

March 12, 2023

10:30 a.m. Worship

Good Enough:

Embracing the Imperfections
of Life and Faith

Lent 3

"Lots of things can be medicine."

'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'

Luke 13:9

First Presbyterian Church

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PASTOR EMERITUS: REV. JAMES C. HUFFSTUTLER

MINISTRY OF MUSIC: CURTISS ALLEN, JR., DIRECTOR OF MUSIC;

WILLIAM ZEITLER, ORGANIST; AMY GANO, BELLS

Welcome to Worship at First Presbyterian Church

This service is being livestreamed and can be viewed on our YouTube channel in real time or as a recording. **Large-print copies of this order of service**, as well as **audio enhancement devices** are available from the ushers.

We gather on Sunday for 3 reasons:

- **To seek God**- whom we find in sacred text and sacrament, in music and in song, in prayer, in the beauty of this space, in the stillness where we can hear our hearts. We offer God our thanks and praise, our lament and longing, and our resources. We let go of burdens and receive grace and forgiveness. We see the One our hearts love.
- **To practice Community** – rejoice w/those who rejoice, weep w/those who weep. To break bread with those whom we love and those whom we need to love more fully. We practice things our culture does not emphasize: resting, forgiving, sharing. Jesus asked us to love one another as he loved us, and we cannot do so without practice.
- **To listen for our Call**- often an invitation to go out and be or do or remember. God is speaking all the time: through conscience, nature, friends, and certainly scripture. We gather to listen for that Call and to recommit ourselves to discipleship.

Information on our common life can be found on our website www.fpcsb.net, along with sermons and newsletters. You can participate in our work by supporting us financially with a one-time or sustaining donation.

Children are welcome in worship. Younger children may go to the Nursery at any time.

OUR NEXT COMMUNION will be Sunday, April 2nd.
Our deacons will set the table so all may be made welcome.

Morning Worship†

REFLECTION before the SERVICE

The American admiration for bootstrappers and optimists had become a capitalist paradise. Everyone was now an evangelist of good, better, best. Harness your mind to change your circumstances. Salvation is only a decision away.

But I cannot outwork or outpace or out-pray my cancer. I can't dispel it with a can-do attitude.

After a diagnosis. After a pandemic. That is the right time to question our popular theories about how to build a better life. We cannot "have it all" if we just learn how to conquer our limits.

Infinity isn't at the bottom of your inbox or in the next level on the Peloton. The problem with our lives is that we cannot solve them.

We can only live them."

- Kate Bowler, *The Washington Post*

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME

PRELUDE

Chaconne

D. Buxtehude (1637-1707)

Allow the music to usher you into sacred space and time.

INVITATION to LENT

SUNG RESPONSE

Good Enough

What in our lives do we dream about for tomorrow, void of sorrow?

Time spent regretting decisions of our yesterdays, mistakes we made?

Sometimes we get what we get,

life disappoints us and yet,

God is still here and somehow, this faith is good enough.

CALLING on GOD (Based on Psalm 63)

Let us pray together:

✘ **Holy One, Our Balm, Our Feast**

we lift our hands and call your name,

in need of healing–thirsting and hungry.

† The symbols you will see in this order of worship mean:

* **Stand if you are able**

✘ **The congregation will read.**

Your steadfast love is better than life.
Open us this day to your nourishment
in the songs of the land, in the beauty of the sky—
in the simple and good enough moments that fill our days.
Amen.

TIME with the CHILDREN

[Children are always welcome in worship. After the time with Children, we invite our children ages 4 to 11 to go to KidSpace in room 11. Parents, please pick your children up immediately following worship. Infants through pre-Kindergarten may go to the Nursery at any time.]

HYMN *God of Joy and Love and Laughter¹

HYMN TO JOY

✘ **God of joy and love and laughter,
guide your people on the way.
Free us to receive your blessings,
freely offered every day.
Jesus came to share our journeys
and to show where life is found.
Loving you and all creation
paves the path where joys abound.**

**Bless our lives when all is changing,
Holy Spirit, help us pray.
Tune our ears to your vocation;
teach new ways to rest and play.
Bless our loving and our friendships
and the new things we will learn.
Draw us closer, give us insight;
grant us wisdom to discern.**

**Nature waits in eager longing
that your will on earth be done.
We your children yearn for freedom,
joy and life for everyone.
Though we suffer pain and hardship,
all these things cannot compare
to the glory that is coming:
life restored for all to share.**

¹ Text: Ruth Duck, ©2013 Hope Publishing Company. All rights reserved. Used by permission of ONELICENSE A706254. Music: Ludwig van Beethoven, 1824.

