

GATHERING

Prelude: How Firm a Foundation

FPC Bell Choir, arr. Ron Mallory

Welcome

Call to Worship

One: Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!

All: By faith in His name, this man was made strong; the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health

One: The Author of life, whom God raised from the dead, is here!

All: Let us enter His presence with praise, walking, leaping, and praising God!

One: Praise the Name of Jesus, for He is the source of our healing and salvation!

Gathering Song: Alpha and Omega

You are Alpha and Omega. We worship You, our Lord. You are worthy to be praised.

You are Alpha and Omega. We worship You, our Lord. You are worthy to be praised.

We give You all the glory. We worship You, our Lord. You are worthy to be praised.

We give You all the glory. We worship You, our Lord. You are worthy to be praised.

Erasmus Mutanbira**

PRAISING

Prayer of Adoration

Lord, we adore You as our refuge and fortress. We ask that You fill our lives with Your peace, joy, and mercy. Thank You for Your love that never fails. We place family, plans, and all that concerns me under Your care, recognizing that it is You who is in control. Open our eyes to Your grace and blessings, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Song of Adoration: What a Beautiful Name

You were the Word at the beginning, one with God the Lord Most High.

Your hidden glory in creation, now revealed in You, our Christ.

What a beautiful Name it is, what a beautiful Name it is,
the Name of Jesus Christ, my King.

What a beautiful Name it is, nothing compares to this.

What a beautiful Name it is, the Name of Jesus.

You didn't want heaven without us, so Jesus, You brought heaven down.

My sin was great, Your love was greater. What could separate us now?

What a wonderful Name it is, what a wonderful Name it is,
the Name of Jesus Christ, my King.

What a wonderful Name it is, nothing compares to this.

What a wonderful Name it is, the Name of Jesus.

What a wonderful Name it is, the Name of Jesus.

Death could not hold You, the veil tore before You; You silenced the boast of sin and grave.
The Heavens are roaring the praise of Your glory, for You are raised to life again.
You have no rival, You have no equal; now and forever, God, You reign.
Yours is the Kingdom, Yours is the Glory; Yours is the Name above all names.

What a powerful Name it is, what a powerful Name it is,
the Name of Jesus Christ, my King.

What a powerful Name it is, nothing can stand against.

What a powerful Name it is, the Name of Jesus.

Brooke Ligertwood**

BELONGING

Kids on the Steps

Call to Confession: His Mercy Is More

What love could remember no wrongs we have done.

Omniscient all knowing He counts not their sum.

Thrown into a sea without bottom or shore.

Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more.

Praise the Lord, His mercy is more;

Stronger than darkness new every morn;

Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more.

What patience would wait as we constantly roam.

What Father so tender is calling us home.

He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor.

Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more. *Refrain*

What riches of kindness He lavished on us.

His blood was the payment, His life was the cost.

We stood 'neath a debt we could never afford.

Our sins, they are many, His mercy is more. *Refrain*

Matt Papa and Matt Boswell**

Prayer of Confession & Assurance of Forgiveness

O Lord, our sins are countless and we are undeserving of Your grace. You, who are all merciful, take our sins away and light within us the fire of Your Holy Spirit. Remove my heart of stone and give me a heart of flesh and blood, a heart to love and adore You, a heart which may delight in You, love You, and please You, in Christ's name. Amen.

Assurance of Forgiveness

Friends, though our sins are many, God forgives them all through Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God.

STEWARDSHIP

Invitation to Offering

Offering Song: Bell Peal on Lasst uns Erfreuen

FPC Bell Choir, arr. Sondra Tucker

FORMING

Sermon: Acts 3:1-16

Acts of the Spirit: The Church Becoming Like Jesus A Church that Heals Like Jesus

- I got to be part of an FPC Care Team meeting last Monday night. Care Team members pursue friendships, walking with persons in our congregation and beyond to offer care and support, often through transitions grief, or job loss. Colin McKearnan brought the opening devotional that night. We start meetings with reflection and prayer because it helps all of us keep remembering just who God is who we are in is his love as we enter into our ministry together.

Colin invited us to watch a short excerpt of a graduation speech from Father Gregory Boyle. As some may know, Father Boyle has given decades to a ministry among gang members in LA. He leads Homeboy Industries, which offers rehabilitation and reentry, finding meaningful work for like 10,000 gang members a year. Garbage removal. Tattoo removal. A bakery. Because of his work leading MIC's social enterprise ministry with the Get It Done Crew here in Missoula, Colin got a tour of Homeboy Industries in LA and said he's never seen such an astonishing embodiment of Christ's love. I want to share with you this morning what Colin shared with the FPC Care Team:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zK--XN4ozr8> (to 5:38)

Along with Melanie Mellgren, Colin helps lead our church's Emergency Overflow Shelter during extreme cold snaps when the Poverello Center is overrun. After introducing this video, Colin wanted to encourage us to pay attention to the humanity in persons we may have become accustomed to avoiding. To sit on the ground with strangers. To look our neighbors in the eye. Because, he said, that's what the love of Jesus looks like.

