

MESSAGE FOR SUNDAY MARCH 29, 2026

WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENT

Giving options are in the back, online, or scanning the QR Code from the screen.

Our special offering for March is Old Town Mission and April is going to be UMCOR. We are collecting contributions to help the kids that cannot afford to go on the awards field trip at Daniel Bright Elementary if anyone wants to help out.

This year our Easter Offering will go to Frontera de Cristo in support of the amazing ministry they do down at the border. Be sure that you write the purpose of your gift in the memo line of your check or on the envelope.

The Book Club will meet in the Atrium of the Verde Hall on April 7 at 10:30 am.

They are reading “The Magnificent Lives of Margery Post” by Allison Pataki.

FELLOWSHIP OF LOVE/SONG

CALL TO WORSHIP

L: Give thanks to God, who is truly good,

P: Hosanna in the Highest!

L: Praise Christ, whose love abounds with grace.

P: Hosanna in the highest!

L: Welcome the Spirit with songs of Praise.

P: Hosanna in the highest!

UNISON PRAYER

UNISON PRAYER

OFFERING/SONG

SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 50:4-9 NRSV

The Lord God has given me a trained tongue, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he wakens, wakens my ear to listen as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious: I did not turn backward.

I gave my back to those who struck me and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting.

The Lord

God helps me; therefore, I have not been disgraced; therefore, I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand in court together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me.

It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty? All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up.

MEDITATION: “ACTIVE LISTENING”

Have I told you about a phrase that really annoys me? It's the phrase "active listening." I have always disliked this term, but I particularly dislike it around school because whether you admit it or not, everyone has a different definition of what active listening is or what it looks like. For some, active listening is staring at the speaker, sitting upright and proper and nodding your head in agreement at the right times. For others of us, we know active listening does not necessarily look like this. I have been partially deaf my whole life. I am great at nodding my head and having no clue what is being said.

At first glance of our passage today you could step back with two thoughts. First is why are we reading this? It is Passion or Palm Sunday, and this passage seems to talk about neither. For the more astute person you may have heard this verse and thought "I know what this is about it is about Jesus as the servant being described." The thing is that that understanding is very minimally correct, and it certainly is not the way I intend to go with our reflection today.

Historically this passage has been interpreted to represent Jesus. The description seems to work as we have a teacher, which the gospel of Matthew goes through great length to identify Jesus as a teacher. In fact, it is in Matthew that Jesus is referred to as Rabbi. Then this passage goes through the special relationship that the teacher in Isaiah has with God. "God awakens my ear in the morning to listen, as educated people do." Then the teacher goes on to talk about how they have not rebelled against God; they have done everything God wants them to do. These are all indicators of a special relationship, which we could easily apply to Jesus.

However, I am a bit of a stickler for interpreting things not just theologically but in their historical context. In this case, I think having some historical

understanding may help us to see how this passage can be applied to us today, particularly in Holy Week, and not just be a descriptor of Jesus and his work.

This passage is from third Isaiah, an anonymous author who is describing a teacher of unknown origin. What we do know is that this teacher has a special relationship with God as we have just described and in turn is being persecuted in some way. This passage in particular is about listening. The careful type of listening where we are listening for what God is saying to us so that we can then do what God wants of us. Before I went on vacation I was speaking in depth about different spiritual disciplines and how to do them. This passage follows up with that. The question is how do we listen for God and what are we to do when we listen.

There is a concept in Methodism called prevenient grace. This is the grace of God that is at work in your life and in the lives of others before we even know that God was at work. We celebrate this in the act of baptism, where we remember that God saves us through no special work of our own, but instead is always present, and always at work in our lives. Careful listening means being attuned to that grace of God in our lives.

I alluded to this earlier when I stated that Matthew wants us to see Jesus as a teacher. If Jesus is our teacher that makes us what? Disciples. What is a disciple's job? To listen and follow. I think this is the key for our holy week. I think many of us have reflected on Jesus' suffering and death often enough during Holy Week, but have we ever stopped as disciples of Christ and just listened?

Listening is hard work. I know it is because I have spent all of my life needing to concentrate in conversations or else I am saying "what?" all the time.

Listening for God is even more work. We need to pay attention to where God is moving in the world around us learning to wait for God to speak. If you are interested in learning more about the activity of listening for God to speak, I suggest doing some reading on Quaker meditative practices. One of the greatest gifts Quakers have given to Christianity is the desire to sit in silence and wait.

After you spend time listening for God I suggest you then listen to God. First I would be skeptical if what God is telling you is something you want to hear. Even if you hear God telling you that God loves you the reason you probably need to hear that is because you do not want to hear that. When you listen for God this is about having an open heart to what God may want to tell you.

This week let us listen for God and to God this week of Holy Week. Let us focus on hearing what God wants us to know not just in our minds but in our hearts. Let us journey together. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

SONG

BENEDICTION

SONG