

REFLECTIONS

The Spirit awakens our dead hearts and opens our blind eyes to see Jesus! Amazingly, when the Spirit works in our hearts to bring us salvation, his central purpose is to show us the beauty and glory of Jesus, not himself. Although the Spirit plays this crucial role in our salvation, and even more of a role in our ongoing sanctification, nonetheless, his goal is to open our eyes to behold the wonder and glory of Christ.

Bruce Ware

To see sin without grace is despair. To see grace without sin is arrogance. To see them in tandem is conversion.

Max Lucado

Prostitutes [and tax collectors] are in no danger of finding their present life so satisfactory that they cannot turn to God: the proud, the avaricious, the self-righteous, are in that danger.

C. S. Lewis

God receives none but those who are forsaken, restores health to none but those who are sick, gives sight to none but the blind, and life to none but the dead. He does not give saintliness to any but sinners, nor wisdom to any but fools. In short: He has mercy on none but the wretched and gives grace to none but those who are in disgrace.

Martin Luther

RIVERWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

T U S C A L O O S A , A L A B A M A

March 14, 2021 • 8:30 & 10:30 Services • Rev. Jeff Pate, Pastor

Fourth Sunday in Lent

8:30am

Leader In Worship: Assisting Elder Robert Thornton
Joann Williams, piano

10:30am

Leader In Worship: Assisting Elder Allen Powers
Linda Graham, piano

WELCOME

Program all communication devices to be in silent mode. Thank you.

PRELUDE

Please use this time for prayer and meditation as we prepare to go before the living God in worship.

PRAISE

CALL TO WORSHIP: *from Isaiah 35*

Pastor: Be strong, and do not fear! Your God will come to save you.

People: **Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf be unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy.**

Pastor: Then will the wilderness rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice and shout for joy.

People: **And we, the ransomed of the Lord, will enter with singing. Everlasting joy will crown our heads.**

Pastor: Open your eyes and see now the glory of the Lord and the splendor of our God! Come! Let us worship.

HYMN: 38 "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"

Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.

Unresting, unhasting and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.

Great Father of glory, pure Father of light,
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all praise we would render; O help us to see
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee!

PRAYER OF PRAISE AND THE 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.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever, Amen.

CONFESSION

SCRIPTURE READING: *James 2:8-10, Matthew 5:20*

⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well. ⁹But if you show partiality, you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors. ¹⁰For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.

²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Leader: This is the Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God!

CORPORATE CONFESSION OF SIN:

Almighty God, in Jesus Christ you love us, but we have not loved you. You have opened your heart to us, and in our pride we have spurned your care. You have given us all things, and we have squandered your gifts. We have disobeyed your righteous law and grieved you. We have caused hurt to others, and we are not worthy to be called your children.

Have mercy on us, O Lord, for we are ashamed and sorry for all we have done to displease you. Cleanse us from our sin and receive us again into your household. Grant that we might nevermore stray from your love but always remain within the sound of your voice. We ask in the name of Jesus, our Savior. Amen.

SILENT REFLECTION AND CONFESSION

WORDS OF ASSURANCE & PEACE OF GOD: *from John 11:25-26*

Pastor: Jesus promised, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.” To this peace we are called as members of a single body.

The peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

COMMITMENT

HYMN: 175 “A Wonderful Savior Is Jesus My Lord”

A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, a wonderful Savior to me;
he hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock, where rivers of pleasure I see.

Refrain:

He hideth my soul in the cleft of the rock that shadows a dry, thirsty land;
he hideth my life in the depths of his love, and covers me there with his hand,
and covers me there with his hand.

A wonderful Savior is Jesus my Lord, he taketh my burden away;
he holdeth me up, and I shall not be moved, he giveth me strength as my day.

With numberless blessings each moment he crowns, and filled with a fullness divine,
I sing in my rapture, O glory to God for such a Redeemer as mine!

When clothed in his brightness, transported I rise to meet him in clouds of the sky,
his perfect salvation, his wonderful love, I'll shout with the millions on high.

OFFERING

**Tithes and offerings will be collected by deacons following the morning service as congregants leave the sanctuary.*

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH:

from *The Belgic Confession* (1561)

Article XXII: The Righteousness of Faith

Leader: We believe that for us to acquire the true knowledge of this great mystery, the Holy Spirit kindles in our hearts a true faith that embraces Jesus Christ, with all his merits, and makes him its own, and no longer looks for anything apart from him.

People: **For it must necessarily follow that all that is required for our salvation is in Christ then he who has Christ by faith has his salvation entirely.**

Leader: However, we do not mean that it is faith itself that justifies us – for faith is only the instrument by which we embrace Christ, our righteousness. And faith is the instrument that keeps us in communion with him and with all his benefits.

People: **When those benefits are made ours, they are more than enough to absolve us of our sins.**

RESPONSE: “Gloria Patri”

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and ever shall be,
world without end.
Amen, amen.

PRAYER OF INTERCESSION

HYMN: 468 “My Faith Has Found a Resting Place”

My faith has found a resting place, from guilt my soul is freed;
I trust the ever-living One, his wounds for me shall plead.

