



*A Service of Worship for
Fifth Sunday of Lent
21 March 2021*

“What message have you for young people?”
asked Carl Stern of NBC in concluding a television interview with
Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel shortly before his death.
Rabbi Heschel replied, “Let them remember that there is a meaning beyond absurdity.
Let them be sure that every deed counts, that every word has power,
and that we all can do our share to redeem the world
in spite of all absurdities and all frustrations and all disappointments.
And above all, [let them] remember . . . to build a life as if it were a work of art.”

Preparing for worship with silence

Gathering in peace

Peace be with you!
And also with you!

Ringling in the hour
Silence is kept

Prelude

Benedetto Marcello

“Adagio” in C Minor

Call to Worship

+Opening Prayer

**In community we affirm
that our lives take on deeper meaning
through relationship.**

**In community we affirm
that we become the people we want to be
mostly as a result of love.**

Scripture Lesson

John 12:20-33

These are our sacred stories.
Thanks be to God.

Hymn

Olivet

“My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

Time for Children

+Response:

Hymn to Joy

***Joyful, Joyful, we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee, Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness; Drive the gloom of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness, Fill us with the light of day.***

Call to Confession

Silent Confession

Unison Confession

**We live, O God, as if we shall never die.
Our friends and relatives die and we deny the reality of death in us.
 Forgive us for our fears which blind us to our
inevitable destiny.
We fill our days with trivia and allow our potential for meaning
and love to pass us by.
We become so busy that we forget to enjoy the beauty of life
about us.
 Forgive us for the selfishness which chokes us with small,
unfulfilled lives.
May we see life clearly, Gracious God.
May we move towards death courageously.
May we live and die with the awareness that:
 It is out of your great love that we have come, and
 It is into your unending love that we shall return.**

Words of Assurance

Music

William L. Dawson

“There Is a Balm In Gilead”

Silent Reflection

Proclamation

Prayer

Invitation

+Prayer of Dedication

**We spend so much time running from ourselves
fleeing from what we know
about the goodness in our hearts
we think we can escape
the intelligence of our loving.
Imagine
you are standing before a bodhisattva –
Jesus, Buddha, the first mother
it does not matter what you call the holy one –
he had dust on his shoes
chaff clings to her**

the smells of being alive –
Shining from their faces is the beam of
all their questions
the compassion of their living
Can you see yourself through those eyes?
Can we know each other like this?
(We who no longer believe in messiahs
can hardly believe in each other.)
Can we
know ourselves seen
and know each other this same way
until our restless hearts
learn to abide
in this knowing and this love?
Can we live in this gaze of blessing?

*Doxology

Old Hundredth

*Praise God the Source of life and birth.
Praise God the Word, who came to earth.
Praise God the Spirit, holy flame,
All glory, honor to God's name! Amen.*

+Affirmation of Faith

**Our shared search
is part of the human condition.
Some of us know what we seek
and others stumble along unsure.**

**Yet we all come to this place
with a yearning—
to find or make meaning,
to live conscious lives,
to grow in kindness,
to renew and remake the world
in the image of love.**

**Today we affirm
not that we are all the same
or that we know exactly what we are doing
but that we are resolved
to ask, seek, and knock**

Together.

**Today we affirm
that whatever God is
is revealed to us slowly,
in increments,
patches and scraps of light
pricking the shadows
glimpsed only
by the wide-eyed
and the curious.**

Benediction

Postlude

Healey Willan

“In Peace and Joy I Now Depart”

Worship Notes

The worship leader is **Jay Hooker**.

The guest proclaimer is **Chris Nagel**.

The Lent banner was created by **Nancy Henry**.

The prelude is played by Andrew Bowen, organ.

The Call to Worship is “Snow Geese” by Mary Oliver.

The Opening Prayer is from **Jeannette Dixon** and Jeremy Rutledge.

The Unison Confession is from an unknown source.

“There Is a Balm In Gilead” is sung by The Covenant Singers, directed by David Lee, September 29, 2019. Artwork by Laura Jeanne Grimes, <https://www.laurajeannegrimes.com/>

The Prayer of Dedication is “Blessing” from *Morning Watch: Meditations* by Barbara Pescan.

The postlude is played by Andrew Bowen, organ.

Education 9:00 - 9:40 a.m.

Adult Education recorded education sessions will be made available on this page: [Adult Education Recordings](#).

During Adult Education this Sunday, please join Laura Mayo to discuss substitutionary atonement. What is substitutionary atonement? Why is substitutionary atonement problematic? Where did the idea come from? If we don't buy into substitutionary atonement then why did Jesus die on the cross? What theological meanings does Jesus' death on the cross have?

Zoom links and materials are available on the Online Gatherings page on our website:
<https://www.covenanthouston.org/covenant-gatherings.html>

Announcements

Sunday schedule for this Sunday:

9:00 - Adult Education with Zoom

10:00 - Worship via videos on the worship website

11:00 - Gather together for coffee time with Zoom

Calendar

Sun. Mar. 21	9:00 a.m.	Worship Online
	10:00 a.m.	Adult Education, Zoom Meeting
	11:00 a.m.	Coffee Time, Zoom Meeting
Mon. Mar. 22	1:00 p.m.	Book Group, Zoom Meeting
Wed. Mar. 24	7:00 p.m.	Covenant Singers, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Mar. 25	10:00 a.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Thur. Mar. 25	8:00 p.m.	Community Group, Zoom Meeting
Fri. Mar. 26	1:00 p.m.	Lunchtime Lectionary Lab, Zoom

Helpful Information

Visitor Cards: If you're a visitor with us, please submit a [Visitors Card](#).

Celebrations and Concerns: If you would like to share a celebration or concern with the Covenant community, please submit a [Celebrations and Concerns Form](#).

Membership: If you are interested in learning more about Covenant, we encourage you to talk with one of the ministers or the worship leader. Email Office@covenanthouston.org.

Newsletter: To subscribe to the newsletter, send a request to office@covenanthouston.org.

Office Hours: The church office is currently not open, but we are responding to emails and phone calls.

*Covenant Church affirms the sanctity, dignity, and equality
of human beings and the value of all life in the universe.*

*We welcome persons of all racial and ethnic heritages, all sexual orientations,
all gender identities, and all faith perspectives to our Christian community.*

*We stand for each individual's right to worship God and to respond
to God's call to ministry in her or his own understanding
of God's all-encompassing love.*

*We value a holistic approach to faith and seek to worship in ways that are
intellectually credible, emotionally stimulating, spiritually engaging
and contemporarily relevant.*

*We value music and art and ritual to express what we cannot ever fully say.
We value participation so that we might hear many approaches
to our shared faith.*

Covenant Church, an ecumenical, liberal, Baptist congregation

Members of Covenant, Ministers

Laura Mayo, Senior Minister

Jodi Bash, Director of Children & Youth

Director of Communication

Fran Avera, Minister of Music, Emerita

David Lee, Interim Director of Music

Andrew Bowen, Interim Organist

Monique Cruz, Office and Financial Administrator

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