PRAYER of CONFESSION

In our scripture today, we will hear about the unproductive fig tree. Oh, the shame of being unproductive! Cut it down! Make room for a more dedicated and hard-working fig tree! Who among us is living up to our fullest potential? Productivity experts can diagnose what's wrong and sell us the antidote in 3 amazing sessions for a low-low price that is guaranteed to turn our lives around. But the gardener offers an alternative medicine—nurture it slowly, letting it soak in the manure all around until it can get the good stuff out of it. Lying fallow and getting fertilized with laughter and tears at the crappy stuff of life can help heal what ails us. Is this not sometimes productive enough? What productivity expectations are holding you captive? Let us take a moment of silent reflection...

(Moment for silent reflection and confession)

ASSURANCE of FORGIVENESS

Hear this word from Isaiah: “Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.”

Know God offers us love enough no matter how much we attain or achieve. We are invited to release oppressive expectations of ourselves and others so that we might recognize true worth afforded to all. Friends, believe the good news of the gospel:

✘ **In Jesus Christ we are forgiven and are being made whole. Amen.**

ANTHEM

Just As I Am

arr. Arnold B. Sherman

SCRIPTURE Luke 13:1-9

This is the word of faith that we proclaim

✘ **Thanks be to God.**

SERMON

Lots of Things Can Be Medicine

Rev. Dr. Sandy Tice

THE OFFERING of OUR TITHES and GIFTS

(We offer our gifts as a response to God's Word, to be part of God's purposes in the world. You may place gifts in the plate during the offertory, or on your way out – or by mail or online.)

OFFERTORY

***DOXOLOGY**

OLD HUNDREDTH

✘ **Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise God all creatures here below;**

Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
Creator, Christ and Holy Ghost. Amen.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE and OUR 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 and the power and the glory, forever.
Amen.

*HYMN 833 *O Love That Will Not Let Me Go* ST. MARGARET

***MOMENT for REFLECTION**

***BLESSING and BENEDICTION**

RESPONSE *Good Enough Reprise*
God is still here and somehow, this faith is good enough.

POSTLUDE *Improvisation* W. Zeitler
(For health reasons we are not greeting at the door)

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"Good Enough" theme song by Marsha Charles, Marcia McFee, Chuck Bell.
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"A Blessing for Slowing Down [excerpt]" from [Good Enough: 40'ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection](#) by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie.
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GREETERS: Bobbie Terrell, Meryll Davis

USHERS: Al Rueda, Lead Usher

Rick Rodriguez, Marilyn Kraft, Security Ushers

SOUND ENGINEERS: Dan Direen, Brent Nord

VIDEO ENGINEER: James Welte

CAMERA OPERATORS: Kevin Lamb, Lynn Usher

REMEMBER IN PRAYER THIS WEEK

George Biddlecombe, Judy Brewer, Tommie Ann Freeman

Elders: Phyllis Hough, John-Paul Fletcher, Jeanne Clark

Deacons: Joyce Lyons, Joanna Nord, Chris Wright-Thomas

This Weeks' Celebrations

Mar 12 Richard Rodriguez

Mar 13 Dotti Garcia

Mar 14 Kevin Coyne

Breanna Nord

Mar 18 Rebecca Nelligan

Todd & Elizabeth Wright

HOLY WEEK

Come make Palm Crosses. On Saturday, April 1st, we will enjoy fellowship as we create the cherished palm crosses distributed on Palm Sunday. It's easy to learn and fun to do! Bring your scissors or a pair of small clippers. You and the entire congregation will be blessed. Everyone – of any age – is invited!

Before the joy of Easter, we must accompany Christ through Maundy Thursday. We invite you to come with us on Thursday, April 6th at 6:00 p.m. as we celebrate the **Lord's Supper** and welcome the mystery of the cross at our Maundy Thursday Service.

Bring Flowers for our Easter Garden! On Saturday, April 8th, come to create a garden of glory for our Easter Sunday service. Bring flowers, greens, blooming branches etc. from your yard (in buckets of water to keep them fresh) or if you prefer, pick up a bouquet at the supermarket. **Bring pruners and gloves** to participate in arranging. No experience is required. Expert members guide the transformation of our plant offerings into individual and collective arrangements that are strikingly beautiful. In this distinctive annual tradition, we create beauty together in imitation of our creative God, as we prepare for the triumph of Easter Sunday!

Butterfly Cookies Needed to celebrate resurrection and new life during Coffee Hour on **Easter Sunday**. Please bring yours to the **kitchen before Worship on April 9th**. Thank you for your help!