Refrain:

I need no other argument, I need no other plea,
it is enough that Jesus died, and that he died for me.

Enough for me that Jesus saves, this ends my fear and doubt;
a sinful soul I come to him, he'll never cast me out.

My heart is leaning on the Word, the written Word of God:
salvation by my Savior's name, salvation thro' his blood.

My great Physician heals the sick, the lost he came to save;
for me his precious blood he shed, for me his life he gave.

PREACHING OF THE WORD

SCRIPTURE: *John 9:1-41*

¹As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. ⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹²They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸The 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 ¹⁹and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²²(His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

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PREACHING OF THE WORD

²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." ²⁵He answered, "Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." ²⁶They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" ²⁷He 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?" ²⁸And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses." ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." ³⁰The man answered, "Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes." ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." ³⁴They answered him, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" And they cast him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" ³⁶He answered, "And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?" ³⁷Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you." ³⁸He said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" ⁴¹Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains."

Pastor: The grass withers, the flower fades,
All: **but the word of our God will stand forever.**

SERMON: "What Do You Do When Christianity Doesn't Work?" Rev. Stewart Swain

HYMN: 460 "Amazing Grace!" st. 1-3

Amazing grace! – how sweet the sound –
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed!

Thro' many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

RESPONSIVE READING & WORDS OF INSTITUTION:

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give him thanks and praise.

Pastor: Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

People: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

Pastor: Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed for us.

People: Therefore, let us keep the feast.

Pastor: The gifts of God for the people of God.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Riverwood Presbyterian uses wine in the celebration of Holy Communion. If you would prefer non-alcoholic grape juice, please take a cup from the inner circle of the tray.

BENEDICTION

HYMN: 460 "Amazing Grace!" st. 4-6

The Lord has promised good to me,
his Word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be,
as long as life endures.

And when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess within the veil
a life of joy and peace.

When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we've first begun.

BENEDICTION

DISMISSING HYMN: 263 "Lift High the Cross"

Refrain:

Lift high the cross, the love of Christ proclaim,
till all the world adore his sacred name.

Thy kingdom come, that earth's despair may cease
beneath the shadow of its healing peace.

(Refrain)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HAPPY BIRTHDAYS

March 16 Greg Vander Wal

March 19 Marvin Skelton

LECTIONARY READINGS FOR THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Numbers 21:4-9; Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; John 3:14-21

OPPORTUNITY TO SUPPORT JUMPSTART

Riverwood has a great opportunity to support Jumpstart AL transitional ministry by providing workbooks for the 212 participants. Each workbook costs approximately \$11. Would you consider helping provide an inmate with this important resource? It will be a useful tool to assist him as he learns about living a new life in Christ in prison as he anticipates living life differently outside of prison.

SPRING BREAK

During spring break this week (March 14-20), there will be no Covenant Kids Club, Youth Group, or children's catechism classes. Church office hours will be intermittent. If needed, please feel free to contact church officers on their cell phones (numbers listed in the church directory).

SUNDAY SCHOOL RELAUNCH CELEBRATION!

On Palm Sunday, March 28, everyone is invited to attend a church wide fellowship between the two morning services to celebrate the restart of Sunday School. We will begin the celebration at 10 a.m. and there will be food, drinks, time for visiting with one another and activities for the kids. Sunday School classes will begin the following week (Easter Sunday). Also, the second morning worship service will begin at 11 a.m. starting on March 28. Hope to see you all there!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

WINGS OF GRACE: FOOD DRIVE AND EASTER BASKETS

Riverwood's children will be filling Easter baskets for families at Wings of Grace. We have baskets, grass and toys from last year. We NEED bags of candy and other snacks to put in the baskets. Riverwood is also collecting food for Wings of Grace between now and Palm Sunday (March 28). Suggested items include: canned goods, crackers, peanut butter, pop tarts, oatmeal packets, pasta, spaghetti noodles, rice, and macaroni and cheese. A box will be in the narthex of the Sanctuary to collect Easter basket and food drive donations through Sunday, March 28. You may also bring donations to the church office.

CHILDREN'S EASTER CELEBRATION

Children ages 4-12 are invited to join us on Saturday, April 3, from 1:00-3:00pm for an afternoon of crafts, music, the Easter story, an Egg Hunt and other fun. To help plan for supplies and helpers, please RSVP to Joann Williams (jwilliams@riverwoodchurch.org). We are asking each child to bring 12 candy-filled plastic eggs for the Easter Egg Hunt.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Thursday, April 1, 6:00pm: Maundy Thursday service
Sunday, April 4, 6:30am: Easter sunrise service
July 5-8: Vacation Bible School

DO YOU LIKE PLANTS?

We need help watering plants around the church property both inside and on the grounds. No previous experience required and brown thumbs are welcome! Contact Meg Sigmon for details: 205-535-8608 or megsigmon17@gmail.com.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Through February 2021

Operating Income:	\$62,057.71
Operating Expense*:	\$61,912.01
Net Income:	\$145.70
Designated gifts:	\$4,171.00
Building loan balance:	\$698,342.70

**Includes the minimum monthly building loan payment*