

WE GATHER

Music for Gathering

Welcome

[invite children present to go to the back to help with the procession at the beginning of your welcome, giving them time to get back there and organized]

Threshold

[accompaniment begins under the Leader's words]

Leader: The story of Jesus includes many moments around tables, as this was part of his ritual of relationship even to the last. In this fifth week of the Lent season, we will hear a story of love and devotion from the disciple Mary, directed at Jesus at the table. As we will see, Jesus tries to prepare his beloved companions for his death. Talk of death is like a gut-punch to many of us; we would rather believe we and our loved ones are invincible, are able to will ourselves into being strong. We all know that isn't always how the story goes. We are fragile. Our lives, like the plants in the gardens we tend, are susceptible to elemental dangers and a life-cycle of letting go in order to live.

"Good Enough"

[sung by a soloist; children bring garden items forward (see Children's Time scripts for suggestions for each week) to place on the ladder-garden]

What in our lives do we dream about for tomorrow, void of sorrow?
Time spent regretting decisions of our yesterdays, mistakes we made?
Sometimes we get what we get,
life disappoints us and yet,
God is still here and somehow, this faith is good enough.
[repeat with congregation]

Calling on God

Based on Psalm 126

Leader: Let us pray together:

Holy One, Lover of Souls,
we call out to you.
You know our tears and sorrows,
and you bear the seeds of grief with us.
Open us this day to your comfort
that nurtures these seeds into sheaves of joy–
the simple and good enough moments that fill our days.
Amen.

The Children Lead Us

[See Children's Time scripts]

Opening Hymn/Song

"The Lord Went to a Dinner"
Text by Carolyn Winfrey Gillette
Tune: ANGEL'S STORY 7.6.7.6 D ("O Jesus, I Have Promised")

Honest Questions, Compassionate Response

Leader: Jesus speaks the words no one wanted to admit: he was not always going to be around. "Oh, don't say that," so many of us have said to a loved one who speaks the truth about the fragility of life. Perhaps we get uncomfortable because it reveals the precious nature of the present moment, laying bare the beauty and horror of it all. The indescribable pain we know we will one day face invades our senses like a pervasive perfume, inescapable. What if we stopped denying the limited nature of our lives and breathed in deeply the fragrance of vulnerability? Let us take a moment of silent reflection…

Silent Reflection

Leader: Hear this compassionate word from Paul's Letter to the Philippians: "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead."

Know that already, God is offering us freedom from
the need to avoid suffering at the cost of denying the fullness of life.

We are invited into the knowledge that Christ's vulnerability
in life, death, and resurrection
shows us the sacred nature of the heights and depths
of sorrow and joy in our own saga.

And know, that despite our sometimes faltering steps,
in the name of Jesus Christ, you are being forgiven, even now.
In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven.
Glory to God! Amen.

The Peace

[invite people to pass the peace in the manner to which you are accustomed, remembering to include the folx at home if you are live-streaming or recording]

WE PROCLAIM

First Reading

[selection from lectionary; chosen by preacher]

The Word in Music

[choral anthem; ensemble piece]
"All My Trials"
(there are many other arrangements of this spiritual)
or
"Remember When"
by The Many

Gospel Reading

John 12: 1-8

Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the

poor?" (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.)

Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

A Word of God that is still speaking,
Thanks be to God.

Thoughts about an Imperfect Life and Faith

"We are fragile."

[see Sermon Fodder document for prompts]

Prayers of the People

[sung]
Though all along our daily pilgrim race
our treasures small and very few may be,
our souls are blest with God's unending grace,
and that is enough, enough for me.
Oh, that's enough for me,
God's truth has set me free;
the love of Christ has sanctified my soul,
and that is enough for me.

[accompaniment slows to a meditative feel
and continues under the following leader words]

Leader: Fragility is not only OK, it is also necessary. To know and respect our own limited nature, our vulnerability to the forces of life, we are able to see and be with those who are hurting. We enter our prayers for all who suffer in mind, body, and spirit–vowing to tend with care to those for whom deaths, of many kinds, seem near.

[sung]
When food and raiment are not ever sure,
and simple fare is hard to get for some,
we work to share our goods with one and all,
and that is enough, enough for me.
Oh, that's enough for me,
God's truth has set me free;
a love like Christ's is meant for ev'ry soul,
and that is enough for me.

[prayers of the people continue as you are accustomed]

Offering

[in the manner to which you are accustomed, insert offertory music if needed]

Doxology
Old 100th

Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Jesus Christ, our burdens know,
Praise Spirit through whom our hearts grow,
Praise Three-in-One, from here below.

Prayer after Offering

Generous God,
in light of your extravagant blessings–
no matter what the state of the world or our imperfect lives–
we offer our gifts and ourselves,
and know that you transform what we plant
into the produce of love.
Amen.

[Communion - insert on weeks that your church practices this ritual; see adaptable liturgy in separate Communion document]

Closing Hymn/Song

"Be Still My Soul"
Chalice 566; GTG 819; LW 510; NCH 488; UMH 534; VU 652; W&R 451
or
"Be Still My Soul" Songselect #7113810

A Blessing for When You're in Grief

"Blessed are you, dear, dear one,
doing this holy work of suffering what must be suffered.
Of grieving what has been lost.
Of knowing the unthinkable truth that must be known.
This grief can make you feel on the other side of glass from the world around you,
a force field of different realities separating you.
Yet blessed are you in yours, for yours is the one most seen
by God who breathes compassion upon you, even now.

Who has walked this path, and who leans toward you,
gathering you up into the arms of love. Rest now, dear one. You are not alone."

Benediction

And now, may the God who loves all of creation, especially the grief-stricken parts,
and Jesus, our companion along this crooked path called life,
and the Holy Spirit, who loves to improvise in surprising ways,
go with you, dwell among you, and give you joy. Amen.

Choral Reprise

[sung slowly, in harmony]
God is still here and somehow, this faith is good enough.

Postlude

Worship Notes:

All liturgy and leader parts Marcia McFee © www.worshipdesignstudio.com/goodenough. Used and adapted with permission.

"Good Enough" theme song by Marsha Charles, Marcia McFee, Chuck Bell. Used with permission of Worship Design Studio.

"A Blessing for When You are in Grief" from *Good Enough: 40'ish Devotionals for a Life of Imperfection* by Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie. Used with permission. Purchase the book at https://katebowler.com/books/good-enough.

Music licenses: *[insert your church's licenses for congregational and choral music]*