

New Scotland Presbyterian Church  
Worship for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
(video link at <https://www.newsotlandpc.com/>)  
August 30, 2020  
The Rev. Holly S. Cameron

Prelude

Ryan Dwyer

“Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty”

Introduction

*Welcome to worship at New Scotland Presbyterian Church. For the next two Sundays, we will be having joint video worship with Delmar Presbyterian Church. Next week, September 16, will be hosted by Delmar. They will be worshipping via live-streaming at 10:00 a.m., and a link will be sent out to watch that service.*

*The flowers on the pulpit today are given to the glory of God by the Dwyers. Thank you for the beautiful flowers!*

Call to Worship

from Psalm 105

O give thanks to the Lord, call on God’s name, make known God’s presence among the peoples. Remember the works God has done: the miracles and the judgments. Seek the Lord and God’s divine strength; seek God’s presence continually. Sing to God; sing praises to God.

Hymn

Choir

“Be Still, My Soul”

Opening Prayer

God of light and truth, you are beyond our grasp or conceiving. Before the brightness of your presence the angels veil their faces. We come to worship in lowly reverence and adoring love knowing there are no secrets that are hidden from you. We know there are things we have done that we ought not to have done, and things we have left undone. We have not always loved our neighbors as ourselves. You alone know how often we have wandered from your ways, wasted your gifts, and ignored your love. Create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. Fill us with your joy that we may be light in your world. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Sisters and Brothers in Christ: whether we move away from God because of confusion or forgetfulness or willful disobedience, God continues to call us back to our true, created selves. God’s mercy and love surround us always, and God offers us the grace we need for new beginnings. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Old Testament Lesson Exodus 3:1-15

<sup>1</sup> Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. <sup>2</sup> There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. <sup>3</sup> Then Moses said, “I must turn aside and

look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up.”<sup>4</sup> When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.”<sup>5</sup> Then he said, “Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”<sup>6</sup> He said further, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

<sup>7</sup> Then the LORD said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings,<sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites.<sup>9</sup> The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them.<sup>10</sup> So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.”<sup>11</sup> But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?”<sup>12</sup> He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.”

<sup>13</sup> But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?”<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”<sup>15</sup> God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’:

This is my name forever,  
and this my title for all generations.

### Kids’ Time

*For those unable to see the video, the children’s sermon is about how Moses heard God calling him to free the slaves, but Moses did not think he could do it. God said Moses could do it, because God would be with him. God calls us to do some hard things, like forgive people who have hurt us, and share with others. We can do those hard things because God is with us, too. Now it’s time to see the photos that remind us of God’s love and hope and joy. { photos.}*

**Keep sending us your photos so we can share them in the coming weeks!**

**Prayer:** Dear God, for the story of Moses, that teaches us you know us by name and you have things you want us to do. When we feel too small, or too scared, or too confused, help us to know that you are with us. Help us to show your love to others. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### Song

“Holy Ground”

Choir

### Gospel Lesson Matthew 16:21-28

<sup>21</sup> From that time on, Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.<sup>22</sup> And Peter took him aside and began to

rebuke him, saying, “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.” <sup>23</sup> But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>25</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it. <sup>26</sup> For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life?

<sup>27</sup> “For the Son of Man is to come with his angels in the glory of his Father, and then he will repay everyone for what has been done. <sup>28</sup> Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom.”

### Sermon

Tom Wright is a Bishop in the Church of England, and a biblical scholar. In the beginning of this century, he took on the task of writing his own translation and commentaries on every book in the New Testament. In his book, Matthew for Everyone, he comments on the passage we just heard, where Jesus tries to explain to the disciples that his journey is leading to suffering and death.

We remember from last week’s reading that Jesus has just asked his disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” And Peter gave his inspired response that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, God’s anointed one. We know that prophets, priests, and kings were anointed to recognize their special calling, and that, for generations, the Israelite people had been expecting a new king, an heir of King David, to come to power and defeat the enemies of Israel.

So, when Jesus confirmed that Peter is right, that he is the Messiah, we can imagine that the disciples were expecting that they have signed on with the winning candidate – the king who is about to take over the land, and make everyone’s lives better.

Instead, Jesus tells them that he is God’s chosen one, and so he is going to be tortured by the religious authorities and killed. And Peter reacts in a perfectly understandable way, saying something like, “But if you are God’s chosen, then surely God would not let anything like that happen to you!”

