

## Midweek Lenten Series: Making Change

Week of Lent 5: Change of Plans

April 1, 2020

### Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Welcome to the last in our series of Midweek Lenten Services.

### Call to Worship

We see Jesus walking ahead on the road.

**He leads us toward Jerusalem.**

We follow but are very afraid.

**He says the Son of Man  
will be handed over.**

We understand nothing about all these things.

**He says the prophets' words  
will be fulfilled.**

We hear him talk of suffering and death.

**Forbid it, Lord!**

**This must never happen to you!**

### Opening Prayer

O God our surprise, you offer so much more than our own limited plans envision. You take our place, becoming our salvation through the cross. As we prepare for Holy Week, strengthen our hearts and minds to follow Jesus on the road to Jerusalem. When we betray like Judas, deny like Peter, and scatter like the disciples, forgive our frailties. Bring us the promise of resurrection and new life in you. In Jesus' name we pray.

**Hymn**      *Before the world began*

**341**

### Scripture Reading Mark 10:32-34

<sup>32</sup> They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, <sup>33</sup>saying, 'See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; <sup>34</sup>they

will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.'

*New Revised Standard Version Bible*, copyright © 1989 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. <http://nrsvbibles.org>

## Reflection

Three short verses, and in them, Jesus tells his disciples what to expect. The Son of Man will be betrayed, condemned to die, he will be mocked, spit upon and flogged, and then he will be killed. After three days he will rise again.

What's more, Jesus had already told the disciples this twice before, each time it is just a short concise straight forward message. This was news that the disciples did not want to hear. The first time they hear it, Peter rebukes Jesus for even saying such a thing. How could the one they thought was the Messiah possibly go through all of that and die. This was a change of plans.

A little further into the Gospel of Mark Jesus once again says to the disciples in a short concise statement, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again. But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him." (Mark 9:31-32).

Three times Jesus tried to prepare the disciples for what they were going to experience, but those thoughts and words were foreign to them. What they were hearing did not compute. The Messiah they were waiting for, that everyone who was Jewish was expecting, hoping for, and believed would change everything, would not be one that suffered and died. The culture in which the disciples had grown up was expecting a king who would ride on in majesty, would overthrow those who oppressed the Jewish people, and the people would once again live gloriously like the stories they had hear, about the reign of King David.

So how could Jesus possibly be this king and yet tell them that he would suffer and die. Again, this was a change in plans. And the last phrase of the statement, where Jesus says he would rise again after three days, that did not even register with them. They were stuck on the dying part. It was not until the experience of an empty tomb that the disciples began to piece together all that they had been taught and were witnessing. That piecing together took some time. It took the resurrection, an Emmaus Road encounter, Pentecost, and more. It was only upon reflection that the disciples

were able to see that Jesus had gone before them, always preparing the way. Still it was uneasy times and uncharted territory.

We are living in a time where a “change of plans” is an understatement. No one saw this coming...the death tolls, the isolation, the fear, and the grief are not something we planned for and few have experienced. Some will remember WWII and what happened then, but even that was a different experience from this virus that attacks when you are not looking and takes a human toll that is unimaginable in times of relative peace. We ourselves are living in uneasy times and uncharted territory. Though the circumstances are new, as Christians, there have been many experiences of uneasy times and uncharted territory in history. This should also be true of our churches now and as individuals, because if there is not uneasy times and uncharted territory it means we are not reaching out in faith to others who may be searching for the grace filled life of faith. If we are not experiencing a change in plans it means we are not listening carefully or watching closely to what God is up to around us.

The scripture we read today tells us Jesus was walking ahead of the disciples; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. When we decide to follow where Jesus leads it can be amazing and scary, it may be because of who Jesus is leading us to, or what we might experience. The one thing we can trust is that Jesus will not lead us where God has not prepared a way. The way may lead us to support friends or family members in ways we had not anticipated, it may lead us to reconcile with someone that hurt us deeply or we have hurt deeply. For some it has meant or means a change in career, or volunteering where they never expected, encountering the world in ways that were formerly unknown. For others it may mean that where you thought you would live out your days is not turning out the way you expected. Yet God is there preparing our way and if we are open to listening, God will use us to do God's work in the world.

Let me state, God did not send this virus to teach the world anything, or punish humanity, but if we allow, God will use these circumstances to teach us something about ourselves and our world. God will go before us and prepare a way when we ask and listen. God will use this time to bring us into relationship with each other, creation, and Godself.

So today, expect the unexpected, find hope and healing in this time where everything has been thrown into a change of plans. Trust that God will not lead you where Jesus has not gone before, nor will God abandon you. Pray,

asking God to prepare the way, to go before you and others just as Jesus did when leading the disciples.

God's love is deep and broad and if you listen, watch and wait expectantly for the movement of the Holy Spirit in your life you may find that God has plans that you could not have imagined, understood, or anticipated, but with amazement, and likely some fear and trepidation, God to lead you to it and through it.

### **Closing Prayer**

God of the unexpected, be our guide as we journey through each day listening, waiting, watching, so that we may know your leading. May we be willing participants in your work in the world where you call us to things we do not anticipate or feel prepared for, trusting that you lead us with a love so broad and so deep that we can barely comprehend it.

May our hearts be open, our spirits be attentive, our minds alert to what you are doing not only in our own lives but in the lives of others. We eagerly, yet with hesitation and some fear release ourselves to you to use as you desire. May your love for creation, for the world, for people, be evident in our living and in our dying.

Amazing God, grant us courage, give us strength for the journey, as we trust you to go before us preparing our way, these things we pray in Jesus precious name, Amen.

©Joyce Yanishewski 2014.

### **Hymn**

*Will you come and follow me*

**634**

### **Blessing**

Go now in peace,  
for nothing can separate you  
from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

*Service based from the resource, Sunday and Seasons 2014, Year A.  
© 2013 Augsburg Fortress. P118-120..*