SAVE THE DATE. On **Sunday April 23, 2023** First Presbyterian will be hosting our annual Blood Drive in association with LifeStream. Blood donations are critically needed and WE CAN HELP. More information will be forthcoming. **Remember, Sunday April 23!!**

Help us keep our website current! *If you are a committee chair or activity leader,* take a look at our website (<https://www.fpcsb.net>), and see if the information on your ministry is current and correct. If not, please send comments/corrections to webadmin@fpcsb.net. *If you take photos of church activities,* send them to the same address.

Remember! **Sunday, December 31st, 2023** is when we will celebrate our 150th anniversary as a church! Watch for more information. **If you have current photos or photos from years past showing the life of our church,** you can help with the celebration by letting us have a copy. There is a box on the reception desk in the office to put the photos in. Please write your name on the back of the photo if you want it to be returned to you. Or send Or send a digital photo or a scan of a photo to Mimi Lange at churchoffice@fpcsb.net!

More news and announcements are available in your Friday *Keeping in Touch* emails. If you are not receiving these, and you would like to, contact Mimi in the church office.

MUSIC BOX

As we've observed so many times before, English may have one word for something like 'love', but New Testament Greek has multiple words to make important distinctions. 'Evil' is another of those words.

There are two major words for 'evil' in the New Testament. The first is **KAKOS**, and refers to what is known as "Natural Evil". That is, the hardships and suffering that we experience simply because we are a part of the natural world. I have found this parable helpful:

One morning the wolf prays: "Give us this day our daily rabbit! I'm hungry! Please let me catch a rabbit today!" Meanwhile, the rabbit prays: "Deliver us from evil! Don't let the wolf catch me!"

Obviously both prayers can't be answered. (I'm reminded of countless wars where both sides claim "God is on OUR side!" and soldiers on both sides pray "let me live and my enemy die.")

We say that the nature of God can be seen in Nature as well as Scripture. That being the case, the harsh reality is that Nature is both tender: the mother cat and her cute kittens – and ruthless: out of thousands of tadpoles to which a mother frog gives birth, only 2 or 3 will survive to adulthood. (And humanity still experiences horrific infant mortality in much of the world.)

If "God is Good", what can be good about this arrangement? What is 'good' about the cycle of being born, having kids, dying; the next generation has kids, eventually dies, etc. – potentially forever? The "Cycle of Life"?

If one can step back and look at the big picture, one can ask: What's the goal here? The convenience/comfort of an individual wolf/rabbit/frog, or the resilience and health of Life on our planet as a whole?

Over the last million years, the earth's temperature alone has fluctuated by about 40° up and 40° down from its average. (Note: I am not saying that humans messing with this is a good idea!) And then there's the enormous changes in the relative amounts of nitrogen, oxygen and carbon monoxide in our atmosphere. For example, about 3 billion years ago there was essentially no oxygen in Earth's atmosphere at all. (If we humans were to recreate that state of affairs now, that would obviously be very bad!) And continental plates have been moving around all this time. Not to mention the occasional mega-volcanic eruption, or major meteor impact just to liven things up.

It is certainly the case that the young are more adaptable and resilient than the old, and so, with our relatively short lifetimes (four-score and ten vs.

millions/billions of years?) the Cycle of Life has allowed Life to adapt to the constantly changing conditions on Earth. Not just individual species, but also the complex ecosystems of how plants and animals all thrive and adapt together in the extraordinary Community called Nature.

Of course the Bible says we humans have a special relationship with God that the rest of the natural world does not. But to me that means: sure, we may have this special spiritual relationship with God, but we also are made of dust. We have one foot planted on Earth, and the other in Heaven. Genesis says He made us of dirt, of earth, and then breathed into us our life-giving soul. Jesus Himself has a Heavenly Father, and an earthly mother.

As an earthly human I get to experience the beauty of a rainbow through human eyes on a blustery day, and the joy of holding my tiny cuddly newborn daughter in my arms for the first time, and the sheer joyous physicality of playing Bach on pipe organs. (And whatever the equivalent of that is for you!)

And I also experience the sorrow of losing loved ones, and the sorrowful consequences of my poor choices (consequences to myself and others I care about), and the inexorable slow but steady ravages of age. Might it all be part of the same package – that the 'good' and the KAKOS-'evil' just go together? That, at least here on Earth, it's just a package deal?

(To be continued next week.)

--William Zeidler

P.S. This morning's prelude is a 'chaconne' – a piece based on a repeating melodic pattern (generally in the bass, but elsewhere also) over which the composer spins variations. Something like Life, is it not? The Cycle of Life repeats forever, and each generation supplies its own unique variation, but the same underlying theme repeats forever.

--WZ