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the
PITS

we've all **been there**

An Order of Worship for the Home

October 18, 2020

The Pits – week 4 – Jesus

This service is written for two speakers. Ideally, family members can speak and declare God's grace to one another following this format. For those who live alone, this worship outline can be followed with a brother or sister in Christ over the phone. You may call on a friend to fill this role, or your elder or pastor can worship with you by phone.

There is an "offering prayer" included in this outline. As we shelter in place, please continue to worship through giving. You can mail offering envelopes and checks to Calvary or visit www.calvaryslz.org to give online.

Invocation

Reader 1: We gather to worship. We gather to pray.
Reader 2: We gather to our God and to his word.
Reader 1: We gather in the name of our God who is...
Reader 2: Father, Son and Holy Spirit...
Together: Amen.

Psalm 103:1-5

¹ Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and all that is within me,
bless his holy name!
² Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,

³ who forgives all your iniquity,
 who heals all your diseases,
⁴ who redeems your life from the pit,
 who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy,
⁵ who satisfies you with good
 so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

Confession & Absolution

Make sure each person present has opportunity to confess to a brother or sister in faith. Go through both parts as many times as needed to accommodate all who are gathered.

Behold, it was for my welfare that I had great bitterness; but in love you have delivered my life from the pit of destruction, for you have cast all my sins behind your back. (Isaiah 38:17)

Christian Confessing: My disobedience is a pit into which I have fallen. My loss of hope is a pit from which I cannot escape. I want to be forgiven. I want to have a stronger faith. God, redeem my life from the pit.

Christian Responding: Your God knows the pitfalls of your life. Not only that, he sent his Son to the pit of death in order to rescue you. In Christ you are forgiven! By his new life, you have new life as well. He is the God who redeems your life from the pit.

Together: Amen.

*Bless the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits,
who forgives all your iniquity,
who heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit...
(Psalm 103:2-4a)*

Lamentations 3:55-57

⁵⁵ "I called on your name, O Lord,
 from the depths of the pit;
⁵⁶ you heard my plea, 'Do not close
 your ear to my cry for help!'

⁵⁷ You came near when I called on you;
you said, 'Do not fear!'

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Message

Where Do You Stand?

Where do you stand? That's a common question during an election year. Candidates are always asked where they stand on the issues. It's also been asked in a variety of ways during this week's confirmation hearings for Amy Coney Barrett. How about you? Have you had conversations where people try to figure you out? Maybe you've been asked outright for your opinion on candidates or current issues.

Where do you stand?

We live in a culture which wants to define every issue as either/or. I suppose it's simpler if you only have two choices, but it's also divisive to think of all issues this way. Instead of conversations which help us explore nuance and improve our thoughts, we entrench ourselves and focus on what or who we're against.

We can't converse. We're told we have to defend our turf. And we're told we must choose. We have to decide where we stand.

- You cannot advocate for women's health and for the health of life in utero. You have to choose. So, where do you stand?
- You cannot grieve the pain of our black brothers and sisters, and support neighbors and friends who wear a badge. You have to choose. So, where do you stand?

- Your ideologies have to fit into the political boxes of Democrat or Republican. Siding with one assumes that you take the party's views on all issues, and demands that you vilify the other. You have to choose. So, where do you stand?

I want to tell you today that Jesus faced similar demands. People tried to force him to choose. Today we'll look at a story where he was tested in this way. In their own way, some people at Jesus' time were pushing the question, "Where do you stand?"

He went on from there and entered their synagogue. And a man was there with a withered hand. And they asked him, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?"—so that they might accuse him. (Matthew 12:9-10)

We all know it's a trap. Jesus knew it was a trap too. The questioners have boiled things down to just two options. It's an either/or decision. Sound familiar?

From the wider context, those asking the question are identified only as Pharisees. They've put this question before Jesus, and they've framed it as a moral issue. They want this to be a choice between what is good and what is sin.

On the one hand, they present what this man wants. He wants to be healed. On the other hand, they point to what God wants. God wants his people to rest on the Sabbath. They're asking which of these holds a claim on Jesus. Will he do what the man wants or what God wants?

At least, this is how they think Jesus and their audience in the synagogue should see the choice. They've boiled it all down to two options, and one of these must be right. Consequently, the other option can only be recognized as sin.

Where do you stand?

You and I can feel like the choices we face have been framed in similar ways. You have to choose one candidate or the other. You have to be pro-mask or anti-mask. You have to choose open or closed borders. And, the decision ought to be clear because one of these is morally right and the other is evil. Or, at least, that's what so many voices vying for attention would like you to believe.

How do you navigate this mess? Let's see how Jesus responded.

He said to them, “Which one of you who has a sheep, if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not take hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value is a man than a sheep! So it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.”
(Matthew 12:11-12)

Jesus sees through the false assumptions. He doesn't buy their framing of the choices. There is not one good choice and one evil choice here. In order to make his point, he puts a very simple case study in front of them. If you had an animal in distress on the Sabbath, would you ignore its need or would you help? You would help; you would serve; you would rescue; you would save that animal. Now, human life carries far greater value, so how could you not help a person in need? How could you not serve, rescue, even save your brother or sister?

