

LISBON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
March 14, 2021 The Fourth Sunday of Lent  
“At Home Worship”

**Call to Worship**

*Awaken to the glory of this new day!*

**We are children of the light.**

*Put aside the works of darkness.*

**In the Lord, we are light.**

*Even in the darkest valley, God’s glory sustains us.*

Let us worship the Lord of all grace and glory in this holy time.

**Opening Prayer** Gracious and loving God, we have come today to worship you. On this Lenten journey, help us grow in our faith and in our relationship to you. Open our hearts to your love; open our eyes to the light of your Son; open our hands to the work of your Holy Spirit. Help us share your grace and follow the ways that lead to new life. In the name of Christ, we pray. Amen.

**Scripture Reading** “So Moses prayed for the people.”  
Read Numbers 21.4-9

**Prayer of Confession** Based on Psalm 17

*Hear a just cause, O Lord; attend to my cry!*

**I call upon you for you will answer me, O God;**

*Incline your ear to me, hear my words.*

**I have avoided the ways of the violent by following your word.**

*Wondrously show us your steadfast love,*

**O savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.**

**Words of Assurance** God is rich in mercy, making us alive in fellowship with Christ. By God’s amazing grace we have been saved. Receive forgiveness and live in God’s abundant love!

**Scripture Reading** “For by grace you have been saved through faith...” Read Ephesians 2.1-10

**Remembering our Joys and Concerns in Prayer** We come to worship with many concerns upon our hearts but also joys in our lives. You are invited to share them with God in this time of silence.

**A Lenten Prayer** (insert) and **The Lord’s Prayer**

**Scripture Reading** “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son...” Read John 3.14-21

**Meditation** Decisions, decisions. We all face any number of choices on any given day. Making them is just built into our existence: “One cup of coffee this morning or two?” “Which socks shall I choose to wear?” “Cold cereal or oatmeal for breakfast?” And that’s just in the morning! Our choices continue throughout the day and many of them, in contrast to these simple examples, are far, far more important, all going to show that we can’t have it all and we can’t do it all. We have to decide. The New England poet Robert Frost spoke to this eloquently in his well-known poem, writing “Two roads diverged in a yellow wood....” Those junctures require us to choose our own path and often those paths have eternal significance.

Our reading from the Hebrew scriptures shares more of the story of the people of Israel. They have been freed from bondage in slavery and are wandering in the wilderness. However, rather than being grateful that they are no longer under Pharaoh’s rule, the people complain. They don’t have enough water or enough food and the manna that God is providing everyday is boring. Not only had Moses heard enough, so also had God. In a striking attempt to get the people’s attention, God sends poisonous serpents among them. And it worked! The people prayed that God would take the snakes away. God answered their prayers in an

unusual way by bidding Moses to put a bronze serpent on a pole; if the people looked at this serpent, God decreed, then they would live. It wasn't the serpent did the healing but, rather, that as people made the choice to look up, to look to God they would be healed.

In his letter to the Ephesians in today's Epistle lesson, the apostle Paul reminds the faithful that God made a choice, a choice of eternal significance, shared with us out of God's love for us. *"For by grace you have been saved through faith,"* Paul wrote, *"and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast."* Our choice in this is not to boast, not to worry but to make the choice to just be grateful! Thanks be to God!

A similar reminder is offered in the well-beloved words of John's Gospel. "John 3.16" is a reference recognized by many. This, wrote Martin Luther, is the "gospel in miniature." God comes us Christ to show us the way of life, life eternal. *"For God so loved the world that He have His only Son..."* However, the verse doesn't end there; the rest reminds us that we have a choice, a decision to make for John writes, *"...so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life."* We must make the decision to believe in God's only Son and to live out that decision with our further choices every day both in word and in action.

Decisions, decisions. They are a necessity. Author Brett Younger sums them up: "When we do not have the courage to choose what is best but act as if our choices do not matter, we make no progress even on the smoothest path; but when we choose courageously, we go forward even on the roughest road."

"Two roads diverged in a wood, and I – I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." - R. Frost

**Words of Benediction** As you continue your Lenten journey, lift up your eyes to the Lord. The One who sent Jesus Christ as salvation for all the world will never desert us. The Lord will keep your going out and your coming in, from this time on and forevermore.



## *The Fourth Sunday of Lent*

Lisbon United Methodist Church  
welcomes, nurtures, and serves  
all people  
with the love of Christ.