

ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

Friends in Christ, while it is true that we have all sinned, it is a greater truth that we are forgiven through God's love poured out in Jesus Christ. To all who humbly seek the mercy of God I say, in Jesus Christ our sin is forgiven. Be at peace with God, with yourself, and with one another.

Thanks be to God!

*** GLORIA PATRI**

Blue Hymnal #579

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUBxpypSblw>

*** SHARE THE PEACE OF CHRIST (From your seats, please)**

Leader: Peace be with you!

All: And also with you!

Leader: As God's forgiven people, share the peace of Christ with each other.

CHILDREN'S TIME **God Is Always with You**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UWIwdDtuwGU>

Hear the word of God

PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION

O Lord our God, your Word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Give us grace to receive your truth in faith and love, that we may be obedient to your will and live always for your glory; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2015%3A1-12%2CGenesis%2015%3A17-18&version=NIV>

SECOND READING

Psalms 27

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+27&version=NIV>

CHORAL ANTHEM

"Jesus, My Lord, My God, My All"

Choir

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FAF4kLKivk>

NEW TESTAMENT READING

Philippians 3:16-4:1

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians+3%3A16-4%3A1&version=NIV>

GOSPEL READING

Luke 13:31-35

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+13%3A31-35&version=NIV>

SERMON

"Comfort"

Fred Archer

Written by Janelle Hiroshige

These days, there is no shortage of material when it comes to difficult news. News of an ongoing pandemic. News of violence, oppression, and communities pitted against one another. News of death and loss – not to mention the difficult moments in our personal lives. We are also facing our own personal losses and fears within our own communities. In fact, this week is around the time that COVID-19 first disrupted our lives. *It's been two years.* We are entering the third year of it. *Who's tired?*

The words in Psalm 27 today are comforting. They say, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom then shall I fear?" and "though war should rise up against me, yet will I put my trust in him." These words are about trusting God and not being afraid. The irony is that among all the difficult news we have been bombarded with, it has been really easy to be afraid. Is it that we lack faith if we are afraid? Is fear a sign that we are not trusting God enough? Elsewhere in scripture, God commands us to not be afraid. Perhaps these reminders to not be afraid are not to shame us when we are, but to recognize that, just like us, people in the Bible had moments when they were afraid. They longed to be comforted too. God is with us not just in our grand declarations of faith, but also when we are afraid. This psalm, for good reason, is a favorite because it is one to turn to when fear rears its ugly head. It is a psalm that longs for the days of "[dwelling] in the house of the Lord," "sounds of great gladness," and "[seeing] the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." It is a psalm of comfort. It is a psalm seeking the balm in Gilead.

This Lenten season is a perfect time to be seeking *the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living*. In fact, the last few years, we have been surrounded by death in very acute ways. The priest says to us, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return" while placing ashes in the shape of a cross on our foreheads. Lent does not shy away from the harder things of this life; when we are reminded of our own mortality, we are also reminded of the life we have yet to live. No matter how much time we have left, at least for today, we are alive and we are breathing. The breath in our lungs is a gift.

The society that we live in does not like to be reminded of death. Talk about death is often hushed or accompanied with uncomfortable laughter. We hide away people who are dying in nursing homes or hospitals, obscured from day-to-day life. But death *is part of* life.

The goodness of the Lord is still present, even in times of great trouble – perhaps especially in times of great trouble. The psalmist asks, "What if I had not believed that I should see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living?" How different our lives would be if we did not believe in that goodness! The implication of this is that if we believe that we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living, then we'll look for it. That goodness is not just at the end of days when God makes all things right, but in the present moment, too. It's all around us if we only slow down and pay attention. I suspect you might know this to be true — especially in the hardship of the last few years.

The image that our Gospel lesson gives us today is that of God as a mother hen. Compared to other metaphors of God in the Bible — shepherd, potter, bread of life, and father, the hen is quite different. There is something very ordinary – and yet profound – about a mother hen. Once a hen hatches her eggs, her priority shifts from self-preservation to protecting her babies. She goes from an individual mindset to a communal one. In order to communicate with them, she will also develop a language that only her chicks can understand. Themes of protection and safety are all over this metaphor. And it's worth noting that mother hens can be quite fierce if their babies are in danger. If you are a parent, you know you would do anything to protect your children.

A mother never forgets her children. Even if they forget her or choose to go on a different path. She will not turn her face from them. One of the hardest things a mother goes through is seeing her child in pain. Likewise, God mourns when God's children suffer. In this Gospel passage, God desires to gather God's children together as a hen gather her brood under her wings. This image is in response to death threats from King Herod. As violence begets violence, it would be easy to counter Herod with an image or metaphor that is violent. Or even one that is overly masculine. Yet, God does not do that. The response to acts of violence and abuse? A mother hen gathering her children. Protecting them and keeping them safe. That is the desire of our God.