After all, you're called to love God and love your neighbor. These are not in competition with one another. They always go together.

You cannot love God and leave your neighbor in a pit.

We've been talking about "The Pits" for four weeks now, but I want you to notice that this pit is different. When we looked at Daniel, Jeremiah, and Joseph I invited you to relate to what it's like *when you're in a pit*. You were invited to find hope even in the pits you might encounter. Today, Jesus is inviting you to take a different perspective on the pit. Not every pit is yours. Sometimes you need to be aware that your neighbor may be in a pit. Today is about *somebody else's pit*.

You cannot love God and leave your neighbor in a pit.

Then he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” And the man stretched it out, and it was restored, healthy like the other. (Matthew 12:13)

Jesus uses the visual of an animal in need, then he provides a real-life example of what it means to bring help... to serve... to heal... to save. He doesn't choose between serving his neighbor and serving God. He reminds us that loving God means loving our neighbor. Serving God means serving our neighbor.

In addition, Jesus does not vilify one choice in order to promote the other. He does not allow the framing of the question to define the choice before him. He makes it clear that he can choose to help while still honoring God. He can love God and serve his neighbor. In fact, he must.

You cannot love God and leave your neighbor in a pit.

In his response, Jesus gives us hope for navigating the choices we face today. What's more, he gives us a glimpse of the future he has for us. The Bible uses the word "restored" to describe the healing Jesus provided. There's intentionality in that word choice. Jesus restored this man's hand, and Jesus' work of restoration is continuing in our world.

The world which God created was perfect, and the people he created were perfect as well. As soon as sin entered the world – along with its fallout including pain, suffering, and death – God promised to send a Savior who would redeem and restore his people and his world. Jesus came to do just that. He would redeem God's people by his death on the cross, and in his resurrection life, restoration would begin.

The miracles of Jesus are signs which show us what restoration means. They remind us that God's work goes far beyond what you and I can accomplish. They tell us that restoration is amazing, and good, and beneficial. The miracles of Jesus make us yearn for the full restoration he's promised.

This work of Jesus also helps us see our place in this world. As disciples of Jesus, we are people of restoration. We get to bring restoration and healing. We see through the false dichotomies presented to us, and we find ways to help, to serve, to heal, to save. When we do this, we give others a glimpse of what true restoration will mean for all of us.

Now, think back to the image offered by Jesus. When a sheep falls into a pit, how would somebody lift it out? You could lower a rope, but I doubt the sheep would respond to that. You have to get into the pit in order to lift the sheep out. Maybe that picture can help us with our opening question.

Where do you stand?

You stand with your neighbor who's in the pit.

You stand with the ones who need your help. You stand with the ones who need restoration. That's where you see Jesus standing too.

And for that, Jesus was despised.

But the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him. (Matthew 12:14)

This should not be surprising. The work of restoration is the undoing of sin. It's the removal of that dark influence. It's the healing of hurts caused by creation's disconnect from the Creator. This is good, yet there is an enemy who does not want restoration to occur. He's the one behind the very first temptation. He's the one who sought to gain influence over creation, and saw his opportunity in human beings. When it comes to influence, Satan has a great deal to lose in the promised restoration.

Satan thought he could cling to control by destroying the One who came to restore all things. He thought putting Jesus to death – putting God to death – would work to his advantage. But, it didn't go the way he anticipated.

God died on the cross. Jesus was buried in a tomb. However, the One who came to restore began by himself being restored to life. Jesus rose from the dead, and now he brings this new life to all who believe in him. He's restoring creation, and he starts by restoring your relationship with God. In Jesus you are forgiven. You are healed. You are made alive. Jesus has restored you!

Jesus saw you in the pit of sin. Through the lens of our world, this might have been framed as a decision between retaining his holy perfection by standing apart from us, or entering the pit of sin and forfeiting his place as God. *Where would he stand?*

Our world pushes these either/or scenarios. Our God won't be forced into this thinking. He entered the pit of sin. He went to the pit of death. But he was not defined by the pit. Instead, he restores what was taken by the pit.

He's a God of restoration. You're his people. You're a people of restoration.

Where do you stand?

**You stand with your neighbor who's in the pit,
because Jesus stood with you in the pit.**

Amen.

[Prayers and the Lord's Prayer](#)

Share prayer requests with one another. Pray over the requests shared, then pray the Lord's Prayer together.

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.

Offering Prayer

If you have an offering present as you worship, you may place your hands over it during the offering prayer.

Reader 1: With thankful hearts we receive from you, O Lord.

Reader 2: With thankful hearts we respond.

Reader 1: Receive our thanks and praise.

Reader 2: Receive our offerings.

Together: Receive us as your own.

Blessing (Jude v24-25)

Reader 1: Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy,

Reader 2: to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Reader 1: be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority,

Reader 2: before all time and now and forever.

Together: Amen.

As applicable, please share this resource with others who would benefit. An electronic version is available at www.calvaryslz.org. We can also add friends to our mailing list if that is preferred.

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