

The Season of Lent



"Light Wave"

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"Love God, Serve Neighbor"



Again & Again: We Are Shown the Way

“Overturn”

by Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity

Inspired by John 3:14-21 | *Acrylic painting with gold leaf on canvas*

My first memory of this passage is from writing “John 3:16” on my basketball shoes when I was in seventh grade, joining many of my teammates in blending our sport with our faith. I don’t remember knowing what the verse really meant, but my display of it was to make a statement about who I was—or at least who I desperately wanted to be. Like the branded clothes I wore, or the way I styled my hair, this was just another way to curate my middle school self-image. I wanted to show that I was good, that I fit in,

that I believed in God. Later that basketball season, I added another Sharpie pen tattoo to my basketball shoes: my mother’s initials and the dates of her birth and death, marking the 44 years she lived. After her funeral, my teammates added her initials and the dates of her life to their sneakers in solidarity.

Now I know that Jesus originally spoke these famous words to Nicodemus, perhaps whispering them amidst the hushed noises of the night. I wonder why Nicodemus came to Jesus in the first place? Had Jesus’ teachings uprooted his religious self-image, one carefully curated to project propriety and adherence to the law? Or had death recently left a sharp sting, unraveling his tidy beliefs, creating in him a well of desperate questions about eternal life?

Jesus speaks to him with poetry of promise: God didn’t send his son to judge the world, but so the world might be restored through him. For God so loved. For God so loves, that like light, God keeps traveling to reach us with that redeeming love. In this abstract painting, the gold leaf marks become like a wave gliding through the cosmos, moving endlessly until it reaches everything.

As I think back to those Sharpie pen inscriptions on my basketball shoes, perhaps “For God so loved... so that everyone... will have eternal life” was the perfect companion to my mom’s initials.

—Rev. Lisle Gwynn Garrity



GATHERING FOR WORSHIP

Pastoral Welcome

Call to Worship

- L: Before we were born,
C: **Before we took our first breath,**
L: Before the week started,
C: **Before the year started,**
L: Before we said, "I love you,"
C: **Before we said, "I'm sorry,"**
L: Before we figured out who we really are,
C: **Before we figured out who we want to be,**
L: Before it all—
C: **God loved us.**
L: Unconditionally and freely,
C: **Fully and honestly—**
L: God loved us.
C: **Again and again, this is where our story begins.**
L: Let us worship God!

Prelude

"God So Loved the World"

Annette Nolan

Confession and Forgiveness

- L: We gather in the name of the Father, the + Son, and the Holy Spirit.
L: God of compassion, have mercy on us according to your steadfast love. In your great compassion blot out the stain of our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our guilt and cleanse us from our sin.

(Silence for reflection and self-examination)

- L: God of compassion,
C: **We turn toward you and open our hearts.**
Forgive our pride and forgive our insecurities.
Forgive our self-absorption and forgive our self-destruction.
Forgive our doubts and forgive our confidence.

**Forgive our longing for attention and forgive our desire to hide.
Forgive each step we take away from you.**

L: May you know that the God of compassion, who is gracious beyond understanding and who loves beyond measure, has completely forgiven all your sins. With clean hearts and renewed spirits, live into the joy of God's salvation.

C: **Amen.**

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

Greeting

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: **And also with you.**

Prayer for Illumination

L: God of the here and now—
We have heard the words,
"For God so loved the world
That he gave his only Son,"
Time and time again.
We have read them on billboards,
Heard them in worship,
And seen them on signs.
And yet we know,
There is a difference between
Hearing those words
In passing
And truly, deeply listening.
We long to listen, God.
We long to hear your truth.
We long to know your love.
Open our hearts and minds.
We are listening.

C: **Amen.**

Gospel Acclamation

"Jesus, Restore to Us Again"

1. Je - sus, re - store to us a - gain the gos - pel of Your ho - ly

4 name, that comes with pow'r not words a - lone, owned, signed and sealed from heav-en's

8 throne. Spir - it and word in one a - greed; _ the prom-ise to the pow - er wed. _____

13 _ The word is near, here in our mouths and

16 in our hearts, the word of faith; Pro - claim it on the

19 Last time to Coda ⊕
Spir - it's breath: Je - sus! _____

The Gospel

John 3:14-21

The Message

Song of the Day

“What Wondrous Love Is This”

Affirmation of Faith

L: We believe that God is present
in the darkness before dawn;
in the waiting and uncertainty
where fear and courage join hands,
conflict and caring link arms,
and the sun rises over walls built to separate.

We believe in a *with-us* God,
Jesus Christ,
Who sits down in our midst
to share our humanity.

