this be our peace. I invite you to open your eyes. The peace of Christ is with us, for we are near to the heart of God where this world's troubles fade from view. Remain seated as we hum or sing softly through our masks...

Music (vv 1,3) *Near to the Heart of God*

Theme I love reading or listening to stories. One of the best phrases around whether it is literally spoken or simply assumed, is "Once upon a time." But stories are not: "Once upon a time there were three little pigs and they all lived happily ever after."

Something is missing in that story, isn't there -- the whole middle. We all know that the middle is what makes a story so interesting. It's where the dark woods are, where giants roam, where hard things happen to good people, where heroes overcome. And that reminds me, [show a bright bandaid placed below elbow] Someone already asked me, "Where did you get your bandage?" How many of you have ever had one of these? I imagine most of us had had one somewhere on a lot of different parts of our body. Some of you might even have one right now. (This one is just for show, I didn't actually hurt myself). We've had them on our knees, our elbows, our faces... someone even suggested they might need to be on our tongues once in a while... But whenever we get a big scrape or small boo-boo, it feels good to get one of these, and even better when it is applied by someone who loves us. Sometimes we even wear them longer than our bodies really need them. I think there are a couple reasons for that. One is, if someone else put it on, it reminds us that someone cared for us. But even more, just like this morning, when someone sees it they ask, "Hey, what happened?" and it gives us a chance to tell our story. The bandage says, "I went through something and I overcame, it didn't keep me down." if we put it on ourselves, a bandage tells a story. It says, "once upon a time I went through something that hurt, but I overcame -- it didn't keep me down." And if they ask for details, you get to fill in all the middle of that story, the details of that story.



Stories are powerful. The Bible is filled with stories of God's people overcoming hard challenges. Our faith is full of stories. Stories help get us through – they encourage us to keep pressing forward until we overcome too. It's wonderfully reassuring to know that no matter what we're going through, we can always turn

to God in prayer. We can ask God's help for ourselves or others. And God, like any truly great healer, listens carefully. God always hears our prayers. So let's pray...

Loving God, We come to you with hearts [*hands over heart*] hands [*hands raised*] minds [*point to head*] and souls [*praying hands*] in need of your healing touch. Heal us from the inside [*breathe in and sigh out*] out -- so that we may reach out to help heal your world. Amen. Charles Wesley wrote about God's healing touch on his life. Let's sing.

Music (vv 1,2,3,5,6) *O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

An Ancient Word Bible Reading *Matthew 9: 27-35*

Intro: Some recent trends in medical anthropology have drawn attention to the positive relationship between healing and storytelling. It is not a new concept. An ancient Greek city prominently displayed healing stories at the entrance of their place of worship to inspire confidence and promote conformity. Today's ancient reading leaps to the end of Matthew's series of healing stories. Unlike those of the Greek temple, Matthew's stories are not only heartening, but they are also disruptive and controversial. They demand a personal response about the source of Jesus' healing power, about just who this Jesus is, and even more -- a claim that Jesus makes on the lives of those he meets. Jesus has just gone to a synagogue leader's home and healed his daughter:

²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" ²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you." ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, "See that no one knows of this." ³¹ But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district. ³² After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, "Never has anything like this been seen in Israel." ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons." ³⁵ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. (NRSV)

Message *Empowered to "See" and "Speak"*

Long ago, a group of Christians lived in British India (now a part of Pakistan). They did what was expected of them, attended church when it was interesting, but left it alone the rest of the week. But when the devastating Quetta earthquake hit, their rescue efforts went so far above and beyond the call that the Brahmin (a

religious leader in Hinduism) was so impressed that he sought immediate baptism into the Christian faith. When words of faith are combined with deeds of love, proclamation takes on influential authority.

³⁵ Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness.

Today, we leap ahead to the end of Matthew's series of healing stories, which followed on the heels of his teaching ministry (the sermon on the mount in cc 5-7). Matthew is combining Jesus' authoritative teaching with his authoritative deeds, which together serve to demonstrate who Jesus the Messiah is, and what kind of Messiah he is going to be and what it means for us to follow him. For he is about to send out his disciples to be teachers and healers too.

