

The Fifth Sunday in Lent - March 22, 2026

## Call to Worship

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone.

**But if it dies, it bears much fruit.**

God is doing a new thing among us.

**We come to worship the God of life.**

## Hymn

*Take my life, and let it be consecrated*

**637**

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|--|---|
| 1. Take my life and let it be consecrated, Lord, to thee; take my moments and my days: let them flow in ceaseless praise.    | 2. Take my hands and let them move at the impulse of thy love; take my feet and let them be swift and beautiful for thee. |
| 3. Take my voice and let me sing always, only for my King; take my lips and let them be filled with messages from thee.      | 4. Take my silver and gold: not a mite would I withhold; take my intellect, and use every power as thou shalt choose.     |
| 5. Take my will and make it thine; it shall be no longer mine; take my heart: it is thine own; it shall be thy royal throne. | 6. Take my love; my Lord, I pour at thy feet its treasure store; take myself and I will be ever, only, all for thee.      |

"Take my life, and let it be consecrated." Words by Frances Ridley Havergal. Public Domain.

## Prayer of Adoration and Confession

God in whom we live and move and have our being, we praise you.

In the face of all that wearies us and worries us,  
your Word echoes across the centuries with hope.

As we follow the footsteps of Jesus in this Lenten season,  
his Cross standing before us, we trust you are never far from our sorrows,  
walking with us; sharing our tears.

You stand beside us when we don't know which way to turn.

In this time of worship, renew our trust in your resurrection promises.

Draw near to us when we need you the most with love that will never let us go.

We offer you our wonder and our praise as  
the creating God, leading Christ, and inspiring Spirit.

**Merciful God,**

**we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed,**

**by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.  
We have not loved you with our whole heart;  
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.  
Have mercy on us and forgive us; so that we may delight in your will,  
and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. The Fifth Sunday in Lent. March 22, 2026. Year A.

## **Assurance of Forgiveness**

Hear the good news.

The God who promises a new covenant has written mercy on our hearts.

The Christ who walked the road of suffering has gone ahead of us into death and opened the way to life. Friends, believe this good news:

in Jesus Christ, we are forgiven. Thanks be to God.

## **Prayer for Understanding**

Faithful God, speak your word into the soil of our hearts.

Plant what leads to life. By your Spirit, teach us the way of Christ. Amen.

## **Scripture Readings**

### **❖ Jeremiah 31:31-34 A New Covenant**

<sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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.

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### **❖ Psalm 32 The Joy of Forgiveness**

<sup>1</sup> **Blessed are those whom the Lord does not hold guilty,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

<sup>2</sup> While I kept silence, my body wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

<sup>3</sup> **For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**

<sup>4</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not hide my iniquity;

<sup>5</sup> **I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,”  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.**

<sup>6</sup> Therefore let all who are faithful  
offer prayer to you;  
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters  
shall not reach them.

<sup>7</sup> **You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.**

<sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

<sup>9</sup> Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,  
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
else it will not stay near you.

<sup>10</sup> **Many are the torments of the wicked,  
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.**

<sup>11</sup> **Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous;  
shout for joy, all you upright in heart.**

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#### ❖ **Hebrews 5:5-10**

<sup>5</sup> So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son,  
today I have begotten you”;

<sup>6</sup> as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest for ever,  
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

<sup>7</sup> In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. <sup>8</sup> Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; <sup>9</sup> and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, <sup>10</sup> having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

#### ❖ **John 12:20-33 Some Greeks Wish to See Jesus**

<sup>20</sup> Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be

glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honour.”

