



"Epilogue" by T. Denise Anderson | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

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Memorial Presbyterian Church

SERVICE FOR THE LORD'S DAY

5th Sunday in Lent

March 22, 2026

GATHERING AROUND THE WORD

The Things That Matter Most

I wrecked the family car, an old gold minivan
that had traveled every inch of I-95. It had worn cushions
and an old school map in the glove box.
It held a folder full of mix CDs under the passenger seat
and every memory of every family trip,
and I wrecked it.
I called the tow truck while the engine

hissed and smoked. I called my dad,
my own apologies tripping over themselves
to get to the front of the line.
I expected to be grounded.
I expected a "How could you?"
But when I got home that night,
my dad held me close and said,
"A car is just a car, but you are my child.
The only thing that matters is that you are okay."
And I knew it for what it was.
It was mercy. It was love.
It was the thing that mattered most.

Prayer by Rev. Sarah A. Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | sanctifiedart.org

PRELUDE

BRINGING THE LIGHT

*CALL TO WORSHIP

Welcome to the weary and the worn.

Welcome to the wiggly and the eager.

Welcome to the skeptical and the seeking.

Welcome to the early risers and those still trying to wake up.

Welcome to the rule followers and the rule breakers.

Welcome to those hungry for justice and those desperate for mercy.

Welcome to the sinners and the saints.

This is God's house.

You can make yourself at home here.

Let us worship our just, merciful, and faithful God!

*SONG OF PRAISE

O God, Who Gives Us Life

Hymnal, No. 53

*CONFESSION AND PARDON

Join me in this act of transformation.

Let us pray:

Holy God,

we love to live our lives by the rules.

We love clear answers.

We love right and wrong.

We love swift justice.

We love to pick up stones,

but you show us another way.

You welcome shades of gray and nuanced conversation.

You prioritize mercy over legality.

You prioritize people over tradition.

You prioritize love over everything.

Forgive us for losing sight of what truly matters.

Forgive us for clinging tighter to laws than to each other or to you.

Forgive us. Soften our hearts.

Root us in mercy, justice, and love.

With hope for a better tomorrow, we pray. Amen.

Church family,

Jesus saw a crowd ready to throw stones
and invited them to choose another way.
Jesus offered them grace, mercy, and compassion,
and the same can be said for us.

So hear and believe the good news of the gospel:

Our God is a God of mercy.

Our God is a God of compassion.

Our God is a God of grace.

We are forgiven, loved, and invited to choose another way.

Thanks be to God for yet another second chance.

Amen.

*THE PEACE

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another.
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

*SONG OF RESPONSE Dear Lord and Father of Mankind Hymnal, No. 169
 Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
 forgive our foolish ways;
 reclothe us in our rightful mind,
 in purer lives thy service find,
 in deeper reverence, praise.

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

TIME FOR YOUNG DISCIPLES

PROCLAIMING THE WORD

PRAYER FOR UNDERSTANDING

SCRIPTURE READING Page No. 805
 Matthew 23:23
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

SCRIPTURE READING Page No. 870
 John 8:2-11
 The Word of the Lord.
 Thanks be to God.

MESSAGE Rooted in Justice, Mercy, and Faithfulness Tracy L. Evans

*SONG OF FAITH Let Us Remember Bulletin p. 7

*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.

**It sounds like welcome
and feels like home.**

**It sounds like laughter
and feels like mercy.**

**It sounds like love
and feels like a seat at the table,**

so I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.
I have seen it alive in the world.
And even when my heart aches,
even when wars rage,
even when mercy feels out of reach,
I remember the one who
welcomed the children
and led with nonviolence.
I remember the one who
cared for the vulnerable
and inspired those around him.
I remember that the good news really is good news,
for I have seen it alive in the world.
Thanks be to God! Amen.

SHARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS/PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

LORD'S PRAYER

Hymnal, p. 35

*Please pray the Lord's Prayer
in the language and wording most familiar to you.*

THE OFFERING

*DOXOLOGY

Give Thanks

Hymnal, No. 647

Give thanks with a grateful heart;
give thanks to the Holy One;
give thanks because we're given Jesus Christ, the Son. (Repeat)

And now let the weak say, "We are strong";
let the poor say, "We are rich
because of what the Lord has done for us!" (Repeat)

Give thanks. Give thanks.

*PRAYER OF DEDICATION

FOLLOWING THE WORD INTO THE WORLD

*SENDING SONG

Breathe on Me, Breath of God

Hymnal, No. 286

*BLESSING AND CHARGE

*POSTLUDE

*Please rise in body or spirit.

We invite anyone who wishes to consider membership in this church to contact the pastor or a member of the session. Membership in this church is a step made by profession of faith, reaffirmation of faith or transfer of church letter.

Lectionary Readings for March 29: Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29; Matthew 21:1-11, Isaiah 50:4-9a; Psalm 31:9-16 ; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 26:14-27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54.

The Food & Shelter items for March are reusable water bottles and ready to eat foods.
Please place your donations in the box by the church information table.

Let Us Remember

ADELAIDE 5.4.5.4 D (“Have Thine Own Way”)

Words: Anna Strickland (2025)

Music: George C. Stebbins (1907)



What is im - por - tant? What mat - ters more?
We've been shown mer - cy all of our lives
Fol - low - ing Je - sus, liv - ing in truth
What does the Lord re - qui - re of us?



Hu - man con - nec - tion or keep - ing score?
By the cre - a - tor of hu - man - kind
We re - main faith - ful to our roots
To re - main hum - ble, lov - ing, and just



In our pur - suit of jus - tice and truth
So when we're in a po - si - tion to judge
When those roots lead us out - side the lines
Keep - ing the heart of the gos - pel in mind



Let us re - mem - ber: we fall short, too
Let us re - mem - ber: they're just like us
Let us re - mem - ber: faith is a - live
Let us re - mem - ber: do what is right

Let the Little Children Come

by Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell , Inspired by Matthew 19:13-15, 11"x14" Acrylic, gold leaf, pen on paper

For my little niece, Angelina, whose art rests at the heart of this composition, and in whose joy we glimpse the Kingdom of God—alongside her sisters, Angelika and Ariana.

At the center of this work is a drawing made by my five-year-old niece, Angelina. I watched her joyfully scribble it in under three minutes, churning out drawing after drawing and handing each one to me with an eager smile. In this piece, she first drew a self-portrait (her wearing a crown), then graciously decided to include me (taking some creative liberties in giving me a third arm!).

I imagine the scene in Matthew 19: toddlers wailing, little ones slipping from their parents' arms, parents offering apologetic glances toward the frowning disciples as the scene around Jesus grows increasingly disorderly and loud. Those of us who've participated in group infant baptisms and baby dedications (when one cries, the chain reaction begins!), have led children's sermon moments with restless kids squirming about, or had the joy of watching our little ones participate in a kids' choir performance that goes delightfully rogue, can easily relate.

The disciples, feeling the weight of being seen as serious leaders alongside their rabbi, Jesus, may have tried to preserve a sense of reverence by shooing away the parents bringing their children to him. Yet here, Jesus reorients his disciples (and us) away from the illusion of control and reminds us that it is the joyful, unruly, sincere presence of a child to whom the kingdom truly belongs. Just a chapter earlier, in Matthew 18, Jesus tells his followers that unless they become like little children, they will not even enter the kingdom. Surely the disciples thought Jesus couldn't mean that literally—right?

While I've been busy making art, Angelina has been busy being an artist. I surely could learn a thing or two from her about inheriting the kingdom. —Carmelle Beaugelin Caldwell

Look

Contemplate the gold shapes in the image. What do they represent to you?