

Greetings to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home,

Our Gospel lesson for this Sunday is an account of the first healing Jesus performed at the beginning of his ministry. At this time he, along with his disciples, is healing, teaching, preaching and his reputation is spreading throughout the region. This becomes the focal point for Sunday's sermon.

The season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17. There are two Lenten program opportunities that we will be taking advantage of.

24th Annual Lenten Discussion Series: This is a six-week program under the title: *Even the Cherry Blossom Falls*. Each session begins at 7 PM, all sessions are on consecutive Wednesday evenings and all will be offered through a Zoom link. There are six congregations involved in this series including First Congregational Church of Shelburne. The first session begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17 with the Rev. Linda Rhinehart Neas from the Whately Congregational Church. A complete schedule will be sent out next week.

Franklin County Interfaith Council is offering a Lenten Ecumenical and Interfaith program titled *Lifting the Veil: Racism in Franklin County*. This is a three-part program, beginning at 7 PM and offered through a Zoom link. The three dates are:

Wednesday, Feb. 24, Thursday, March 11 and Thursday, March 25.

More information will be available soon.

Wishing you God's peace,

Pastor Rob

Welcome to Sunday Worship

January 31, 2021

Good Morning to our members, those from United Congregational Church in Conway and all our friends at home,

The Bible is full of characters that portray the less than exemplary side of human nature. Our history, on a global and national level is full of similar examples right up to the present day. It would not be difficult to conclude that the qualities of honesty, truthfulness, integrity, and faithfulness have fallen by the wayside. This morning's service centers itself around the Gospel passage from Mark that tells the story of Jesus healing in the synagogue. It is easy to see why it didn't take long for the people to hear about him and seek him out. His reputation was built on what he proclaimed as well as how he lived his life for others.

Prayer Requests: We are accepting requests for prayer (healing, comfort, thanksgiving, and others). Please send your requests to the Pastor at pastor01089@gmail.com. Requests will then be sent out through our email list to the congregation for our common prayer life during the week. PLEASE remember that all prayer requests received become public knowledge. If you are uncertain if your request for another might be confidential, do not send it.

And now let us be in worship

Call to Worship (Responsive, L=Leader, P=People)

L May God open our hearts to hear God's Word.

P May God open our hearts to praise God's name.

L May God open our hearts to worship.

Morning Unison Prayer & the Lord's Prayer

O God open our ears to hear what you are saying today. Open our eyes to see where Jesus' healing love is needed in our world. Open our hands, to do your ministry. Open our lips to bring comfort, joy and laughter to your people. Open our hearts to love you, our neighbors and ourselves as you love us. In the name of Christ, who taught us to pray, saying...*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.*

Prayers of the People

Today's prayers are based on a prayer offered in the book *Prayers for all Occasions*, by Rev. Dr. Roy Pearson. There is a space provided to offer your own prayers. Let us now come to God.

God of truth and God of grace, ever near to us in our time of prayer, it is here that we wrestle ourselves to quietness, and struggle to be still, so that we may be fully in the present, undistracted, focused of thought that we may come before you in prayer, in discernment of your will, in our strength and our weakness, in our joy and in our despair.... it is here that we offer prayers for ourselves, as your people, as Christians. We ask for clarity of vision that we may learn to separate fact from fantasy, truth from falsehood, right from wrong and love from hate. We ask that we become restless when the realities of our world, your creation, are made clear to us. That the agonies of our sisters and our brothers, regardless of who they are or where they are from, may not be distant from our hearts. That we may add our voices to theirs and not remain silent. We ask for love and compassion, that we may not only care for the lovable and likeable, but for the difficult, the wayward, the lost, and yes, even those who trade in hate. We ask for a hunger in our souls. That preoccupation with good causes may not leave us blind to the cause of their goodness, and that wanting to be your hands and your feet to bring your goodness to a world in great need, we may pay, without exception, the cost of our discipleship. Gracious God, we are your children, you have made us, set before us the ways of life and the ways of death. You have bound our feet to the earth while raising our hearts and minds unto heaven. We pray for ourselves, here, in this community, Shelburne and in this congregation. Be in truth and grace among us and teach us to live

together here, that we may be a light to others offering the warmth of your care to all we meet. In this luxury of peaceful quiet, may these our prayers rise to you as incense.....
(Personal prayers and meditation)

God of truth and God of grace, may we endeavor to show our faith in all we say and all we do. Amen.

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:21-28

The Gospel according to Mark was the first Gospel written and also the shortest. The author of Mark moves quickly through Jesus' ministry as if running through the stories, each of which the author considers to be important. Mark begins his Gospel with the coming of John the Baptist before we are introduced to Jesus. After being baptized by John, spending forty days in the wilderness, and calling his disciples, Jesus' ministry moves immediately to the tasks at hand; teaching, preaching and healing. This morning's narrative records the first healing of Jesus' ministry.

They went to Capernaum; and when the Sabbath came, Jesus entered the synagogue and taught. They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, and he cried out, "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God." But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be silent and come out of him!" And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, "What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him." At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

After the reading, you may reflect on this passage and share your thoughts.
The sermon for this text may be seen in this week's video.

Sermon: *Reputation*

Benediction

Go forth and serve your God with
patience and passion,
Be deliberate in living your faith.
Be steadfast in celebrating
the power of the Holy Spirit.

And may peace be your way in the world. Amen