The two stories of healing we heard today are meant to illustrate once again Jesus' *Messianic* role by being a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy about him in Isaiah 35:4-6a, in which he said, "Here is your God... He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped, the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy." (NRSV)

The stories we have heard thus far carry especially powerful weight for Matthew for the brokenness of the people involved seems to have less to do with their physical disability as it does the treatment leveled at them by others. I don't think it is by accident that Matthew places his own call story in the middle of these healing narratives. This was his story: Jesus was walking along and saw Matthew, the tax collector, and he invited him to follow, and he did. That is his whole call story. But then he follows it up with a paragraph after that. He says Jesus has dinner at Matthew's house, and many tax collectors and sinners joined them. The Pharisees challenged Jesus' disciples about his actions -- that he was with them, with "those kinds of people". Jesus overheard and gave the answer for his disciples -- I have come for those who are sick, and God desires [to give] mercy [to the sick], not [receive] sacrifice [from the allegedly well who don't think they need healing].

You probably know this, but Rome only cared that it got its cut from the taxes. They didn't care if their collectors unfairly extracted extra portions to line their personal pockets. So many of them did. We know Zacchaeus did, because he promised a zealous restitution plan when Jesus came with salvation to his house. (See Luke 19:1-10) We don't know Matthew's business practices, but even if he was ethical, he would have seen as guilty by association to the profession, and stereotyped as no better than a robber, and treated as such. But even more than that, as a collector for Rome, he was already considered a betrayer of faith and

traitor to the nation. He, like those in our healing stories so far, were rejected by society and religious leaders in a way that creates even more brokenness and offers no recourse for renewal. Today's story is a cautionary tale, for reading too much into "faith", and assuming that ailments = a lack of it. We do this because we work it backwards. "Do you have faith." "Yes." Then they are healed. But then we turn it around and say, "Well, if he isn't healed, then he must not have faith." We can't do that. The possessed who happened to have the side effect of hearing loss -- it was not so much about the hearing loss as it is for the problem of people who are unable to spiritually hear the gospel with their hearts, and helpless people are because of that spiritual problem.

Paraphrasing and expanding on something Marcia McFee wrote: Some of us experience pain and brokenness because of how others perceive us, and the way they treat us because of that perception. A perception which may not even be true, and is never the whole story, for we can never fully enter into someone else's shoes -- because we are not them, and this is especially true when the brokenness is not obvious to sight. "Looks normal, must be normal, doesn't act normal -- something must be wrong with that person." But it is not the way they really are. And certainly we can never enter into anyone's shoes over their full lifetime of experiences and influences.

This social mirror -- this seeing ourselves on the basis of how others see us, or how we think other see us, can even prevent us from seeing who we truly are in the eyes of God. Today's stories are less about physical sight and speech, but about receiving (or losing) insight and regaining a voice in our circles of influence - through hearing those stories of life, and being able to speak them. Or as McFee put it: It is reclaiming our "sense(s)" of who we are (being able to see and hear anew) and then being able to voice our salvation stories, our divine worth about ourselves. All this is part of healing our minds and spirits.

We know of no physical ailment for Matthew. But by Matthew placing his call to follow story and Jesus justification of calling "that kind of a person" immediately after, in the center of all of these healing stories; I have no doubt that he saw himself as sick and in need of Jesus healing; and the call to follow enabled him to see himself in a whole new light... for he saw himself as God saw him -- someone of infinite worth, deserving of mercy and to be whole.

The hurting people in today's passage, too, while experiencing physical issues, Matthew is making clear that the real topic is something deeper and different than their physical ailments.

²⁷ As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!"

First, we have two blind men. Everything they knew of Jesus had to be heard, for they couldn't see. And for the first time in Matthew, these sightless men "see" -- and name Jesus as the Son of David -- the Messiah that everyone was looking for, and not finding. Like healing, the prophets described mercy as one of the Messiah's characteristics.

And so, these two asked for mercy. In this context, it is less an emotion and more a quality which contains within it an active, practical response to a need (and it is quality that described the character of the giver of mercy, (Jesus) and has less to do with the merit, the deservingness of the receivers (the blind men).

And they followed him -- and while on one level, the physical plane, it means they went after him down the road -- which was a trick in itself, not being able to see. But on another plane, it means they followed like Matthew and the disciples followed, because they understood who he was and what he came to do.

