



JAMESTOWN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

411 Liberty Street, Jamestown, PA 16134

(724)932-2101

www.jamestownpres.org

E-mail: jpc411@windstream.net

May 21, 2020

Dear JPC family and friends,

Greetings in the precious name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I pray that you are well and in good spirits, as the weather is warming and spring has finally arrived – rain showers and all. There are only a few updates this week:

- As you know, it has now been two full weeks since our area of Pennsylvania moved to “yellow” status, meaning the stay-at-home order is lifted and some businesses are able to re-open. Health and government leaders are watching closely to see how COVID-19 progresses. If social distancing and other factors continue to make a positive impact in our area, Session is cautiously optimistic that we may be able to begin gathering for worship services (with precautions) in the not too distant future.
- We will continue to send out weekly worship materials and post online services.
- The next free Saturday Supper will be on June 14th - a week earlier than usual. The meal will feature pulled pork sandwiches, by take-out with advanced reservations made through the church office (724-932-2101).
- Thank you for your faithful prayers and other support of this ministry. Finances are holding steady so we have not needed to reduce staff hours.
- Truly, God has blessed this congregation and we want to be a blessing to others. Early this year, Session announced that in any month that has five Sundays, the entire offering received on the third Sunday will be sent out for disaster relief. We forgot to announce this in May (which had five Sundays), so will instead use offerings received during the second week of June (6/8 through 6/14).
- As we draw near to the end of the school year, we lift up all teachers, students and parents as well as school staff and volunteers. We'd like to especially recognize Amanda College, graduating from JHS.
- Lastly, I am taking two weeks off to help a family member make a cross-country move. Pastor Sean Hall from Hillside Presbyterian Church will be available if there are any emergency pastoral care needs prior to my return on June 8. Pastor Sean can be contacted by calling Hillside Presbyterian Church 724-588-4920 or Pastor Sean's cell phone 724-638-7381.

Please continue to use wisdom and discretion as you go out and about. May the Lord bless you with grace and peace in abundance, as together we wait in joyful hope for the good future he has in store for all his people.

Pastor Sue

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

In observance of Memorial Day, the church office will be closed on Monday, May 25, 2020.

Pastor Sue will be on vacation starting May 25 and returning on June 8. The speaker for Pentecost Sunday (May 31) is Reverend Rick Cepris, with Dave Valentine, an elder from East Main (ECO) Church in Grove City speaking on June 7. Pastor Sean Hall of Hillside Presbyterian Church is available for urgent pastoral care needs during Pastor Sue's absence. Pastor Sean can be contacted by calling Hillside Presbyterian Church 724-588-4920 or Pastor Sean's cell phone 724-638-7381.

We have added Zelle® as a direct payment method for your monthly giving. Search for our account using **jpc16134@gmail.com** (not the Windstream email address) By using Zelle®, the church will receive 100% of your donation.

Happy Birthday!

05/28	Mary Helen Valesky
05/31	Scott College Carol Henegan
06/01	Linda Williams
06/02	Camille McClimans
06/10	Jan Reese



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“Worshiping Together ... Even While Apart”

To prepare our hearts and minds for worship, let us take a few moments in silent prayer.

Welcome

Call to Worship:

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good! Let all creation praise God's holy name! Let us declare God's steadfast love in the morning and his faithfulness at night, for the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised.

***SONG: Lord, I Lift Your Name on High**
(sing twice, words on inside page)

Call to Confession:

Trusting in God's love for us in Jesus Christ, let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Unison Prayer of Confession: **Merciful God, you love us so much that you sent your only Son, Jesus Christ, to rescue us from sin and darkness. Yet we confess that we do not always live as children of the Light. Where we have sinned, forgive us; where we have resisted your will, correct us; where we are weak, strengthen us. And in your mercy help us forgive ourselves and one another for past mistakes and misdeeds, so that we may live and serve joyfully in the new life you have promised to your people. Through Christ we pray; Amen.**

Assurance of Pardon:

The proof of God's love for us is this: while we were still lost in sin, Christ died for us, Christ rose for us, Christ reigns in power for us – Christ even prays for us. So rejoice and be glad: in Jesus, we find forgiveness, healing and peace. Thanks be to God!

Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer

Include your prayers of thanksgiving and intercession.

Our Father, Who art in Heaven,

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 sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

The Presentation of our Tithes and Offerings

Tithes and offerings can be either mailed to the church or donated online via the church website.

Prayer of Dedication (in unison):

Blessed are you, Lord God of all creation! In your kindness you have freely given to us an abundance of good gifts. Help us to wisely use the resources you have entrusted to us, so that in using them we may bear lasting fruit for your kingdom. Amen.

Scripture: Acts 1: 1-11

Message: "A Good and Perfect Plan"

HYMN: "Crown Him with Many Crowns" # 345
(v 1-4)

Benediction

Closing Refrain: "God be With You 'Til We Meet Again"

Lord I Lift Your Name on High

(sing twice)

Lord, I lift Your name on high
Lord, I love to sing Your praises.
I'm so glad You're in my life;
I'm so glad You came to save us.

You came from heaven to earth to show the Way,
From the earth to the cross, my debt to pay.
From the cross to the grave,
From the grave to the sky.
Lord, I lift Your name on high.