### **Jesus Speaks About His Death**

<sup>27</sup> “Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name.’ Then a voice came from heaven, ‘I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.’ <sup>29</sup> The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” <sup>30</sup> Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the judgement of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

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The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

### **Message The Grain That Bears Fruit**

Though in many parts of the country it feels like spring is not winning the battle over winter, I still am aware of many people who have been pouring over seed catalogues, have ordered their seeds, and may be starting some seedlings. Green houses started their plantings some week ago in anticipate of the season to come. And farmers have the seed or are getting the seed purchased and ready for spring seeding. So, this is an interesting time of year to also hear the reading from the Gospel of John in which Jesus says, “Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.”<sup>1</sup>(12:24)

Now, I would say most of you have an understanding of this process, but let’s just take a moment to think about that grain of wheat. That seed is, for all intent and purposes, dead when just sitting in storage, and yet, put that seed in the ground there is a chance at it coming to life, producing a plant, and bringing a harvest. And if you have ever seen a golden, ripened field of wheat swaying in the wind, you know that is a beautiful sight. But to get to that point, there has to have been good soil, the right amount of rain and sun. This growing does not happen on its own the most important pieces are the soil, water, and sun, but often fertilizer has also been applied to help make the grain more bountiful.

Now with all metaphors there are limitations to how far one can go, but let’s take a look at how Jesus may have meant for us to hear these words remembering there are always

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture quotations taken from *New Revised Standard Version, Updated Edition*. Copyright © 2021 National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

layers. It can be helpful to recall that we are looking at the Gospel of John which in John 1 verse 14 we hear the words, “and the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.”

When we hear about the cross it can be difficult to get our minds wrapped around the abuse, the torture, and that it may feel like as Jesus prayed, his prayers were unanswered. In Hebrews chapter 5 we read, “In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.” (vs7-8).

To speak to this in some helpful way, it is important to remember that Jesus’ body was flesh. He was as human as you and I, so suffering and death were real. The pain of the cross was real. However, Jesus was also fully divine, so it was not like God was sacrificing God’s child in the same manner that we as humans have children. Jesus was the Word and the Word was made flesh. In other words, Jesus was divine, also God, and so it is more like God offered and offers God’s self in Jesus’ death. Hebrews continues in chapter 5 verse 9 to say, “and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.” This mysterious priest is connected to Old Testament scripture (Genesis 14:18–20) and points to an order of priesthood that is not earthly line of priests.

Getting back to the grain of wheat. You will note that the seed is transformed, given new life as it is nurtured and grows. The seed becomes something different. Again, not to take the imagery further than intended, that seed can represent at least two things for our understanding, one is that Jesus’ own body was transformed through his death, resurrection, and ascension. He died in an earthly sense, but through the power that is God, his body was transformed. This is a promise for us as well in our own death. But there is more to this for us our living, right now.

This promise of new life coming from a seed, is the promise of new and transformed lives right now, in our time, in this life, where through Christ we can live out the gospel truth that we are loved, forgiven, valuable image bearers of God. We can, in this moment, live grace filled lives where love and justice meet.

I also want to point out the context of Jesus words. “Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, ‘Sir, we wish to see Jesus.’ Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus.” (John 5:20-22).

All that Jesus had spoken was in answer to and in the presence of not just the disciples or those who were Jewish, but it was said with outsiders there. And Jesus didn’t qualify his words by saying this is for these people and not for you. His message was for everyone. Remember John 3:16...for God so loved the world. This is not a message or

promise for just a certain group of people. It was not just for the Jews and it is not just for Christians. If Jesus were here among us now, this message would be for anyone in earshot and beyond. Jesus came for the world. This is truly good news.

Going a little further into these readings, you will note that suffering is not taken from Jesus. Submission and obedience are words that come up and sound both archaic and just plain wrong in a world where dominance and power like to put us all in our places. But in Christ, in God, in the power of the Holy Spirit, in the power of the cross, all of these things are flipped. Power becomes love, forgiveness, and grace. It is about justice for the truly oppressed. It is power for those who have no power over their circumstances for sure, but also for those who have little power over their health and well-being, little power in their relationships.

All of this is understood in light of the grace and will of a loving God. Not some vengeful God who needs appeasing. But God does need to be respected, loved, and considered in our lives and decisions. And even here God does the work of helping instill in us words of life. In the reading from Jeremiah, the words are written as spoken by God of covenants, promises between God and God's people.

<sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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.