-Our sermon series in the Book of Acts is about how the Spirit acts in people apprenticed to Jesus so that we come to take on family resemblance to him. Today is about a Church that heals. Our passage is from Acts 3.1-16.

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 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 astonishment at what had happened to him.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray: O Lord, fill us with a countercultural love, and upside-down kingdom love, a Jesus love, a faith in love, a healing love for neighbor, outcast, and enemy, so that we might all of us be led by you back to our true selves. Amen.

-OK. So there's this guy who's been crippled from birth. Unable to walk. People carry him to beg at Temple gate at the time of prayer. Where people pass him by and he can call out to them. Imagine what his life is like. How does it feel?

They say one of the loneliest professions, the job linked with the most self-harm, is the toll booth operator. The toll booth operator, where thousands of cars slow, toss money, and pass you by, without ever looking you in the eye.

Then there are Peter and John...On the springtime side of the resurrection. On the birdsong side of the pouring out of the Spirit.

Two men who, after deserting Jesus in the end, have been sought out. Forgiven. Embraced. Restored by the risen Jesus. Two men sent out not by their own power but by the power of the Spirit of Christ to embody his vindicated compassion and healing. Peter and John are, like all of us, apprentices. Learning Jesus' Way of love.

So the man who is disabled calls out to them. He asks for alms. A gift that could demonstrate that their relationship is a sacred, spiritual matter. He asks without expectation of connection. Just the handout.

And what happens?....The Bible says that Peter looks at him intently, as does John. They don't pass him by. They don't avert their eyes. They look at him. And more. They see him.

Is it your experience that often the most humble, most compassionate people are those who have themselves suffered hardship. Suffering, sin, shame – they can lead to hardened bitterness. But given to the Lord, our anguish can be transformed into the compassion of Christ.

Why is Mario the kindest, gentlest, most humble and tender person and former gang member at Homeboy Industries? His violence has been suffused in and given over to the love of Jesus. He understands the anguish of his brothers and sisters – what it means to be crushed by the weight of it. And so he sees persons as children of God.

I gotta think that Peter (in his particular experience of betrayal and shame and grace) has had his eyes changed. That now Peter has new eyes, post-resurrection eyes. Do you?

So not only does Peter look intently at this man whose life has been crippled. Did you notice? He invites the man to look into their eyes as well.

The tragedy for persons who've sat begging is that while they may call out to you or direct you to their sign, they may also lower their eyes to guard themselves from watching people pass them by, to guard their hearts from being scorned or ignored. Peter wants this man to see in his look – and in John's – that they count him a brother. Even before there's been consideration of this man's legs, Peter extends the healing and wholeness of regarding him with dignity.

We often let our confusion about what we can or should do – especially about money – rob a moment of healing human connection and risky faith. Not Peter. Not Jesus' apprentice. Money matters. Money can of course be well-used to help (think of the story of the Samaritan who pays for someone to heal up). But more powerful, more transforming, is the Person, the Name, the Hope of Jesus alive. 'We don't have cash on us,' he says. 'But what we have, we want for you. Healing. Wholeness. And Hope in Jesus.

'In the name of Jesus, stand up and walk.' Peter's is an act of not only compassion, but trust in the heart of God for broken bodies, minds and spirits to be healed. It's the confidence of hope that Christ is alive not only to strengthen this man's ankles, but to restore his humanity and guide his steps. To renew his whole life, not as a project, but as a person.

On this side of the resurrection Peter and John do what Jesus did by the power of the Spirit. They offer the healing, wholeness, and hope of God.

-Friends, who do you think of when you long for the healing of Jesus? Whose body is broken? Whose mind is aching? Whose spirit is withering? Whose soul is in anguish?

Marina Abramovic is a performance artist. For several months in the spring of 2010, New York City's Museum of Modern Art hosted an event called The Artist is Present. Ms. Abramovic sat silently in a chair for eight hours a day, and she invited the public to sit across from her one at a time while looking into each other's eyes. Fifteen hundred people took her up on it. Some sat poker-faced, some smiled, some cried, and one even sat for seven hours. They all of them came to participate in the giving and receiving of presence. Call it soul gazing. The moment revealed the human need for connection. For healing intimacy. (Greg Levoy. Psychology Today article: Beyond Words: The Power of Eye-Gazing)

There's a Kelly Corrigan interview with Father Boyle (on PBS, 'Tell Me More.') In the conversation, Father Boyle offers a simple framework for treating trauma, which we could count at some level to be the condition of the human soul. He says, 'If it's true that the traumatized are more likely to cause trauma,' (you know, the idea that hurt people, hurt people) 'then it's equally true—it has to be—that a cherished person is going to be able to find their way to the joy there is in cherishing themselves and others.'