We affirm a faith
that takes us beyond a safe place:
into action, into vulnerability
and onto the streets.

We commit ourselves to work for change
and put ourselves on the line;
to bear responsibility, take risks,
live powerfully and face humiliation;
to stand with those at the edge;
to choose life and be used by the Holy Spirit
for God’s new community of hope. Amen.

Prayers of the People of God

L: God of compassion, you love this world so much that you sent your
own Son, Jesus Christ to live and die among us, in order that we
might have life – abundant life. Teach us to live from your
abundance so that our lives might be signs of your generosity,
compassion and justice. By your Spirit,

C: make us instruments of your love.

L: God of compassion, you have shown us that the way of true life is to make room in our hearts and homes for refugees and strangers, so that we may learn to share our goods and ourselves with those for whom you stand in solidarity – the poor, the lonely and those who suffer. By your Spirit,

C: make us instruments of your love.

L: God of compassion, you have knit the Christian community together to be your body in the world. In our life together, may we raise each other up rather than tear down, accept each other with trust and affection rather than harbor suspicions, forgive one another rather than carry grudges, as we move forward together in hope and love. By your Spirit,

C: make us instruments of your love.

L: God of compassion, we pray for those for whom illness, frailness or bereavement have left them isolated and cut off from the joy, support and encouragement of human encounter. As we hold them up to you, show us how we may care for those in need. We pray especially for . . .

L: We now pray aloud or in the silence of our hearts for those we wish to name (*give time for community to pray*).

L: We remember and celebrate the lives of those who have died, especially, those we name now . . . By your Holy Spirit, comfort their families, and all who grieve, give peace to those who mourn, strengthen all through the promise of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

L: God of compassion, continue to sustain all healthcare professionals and relief workers, especially those who find themselves on the frontlines to bring healing, comfort and care to all impacted by the coronavirus. We are grateful for the development of a vaccine and for those who are assisting in making it available. Strengthen, encourage, and empower us to be people of peace in the midst of anxiety, impatience, worry, and dread, as we hunger for life to be normal again. By your Spirit,

C: make us instruments of your love.

L: God of compassion, open our hearts to share the fullness of your generosity, call our dry bones to dance, and restore in us the joy of your salvation.

C: **Amen**

CELEBRATING HOLY COMMUNION

The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to God.

C: **It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

Words of Institution

The Lord's Prayer *(spoken)*

C: **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; 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.**

The Post-Communion Blessing

L: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the gifts of his body and blood strengthen, keep and unite us now and forever.

C: **Amen.**

Benediction

L: May the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ go with you wherever he may send you. May he guide you through the wilderness, protect you through the storm, and may he bring you home rejoicing at the wonders he has shown you. May he bring you home rejoicing, once again into our doors.

C: **Amen.**

Dismissal

L: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
C: Thanks be to God.

SENDING GOD’S PEOPLE

Sending Song “Again and Again”

Words by
Claire Cloninger

Music by
Robert Sterling

♩ = 108 % VERSE F² B♭²/F

1. Lord of the man - ger, Lord of the cross, __
(2. Lord of all mer) - cy, Lord of all joy, ____
(3. Lord of all a) - ges, Lord of all days, __

4 Gm Dm C^{sus}

* You gained a king - dom for the life that You lost. ____
You claimed the vic - t'ry death can nev - er de - stroy. ____
we stand be - fore __ You for - ev - er a - mazed ____

8 F B♭²/F

__ You lived a - mong __ us, our Sav - ior and friend. __
__ You give us new __ life that nev - er will end. ____
__ at how You have loved __ us and called us Your friend. __

12 Gm B♭

And we praise You, __ Lord Je - sus, a - gain and a - gain. .
And we praise You, __ Lord Je - sus, a - gain and a - gain. .
And we praise You, __ Lord Je - sus, a - gain and a - gain.

15 1, 3. F 2, 4. F Fine

__ 2. Lord of all mer - ____
__ 3. Lord of all a - ____

CHORUS

19 C/E B \flat^2 /D F F^{sus} F F^{sus} F

Glo - ry to _ the One _ who walks _ be - side _ us.

23 C/E B \flat^2 /D F F^{sus} F F^{sus} F

Glo - ry to _ the One _ who al - ways will. _ We

27 C Gm Dm

praise You for _ Your awe - some love _ that guides _ us. And when Your

31 E \flat^2 (#4) E \flat E \flat^2 (#4) E \flat C^{sus} D.S. al Fine

king - dom comes, _ we _ will praise _ You still! _ 3. Lord of all a -