

PROMISE

REHAB WORSHIP SERIES

Today's Sanctuary flowers provided by the Flower Committee to the glory of God.
 Today's choral selections are provided by the Temple Choir under the direction of Joan Nevill. Organist: Barbara Waite.
 Ushers March 18: Eric Eades, captain; Seby Durgy, Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
 Ushers March 25: Eric Eades, captain; Chuck Taylor, Ronnie Pursley, John Oberhelman, Thornton Patberg (balcony), Margo Borre (balcony)
 Greeters March 18: Warren Heinsohn, Janet Kissel, Pat & Ken Haynie
 Greeters March 25: Sue & Cle Watson, Tom Harvey, Mary Locket

ORDER OF WORSHIP

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC

Congregation Hymns

WELCOME

PRELUDE

"We All Believe In One True God" by M. Dupre

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Hear and trust the good news: God has called us, "My people!"
People: God has established a covenant, a promise of loyalty and love.
 Leader: In the flood, in the wilderness, in exile;

People: In certainty and doubt, abundance and scarcity;

Leader: God's promise is true to the thousandth generation.

People: We can love because God first loved us; we can follow because God first came to us; we can be faithful because God is faithful.

CHORAL INTROIT

"What Wondrous Love Is This" setting by John Carter

*CHIMES & SERVICES OF LIGHT

*HYMN #730

"O Day Of God, Draw Nigh"

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

Leader: May the peace of Christ be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Please turn to those around you and pass the peace of Christ.

CALL TO PRAYER

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Leader: Let us pray as one.

PASTORAL PRAYER

All: God of the Covenant, You are faithful through all generations. Teach us the ways of never-ending love, and guide us in Your path of forgiveness. And now, O God, hear us as we pray, each in our own hearts and our own ways...

LORD'S PRAYER

Matthew 6:9-13 "Pray then like this: '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 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.'"

GIVING TITHES & OFFERING

"Come, O Sinners, Poor And Needy." by D. Cherwien

*DOXOLOGY *The congregation stands as the Ushers return the offering to the Altar.*

#95 in Hymnal

ANTHEM

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" arr. by Gilbert M. Martin

KIDZ MOMENT

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Jeremiah 31:31-34

A New Covenant

³¹ The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³² It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

FAITH WE SING #2152

"Change My Heart, O God"

MESSAGE *by Pastor Andy Payton*

"Promise"

Well good morning friends. It is a joy to be with you here this day in this place. I had two glory sightedness this last week. The first one I guess happened this morning on my way to worship. I was just about ready to walk out of the garage and Leslie was holding baby Ella. Baby Ella looked at me. I think she could tell I hadn't my coat on; I was ready to go, and she waved goodbye to me. She's smart like her mom. She gets it. The other glory sighting I had this last week was last night; We were eating supper together and Leslie said to me you weren't here but one meal this week, Paige prayed the prayer without anyone's help. She prayed the prayer without anyone leading her or telling her what to say. And of course our prayers are very simple one just two words Aba Amen. She stopped us. She stopped us. She stopped Leslie rather and said Aba Amen. Now we can eat. I hope you're seeing the glory of God in your life. I really do. And that's why we're doing glory sightings. I hope that you are seeing the light of God shine through into your life in some way because if nothing else that's the purpose of worship. We learn to see God in this place so we can learn to see God in every place. Our theme for Lent this year has been rehab and the reason is because it's meant to be a season in which we rehabilitate our faith and learn to see the presence in the light of God's shining through. And today well our theme is promise. God is with us. God is here. God promises to be here, and so let us always seek to see that light that grace that love- the face of God shining through within our lives. As we get started let's begin with a moment of prayer. Aba help us to be present to you even as you are here present with us. Amen.

