

Pastor's Message
April 26, 2020

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with the great joy of the resurrection that I offer you greetings. I pray that you continue to care for yourselves and others through these uncertain times.

Last Sunday we tried something new as we held our first Zoom worship service. We had 36 people sign in with about 50 people participating. We will continue to worship via Zoom until we can physically come back together. If you would like to join us, send an email to gselc4201@gmail.com and we will send you the link.

The church council has been meeting weekly via Zoom to talk about issues that may have surfaced over the past week. I have been asked by the council to thank you for your continued financial support of the church. As you are able, we ask for you to continue to mail in your envelopes or to give electronically on our website. The church's mailing address is 4201 Stoudt's Ferry Bridge Road, Reading, PA 19605. The church's website is GoodSheperdELC.org. If you would like to donate electronically and are having some issues navigating the website, email the church at gselc4201@gmail.com and I will connect you with someone that can help you.

Be well my friends.

Your sister in Christ
Pastor Denise

Acts 3:1-10

1 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer, at three o'clock in the afternoon. 2 And a man lame from birth was being carried in. People would lay him daily at the gate of the temple called the Beautiful Gate so that he could ask for alms from those entering the temple.

3 When he saw Peter and John about to go into the temple, he asked them for alms. 4 Peter looked intently at him, as did John, and said, "Look at us." 5 And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. 6 But Peter said, "I have no silver or gold, but what I have I give you; in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk."

7 And he took him by the right hand and raised him up; and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong. 8 Jumping up, he stood and began to walk, and he entered the temple with them, walking and leaping and praising God.

9 All the people saw him walking and praising God, 10 and they recognized him as the one who used to sit and ask for alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. AMEN

Let us pray

Holy Lord, your followers gave to your children something more powerful and more valuable than riches. They gave healing and hope. Bring healing and hope into our world and show us evidence of your presence in our lives. Amen.

As we heard Jesus say to his disciples, you are called to be my witnesses to bring hope and healing to all people, we hear in this morning's text a story of hope and healing.

As we continue on our adventure on this post resurrection road, we find Peter and John on their way to the temple for a prayer meeting

We are also introduced to an unnamed man, who is **not** heading to the prayer meeting because he is disabled. Each day, he is placed by the gate that leads into the temple so that he may beg for alms. The lame man is not going into the prayer meeting because he wants to stay by the gate and beg, but because he has no choice. He is not welcome because of his physical disability. So, the best that he can do; is have his friends bring him to a "good spot" where we might receive a few coins from "the worthy" who are headed into the temple.

The text tells us that the man has been lame since birth. So think about it, there he sits every day by the gate unable to move – hoping for a coin or two from the people heading into the House of the Lord. Where he, by no fault of his own is not welcome. Where he, by no fault of his own has been deemed unworthy. Where he, by no fault of his own has been cast out and excluded from temple life.

And although it is probably a good spot for begging, as people on their way to worship probably remember that they are to take care of the poor and less fortunate. The temple goers keep their distance and do not stop to engage in conversation with him. The temple goers would have never thought to bring him into the temple so that he too could experience worship, for they believed that just his very presence would defile their sacred space. The temple goers don't really see him as a blessed and beloved child of God, but they see him as someone cursed for his sins or the sins of his forefathers.

Day in and day out, this is his station in life. To sit by the gate as an outsider, a misfit, a charity case waiting for someone to throw him a crumb.

Day in and day out, he sits by the gate with no hope that he could ever be one of them: one of them who gets to go inside the grand temple and worship in community, one of them who

belongs, one of them who were known **not** for their disability or deformity but just for who they are

Until this one day when Peter and John on their way to the afternoon prayer meeting, they see the man, **really** see the man. Not just as a fixture by the gate, but really see him in the same way that Jesus would have seen him – as a beloved child of God who was hurting and left out.

And today, something very new and different happens for the man. As Peter and John not only “see” the man who has been cast out, but they (as Jesus would have), they stop to talk to the man. For they saw the man just as Jesus would have seen the man, not for what he had done or not done, not for what he was capable of or not capable of, not for who he was (a lame beggar) but for whose he was, a beloved child of God

As they stopped, Peter and John did not throw coins in his cup but they engaged in a conversation with the man. As they told him they had no silver or gold, but what they were about to give him was more valuable than any silver or gold could ever be.

And without waiting for a response from the man, Peter and John grabbed him by the arm and lifted him up. There were no conditions or pre-requisites. They saw a man who was in need of healing and they acted and by the power of the Holy Spirit working through Peter and John the man was healed. And without a second thought, the unnamed man who was lame from birth walked into the House of the Lord for the very first time.

This is our God in action – this is how God acts – through us - to bring hope and restore wholeness

In the past few weeks, we have been bombarded with a health crisis that has set off a financial crisis that scares us in ways most of us never thought of two months ago. Our health and our livelihoods have been threatened. We are in a caught in Catch 22 - between taking care of one another by social distancing and the loneliness of isolation that has resulted from this loving one another from a distance. From taking care of the health of our selves and one another while risking financial hardship.

And right now more than ever, we need to remember that not only God walks with us through these stormy times, but that God works for us through others to bring hope and healing. And just as God worked through Peter and John to heal the man and restore him to wholeness, so God is working through so many people right now to get us through this storm.

And so this week I encourage you to look for the ways that God is working in and through us and in and through others to restore hope and wholeness for those of us who are anxious, for those of us who are disillusioned, and for those of us who are weary.

For God has promised, and we all know God keeps his promises, even when it cost him his one and only Son.

God has promised, he will never leave us or forsake us,

Therefore we can trust that God will find a way to act to bring healing and restore wholeness, God will find the leaders who will guide us in the right direction, God will empower the doctors and the medical professionals, God will inspire and enlighten the researchers and the scientists, and God will find all those that we don't even know we need to get us through this storm

And that is why, even in the midst of this crisis we can be filled with hope as we live in the peace of God that passeth all understanding.

AMEN

May the Lord bless you and keep you.
May the love of the Lord shine upon you with grace and mercy
And may the Lord give you whatever it is you need for each new day.

In the (+) name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. AMEN

Peace be with you until we meet again!!!