CCLI Song # 11947
Words & Music by Rick Founds
CCLI License # 1509999

“A Good and Perfect Plan”

This Sunday we pause to reflect on a critical, but in some ways almost forgotten, moment in Church history. If you were to ask the average Pennsylvania resident to list the most important events in Jesus’ life, they would almost certainly start with his birth (Christmas); his crucifixion and his resurrection. And ... then what? maybe Palm Sunday; maybe his baptism, or the Transfiguration on the mountaintop.

But how many would think to mention the day he returned to his Father?

That’s the moment described in today’s Scripture passage. Of course, it’s told from the perspective of the disciples who were left standing there, staring into the sky. We’ll come back to that in a moment.

But it’s almost impossible to imagine the extraordinary joy Jesus must have felt in coming HOME again. There are lots of things about his incarnation that we will never be able to fully understand, and one of those things is that Jesus had never *physically* been in heaven prior to the Ascension! But now he was home again in the presence of the Father and Spirit, having accomplished all that he came to accomplish.

Most of us never have the satisfaction, even at the end of our most productive days, of being able to say, “Everything that needs doing has been done.” Oh, we can cross chores and projects off our list, but as long as this life lasts there’s going to be something else that needs doing. Maybe not just this minute, but soon ... like mowing the lawn, washing the dishes or walking the dog.

Very seldom can we say, “I’ve finished everything I needed to do.” But Jesus COULD say that. Jesus could say, “It is finished. I’ve done everything the Father asked of me.”

In the wilderness he conquered temptation. On the cross he conquered sin. Rising from the grave, he conquered death. And then – over a period of 40 days – Jesus appeared to his disciples and spoke with them about the Kingdom of God.

One time when they were all eating together, he said, “I want you to wait here in Jerusalem until you receive the gift the Father has promised, that you’ve heard me talking about.” Gift? What gift could Jesus mean? There was only one thing they could think of, one thing

they had been waiting and longing for – the thing that was at the very top of their list of unfinished business.

They asked, “Is this finally the time, Lord, when you’re going to kick the Romans out and restore Israel to its former glory?”

I can almost imagine Jesus shaking his head in disbelief. He had spent *three years* trying to impress on them the idea that the kingdom of God wasn’t about politics or money or military power. He’d just spent weeks after his resurrection, talking about the kingdom of God ... and STILL they wanted to kick out the Romans!

But instead of getting angry, he just said: “No one knows for sure when God’s going to accomplish that part of his plan. You don’t have to worry about that anyway. But you’ll have everything you need when the Holy Spirit comes to you. Then you will be my witnesses – in Jerusalem, in Judea, in Samaria and even far-away places.”

And then -- up into the sky he went – up and up and up. Well, you know what happened to the disciples. They just stood there, watching in disbelief. Despite all the times that Jesus had told them, “I am going to the Father,” they couldn’t quite grasp what was happening. They probably thought they were going to get to spend the rest of their lives with Jesus – on earth. Maybe they thought that by “witness,” Jesus meant they were going to have front row seats watching him do all the amazing things he did.

No wonder they stood there, staring into the sky. If they weren’t saying it out loud, I imagine they were thinking, “He’ll be back in just a minute, won’t he? No, really – he’s just messing with us, right? No way he’d leave without saying goodbye!”

I want you to hold that picture in your thoughts for a moment. And now – try to imagine what was happening *above* the clouds.

There’s an old story about what took place in heaven immediately after the Ascension. When Jesus arrives he is met by great choirs of angels, all singing with great joy. They eagerly gather around him to hear what will happen next on the earth. “Now,” he says, “all nations of the earth will learn of God’s mercy, hearts will be changed and the world will be transformed into the kingdom of God.” One of the angels asks, “How will that happen?” Jesus tells them about those he has chosen to be his witnesses and what great work they will do spreading his message. The angels look at one another somewhat doubtfully. They remember that Peter blurts things out without thinking, and how angry James and John – the “sons of thunder” – can become when people won’t listen.

“So, Lord,” says one of the angels, “what’s your ... umm ... what’s your Plan B?”

“Plan B?” says Jesus with a smile. “There is no Plan B. But there is a Gift ...”

Then he looks down to where the disciples are still just staring into the sky. And he sighs, shakes his head gently, and picks out two angels, saying, “But you two had better go down and tell them to just stop standing there. I will go back – when the time is right – but for now, my work there is done.”

None of that little story is in the Bible ... but it does make a point. There is no Plan B. I’m sure those first disciples would have argued, if Jesus had told them he had finished his work on earth. They would have argued, if he told them it was time for him to go. Just like they argued – months earlier – when Jesus told them he had to go to Jerusalem, that he would suffer and die and rise again. But that WAS the Father’s good and perfect plan. Just like it was part of the Father’s good and perfect plan to extend his church through the testimony of reliable witnesses, filled with the Holy Spirit –
that precious, powerful Gift who could not come if Jesus remained on earth.

But just as God’s good and perfect plan was to bring peace and redemption through Christ’s suffering and death on the cross ... just as God’s good and perfect plan gives us assurance of eternal life through the resurrection of Christ ... in the same way, God’s good and perfect plan is that ordinary men and women –
fishermen and tax collectors and computer programmers and nurses and teachers and housekeepers and restaurant workers and students and farmers and electricians and secretaries and engineers and stay-at-home moms and dads –

In God’s good and perfect plan, all kinds of ordinary people are called to bear witness to the great good news of the God who loves us, forgives our sin and gives us new life in Christ. People like you. People like me.

Let’s pray