

Church on the Hill

A Congregation of the
Reformed Church in America
167-07 35th Avenue, Flushing, NY 11358

March 3, 2024

10:30 AM



Who Do You Say That I Am?

By Lauren Wright Pittman

Inspired by Matthew 16: 13-20

| A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

Rev. Sally Ann Castle — Interim Minister

Mr. Sean Cotty — Music Director

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Third Sunday in Lent

BOLD – Congregation responds

* – Congregation Stands

Prelude Improvisation on “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross” Sean Cotty

Welcome

Votum

Our help is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth. **Amen.**

Sentences of Scripture

* **Call to Worship**

Inspired by Psalm 19

If you ask the sky who God is, **the sky will tell you of God’s reach.** If you ask the day who God is, **the sun will tell you of God’s warmth.** If you ask the night who God is, **the moon will tell you of God’s comfort.** “The heavens are telling the glory of God” (Psalm 19:1). Are you listening? **We are listening! We will sing of God’s glory.** Let us worship Holy God.

* **Hymn No. 45**

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

***Come, thou fount of every blessing; tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above;
Praise the mount! I’m fixed upon it, mount of God’s unchanging love!***

* **Call to Confession**

In our scripture for today, Jesus asks the disciples, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter said, “You are the Messiah.” Have you ever wondered if his voice faltered when he answered? Did he respond loudly and with confidence, or with a tentative whisper? We’ll never know. The text doesn’t provide those details. But we can trust that, no matter how we speak to God, when we speak, God is listening. So friends, join me in the prayer of confession. Whether you whisper these words or speak them with conviction, may you trust that our gracious and merciful God is listening with love. Let us pray together:

* Prayer of Confession

Holy God, Some days, we are quick to declare your goodness. Like Peter, we see you in our midst and we are confident in our faith. Other days, we are distracted and uncertain, desperate for answers. Forgive us for losing sight of you. Some days we are quick to trust your blessings— **trusting that we are called, that we can make a difference.** Other days, our praise falls silent and doubt creeps in. **Forgive us for losing sight of ourselves.** We know that fear and doubt are part of the journey of faith. But for the days when we are far from you and far from ourselves, we ask for your tender grace. **Pull us closer toward you. Remind us of the mountaintop moments of our faith. Amen.**

Kyrie

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy. Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.

Words of Forgiveness

Friends, whether you speak to God in a whisper or with clear conviction, with questions or with answers, with hope in your heart or with doubt in your throat— God will *always* listen with love and mercy. So rest in this good news: regardless of how loudly you live your faith—you belong to God. You are loved. You are claimed. You are forgiven. Speak *that* good news with confidence. **Amen.**

Anthem

Surely He Hath Borne Our Griefs

Antonio Lotti

Surely He hath borne our griefs

And carried our sorrows.

Prayer of Illumination

Holy Word, for generations people have bowed their heads, have prayed the Psalms, have asked for your presence in their lives. For generations people have whispered, “May the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable and pleasing to you, O God.” **For generations we have gathered here, we have quieted our minds, we have prayed to feel your presence in our midst. So once again, just as the generations before, we turn our hearts to your Word. Still our busy minds so that we might truly comprehend what you have to say to us today. With joy and hope we pray, Amen.**

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours forth speech, and night to night declares knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words; their voice is not heard; yet their voice goes out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In the heavens he has set a tent for the sun, which comes out like a bridegroom from his wedding canopy, and like a strong man runs its course with joy. Its rising is from the end of the heavens, and its circuit to the end of them; and nothing is hidden from its heat. **The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.**

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the decrees of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is clear, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is pure, enduring for ever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey, and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. **The commandment of the Lord is pure and gives light to the eyes.**

But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults. Keep back your servant also from the insolent; do not let them have dominion over me. Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. **Christ, the sun of righteousness, rise in our hearts this day, enfold us in the brightness of your love and bear us at the last to heaven's horizon; for your love's sake.**

Sung Response No. 819

Let the Words of My Mouth

Gospel Reading

Matthew 16: 13-20

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.' And Jesus answered him, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will

not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he sternly ordered the disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah.

This is the Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ.**

* **Gloria Patri**

**Glory be to the Father,
And to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen, Amen.**

* **Hymn for Lent** (see insert)

Here at the Peak

Sermon

"Praise the Mount"

Rev. Sally Ann Castle

* **Affirmation of Faith**

Jesus asked the disciples, "But what about you? Who do you say that I am?" Church, what do you say? Jesus is a hand reaching out in the storm, the voice of truth spoken over us, and love without walls. Jesus is justice for the weary, healing for the hurt, and welcome for the stranger. Jesus is teacher, Messiah, and friend— with me on the mountain and beside me in the valley. Jesus is a star in the night, and the love that knows my name. Jesus asked, "Who do you say that I am?" Like Peter, we say, "Jesus, you are the Messiah, son of the Living God."