They call them emojis. Do you all know emoji are? If you've ever texted you know what an emoji is. An emoji, the best I can explain is, it's electronic symbol that is meant to help us communicate with one another. They really got popular as cell phones got more popular. There are ways that we communicate with one another. For example instead of writing someone a text saying okay, you might send him a thumbs up. Instead of writing someone a text saying I don't like that you might send them a thumbs down. Sometimes as a minister I might send some of my friends an emoji where there's two hands together. I said I'm praying for you. Or another way that I didn't emoji is interpreted as thank you. I got it. There's a lot of other emoji like one that's a volcano that spewing out fire. That's pretty cool. You can use a lot of different ways. They became popular though they really started in 1999 in the country of Japan interestingly enough, and they really became popular in the last four or five years. They got really big, and in fact they got so big a couple of years ago that my next slide will show you the emoji that was titled The Word of the Year by the Oxford Dictionary is of course an emoji of joy. Which is interesting enough right that it's a symbol that expresses joy that was called the Word of the year. I think of all the emoji that they chose as the Oxford Dictionary. This one is curious to me that they chose this one because I think it embodies something we're all looking for we all want- joy. Happiness. We want to be that emoji. Now the real reason I bring all this up is because I'm going to attempt to do something I've never done before ever. I'm going to attempt to tell a Bible story in emoji today so I don't know how well it's going to go but I know you're a bunch of grateful and gracious people and you get to be nice to me about this.

Our text or text today comes from the prophet Jeremiah. Now here's the thing about Jeremiah. He's a little grouchy. He's a little grouchy and as I was thinking about how to tell his story I'm like you know what, I might just spice it up with a little emoji. If you've read the prophet Jeremiah, it's 30 chapters of the prophet Jeremiah is about him proclaiming God's judgment on the people of Israel. Grouchy Jeremiah. Let's say it this way, Jeremiah did not have a megachurch. Jeremiah did not have his preacher's podcast. Jeremiah was not the host on one of those TBN preacher television shows. He was not a popular figure because for 30 chapters he was telling the people of Israel God's judgment is going to be upon you. It's not going to work out. It's not good. No one wanted to hear that. In fact it got so bad at one point they beat him and they left him for dead. So how do you like spice that story up right? With emoji!

So here's my next slide here's the here's the story. All right here we go. Jeremiah was a person of Israel. He was a person from Abraham. He was a person of the covenant people and their story goes that God promised to them home. You see my home emoji? I kind of messed it up in the home got split down the middle which interestingly enough is kind of what happens to the people of Israel. They get split down the middle. Israel in the North and Judah in the south get split down the middle. God promised to them a home and the way it goes. The story at least is they were in Egypt. They cried out for help. God raises up Moses, leads the people to Israel, promises them a home, and on the way to this new home, God tells Moses to write it down right. Write it down. Write down the Ten Commandments. Write down the commandments of God. Now here's what you need to understand about the commandments of God. They were given so that they could continue in the freedom that God was given them.

A lot of times when we think about commandments we think of a burden that God places upon us but that's not the reason God gives us commandments. God gives us commandments so that the freedom might continue in our lives and that freedom is the freedom from sin. The people of Israel are on their way out of Egypt to go into the promised land, and on the way God gives them commandments in order that when they get to this promised land that the freedom that God gives them might continue. In other words when they get to Israel, when Israel gets to Israel, they won't become the Egypt that they left. All right. So they're on their way home. God says write it down. They finally get there. It goes OK. Thumbs up. They get there. It goes OK. Thumbs up. But then, they forget the Commandments. They disobeyed God. And the home that God gives them begins to fall apart. Thumbs down. Home begins to break apart. Now this is where Jeremiah begins to prophesize, in this era in which the home begins to fall apart. And this is why I'm using emoji because he doesn't have a lot of good things to say for like 30 chapters. He's just like it's all over. It's not good. Babylon's coming. We're going to be destroyed. We're going to be defeated. And that's what happens. And this continues for a long time until we get to our text we just read this morning. Next slide Jeremiah. Jeremiah begins to tell a news story in Jeremiah. Chapter 31. Instead of judgment, he begins to preach a vision of hope he says. Basically I know that the home that God has given us is in disarray. I know we've been defeated and it's broke down. I know we disobeyed. I know it's not good. But here's the thing: God's going to promise to bring us back home again. Only this time it's going to be different. This time instead of just writing the commands on the tablets of stone, if you will, God's going to write the commandments of freedom in our hearts. That is going to change the world.