Father Boyle describes the healing process as ‘dosing’ – the more doses of being cherished, the more a person may come to cherish themselves and others.’ It’s what the woman who asked Mario the question offered him, a reflection of how much he is cherished by God.

It’s healing to be noticed, understood, embraced, affirmed as God’s children, as persons of sacred worth. And, I recognized listening to the Care Team on Monday, that when we become intentional about seeing and cherishing the humanity in our neighbors, it turns out that Jesus is restoring us to ourselves, too. The invitations to be together. The gracious listening. The acts of caring. The shared prayers. Why do they do it? Because it heals them, too. Because dosing heals us all. Because care-giving is care-receiving.

- In the end, this man at the Temple gate is transformed by the love of Christ flowing through his apprentices. The word ‘church’ means the people called out of the worldly ways to love in the supernatural way of Jesus. It’s miraculous. And this man’s ankles are made strong. He jumps up walking and leaping and praising God.

The healing of Christ is a mystery. I’ve prayed (and I know you’ve prayed desperately) for bodies to be healed and watched as persons thought to be near death recovered to walk and leap and praise God. And I’ve prayed (and I know you’ve prayed desperately) for bodies to be healed and watched as persons do not physically recover and weaken and die.

I’ve prayed for broken marriages to be renewed. Some have seen renaissance beyond my dreams, while others have broken on the rocks. I’ve prayed for legal disasters and financial crisis and brain tumors, and I’ve prayed for children in harm’s way and thorny mental health struggle and persons fallen into addictions that seem hopeless. I’ve prayed for healing in Jesus’ name. Often the Lord has not answered my prayers as I would have imagined. And Often I’ve seen a redemptive thread stitched through heartache to form a miraculous tapestry of healing joy I would have been incapable of naming.

Peter and John saw not an inconvenience or a project, but a person and brother. They saw Mario. They invited him to see them see him as a child of God. They called upon the power of Jesus’ love for healing and wholeness. They risked dosing him with how much he was cherished. And they trusted Christ to heal him how he would./

Friends what do you hear the Lord saying to you in this Scripture?

What does this passage invite us to pray?

Song of Response: Instrument of Peace

Refrain: Lord, make me an instrument of peace, an instrument of peace.

Lord, make me an instrument of peace, an instrument of peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love. Where there is darkness, let me sow light.
For in the giving, we shall receive. And in the dying, we’re given life. *Refrain*

Where there is sorrow, let me sow hope. Where there is doubt, let me sow faith.
Where there is injury, Your parting gift. Your consolation to those in pain. *Refrain*

Isaac Wardell, Jessica Fox, Liz Vice, Orlando Palmer, Paul Zach**

Prayers of the People

Heavenly Father, you are the one who can heal any suffering we have. We ask that you heal the world in places that suffer from war and disaster. Grant wisdom to global leaders, peace among nations, and healing to all who suffer. Guide the leaders of our nation to make wise decisions that promote justice and peace. Strengthen those who serve and protect and help us to care for the vulnerable in our society. Be with our neighbors who are struggling with unemployment, hunger, or loneliness. Help us to reach out to them in ways that alleviate their suffering today and in the future. Lord, renew the faith of this congregation and unite us in compassion and service to one another. Be with those among us who are facing illness or grief.

We pray all this in the name of Your son, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray...

ALL: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, Your 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 Yours is the kingdom and the power, and the glory forever.
AMEN

SENDING

Sending Song: May the Peace of God

May the peace of God our heavenly Father,
And the grace of Christ the risen Son,
And the fellowship of God the Spirit
Keep our hearts and minds within His love.
And to Him be praise for His glorious reign,
From the depths of earth to the heights of heaven.
We declare the name of the Lamb once slain:
Christ eternal, the King of kings!
May this peace which passes understanding,
And this grace which makes us what we are,
And this fellowship of His communion
Make us one in spirit and in heart. Refrain.

****Stuart Townend and Keith Getty**

Benediction

Leading in Worship This Morning:
Liturgist: Bill Maitland
Kids on the Steps: Austin Graef
Sermon: Dan Cravy
Musicians: Joselyn Thomsen, Noah Hill, Chris Caldwell,
Marley Ball, Madison Spencer
Sound and Video Techs: Zane Reneau, Pat Scott, Sean Barry

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FPC Ministry Staff:
Pastor: Dan Cravy
Children, Youth and Family Director: Sarah Henning
Music Director: Noah Hill
Worship Coordinator: Allie McAdow
Church Operations Manager: Becky Kress
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Facilities Manager: Wes Keller
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Bell Choir Director: Tomi Kent
Parish Associates: Rev. Janet Malone and Rev. Bob Schurr
Preaching Pastor, Blackfoot Church of the Potomac: Natalie Mauer