



Brookline Community Church
Worshiping Apart
Reverend Catherine Merrill, Minister
March 15, 2020

Centering Ourselves for Worship:

Loving God, we come together for worship, but we are not gathered together in our familiar place, with familiar faces all around us. We want to sing and pray together, like we usually do, when the world is not turned upside down.

Help us to feel your presence in this moment and in the days to come, when we're afraid it will feel like we're all alone and everything is being tumbled about.

Loving God, help us to let go of any worries or concerns that are pulling us out of this moment, so we can be centered on you and only on you.

Help us to see the light you bring into this world; help us not to be blind to the ways your love is shining in this world, even when it feels like the darkness is all around us.

Amen.

#384 "This is My Father's World"

[Click here](#) for a link that will give you a piano to sing with. The page from the hymnal was a separate attachment.

[It may feel a little odd to sing on your own. Or it may feel like the most familiar part of this whole service. Just try it and see. No worries if you decide to stop or go all the way to the end.]

Lifting Up Our Joys & Concerns:

Loving God,
why is it that we look, but do not see?
Bring us again and again into your light
until your ways become visible to us,
and bear fruit in us.

For those who are lifted up in joy,
like [say aloud those places where you found joy this week]
let us see you in their joy.

For those who are weighed down with concerns,
like the friends & family of Terry, Bill's brother, who passed away, like Miriam,
Sanjay's sister, as she and her son together work through challenges of teenage
years, like Kerri, Susan & Russell's daughter, whose delivery date is now so
much closer, like the families who step up when needed, like all those affected by
the Covid-19 virus, and all those working to limit its impact, like [say aloud those
concerns you'd like to raise]
Let us see your light shining around all these people who are a part of us.

Touch us so that we are utterly changed,
a "before" and "after,"
a "now" and "then";
that we may also say,
"One thing I do know,
that though I was blind, now I see."

Lord, we believe;
help our unbelief.
In Christ's light, we pray the prayer he taught us:

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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not
into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power,
and the glory forever. Amen.

[For next week, please feel free to send me your joys & concerns and I'll include
them in our prayers: minister@bccnh.org or (978) 494-6953.]

SCRIPTURE READING: John 9:1-41

[It's a long one! But it's an interesting story from John. You may find you absorb more if you read it aloud. You may prefer to read it silently. Whatever works best]

As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?' Jesus answered, 'Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.' When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, saying to him, 'Go, wash in the pool of Siloam' (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, 'Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?' Some were saying, 'It is he.' Others were saying, 'No, but it is someone like him.' He kept saying, 'I am the man.' But they kept asking him, 'Then how were your eyes opened?' He answered, 'The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, "Go to Siloam and wash." Then I went and washed and received my sight.' They said to him, 'Where is he?' He said, 'I do not know.'

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, 'He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.' Some of the Pharisees said, 'This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.' But others said, 'How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?' And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man, 'What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.' He said, 'He is a prophet.'

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, 'Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?' His parents answered, 'We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.' His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, 'He is of age; ask him.'

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, 'Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.' He answered, 'I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind,

now I see.' They said to him, 'What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?' He answered them, 'I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?' Then they reviled him, saying, 'You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.' The man answered, 'Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.' They answered him, 'You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?' And they drove him out.

Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, 'Do you believe in the Son of Man?' He answered, 'And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him.' Jesus said to him, 'You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he.' He said, 'Lord, I believe.' And he worshipped him. Jesus said, 'I came into this world for judgement so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.' Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, 'Surely we are not blind, are we?' Jesus said to them, 'If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, "We see", your sin remains.

Reflection on the Scripture:

I didn't mind it when I went into my Market Basket and there were no carts so I had to go outside again and follow someone who was heading to her car. I didn't mind it when there was no rice and only the "Hot" enchilada sauce that is way too spicy for my New England Yankee self. I didn't mind it when they didn't have the Hood Peanut Butter Cup ice cream and I had to compromise with the Hood Red Sox Caramel Comeback (with the little chocolate Red Sox socks that have caramel on the inside – so good).

But when the line to get to the registers started in the produce section, that I minded. Not because I mind waiting in line, because I'm o.k. with that when that's the most efficient way to get a *ton* of people through a grocery store as efficiently as possible. What I minded was what was going to happen at some point in the next 30 minutes, between the oranges and the conveyor belt at the checkout.

Someone was going to appear from the Brillo pad aisle and try to cut the line. And it was going to get awful. Everyone was tired and on edge and everyone had been waiting in line. And we had struck up little conversations with each

other, and nudged along each other's carts when someone remembered they needed bleach or another box of Triscuits. We were a little neighborhood.

So, we were looking for that person who was going to cut the line. It was like a military array of radar dishes all scanning for incoming missiles. All the abuelitas, and mama bears who had been making up games for six-year-olds and foot sore ministers in their work out clothes. We were all looking for that person who was going to pretend they hadn't seen the line we were in.