Anthem

Into the Woods My Master Went

Peter Lutkin

*Into the woods my Master went, clean for-spent.
Into the woods my Master came,
For-spent with love and shame.
But the olives, they were not blind to Him
The little gray leaves were kind to Him;
The thorn tree had a mind to Him
When into the woods He came.
Out of the woods my Master went,
And He was well content;
Out of the woods my Master came,
Content with death and shame.*

*When death and shame would woo Him last,
From under the trees they drew Him last,
'Twas on a tree they slew Him last
When out of the woods He came.*

Offering

* **Doxology** (verse 3)

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

***O to grace how great a debtor daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter, bind my wandering heart to thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for thy courts above.***

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

May the God of discipleship be with you. **And also with you.** Let us continue our Lenten journey with open hearts. **We offer them to the One who walks with us.** Let our voices resound with thanksgiving to the One who shows us faithful care. **We rejoice in our God of hope and love.**

You held nothing back, Gardener of grace, as the Spirit led creation into the hinterlands of nothingness: spreading rich soil in the valleys, planting seedlings and flower bulbs, making mountains from river clay, sprinkling water over everything. Mornings came in Eden's beauty, all that wonder and goodness given for your children, but we listened to evil's whispers, believing those lies so easily told. Like a crew launching a boat to rescue those who are adrift, prophets came, counseling us to let go of our stubbornness and return to your side, but with our eyes wide open, we followed that path which took us away from the middle of the garden. So you sent Jesus to us, that free gift of grace for all. With the faithful who have gone before us, with companions through this journey today, we offer glad songs of deliverance:

Holy, holy, holy are you, God of steadfast love.

Creation sings your praises as on that first morning.

Hosanna in the highest!

Blessed is the One who brings grace to us. Hosanna in the highest!

You alone are holy, Hope of our lives, and Jesus Christ is your blessed righteousness. When we got what we wanted in knowing both good and evil, he came, so we might receive what we need most - your grace. When

we left the garden to enter the deserts of temptation, he came, to show us the path back to your heart. When we had given control of our lives to sin and death, he came, to break their hold on us as he was resurrected from the grave. As we begin to follow him to Jerusalem, as we would choose to embrace his suffering, we speak of that free gift called faith:

Christ died, going into the wilderness of the grave;

Christ was raised, shattering the grip of sin and death;

Christ will come, so we might follow him to the New Jerusalem.

You hold nothing back from us as the Spirit comes to rest on the gifts of the bread and the cup, so that those gathered might be fed. Like your heart, the bread is broken, so we might be made whole and, by our healing, go forth to bring hope to those around us. Like your Child, the cup is poured out, so we might be filled with your grace, and go out into the world to empty ourselves for others. And when our journeys in and out of the wildernesses of the world are ended, you will gather us around the great Feast of the Lamb, where we will sing glad songs of joy to you, God in Community, Holy in One. With Christ's words on our lips and in our hearts, we pray:

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 trespasses

As we forgive those who trespass against us.

Lead us not into temptation,

But deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom and the power

And the glory, forever. Amen.

Distribution

The bread of life.

The cup of love.

The gifts of God, for the people of God. **Thanks be to God!**

* **Hymn No. 774**

Bread of the World in Mercy Broken

Post-Communion Prayers

May God lead us to all who are afraid. **We will follow God into the barren spots of our world.** May Jesus lead us to all who look for a friend, a companion in this life. **We will follow Jesus into all the places where the lonely live.** May the Spirit lead us to all who are tossed aside by the world. **We will follow the Spirit to the neighborhoods filled with injustice, to bring hope.**

Communion liturgy ©Thom M. Schuman

Prayers of Intercession and Thanksgiving

* **Hymn No. 21**

How Great Thou Art

* **Sending**

Beloved wanderer, as you leave this place, may you carry your curious heart on your sleeve. May you look for God in every face. May you find the courage to get out of the boat, to run to the tomb, and to speak of your faith. And when the world falls apart, may you hear God's voice deep within, saying, "Take heart, it is I, be not afraid." You are called. You are blessed. In both your ups and your downs, you always belong to God. Go now in peace. Go trusting that good news. **Amen.**

* **Benediction**

Response (please be seated)

God Is My Great Desire

*God is my great desire, his face I seek the first;
To him my heart and soul aspire, for him I thirst.
As one in desert lands, whose very flesh is flame,
In burning love I lift my hands and bless his name.*

Postlude Finale from "The Passion According to St. Matthew" J.S. Bach

**Adapted from a prayer by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.



Announcements

NEXT SUNDAY

March 10th, 2024

Wandering Heart: "I'm fixed upon it"

Focal Scriptures: Matthew 16: 21-23, Psalm 107: 1-3, 17-22

Theme Connections: When your world unravels and your beliefs are tested, you may cling to what you know. As Jesus foretells his death and resurrection, Peter protests. Peter is fixed upon the way he thinks things should go; he resists the pain of what will come. But Jesus is fixed upon his calling and calls Peter out. For everyone, there comes a time when your faith is tested and you will have to face difficult and inconvenient truths. We may want to take the easier path, the path with less pain. We may want to cling to easy or simplistic answers. Instead, what does it look like to welcome complexity? Can you stay fixed upon your convictions while also expanding your perspective?



