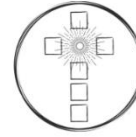




# WHAT ARE YOU UP TO? Lent 2024



*Serve & Enrich*  
Zion United Church  
of Christ

## Welcome

*Lenten Chorus: "You Raise Me Up"*

**When I am down and, oh my soul, so weary  
When troubles come and my heart burdened be  
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence  
Until You come and sit awhile with me**

**You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains  
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas  
I am strong, when I am on Your shoulders  
You raise me up to more than I can be**

**Meditative Moment:** An important aspect of the season of Lent is turning to God with an honest heart and asking for the grace we need. This Lent, we are praying the Psalms as we confess our brokenness and seek God's mercy. Hear assurance in what the Psalmist proclaims in Psalm 22 as we go to God in prayer:

The heavens are telling the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims God's 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. . . . 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 forever; the ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. (*Psalm 19, excerpts*)

By the grace of God, may your spirit be uplifted. In the name of Christ, you are forgiven. Glory to God. Amen.

## Hymn

*There is a Balm in Gilead, 631*

## **We Hear God's Word—** *John 2:13-22 (NRSV)*

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, with the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

### **A Message that Uplifts**

*In our scripture, Jesus acts out of righteous anger at the injustices he witnesses. Too often our anger is lived out in unhealthy ways, but there are times when our anger moves us to embody God's mercy and compassion when we see a wrong before us. This is not an anger to shy away from but an anger whose flame refines and transforms, like a natural wildfire that cleanses the brush so new life can bloom.*

"A Just Anger" by Marge Piercy

Anger shines through me.  
Anger shines through me.  
I am a burning bush.  
My rage is a cloud of flame.  
My rage is a cloud of flame  
in which I walk  
seeking justice  
like a precipice.  
How the streets  
of the iron city  
flicker, flicker,  
and the dirty air

fumes.  
Anger storms  
between me and things,  
transfiguring,  
transfiguring.  
A good anger acted upon  
is beautiful as lightning  
and swift with power.  
A good anger swallowed,  
a good anger swallowed  
clots the blood  
to slime.

## A Creed by Yong Ting Jin, Hong Kong

We believe in Jesus Christ,  
Our saviour and liberator,  
The expression of God's redeeming  
And restoring love,  
The mark of humanness,  
source of courage, power and love,  
God of God,  
Light of light,  
Ground of our humanity.

We believe that God resides in slums,  
Lives in broken homes and hearts,  
Suffers our loneliness, rejection and  
powerlessness.

But through death and resurrection

God gives life, pride and dignity,  
Provides the content of our vision,  
Offers the context of our struggle,  
Promises liberation  
To the oppressor and the oppressed,  
Hope to those in despair...

We believe in the activity of the Holy  
Spirit  
Who revives our decaying soul,  
Resurrects our defeated spirits,  
Renews our hope of wholeness  
And reminds us of our responsibility  
In ushering God's new order here and  
now.

## Up to Something Good

*Prayers of the People*

Each midweek service, we'll have an extended time of prayer. If you like incense or candles, we encourage you to light them at home each day when you spend time in reflection and prayer. This connects our practice to an ancient practice mentioned by the Psalmist in chapter 141: *"I call upon you, O Lord; come quickly to me; give ear to my voice when I call to you. Let my prayer rise up as incense before you and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice."*

During our time of prayer, you'll be invited to speak aloud, at different points, that refrain from Psalm 141. It will appear on your screen. Let us pray:

We listen for your voice, O God, in the story of Jesus turning over tables in the temple. Sometimes we have to break down what is no longer working and start again with a new foundation. As we consider what tables we are ready to turn in our own lives, we pray that we can be "up to something good" for our selves, our neighborhoods, and our world. And so this week we start with thanksgiving for these acts of uplifting goodness: for 500 coloring books for the kids at Riley Hospital for Children, for willingness to let go to make room for more life, for enriching neighbors near and far...

**Let my prayer rise up  
like incense before you,  
the lifting up of my hands  
as an offering to you.**

We call upon you, O God, to incline your ear and extend your love and healing power for these laments: the letting go that brings grief, the injustices we fail to see but that you see, O God, the tables left unturned...

**Let my prayer rise up  
like incense before you,  
the lifting up of my hands  
as an offering to you.**

We call upon you, O God, to give us the strength and courage to be up to something good for the sake of The Good. In this moment — in our mind’s eye — we imagine and offer our commitment to one small thing this week that will lift someone up, elevate and affirm the good when we see it, and bring a bit more calm or joy where we are. And if we find we are not up to it, we pray we can accept the goodness of others and feel your encouraging love. *[pause for a few moments]*

**Let my prayer rise up  
like incense before you,  
the lifting up of my hands  
as an offering to you.**

We pray this in the name of Jesus, who taught us to pray...

**The Lord's Prayer** (unison)—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**

*Be Still My Soul, 451*

**Benediction**— Beloved, go forth to uplift those around and to get up to something good. When someone asks you, “What are you up to?” you can respond, “**With God’s help, I’m up to something good!**” Let the people say, Amen! **Amen!**