We're still waiting in some ways aren't we? We're still waiting in some ways. The Christians picked up on this story of Jeremiah talking about God writing God's Commandments in our hearts and fulfilling the world, giving us a home again. And as it began to think about this vision that Jeremiah had, they started to look to Jesus as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. They called it the Incarnation. I know it's kind of a lofty theological word, but basically early Christians said that God came to us in flesh, in Jesus Christ. And the Gospel writer John has this wonderful verse he says when Jesus is lifted up Jesus draws all people under him. Everyone can know God within their heart. And so they say that in flesh God came to us in Jesus Christ and fulfills this prophecy if you will that Jeremiah is talking about in his passage this morning and fulfills it. God came to us and this person healed people cast out demons and ultimately we say that Jesus died our death and rose for our sake in order that we might have hope. And now here's the thing about this, we say that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy where all people might know God. And many times when we look at Jesus what we do is we think that the only reason why he came is so that we can die and go to heaven. That's the version of the story that I've heard my whole life. I call it the evacuation plan Jesus. That the only reason Jesus came is so that when we die we can go to heaven and that's the story. The only problem with that is it doesn't really transform the world. This world really doesn't matter. If the one reason why Jesus came was so that I can just do whatever I want get forgiven and go to heaven, that doesn't really transform our world. As I've said it a few years ago in a sermon I said you know you can believe all this stuff about Jesus. You can believe that he was born of a virgin. You can believe it he healed people, told parables, cast out demons, died on a cross, rose from the dead. You can believe in all that stuff and be a jerk. It's true. And we say it. The number one thing people say about why they don't go to church is why? You know it I know it: people are hypocritical.

And so what do we do with this Jesus story? Well here it is friends. It's not just about giving us hope for when we die. This Jesus story is meant to be a lens, a lens through which we look at all of our lives. And by that I mean this: in the person of Jesus Christ we believe that God became incarnate. That spirit and matter became one right. We call that the mystery of the Incarnation, and what we as Christians are invited to do is to use that as a lens through which we look at all of life. In other words, if we look through the lens of the incarnation we look through the lens of Jesus to this world in which we live, what we begin to see and realize is this: that the infinite presence of God has been revealed to us through the finite things of this world. That the spiritual things that we're desiring and looking for is being manifest in the material things of this world. This is the part of the Jesus story that we have missed to our own peril. To our own peril.

We see the Jesus story as just this thing that gets us to heaven. But the truth of the matter is that Jesus and the Jesus story is a lens through which we can look at all of our lives. At the face of God is looking back at us through the very creation that we find ourselves a part of. Now when I started to learn that, it changed my life. All of a sudden this thing called the Incarnation oh my gosh had real implications for me. And how I lived. But don't just take my word for it. The New Testament writers got this too. Here's a couple verses I got all excited this week and I made a slide presentation to show you. Here's one Gospel of John Chapter 1. Jesus is a true light which enlightens every person. The light is in every person. He's right there. He's in you. He's in them. Here is another one: Romans 1. The creation of the world ever since the creation the world the eternal power and God and the divine nature invisible though they have been, have been under stood through the things that he has made. Spirituals and the material. Here is another one: In Christ all things hold together. He's there. He's in it. Some of the truest tradition of the church got this to one of my favorite statements I learned just recently comes from St. Catherine of Genoa which is like 13 years old when she felt the call of God. 13! So many times, it's kids that remember this truth. It's kids that remember this truth. She used to walk around the streets of Genoa and say my deepest me is God. And I imagine people thought she was nuts. But she's right she's right. My deepest me, my deepest God. Our own John Wesley even kind of got this. I know this is kind of small print but I wanted just to prove that this is a little bit Methodist when I'm talking about here today. He's talking about the Kingdom of God within us. This is one of the standard sermons that this comes from the standard sermons and united Methodism is our official church doctrine. So this comes from our official church doctrine. This is John Wesley talking about the Kingdom of God within us. This is what he says: what is it about the love of God, the kingdom of God is the love of God. Because he first loved us. And the love of all mankind for God's sake for his sake. When we're loving other people we're loving God in other people. When you begin to see the presence of God within the finite things of this world, when we begin to see incarnationally, it changes everything. It changes the way we see the environment. It changes the way we treat animals. It changes the way we treat the poor. It changes the way that we look at outcasts. It changes the way that we even look at ourselves. And I think we've missed this as Christians, And the reason why we've missed this as Christians is because if we really believe this then we would have treated the environment differently. We have treated the poor differently. We would not have been some of the most violent nations that the world has ever known. We wouldn't be creating outcasts wherever we go. And we would see ourselves differently.