And there he was. I could see everyone tensing up. When this woman who had to be six feet tall, with fabulous hair and nails, walked right up to him. "Oh, honey," she said, "I don't want you to get cussed out by all these nice ladies. The line starts back in Produce. Why don't you start there like everyone else, because none of us want to wait in this line either? I think you'd be a wise man to do that, son." And off he went.

We had all seen him. But none of us saw him like she did. None of us was prepared to do a single thing to help him save face. All of us could only see that he was trying to take our place in line. And we weren't going to have that. She saw him and she saw us and she saw the situation and she stepped right in with a real solution. She saw what was going on and she acted with loving compassion. Not by letting him into the line, but by keeping him from being cursed by at least 35 people.

In the reading, clearly John is playing with ideas of light, sight, and really seeing what's in front of you. The man born blind is there, Jesus is there, but there are Pharisees and neighbors and the man's parents. Everyone is reporting what they saw to everyone else, and no one, not one person, is seeing what Jesus had really done, except for the man born blind.

Take a minute and look forward (yes, I did that on purpose) to the week that is coming, with all the unknowns that the virus will throw in your path. For all the things you can't see, all the blind and dark spots, where are the places where you know you'll see God's light? Walking with your dog? Singing with the radio on your way to work? Checking on that elderly neighbor you're not so friendly with, just in case they need something from the grocery?

[I'll let you think for a minute]

The light you know how to look for, it's also there in all the blind and dark spots. It's just harder to see. So when you're in the parts of next week that are dark, if you can't find the light, see if you can find the people who are pointing to it. Like the magnificent woman with the scarlet nails.

***HYMN: #519 “It is Well with My Soul”**

[Click here](#) for a link that will give you a piano to sing with. The page from the hymnal was a separate attachment.

[It may feel a little odd to sing on your own. Or it may feel like the most familiar part of this whole service. Just try it and see. No worries if you decide to stop or go all the way to the end.]

A Prayer to Send us Back Out into the World

In gratitude, O God, we come into your presence.
For all that you have done for us,
most especially, for bringing us
into the light of Jesus Christ,
we offer our thanks and praise.

We long to live as children of light,
doing what is pleasing to you
and bearing the fruit of the light
through Jesus Christ,
who awakens those who sleep,
and raises those who are dead to new life.

We ask that you be with us in the coming week,
when we are blind to your love,
when we are lost in the darkness of worry and concern,
when nothing seems like it is where it should be.
Help us to remember that you are with us
That Jesus is with us,
As ever,
As always,
In his name we pray. Amen.

* CONGREGATIONAL RESPONSE: # 839 “*God Be With You Till We Meet Again; by his counsels guide, uphold you, with his sheep securely fold you; God be with you till we meet again.*”

[This one you’ll just have to sing on your own]

Here ends our worship, now let our service begin.



PRAYER LIST (3/15/20)

If you know those on this list, call on them & tell them we are praying for them. If you know others who should be added to this list please give their names to the minister or a deacon.

- Rev. Tom Atherton, failing from Parkinson's
- Friends & family of Dylan Szabad, Irene Thompson, Nell Smallwood, Beatrice Maude Charewicz, Win Hall, Bruce Garvin, Louise Price, Eddy Whitcomb, Shirley Jeffreys, Hazel Corey, Jean & Duke, David & Dougy Connors, Jerry King, Tre Rouse, and Tasha Feller.
- For those who are struggling with depression, addiction, mental health issues, and in their marriages
- Luca, Amy's nephew, as his new treatment appears to be having effect
- Ethel Long who is recovering from hip replacement surgery
- God's grace and healing for us all
- Dave, continuing to recover now that he is in remission
- Pat Tiner, Candy's mother-in-law, who died of a heart attack. Prayers for the whole Tiner clan, including Ciara, who misses her Nana terribly
- Ron Long, recovering from surgeries to both repair his ankle and install a pacemaker
- Those affected by the corona virus around the world and those working to limit its impact
- Terry, Bill's brother, who passed away in Georgia
- Mirriam, Sanjay's sister, who's facing the challenges of a 15 year old son
- Kerri, Susan & Russell's daughter, whose delivery date was moved from April to March 17th
- The families who step up when needed, whether we're the ones stepping up or the ones in need
- Individuals serving in our military & their families

Household Prayer: Morning

Good morning, Lord. The day has dawned with the gift of sunlight, and I awaken from sleep into the light and grace of Christ. Thank you for this new day. Stay with me, I pray, shepherding me through all that the day will hold. Lead me into pleasant places, and give me the provisions I will need if I find myself in difficulty or danger. Whenever the cup of gladness overflows, help me to recognize that it is filled with your goodness and mercy. In praise and anticipation I begin this day; in Jesus' name. Amen.

Household Prayer: Evening

With the night, Good Lord, comes rest, and a chance for my soul to be restored. You are with me in this and every darkness, so I will not be afraid. For all I have seen with my own eyes today, for all others have helped me to see, I give you thanks. For those things that I did not notice: signs of beauty and kindness, evidences of your grace, I pray that you will improve the eyes of my faith so that I can see you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly tomorrow, and all my tomorrows. In the name of your Son, my Savior, I pray. Amen