BIBLE STUDY

Lenten Bible Study- Tuesday, March 5th at 7 pm on Zoom

Third week of Lent - Psalm 63: Blessing

Pause, Spending Lent with the Psalms by Elizabeth F. Caldwell

The invitation to pause with the Psalms began on Ash Wednesday with Psalm 51. Each chapter helps readers to connect an image drawn from a psalm, such as paths, faces, blessing, tables, waiting, thanksgiving, listening, being alone or abandoned, and hands, with their own lives. At the close of each chapter, readers are invited to try a different prayer practice to help them continue to reflect on the theme and psalm each day. This intentional engagement—without feeling burdensome—opens just enough space and time for a creative spiritual practice to flourish, sustaining the life of faith during the Lenten season in ways that can make a difference in God's world.

Check the Weekly Email for Zoom information!

QUEENS COMMUNITY CHILDREN'S CHOIR

The Queens Community Children's Choir is starting its Spring semester in March. The 8-week program runs from 3/7- 5/9 (no classes on 3/28 and 4/25). We will meet on Thursday afternoons from 5:00-6:00 pm in the Music Room. These rehearsals will culminate in a grand end-of-semester performance on Saturday, May 11th at 2 pm in the Church on the Hill sanctuary. All children are welcome.

COFFEE HOUR

Please join us for coffee hour after the service, downstairs in Gessner Hall. Thank you to the White family for putting together today's Coffee Hour!

OFFERING

If you feel called to give, offering plates are located in the rear of the sanctuary, where you can leave your offering upon entry or exit of the sanctuary.

BARGAIN BOUTIQUE

The Bargain Boutique is open on Saturdays from 10 am- 1 pm. Donations are accepted on Saturdays only. *We are unable to accept: Electronics, TVs, Furniture, Textbooks, and Large Toys/Stuffed Animals* Find us on Instagram @cothbargainboutique for a fun look inside the Boutique and to find out about special sales and hidden gems!

JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST!

Be sure to sign up for our email list to keep up with the latest Church on the Hill happenings through the weekly email and the Beacon. A sign-up form can be found on **churchonthehill.org**

Prayer Requests

If you would like to add a loved one to the prayer list, or if your loved one no longer needs to be on the prayer list, please contact the church office at office@churchonthehill.org

Karin Bennitt

The Bermudez Family

Diane Blagburn

Hank Boechmann

Katie and Clayton Buckley

The Cappellano Family

Richard D.

Thomas Degnen

Gabriel DeMelo

Lucas Ditta

Joanne Dunckhahn

Alison Friedman

Michael Gittens

Adam Gonzalez

The Greer Family

Rhoda Jabbour

Rudy Jakob

Mary Kansfield

The Family of Rev. Norm Kansfield

Mike Kenny

Susan Laurita

Donna Lemay

The Liao/ Lin Family

Gessa Markantonis

Rose McLain

Christian Mender

Kathy Mender-Murphy

Paul Mobius

Mary Moder

Lillian Mukai

Marti and Tom Pearce

The Family of Rev. Bob Perless

Iris and Ralph Prager

Nina Proschel

Patrick Sullivan

Ed Surujballi

Virginia Young



The sanctuary is looped for the hard of hearing. In order to connect to the system, please sit in the north set of pews (on your right when you enter the sanctuary) and set your hearing device to the "T" setting.



Nancy Gessner, Victor Han, **Vice Presidents**
Nancy Gessner, **Clerk**

Consistory & Staff

Elders

Linda Diez
Nancy Gessner (VP)
Victor Han (VP)
Rhoda Jabbour
Sarah White

Deacons

Ginny Chan
Emerson Chen
Jerry Lutz
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Sean Cotty, Music Director: sean.cotty@churchonthehill.org

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THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
Wandering Heart: "Praise the mount"

Praise the Mount

I have stayed quiet before.

I have held my tongue
while passing mountains.

I have slipped my hands deep into pockets,
despite the music that invites me to dance.

I have glimpsed a new moon and a new love
and have acted as if it was something other than a complete, God-given
miracle.

But not today.

Not today.

Today I will dance.

Today I will tap my toes all the way to heaven's gates.

Today I will point out every shade of gold and periwinkle that we pass.

Today I will talk about my faith like we talk about the weather—
early and unprompted, comfortable and unashamed.

Today I will tell you that God did such a good job with freckles, willow
trees,

and your entire being.

And I will not be embarrassed by my own conviction.

I will not swallow my praise.

I have stayed quiet before,
but not today.

Today I will sing.

A poem by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org.

Here at the Peak

HAMBURG 8.8.8.8

Words by Anna Strickland, 2023

Music by Lowell Mason, 1824



Here at the peak I clear - ly see
Here I pro - claim the truths I know
Here my Cre - a - tor stands en - fleshed
Here at the peak you clear - ly name



All of the pie - ces you've laid out
Be - yond the know - ledge of this world
In - fin - ite glo - ry here con - tained
Who you cre - a - ted me to be



And in this brief though time - less peace
Truths plant - ed deep with - in my bones
Hum - ble and rug - ged, sim - ply dressed
I - den - ti - fied not by my shame



Such clar - i - ty oc - cludes my doubts
Brought to the light as gold un - earthed
Sav - ior of all on earth to reign
But by the gifts you gave to me