We see the Jesus moment as just this evacuation plan and not a lens through which we live our lives, and it comes at our own peril. I got to thinking about that this week during our session with Rabbi Gary Manzo. Gary Manzo was with for open community. He was telling us about Judaism and as he began to share. He reminded me a lot of the class that I had in seminary. The class was called Jewish and Christian Dialogue. It was co-taught with a Jewish rabbi from Indianapolis and one of our theological professors in seminary. It was one of the funnest classes we ever had. And the reason was because we had a field trip I liked field trips. That means I don't have to sit in class. It's good. Our field trip was to the Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. That was our field trip, and so we flew to Washington D.C. on our field trip. I can't tell you a lot about that museum except for I remember one room. It was a room filled with shoes. Next slide. I can remember walking in that room and smelling the leather from those shoes. You know what those shoes came from? This people who died in Holocaust. Jewish people, homosexual people, Catholic people, anyone deemed outcast. That's their shoes. Next slide. This is a pile of shoes outside one of the concentration camps after the war was over. Lot of shoes. As I solve this, and I thought about this it occurred to me this: that these orders to kill these people were carried out by Protestant Christians- German Protestant Christians. People who said that if you ask them that they believe that Jesus was born of a virgin, Jesus healed people, Jesus cast out demons, Jesus died a death, and rose for our sake, they would say that he believed all this. But they didn't see incarnationally. Because if they did, they would have understood that this Jesus that they said they professed faith in was in those people.

Can I ask you a question? Who in your life do you refuse to see the presence of Jesus in? What group? What person? What ideology? What denomination? What faith tradition? What group do you refuse to see Jesus within? We all have someone that we struggle with seeing the glory of God in them. Those people that we are separate from like that. That separation friends is sin, sin-separation. When we block out people within our lives and refuse to see God within them, we're not just losing them, we're losing a piece of God's presence as well.

We call this season Lent. It is a time in which we search our conscience and think about those sins within our lives that we need repented of. They need to be away. And one of the quickest ways to us, it's challenging. In closing, I'll share with you a prayer I think you can carry with you that can remind you of this all week long. It comes from my grandpa, Pops. We call him Pops. I don't know how he got that name but he's Pops. One reason why I am talking about my grandpa all the time is because for me my grandpa has embodied the love of Jesus more than just about any person I've known. I mean he loved me, and he has to be filled with grace to love me especially as Andy as a 17 year old. You had to be filled with grace to love the a 17 year old, and he loves me. And one of the things I've also wrote about Pops, and he's 87 years old, is throughout my entire life, he always had some sort of outcast in his life that he had come to our house. Pops always had someone that the world would want to addicts at our house. We had people that just got out of jail that would come to our house. Pops always had someone that the world would want to create an outcast out of and he'd bring him in. Anyway he has a prayer that he prays that he taught me that I want to teach you. He says that when he wakes up in the morning this is what he says. "Lord here I am. Here you are. Live your life through me." Lord here I am. Here you are. Live your life through me because that's what's happening, and the tragedy is we just don't see it. Amen

*HYMN UMH #358

"Dear Lord and Father of Mankind "

*CHIMES & SERVICE OF LIGHT

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE

"AEolian Fanfare" by C. Callahan