²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?"

They followed him right into a house. They are enlightened, following disciples - *spiritually* whole -- *before* they are healed. And in that private setting of that house, Jesus begins to deal with them. There is a time for public faith -- that's why we are so excited to be back in person, right? But sometimes, public faith can get us stirred up in crowd of like-minded people, and we think we know what God wants and what we want. But sometimes it is only the emotion of -- "we're together and we all think alike!" and so we do something that isn't really there (in our hearts). And so now in the privacy, when we get alone with God; God begins to deal with us. Jesus asks us what we *really* want. Covid has kind of forced that on us, hasn't it? To get *alone* with Jesus, and lay our heart bare before him, and see where our heart is between him and us

Some suggest that Jesus didn't answer their request right away (out in public) because he wanted to ensure it was genuine and their sense of need was real, or if some other motivation was at work. Sometimes, publicly we just want to say, "Yeah!" Right? And we want victory and complain about our vices because we know it is the right thing we are supposed to do. But when privately confronted about the real possibility for change, we may not be so excited about giving up that vice or that challenge, or about taking responsibility for constructive change rather than bemoaning the problem. You probably know some people (don't point fingers 😊) you probably know some people who would be at their most miserable if they didn't have something to be miserable about. Right? If everything was going smooth they would be mis -- er -- a-- ble. And let's face it, sometimes change is just plain hard, and uncomfortable -- and many people prefer the dysfunction and

pain of what they know in the present as opposed to working toward something that is different and *unfamiliar* in their future.

Therefore, Jesus asks them if they believe he can do this. Implied in that question is, do you *really* want to be healed? And the focus again comes back to faith. Even doctors will say how important it is that patients put hope in the medicine and treatment and have a positive attitude. The way to a miracle is to place oneself in the hands of Jesus, knowing he can make us what he wants us to be.

But be careful when you do this. As I've already said, faith and infirmity don't go both ways, right? You have to have faith to be healed, but because you aren't healed does not mean you don't have faith, necessarily. And the idea that leaders of faith, and society itself, sometimes poison the healing waters -- making people sicker and more wounded by blaming and even attacking the sick person for a lack of faith, which is not why they are not healed. Read Job, read about Paul's unhealable thorn in the flesh, and watch what happens today as we enter into this next section of today's text...

They said to him, "Yes, Lord." ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you." ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, "See that no one knows of this." ³¹ But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district.

They answered. They said they believed, and because of that faith, they were healed. And then Jesus sternly ordered them to not tell anyone. The strength of that phrase is stronger than sternly. It is likened to a stressed, angry horse that is snorting at you, or to the howling of Cerberus (sir-burr-us) (the three headed hound of Hades) and doesn't let anyone out. Vicious, angry. Jesus was very firm with them -- not wanting his healing deeds to be separated from his kingdom teaching - for the meaning of the miracles can't be understood without the teaching of the kingdom.

And most of us know that enlightenment into who Jesus is and what he was about implies that we listen and obey what he says, and what he says in no uncertain terms is -- "Don't tell anybody!" And the first thing they do is go out and tell everybody. Hard to blame them, plus people would be able to see that they see. Kind of hard to hide.

But Matthew is driving home a point that he will land on later on -- the physically blind had better insight before they saw, and after, they had less. He was comparing that to the spiritual leaders of the day who thought they could "see" and thought they "saw" everything about God, and Jesus, when they saw nothing at all. Matthew later calls these faith leaders blind guides who can't heal their own blindness much less the ones of those they lead. John 9 is one of my favorite stories in the Bible, contains a lengthy trial of a man who was born blind but then

whom Jesus healed, and it contains a similar theme -- how the seeing can't see it, but the non-seeing do see it. In this case the blind man can know see but hasn't lost his insight and as the trial progresses so does his insight increase into who Jesus is -- and eventually it leads him to believe and worship him.

In other words we have to be careful we don't subconsciously associate the physical ailment with a spiritual problem, or even, a physical ailment with a lack of wholeness of who we can be as a people. Too often, our culture does not believe a person can be whole unless they fit some sort of normalcy pattern. That is not what we believe in the church.