God's deepest desire is to be in relationship with each and everyone of us in a way that we know how deeply loved we are. Still, in relationships there is the choice of rejection. And know that God does not reject us. Throughout the scripture God keeps coming back to people, finding new ways to show God's love, provision, and grace for people, for us. In Jesus that love found its fullness for us and in us. Jesus is that new covenant written on our hearts. Jesus is the promise of transformed and new life now and in a time to come.

It is strange for us to imagine, but it is the way of Christ and of a transformed life seems to be summed up with loss equals gain and surrender equals strength. As Ron Rienstra writes, "...trust that God is not finished with what looks spent. [We are] to believe that God, in resurrection power, can coax life out of what has been buried, hope out of what has been handed over. There is a cost; but in time there is also a harvest."

Our lives are intended to be like grains of wheat that bear good fruit. Lives that are transformed, meaningful and purposeful. Not without challenges, but certainly lived trusting, knowing in our depths, that we are valuable and worthy of love and able to share love, compassion, and grace with others. We are one grain of wheat come to life, but look around there is a church not just this church, but a plethora of churches filled with people also bearing fruit and a world in need of love and transformation. A world where each person is to know that deep within them is the seed, the image of God. May we nourish one another and the world so that what is reaped is a bountiful harvest of compassion, grace, and above all, love. Amen.

## **Prayers of the People**

God of the loving heart, thank you that in Christ, you call each of us by name and unite us in his body, the Church.

Give us love enough to make a difference in your world,  
and trust enough to follow even when the way ahead us is a challenge.

Christ of majesty and mercy, bring your compassion to this world once more.

God of peace and promise, in Christ you call us to love our enemies and to be peacemakers in the word you love.

We pray today for people and places divided by ancient bitterness and current hostility, (especially we remember ... adding places in the recent news...)

O God of the bruised and broken, we are grateful that, in Christ, you have taken up the cross and know by heart the things that bring us suffering and pain.

We pray today for all those in need of healing and comfort,  
whatever the source of their pain....

O God of the lonely and sorrowing, in Christ you faced the loss we know when loved ones die or when friends let us down.

We remember before you those who grieve the loss of their beloved  
and those who face a lonely future....

O God of hope and new possibility,  
in Christ you opened the way into the future for us through the power of your redeeming love. Give us the courage we need to face our future,  
assured of your presence and power to sustain us. We offer all that we are and all that we hope for through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray together as his people:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada. Worship Planner. The Fifth Sunday in Lent. March 22, 2026. Year A

## **Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen**

## Invitation to the Offering

We share our tithes and offerings this day acknowledging that most of the time we are clinging tightly to what we have, afraid we might lose something we need and afraid somehow there won't be enough to live our lives.

The scarcity mindset overtakes us, and it robs us of the joy of our days. Our offerings to God remind us that Jesus has called us to be ready to let go of this life so that we might claim the abundance of life eternal.

Adapted from [Discipleship Ministries | Fifth Sunday in Lent, Year B - Offertory...](#)

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## Hymn

*Christ, you call us all to service*

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1. Christ, you call us all to service,  
call us all who follow you;  
plant in us a deep commitment  
all your work and will to do.  
Fire a passion for your justice;  
in us kindle love of peace;  
help us heal the broken-hearted;  
to the captive bring release.
2. Teach us how to work together,  
brother, sister, side by side,  
equal partners in the struggle,  
in the cause of truth allied.  
To each one some gift is given—  
man or woman, young or old;  
help us use each skill and talent,  
your great purpose to unfold.
3. Let us be a servant people,  
reconciling, ending strife,  
seeking ways more just of sharing  
and of ordering human life.  
Fill us with a glowing vision  
of this world as it should be;  
send us forth to change that vision  
into blest reality.

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## Benediction

May the God who plants a new covenant in human hearts  
give you courage to trust what you cannot yet see.  
May the Christ who chose the path of obedience  
walk with you when the road narrows.  
May the Spirit who brings green shoots from buried seed  
give you courage to give yourself away.  
Go in peace. Walk in hope. Amen.

Grounded and Growing—Journeying from Lent to Easter A - Year of Grounded and Growing  
by Ron Rienstra. As Published on the Reformed Worship website January 2026