Bishop Wright says that in this passage we begin to understand that the gospel story is a little like the book, Alice through the Looking Glass. If you remember reading that Lewis Carroll classic you know that when Alice goes through the mirror, she finds she is in a mirror-image world, where everything is the opposite of what it seems. She discovers that in order to get somewhere, you cannot walk toward it; because the longer you walk, the further away you will get. In order to get where you want to go, you have to set off in what seems to be the opposite direction.

We all know that trying to do something in the mirror is confusing. If you’ve ever tried to cut your own hair, or trim your own beard, you know it takes great concentration to figure out which way your hand is supposed to go, because as you look in the mirror, everything is backwards.

In this gospel story, Jesus is asking his disciples to think in a similar kind of inside-out way. When Peter says they realize that Jesus is God’s anointed king, we can

imagine the disciples beginning to plan their strategy of how they will help Jesus take the throne.

We change leadership in our country on a regular basis through elections. We've just had two weeks of political conventions, and recognize that strategy of how to get your candidate in power – you get people all excited by telling them their lives are going to be better if they help your candidate; and you encourage them to go out and get more people excited, in hopes that you recruit enough people to get your candidate voted in as the leader.

The disciples were probably thinking along similar terms – that they could begin a march to Jerusalem, pick up supporters along the way, choose the right moment, say their prayers, and—because that was not a democracy—fight a surprise battle. And, since they now know God is, for sure, on their side, they would win the battle, and take over the Temple, and install Jesus as the new king.

But what Jesus tells the disciples is that their story is the looking-glass version of what they have imagined. He says, yes, we are going to Jerusalem. And yes, the Kingdom of God is coming soon. And yes, the Son of Man will be exalted as the king, dispensing justice to the world.

But the way to that kingdom is the exact opposite of what Peter and the other disciples have in mind. The way this new king will be established is through suffering and death. Jesus will indeed confront the ruling powers and authorities in Jerusalem; but they, not he, will appear to win the battle.

Jesus does then say that he will be raised from the dead, but neither Peter nor the others can figure out what he means by that yet. All they know is that Jesus is talking crazy—the idea that you suffer and die to become king is just nonsense.

Jesus, however, insists that God thinks differently than we mortals think. God sees everything inside out. Or perhaps we should say God sees everything the right way around, while we see everything inside out. Remember what Paul says in his letter to the Corinthians: we see everything now in a puzzling mirror, but eventually we may get through that glass, and see everything the way God sees it (First Corinthians 13:12).

But to get there, we have to take up our own cross and follow Jesus on this inside-out journey. And, just like doing any task in the mirror, our journey will require effort on our part. It is not something we can do halfway, or we'll keep get distracted by how things look like they should go, and we will end up even further away from our goal.

Bishop Wright says it is like learning to swim. If you're walking into a lake or a pond, the logical thing to do is to walk along and keep your feet on the bottom. That is what feels safe, but the further out you walk, the deeper the water gets, you have to make a choice: you either abandon your "logical" safe strategy of keeping your feet on the bottom, or you're going to drown. You have to do the illogical, inside-out thing, and start moving on top of the water.

Following Jesus on this inside-out journey has never been easy, but it is not impossible, and there are rewards along the way. At the end of this story, Jesus says that some of them will see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom, before they die. Wright points out that many of us think that refers to the second coming of Jesus, but he says those verses are really about this story Jesus is telling them right now. In other words, after his suffering and death, his disciples see that he is raised from the dead,

just as he is telling them now. This inside-out way that seems so confusing, will begin to make sense when they see events unfold as he is telling them right now.

For those of us who follow him today, Jesus makes equally large promises. We do not have to wait to see if his promises will be fulfilled, because they have already happened. He is already the risen and exalted Lord of the world. But it is still true that if we are going to follow him, we have to learn to think in that inside-out, looking-glass kind of way: what the world counts as great foolishness and craziness is God's true wisdom. If we cling to our lives, trying to take the logical, safe path, we will lose our way. If we give everything we have to Jesus—our time, our energy, our attention, our talents, our material goods—if we give our very lives to Jesus, then we find our true selves. It is in pouring ourselves out for others that we discover who God means for us to be, and what God means for us to do.

I don't know what else to say about this, except I know it is difficult to think about behaving in this inside-out way. My first reaction to things I don't like is to get angry, or clap back, or decide to ignore it or move away from it. The disciples were this way, too. They were always trying to move away the people they didn't like – saying, "Get these kids out of here," or "Get these foreigners out of here," or "Get these women out of here," or "Get these sick people out of here." Jesus keeps walking toward the things we want to walk away from.