God may be glorified in miracles that overcome disabilities, but he may be equally or even more glorified through an ongoing disability or challenging circumstance. (As Paul says, where I am weak, then he is strong) and our series theme verse says I am paraphrasing it this week -- we are these weak, frail, clay vessels, containing the incomparable treasure of Christ within -- so that there is no mistaking who is divine, and who is -- us.

³² After they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, "Never has anything like this been seen in Israel."
³⁴ But the Pharisees said, "By the ruler of the demons he casts out the demons."

Another quick miracle, a man who couldn't speak spoke -- but what he said is not reported to us. What mattered was that when he found his voice, people noticed; and it caused them to start speaking. People who couldn't see saw, and people who couldn't speak now find their voice, and it elicits two very different speeches in others.

One speech is that the amazed crowd knew nothing had EVER been seen like this before, and that they were witnessing a unique time in history. Religious leaders had been teaching and leading and nothing had been happening. Jesus speaks and demons flee, storms settle, dead are revived, sins are forgiven -- In Jesus' presence was the presence of God's kingdom. And yet what the crowd saw was not necessarily what Jesus wanted them to see -- that here was their Savior. What they saw was, here is a way to get our physical things taken care of. That's what happens when you get the healing without the teaching. At this point, at best, they were excited observers who had the potential to become followers, but they didn't yet have a heart response to follow in spiritual obedience.

The second speech is generated in response not only to the miracles, but the people's response to the miracle. What do these miracles mean? These leaders were trying to get to the meaning of it: Does it mean the Messiah has arrived and the kingdom of God is taking shape in front of their eyes? They didn't want to see that. Because that meant the people would abandon them to follow Jesus, and

they would be left out. Maybe this is the reason they chose an alternative theory - that Jesus' miracles were because he was in cahoots with the devil as a strategy to bring everyone to ruin. Their accusation aligns Jesus with being a false prophet worthy of death.

Matthew then simply states where we started the sermon -- that Jesus did do the teaching and healing he described, but now he started doing it everywhere, teaching, and proclaiming, and healing. And he doesn't resolve the story of these two speeches -- who is he, what is he doing? Where is he getting his power from? -- because he wants the readers (he wants us) to examine their own hearts and find clarity, and spiritual eyes and spiritual ears, to see where they truly are in this story.

Ritual Action with Commission

Last week we were asked to pay attention to the fact that we had multiple pieces of sea glass in our sandy bowl, be it in our home kits or on our altar, reminding us that we are not alone on our venture through this world. You may not be able to see it well on the TV or even on the platform. But if you have a Lent kit you can do this at home, or for us here, you can do it when you get home to your kits. Or if you don't have a kit you can just imagine it.

When sea glass is dry, it is often -- dusty looking, not real clear. But when it comes in contact with water, it begins to sparkle and shine and has a whole different quality to it. When you take them out wet, they have a whole new clarity to them that they don't have when they are dry. This week, let's put our glass in a water bowl. If your bowl at home is big enough with the sand on the bottom and you can just fill it up with water on top of the sand. But mine isn't that deep so I am going to use a separate bowl. Let's leave them in that bowl of water this week as a reminder to pray for new clarity for us in our lives and for each other.

And for today, more specifically, clarity on where we are living in these stories. Are we the blind men (who by hearing understood who Jesus was) and blind men after (who then thought they could see and so stopped listening), or are we the one who is so overwhelmed by circumstances that they can't find their voice in the world, Are we part of the crowd (watching with amazement, but not yet following) or are we, as ones who think we see, (like Saul before he became Paul), or the Pharisees of today's story, who thought they knew all the ins and outs but were actually opposing God when they thought they were serving him. Maybe we are doing that in some specific area of our life...

Communion No matter where we are in the story, it is nice to know that God is willing to bring his healing insight. Jesus simply asks, "Do you believe I am able to do this?" And we need to think, "Do we really want him to do something different in us? Jesus invites us to consider our own belief in transformation. He invites us

to step into a renewed vision of our lives, to speak into being a new story, not be bound by the stories of the past, either than we have done to ourselves or that others have done to us and living under that -- stories and stereotypes that limit and oppress our possibilities for our future.

Gilead was an ancient city known for trees and plants from which they made high quality medicinal healing aromas and soothing balms (ointments, salves). Jesus invites and welcomes to participate in his communion all of us who believe and desire to be enlightened and empowered by the healing salves of his Spirit. Let's sing.

Music of Preparation (vv 1,2) *There is a Balm in Gilead...*

Let's pray: Healer of our every ill, and of our fears of those who don't fit our picture of what is *our* standard of normal, we come before you to make our petitions known. Hear our cries for healing of body, mind, and spirit. We know that already you are at work among us, showing us the way to recovery from the toxicities and grief of our time. You have stamped each one of us as "worthy." We give you thanks that your mercy is wide and your faithfulness to us does not depend upon having our feelings sorted out or our sense of well-being secure. You are not waiting for us to "get our act together" before offering us your love and grace.

We pray especially for those who have experienced heightened and acute mental and emotional difficulties (or any other kind) as a result of this past year of isolation and fear. We pray for those who feel far from hope and we mourn those who could not find a lifeline to survive this hardship. We pray for those who find themselves without access to adequate care, someone to talk to, or appropriate resources to steady their hearts and minds.

Today we pray specifically for these whose requests have come in this week, We give thanks for Harold Winegarner who spent a few days in the hospital, but who is now home and recovering well. For Bill Martin who returned to the hospital with multiple issues, and though he does not have covid, was isolated that unit for a few days. Now out of that unit, but not doing well. A praise for Cathy Root, whose back surgery was successful but continue to pray as she now recovers. And for Fran's niece Sherri for whom the family has called in hospice.

We give thanks for those who are telling their stories, showing us how to open our hearts to help others and offering ripples of healing in the community. We pray grateful thanks for progress toward holistic healthcare and the efforts of all who are working, making it easier to ask for, and get, the help so desperately needed. We ask for the courage and encouragement of your presence as we are healed and become instruments of your healing for others.

Know this: Our God is with you! **And also with you!**

Lift up your hearts! **We lift them up to our God.**

Let us give thanks to our Sovereign God!

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, In the beginning you breathed life into raw materials, creating and animating containers of beauty and goodness. We, your holy vessels, were fired in the kiln of love until we shined with your light. Susceptible to shattering, we find ourselves broken, unable at times to remember your promise of repair. You remind us time and again that, though broken, we are held in your presence and made whole by your grace. And so, with your people on earth and all the company of heaven we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ, Holy Vessel of Divine Presence here on earth. Your Spirit anointed him as a container of grace in the form of preaching good news to the poor, proclaiming release to the captives covering of sight to the blind, setting at liberty those who are oppressed, and announcing that the time had come when you would save your people. He healed the sick, fed the hungry, and ate with those considered too broken for company. By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection you gave birth to the path of healing and recovery, delivered us from our despair and isolation, and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit. When Jesus ascended, he promised to be with us always. And so, in remembrance of the healing, life-transforming acts in Jesus Christ, we offer ourselves as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us, as we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.

In the power of your Word and Holy Spirit, we are not alone. So pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and at home, on these gifts of bread and cup, and those elements being used at home. Make them be for us your Healing Spirit through Christ, so that we may be for the world the body of Christ, healing agents in a broken world, offering the life-blood of hope. By your Spirit make us one with Christ, one with each other, and one in ministry to all the world, until Christ comes in final victory and we feast at his heavenly banquet.

All honor and glory is yours, Healing God, now and forever, with the Holy Spirit in your holy church, and through your Son Jesus Christ who taught us to pray, **Lord's Prayer.**

On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

When the supper was over, he took the cup, gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said: "Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Music Intro By reenacting - by reliving this event with Jesus who is present with us, we are reminded of God's ocean like abundance of love that reaches to and fills us in Christ, we are reminded of a fountain that cannot contain itself, but joyously erupts with living water, and of Christ's peace which flows through us like a river, but not only within us but beyond us to others, giving life, and health, and hope. Let's sing "Peace Like a River"

Music (vv 3,2,1) *I've Got Peace Like a River*

Blessing Now go with confidence that the One who is living water is already cleansing, renewing, and clarifying our lives, recovering our depth of love for all and our joy of living in this world. May the words of Jesus ring in your ears: "Do you believe this is possible?" And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver salve to your souls and a spring into our steps. Amen.