There is nothing weak about the mother hen; she demonstrates boldness, compassion, and the willingness to do whatever it takes to protect those whom she loves. Not much can get in the way of a powerful and determined mother. "Prepare the way of the hen!" we may say to ourselves when we have reached a point where we are not sure we can go on much longer. Perhaps we are not as self-sufficient or courageous as we had hoped. Sometimes we need someone to advocate for us.

The invitation this Lent is to carry the image of Jesus as a mother hen with us as we travel. This does not ignore the realities of the dangers up ahead, but it does give us something to hold onto when we are afraid. How we long to be gathered under those wings! Much like those comforting words from Psalm 27, knowing that God is with us at every twist and turn can make a world of a difference — even and especially in these difficult times.

There is power in the loving care of God. **Amen**

*** HYMN**

"What a Friend We Have In Jesus"

Blue Hymnal #403

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YTpUQO0aryw>

Respond in Love and Service

*** AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

Leader: Let us declare our faith in God.

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the

Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

Our lives overflow with good gifts which come from God. Out of the goodness we enjoy, let us present our offering to God with thankfulness and generosity.

Please, continue to support the life and work of Crestholme. You can mail your tithes, pledges, and offerings to...

CPC
PO Box 23919.
SA TX 78223-0901

Or you can save them and gather them until we meet again. Thank you!

*** DOXOLOGY**

Blue Hymnal #592

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uyg6-htOtHU>

*** PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Living God, we offer our gifts today in hopeful gratitude. Bless these gifts and use them to increase the goodness enjoyed by those in need. Bless our lives that, through our relationships, others will be touched by the hope we know in Christ Jesus and find their lives blessed by his love and mercy. **Amen.**

*** HYMN FOR OUR NATION**

"Heal Our Land"

Red Hymnal #800

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTm_rA54EGw

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION AND THE LORD'S PRAYER

God of strength and comfort, in the quiet calm of your presence, we pause in the whirlwind of concerns around us, and set aside our own interests and distractions to pray for the world you love. Today we remember before you:

All people in their daily life and work...
our families, friends and neighbours,
those we work with, and those whose faces we recognize regularly but do not know.
Be with all who find these times stressful or exhausting:

-Silence for 15 seconds -

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We remember before you this congregation, our presbytery, and congregations of other traditions near us, as well as those who serve in church leadership and all who nurture faith in others. Help us support each other and look to the future with hope.

-Silence for 15 seconds -

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We pray for this community, our country, and governments throughout the world, as well as all those who work for justice, freedom and peace. Send your Spirit, the Advocate, to speak for the voiceless and challenge injustice.

-Silence for 15 seconds -

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

We pray for victims of hunger, fear, injustice and oppression, for all who struggle to rebuild their communities after natural disaster and the effects of the pandemic, and for all who are in danger, sorrow, or any kind of trouble. Bring them comfort and courage, and the support of their neighbours.

-Silence for 15 seconds -

And we pray for those people and situations on our hearts and minds this day:

-Silence for 15 seconds-

Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**

Hear us as we pray in the words that your Son taught us:

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 those 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 and ever. Amen.

* **CLOSING HYMN** **"O Jesus I Have Promised"** **Blue Hymnal #388**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ft0suErdaj4>

* **BENEDICTION**

Go out into the world in peace; have courage; hold on to what is good; return no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak, and help the suffering; honor all people; love and serve the Lord, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.
Go in peace of Christ and walk in his light.

**The End of Today's Worship Service – The Beginning of Service
Announcements**

Welcome to worship with us this morning! We're glad that you're here! If you do not have a church home, we invite you to become a part of our compassionate church family... ask Carlos or an Elder about meaningful participation and membership!

Next Sunday Dr. Carlos Baladez will present his next sermon in the series "Knowing the Name of God".

Remember the Congregational & Corporate meetings to be held after Service on March 27th

Weekly Calendar

TBD	TBD	Food Pantry
TBD	TBD	Clothes Closet
Sunday	10:00 AM	Sunday School
Sunday	11:00 Am	Worship Service

Holy Communion is observed the First Sunday of each month.

Crestholme Presbyterian Church Officers

Session

<u>Class of 2022</u>	<u>Class of 2023</u>	<u>Class of 2024</u>
Irene Thomas	Katie Lamb	Netsy Williamson
Steve Tovar		

Clerk of the Session: Dick Crist
Church Treasurer: Fred Archer

Trustees

<u>Class of 2022</u>	<u>Class of 2023</u>	<u>Class of 2024</u>
Fred Archer	Tommy Rudwick	Penny Christoff

Crestholme Presbyterian Church Staff

Stated Supply Minister	Vacant
Pulpit Supply Preachers	Dr. Carlos Baladez
	Elder Fred Archer
Choir Director	Robin Bernhard
Organist	Cathie Owen
Secretary/Coordinator	Vacant

Membership in the Presbyterian Church is open to those who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. Every member and officer will be more than happy to visit with you about salvation by faith in Jesus and membership at Crestholme.

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