If I'm to follow him, I have to pay attention to my first reaction and see if it's coming from my fear, or from God. Maybe I have to look at my first reaction and say, "What is the mirror opposite of this? Does God want me to do something that seems different?" St. Paul says the message of Jesus is foolish, absurd, folly (First Corinthians 1:18). So, if we want to follow him, maybe we need to be doing a few more things that are challenging. I think of others who have done so, in his name. In my lifetime there was Mother Teresa, who went to live with some of the poorest people in the world, who was so dedicated to them that she would not even use air-conditioning when she traveled to wealthier nations. I think of Congressman John Lewis, who was part of non-violent demonstrations in the 1960's sitting at lunch counters, and riding buses, and walking across that bridge in Selma; he was spit on and taunted and beaten almost death on several occasions. I think of Archbishop Oscar Romero who spoke out against poverty and injustice in El Salvador and was assassinated while he was leading worship. They were not perfect people, but they followed the call of Christ in ways that seem foolish to the world. They saw at least part of God's inside-out way, and they walked it.

In every generation we hear about people who are prepared to take Jesus seriously and live by his Word. What would it be like if we were among them?

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

Song  
"If Any Man"

Choir

Pastoral Prayer

Gracious God, your words in scripture invite us to rejoice always, to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in all circumstances. It is our joy to give you thanks for good health, good friends, abundant harvests, and beautiful weather. Help us to learn

to thank you not only for the good times but also for the challenge of difficult times— help us to be grateful in the midst of tough times that cause us to grow in ways we never thought possible; help us to give thanks for difficulties that lead us to your presence, to ask for help, that remind us to pray often, and give us the opportunity to receive love and encouragement from others. We thank you that you are present with us, no matter what our circumstances, for you alone give us life.

O God, as we seek to follow your sometimes-confusing way, give us hearts that are open to hear the cries of the suffering—those around the world who are facing the trauma of fires and floods, hurricanes and violent storms; those who are struggling with illness and death; those who are lonely; those who are without enough work or support; those who are afraid to be who they really are; those who are running from their past or their future; those who are challenged by addiction or mental illness; those who are losing hope.

Give us the courage and compassion to respond to the needs of one another. Help us to see your glorious mystery at work so that we may be a daring church, willing to lose who we are in order to find who you want us to be.

Hear us as we say the prayer Jesus taught us:

### Lord's Prayer

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 us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

### Hymn

Choir

"God of the Ages" #262 in the Presbyterian Hymnal

### Offering

God has taught us to be so grateful for our abundant blessings that we will be generous with all God has given us. Let us be cheerful givers in contributing to the mission of Christ.

*We give thanks for our many gifts. Churches depend on the generosity of members and friends to support their ministries. If you are able to mail in an offering, or give online at <https://www.newscotlandpc.com/>, we are grateful. If all you can do is offer prayers for the church, we love you for that gift. Whether it's money, time, attention, a phone call, a text, an e-mail, a smile, a decoration in your window or yard – there are so many ways we can reach out to others and know we are not alone. We are blessed to be able to connect to one another and to love one another. Thank you for your generous giving!*

### Song of Praise

Ryan Dwyer

*These are probably the most-sung lines in the last 300 years, so here are both the traditional words, and another variation:*

Praise God from whom all blessings flow;  
Praise God, all creatures here below;  
Praise God above, you heavenly host;  
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Praise God who loves us, great and small  
Praise God who hears our faintest call  
The Sovereign Lamb redeemed the fall  
Praise God the Savior, Lord of all.

### Announcement

As we come to the end of our worship, remember that the next two Sundays are joint video worship services with Delmar Presbyterian Church. Next Sunday, September 6, Delmar will be hosting. They live-stream their worship at 10:00 a.m., and a link will be sent out to watch that service. I will see you back here on September 13!

### Benediction and Blessing

Hear again these words from St. Paul, “Outdo one another in showing honor, extend hospitality to strangers, rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep, live peaceably with all, never avenge yourselves, do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” And may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit, you may abound in hope, both this day and always. Amen.

### Choral Benediction

Choir

May the good Lord bless and keep you, whether near or far away,  
May you find that long awaited golden day today.  
May your troubles all be small ones, and your fortunes ten times ten,  
May the good Lord bless and keep you ‘til we meet again.

### Postlude

Ryan Dwyer

“Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty”