***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Lenten Worship Series – Week 1**

***Building a Skyscraper – Isaiah***

**March 6, 2022**

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| **WORSHIP SERVICE OUTLINE**S  Each worship outline contains all elements needed for your worship service. The order of each service presented is only a *suggestion*. No doubt changes will be needed to accommodate the flow and worship style of your corps. The outlines are flexible and allow opportunities to “cut and paste” as needed. If you are blessed with instrumental or vocal music resources, you may find there is more structured material here than needed. Sermon manuscripts are included as a *sample* and not to be preached verbatim. |

**Introduction to the series:**

The title of our worship series for Lent is *Wind in the Wilderness*. Though we cannot see the wind, we know it by its effects and interpret it by its results. When something is affected by wind, we begin to take notice of its potential and power. The same can be said of the Hebrew prophets, who communicated God’s justice and faithfulness at various times throughout the history of God’s people. Much of this history was chaotic and unpredictable, like the wilderness. Often times it felt as if God was distant. Yet as the prophets spoke, the wind of God’s presence was blowing. Through their words the wind was moving, giving us a hint of Jesus, who was to come.

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, p. 8)

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| **HC#250 – Hear the Call of the Kingdom** | HC-250 | HCD23-T20 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#52/SOS#17 – O worship the king** | TB-479 – Hanover  SOS-17  HC-221 | HTD4-T4 (3 vs.)  HCD21-T11 |
| **SB#56/HC#251 – Praise to the Lord, the Almighty** | TB-735 – Lobe den Herren  HC-251 | HTD4-T11 (4 vs.)  HCD24-T11 |
| **SB#104 – Come, Thou long expected Jesus** | TB-370 – Hyfrydol  HC-114 | HTD1-T14 (3 vs.)  HCD10-T14 |
| **SB#39/HC#121 – Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee** | TB-367 – Europe  HC-121 | HTD3-T11 (4 vs.)  HCD11-T11 |
| **SB#271 – Rejoice, the Lord is king!** | TB-200 – Darwalls  HC-298 | HTD1-T7 (3 vs.)  HCD28-T18 |
| **SB#283 – Come, Thou almighty king** | TB-198 – Moscow | HTD2-T2 (4 vs.) |
| **SB#938/HC#277 – We have caught the vision splendid** | TB-394 – Austria  HC-277 | HTD1-T2 – (3 vs.)  HCD26-T17 |
| **HC#282 – Christ for the World** | HC-282 | HCD27-T12 |
| **SB#1010 – Peace in our time, O Lord** | TB-162 – Diademata | HTD1-T8 (4 vs.) |

***Building a Skyscraper***

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| **Drama – Going Up** |

**Call to Worship:**

In order to build a building that is worthy of the name of “skyscraper,” you must first make preparations… blueprints, landscape surveys, and conversations between contractors and builders. Then after all the pre-work is done, the digging can begin. No matter what the project, preparations are important. Hundreds of years before Christ was born, God had a plan in place and he revealed that plan through his prophets. That plan came into fulfillment at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and continues in our lives today. If we read Isaiah 58:6-9, which was written after the people returned from Exile in Babylon, he describes what the skyscraper may look like:

**[Put scripture below on screen.]**

*“What I’m interested in seeing you do is:*

*to break the chains of injustice,*

*get rid of exploitation in the workplace,*

*free the oppressed,*

*cancel debts.*

*Share your food with the hungry,  
invite the homeless poor into your homes,  
 put clothes on the shivering ill-clad,  
be available to your own families.*

*Do this and the lights will turn on,*

*and your lives will turn around at once.  
Your righteousness will pave your way.*

*The God of glory will secure your passage.  
Then when you pray, God will answer.*

*You’ll call out for help and I’ll say, ‘Here I am.’”*

Isaiah 58:6-9 (MSG)

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, pp. 12, 20)

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| **SB#699/HC#207/SOS#88 – Grace alone** | TB-640 – same  HC-207  SOS-88 | No HT CD  HCD19-T17 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **HC#123/SOS#55 – Shine on Us** | HC-123  SOS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **SB#37 – Immortal, invisible, God only wise** | TB-508 – St Denio | No HT CD |
| **SB#275 – Sing we the king who is coming to reign** | TB-475 – The glory song | No HT CD |
| **SB#580 – Dear Lord, I do surrender** | TB-235 – To the uttermost He saves | No HT CD |
| **SB#287/HC#91 – Fan the flame in me** | TB-608 – same  HC-91 | No HT CD  HCD8-T11 |
| **SB#355/HC#112/SOS#71 – The Potter’s Hand** | TB-867 – same  HC-112  SOS-71 | No HT CD  HCD10-T12 |
| **HC#154 – Moved with Compassion** | HC-154 | HCD14-T14 |
| **HC#178 – Speak, O Lord** | HC-178 | HCD16-T18 |
| **HC#193/SOS#156 – Soldiers’ Hymn** | HC-193  SOS-156 | HCD18-T13 |
| **SB#608/HC#262 – Make me a channel of your peace** | TB-751 – same  HC-262 | No HT CD  HCD15-T12 |
| **SB#418/HC#269 – People need the Lord** | TB-797 – same  HC-269 | No HT CD  HCD25-T19 |
| **HC#281 – More Like Jesus** | HC-281 | HCD27-T11 |
| **HC#287 – Build My Life** | HC-287 | HCD27-T17 |

**Invocation:**

Loving and gracious God, thank you so much for the season of Lent. Thank you for the opportunity to slow down, reflect, and to gain greater perspective on life and on what is happening around us. Thank you that where we are now is not the finished product, but rather a work in progress. By your grace, we are so grateful for the weeks ahead of us where we can ponder your amazing love. We know that the kingdom is coming. May this season be more than an opportunity for spouting lofty words; may it also be a chance to deepen our discipleship. This we pray in your Son’s name, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, p. 21)

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| **Children’s Moment** |

***The Skyscraper God is Building***

**Responsive Reading:**

**Leader:** The prophet Isaiah’s words in Chapters 9 and 53 harken back to visions of what God will do and what was yet to come when all seemed lost. These verses would resonate with the Israelite people during their time of exile in Babylon because the words promised that God would redeem them. Let’s look at Isaiah 9:2-7 first:

**ALL: *2*** *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.  
    On those living in a pitch-dark land, light has dawned.*

**Women: *3****You have made the nation great;  
    you have increased its joy.  
They rejoiced before you as with joy at the harvest,  
    as those who divide plunder rejoice.*

**Men: *4****As on the day of Midian, you’ve shattered the yoke that burdened them,  
    the staff on their shoulders,  
    and the rod of their oppressor.*

**Women: *5****Because every boot of the thundering warriors,  
    and every garment rolled in blood  
    will be burned, fuel for the fire.*

**ALL:** ***6****A child is born to us, a son is given to us,  
    and authority will be on his shoulders.  
    He will be named  
    Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
    Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.*

**Men: *7****There will be vast authority and endless peace  
    for David’s throne and for his kingdom,  
    establishing and sustaining it  
    with justice and righteousness  
    now and forever.*

**ALL:** *The zeal of the Lord of heavenly forces will do this.*

Isaiah 9:2-7 (CEB)

**Leader:** This dramatic vision of the future is like the plan for a finished skyscraper, a blueprint of what life would be like when God’s construction project is completed. Now let’s consider Isaiah 53:1-6:

**ALL: *1****Who can believe what we have heard,  
    and for whose sake has the Lord’s arm[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53&version=CEB#fen-CEB-18713a)*] been revealed?*

**Women: *2****He grew up like a young plant before us,[*[*b*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53&version=CEB#fen-CEB-18714b)*]  
    like a root from dry ground.  
He possessed no splendid form for us to see,  
    no desirable appearance.*

**Men: *3****He was despised and avoided by others;  
    a man who suffered, who knew sickness well.  
Like someone from whom people hid their faces,  
    he was despised, and we didn’t think about him.*

**Women: *4****It was certainly our sickness that he carried,  
    and our sufferings that he bore,  
    but we thought him afflicted,  
    struck down by God and tormented.*

**Men: *5****He was pierced because of our rebellions  
    and crushed because of our crimes.  
    He bore the punishment that made us whole;  
    by his wounds we are healed.*

**ALL: *6****Like sheep we had all wandered away,  
    each going its own way,  
    but the Lord let fall on him all our crimes.*

Isaiah 53:1-6 (CEB)

**Leader:** Jesus the Messiah took on the worst of us, the very worst of what we are capable of, so that we might have a chance to be who we were created to be. He is the skyscraper that God is building, that God indeed has built. The hole—the suffering—wasn’t the end for the people in exile. It isn’t the end for us.

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, pp. 14-18)

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| **HC#136 – We All Bow Down** | HC-136 | HCD12-T16 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#201/HC#137/SOS#66 – Worthy is the Lamb** | TB-947 – same  HC-137  SOS-66 | No HT CD  HCD12-T17 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same  HC-139 | No HT CD  HCD12-T19 |
| **HC#162 – The Power of the Cross** | HC-162 | HCD15-T12 |
| **SB# 243/HC#164 – Before the throne of God above** | TB-52 – same  HC-164 | No HT CD  HCD15-T14 |
| **HC#166 – We Fall Down** | HC-166 | HCD15-T16 |
| **SB#699/HC#207/SOS#88 – Grace alone** | TB-640 – same  HC-207  SOS-88 | No HT CD  HCD19-T17 |
| **HC#226 – I Worship You** | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |
| **SB#178/SOS#95 – Jesus, keep me near the cross** | TB-238 – Near the Cross  TB-237 – Healing Stream  SOS-95 | HTD2-T5 (3 vs.)  HTD5-T8 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#183 – Man of sorrows!** | TB-754 – same | No HT CD |
| **SB#208/SOS#63 – When I survey the wondrous cross** | TB-875 – Wondrous Cross (first 16 bars, Boston)  HC-94 (use vs. 2 as chorus)  SOS-63 | No HT CD  HCD8-T14 |

**[Congregational prayer, please print in bulletin.]**

**Intercessory Prayer:**

Our world cries out for justice. We hunger and thirst for truth and integrity. We wait with eager hearts for Your coming. O Prince of Peace…as we wait, let us shine with the light of righteousness and encroach on the rule of darkness. We pray that you will live in us, and be righteous in us. Yours is the light that will cause even the blind to see and glorify God. Amen.

(*The NIV Worship Bible*, p. 910)

**Missionary Moment**

**Offering**

**Message – *Building a Skyscraper – Isaiah***

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| **SB#287/HC#91 – Fan the flame in me** | | TB-608 – same  HC-91 | No HT CD  HCD8-T11 |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | | |
| **HC#123/SOS#55 – Shine on Us** | | HC-123  SOS-55 | HCD11-T13 |
| **SB#355/HC#112/SOS#71 – The Potter’s Hand** | | TB-867 – same  HC-112  SOS-71 | No HT CD  HCD10-T12 |
| **HC#154 – Moved with Compassion** | | HC-154 | HCD14-T14 |
| **SB#608/HC#262 – Make me a channel of your peace** | | TB-751 – same  HC-262 | No HT CD  HCD15-T12 |
| **SB#418/HC#269 – People need the Lord** | | TB-797 – same  HC-269 | No HT CD  HCD25-T19 |
| **HC#287 – Build My Life** | | HC-287 | HCD27-T17 |
| **SB#439/HC#139 – There is a message** | TB-879 – same  HC-139 | No HT CD  HCD12-T19 |
| **HC#166 – We Fall Down** | HC-166 | HCD15-T16 |
| **SB#699/HC#207/SOS#88 – Grace alone** | TB-640 – same  HC-207  SOS-88 | No HT CD  HCD19-T17 |
| **HC#226 – I worship you** | HC-226 | HCD21-T16 |
| **SB#178/SOS#95 – Jesus, keep me near the cross** | TB-238 – Near the Cross  TB-237 – Healing Stream  SOS-95 | HTD2-T5 (3 vs.)  HTD5-T8 (3 vs.) |
| **SB#208/SOS#63 – When I survey the wondrous cross** | TB-875 – Wondrous Cross (first 16 bars, Boston)  HC-94 (use vs. 2 as chorus)  SOS-63 | No HT CD  HCD8-T14 |

**Benediction:**

Let the peace of Christ keep you in tune with each other, in step with each other. None of this going off and doing your own thing. And cultivate thankfulness. Let the Word of Christ—the Message—have the run of the house. Give it plenty of room in your lives. Instruct and direct one another using good common sense. And sing, sing your hearts out to God! Let every detail in your lives—words, actions, whatever—be done in the name of the Master, Jesus, thanking God the Father every step of the way. Amen.

Colossians 3:15-17 (MSG)

**Announcements**

**Vocal Benediction:**

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| **SB#938 – We have caught the vision splendid** | TB-361 – Blaenwern  TB-394 – Austria | HTD5-T3 (3 vs.) HTD1-T2 (3 vs.) |
| **Additional Optional Songs** | | |
| **SB#936 – Wanted, hearts baptized with fire** | TB-370 – Hyfrydol  TB-394 – Austria  HC-114 | HTD1-T14 (4 vs.)  HTD1-T2 (3 vs.)  HCD10-T14 |
| **HC#198 – In Jesus’ Name** | HC-198 | HCD18-T18 |
| **SB#819/HC#202 – O Church, arise** | TB-777 – same  HC-202 | No HT CD  HCD19-T12 |
| **SB#1031/HC#283 – Lord, if Your presence** | TB-740 – same  HC-283 | No HT CD  HCD27-T13 |

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| **Lent 2022 Week #1** | |
| **DRAMA**  **Going Up!**  **By Martyn Scott Thomas**  © Copyright 2021 by Martyn Scott Thomas. All rights reserved. Used by permission. | |
| **Topic:** | Preparations |
| **Scripture:** | Isaiah 9:2-7; 53:1-6 |
| **Synopsis:** | A television news crew reports on a new skyscraper being built. |
| **Characters:** | Andy (or Anna) Story – News anchor  Scoop Johnson – Field reporter |
| **Props/Costumes:** | A desk and chair for Andy. A microphone for Scoop. Professional dress for both. Headsets/earpieces are optional. |
| **Setting:** | A news desk and live remote for telecast. |
| **Running time:** | 3 minutes |

[*Andy is seated at a desk stage right. Scoop is standing stage left with a microphone in his hand.*]

**Andy:** Good evening and welcome to Action News. I’m Andy Story. And the top story for tonight: our city will soon be home to the world’s 232nd tallest skyscraper. For all the details, we take you live downtown with our reporter on the street, Scoop Johnson.

**Scoop:** [*looking around casually, not responding*]

**Andy:** [*pause, then repeating*] Scoop, can you hear me?

**Scoop:** [*starts to scratch nose, then snaps to attention*] Yes, Andy. I can hear you. [*composing himself – to the camera*] Scoop Johnson here at the corner of Main and State, location of the soon to be Mainline Tower.

**Andy:** So, Scoop, what can you tell us about the Mainline Tower? How tall is it?

**Scoop:** Well, Andy, right now it’s just a big hole.

**Andy:** [*exaggerated chuckle*] That’s a good one, Scoop. No really, how tall is this building?

**Scoop:** When completed, it will stand some 60 stories over our great city. But for now, it’s just a big hole.

**Andy:** Well, that’s a bit of a letdown. Is anything going up? Maybe a support beam of some kind?

**Scoop:** No, not at all. In fact, I’ve been here a week and the hole just keeps getting bigger.

**Andy:** [*hopeful*] And by bigger you mean . . .

**Scoop:** Deeper. It’s hard to see the bottom, but they keep going down further.

**Andy:** I have to say, Scoop, I’m a little disappointed. I thought this was going to be a [*a little proud of himself*] ‘big’ story.

**Scoop:** Well, it will be once this project is finished. It will be the tallest skyscraper in town and the 232nd tallest in the world.

**Andy:** Wow, that is impressive.

**Scoop:** The Mainline Tower will be home to a new hotel, a fitness center, office space, several restaurants, a movie theater, a bowling alley, and 100 condominiums.

**Andy:** All of that? That’s pretty amazing! So when can we expect to see all of this ready to go?

**Scoop:** Five to seven years.

**Andy:** I think there might be something wrong with our connection. [*chuckling*] It sounded like you said five to seven years.

**Scoop:** I did. That’s how long this project is going to take.

**Andy:** [*disappointed*] Tell me again why this is a top story.

**Scoop:** The Mainline Tower will be the ‘biggest’ thing in town, pardon my pun. But the developer has told me that before we build up, we must dig down. It’s all about the foundation.

**Andy:** The foundation?

**Scoop:** Yes, the higher you build, the deeper the foundation must be. If you want a building to stand tall, it has to be anchored deep.

**Andy:** I’m sure there’s a metaphor for life in there somewhere, but it escapes me at the moment.

**Scoop:** Anyway, I’ll be here at Main and State to monitor the progress of the Mainline Tower and will be ready to update our viewers as things move along.

**Andy:** [*rolling his eyes, disinterested*] Don’t call me until things actually start moving up.

**Scoop:** [*ignoring him*] This is Scoop Johnson, Action News, reporting from the site of the new Mainline Tower. Back to you, Andy.

**Andy:** And I’m Andy Story. We’ll be right back after this message. [*off camera*] Isn’t there anything else happening in this town?

[*Blackout*]

*\*Optional segue into Call to Worship*

No matter what the project, preparations are important. For anything to succeed, plans need to be made ahead of time to ensure success. Hundreds of years before Christ was born, God had a plan in place and he revealed that plan through his prophets. That plan came into fulfillment at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and continues in our lives today.

***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Children’s Moment – Week 1**

***Building a Skyscraper – Isaiah***

**March 6, 2022**

**By Katie Laidlaw**

**Series Synopsis:**

The *Wind in the Wilderness* Children’s Moments are given from the perspective of a camping trip gone wrong. Each week will present a new challenge or struggle that will be ‘solved’ through the application of each theme. The context of these lessons should allow children to embrace a fuller understanding of issues including injustice, prophecy, identity, sin/disobedience, long-suffering, God’s character, and living a Spirit-led life.

**Set-up/Staging:**

Invite children to come to the front, either having them stand or sit for the lesson. If possible, have the children sit around a makeshift campfire to add to the context of the theme. This could add to the excitement and intrigue of the lesson. If not using this set-up, have the children stand for optimal engagement, participation, and focus.

**Props:**

Hiking gear/apparel, items for a campfire (legitimate or crafty), camping supplies (lantern, backpack, sleeping bag, tent, etc.) and any props mentioned in the weekly scripts

**Week 1 – Building a Skyscraper**

**Scripture:** **Ephesians 4:31-32**

**Props: Printed instructions for tent**

[*The Narrator should call the children of the congregation forward and have them sit or stand around ‘campfire’.*]

**Script:**

[*Looking frustrated reading tent instructions*] …Lay flat…assemble poles…insert poles into side loops… Ugh! Why isn’t this working for me?! Do any of you guys know how to put up a tent? I have been trying to set this tent up for HOURS!

I think I need to take a break—do you want to sit with me? This camping trip has been such a disaster; how am I supposed to camp without a tent?! I *never* use directions. Setting up a tent shouldn’t be this complicated…I shouldn’t need help! It looks like I might have to adjust my plan a little bit.

Have you ever made a plan that didn’t work out? [*Allow children to respond*]

What did you end up doing after your plan didn’t work out? [*Allow children to respond*]

Sometimes our plans don’t work out because God has something better for us. Which reminds me of the greatest plan God ever had—sending His Son, Jesus, to save us from our sins. Even before Jesus was born, God had a plan set in place to set-up and prepare people for the birth of Jesus, and all that was going to happen through the life of Jesus. This plan was extremely detailed and was looked at, and thought about for many, many, MANY years. Jesus was born, He lived a life as an example of love, forgiveness, and grace. He gave himself as a sacrifice for our sins. Jesus died, and came back to life, then returned to heaven. Now, we’re waiting for Him to come back! So, we know the details of the plan before Jesus was born, and the plan for the life of Jesus on earth, and the plan for his death and resurrection. But what is the plan for right now – the plan for while we are waiting for Jesus to come back?

The Bible is our book of instructions, directions, and examples. The Bible gives us instructions for what we, as followers of Jesus, should be doing while waiting for Jesus to come back. Can you tell me what some of those instructions are? [*Allow children to respond*]

The book of Ephesians, chapter 4, gives us specific instructions to build a strong and firm life in Jesus. It gives us an example of what living as a Christian looks like:

[*Hold open Bible*]**“Get rid of all hard feelings, anger and rage. Stop all fighting and lying. Put away every form of hatred.”**

Then, it tells us: **“Be kind and tender to one another. Forgive each other, just as God forgave you because of what Christ has done.”** (Ephesians 4:31-32, NIRV)

Do you find it hard to follow instructions sometimes? [*Allow children to respond*]

I know I have a hard time following instructions. Sometimes I think I know better, or that I have a better idea than what the instructions are telling me.

God’s plan is always best. God knows and sees all things and has a beautiful, and special plan for each one of us. God’s plan is for all people to know Jesus and experience His love, forgiveness, and grace. God’s instructions help us experience this in our own lives, and helps others to see Jesus in our lives and want to know Him for themselves.

I think I’m ready to follow the instructions to get my tent built! Let’s pray.

**Main Points:**

* Sometimes our plans don’t work out because God has something better for us.
* The Bible is our book of instructions, directions, and examples. The Bible gives us instructions for what we, as followers of Jesus, should be doing while waiting for Jesus to come back.
* God’s plan is for all people to know Jesus and experience His love, forgiveness, and grace.
* God’s instructions help us experience this in our own lives, and helps others to see Jesus in our lives and want to know Him for themselves.

**Questions:**

* Have you ever made a plan that didn’t work out?
* What did you end up doing after your plan didn’t work out?
* What are some of the instructions the Bible gives us to accomplish as followers of Jesus?
* Do you find it hard to follow instructions?

***Wind IN THE WILDERNESS***

**Lenten Sermon – Week 1**

***Building a Skyscraper – Isaiah***

**March 6, 2022**

**By Major Katherine Clausell**

**Scripture:** **Isaiah 9:1-7; 53:1-6**

**Introduction:**

Unlike the other holiday seasons,Lent is one of the few seasons of the year when we really get to slow down, reflect, and engage in self-examination as a means to connect deeper with God. The Lenten season is also a time of penitence and is often demonstrated through a time of self-denial as we prepare our hearts, minds and spirit for this time of renewal and spiritual revival. As we move through this Lenten series, we will have the opportunity to consider the history of Jesus’ life and how Jesus, the Messiah, fulfilled the promises of the Hebrew prophets.

We will also focus on the work and words of the Hebrew prophets who communicated God’s justice and faithfulness at various times throughout the history of God’s people. Although much of the early history of God’s people may appear chaotic and unpredictable like the wilderness, as the prophets spoke, the wind of God’s presence was blowing. Through the words of these prophets, the wind was moving, giving us a hint of Jesus who was coming.

And so, during this Lenten season we will spend time exploring the historical context into which each prophet spoke. We will turn our attention to the issues of justice in today’s world and consider our response as Christ’s disciples. We will see how the wind moved among God’s people in the past, to discover how it’s moving in your life today.

(*Wind in the Wilderness*, pp. 8-9)

**Opening Illustration:**

[Share a personal story about:

* The challenges associated with having to build something from scratch like the total gut of a kitchen or bathroom renovation. Include the preparations that went into such a construction/renovation project.
* Or share the details of the building of a skyscraper such as the Sears Tower (aka Willis Tower) in Chicago. Focus in on the preparations the builder must make and how far down the builders had to dig in order to build such a tall building.
* Or, if you have ever had to add an elevator to the corps building, share details regarding having to dig a deep hole called ‘the pit’ which will contain all the electrical and mechanicals related to the functioning of the elevator, as well as the elevator car itself.

Conclude your opening illustration with a comparison between the preparations one has to make before building a skyscraper, and the hole we dig ourselves into as the necessary work to achieving God’s design for the world—the building of his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven.]

**Transition:**

The nation of Judah had experienced loss at the hands of the Babylonians and were now living in exile because they neglected their covenant with God and relied on something else that gave them a false sense of security. They found themselves in a ‘big hole’ with little-to-no hope of getting out.

What kind of hole or pit do you find yourself in today?

Today’s message gives us the opportunity to consider the hole we find ourselves in and our continued need for the justice and peace that Jesus Christ offers. If we are honest with ourselves and each other, we are all in a hole of some kind or another. Having just spent the last two years dealing with a global pandemic, a growing awareness of racial injustice and other disparities, it is difficult to hold on to a vision that the world does not have to be the way it currently is. But we can take heart because the pit or hole we find ourselves in is not the finished product. Rather, it is actually an opportunity to gain greater perspective on life and on what is happening around us. Viewed through a kingdom lens—where justice, peace and righteousness are the final product—we get to use our moments in the pit to realize God’s redemptive plan for us and the world can be realized.

1. **Historical dilemma and vision for the future** (Isaiah 9:1-7)
   1. The prophet Isaiah shares a vision of encouragement from God to the struggling Kingdom of Judah. This vision speaks of what God will do and what was yet to come when all seemed lost. Isaiah 9:1
   2. The Israelite people are distressed, discouraged and have been walking in darkness as broken people living in exile for a long time. Yet, in this time of great darkness, Isaiah brings a message of hope that a “great light” is dawning and will bring them out of this great darkness (the valley of death). Isaiah 9:2
   3. Israel will be great again and experience great joy. Isaiah 9:3
   4. God will deal with their oppressors. Isaiah 9:4
   5. Isaiah foretells of the child that would be Israel’s deliverer/Messiah. He is both “Wonderful Counselor” and “Mighty God.” Isaiah 9:6-7 (see also Matthew 4:15-16)
   6. This message of hope is fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ and the establishment of his eternal kingdom. This kingdom will be built on justice and peace both now and forever. Isaiah 9:7

This dramatic vision of the future is like the plan for a finished skyscraper, a blueprint of what life would be like when God’s construction project is completed.

1. **God’s plan for redemption prophesized** (Isaiah 53:1-6)
   1. God chooses to save the world through a humble, suffering servant rather than a glorious king. Isaiah 53:1-3
   2. God’s plan for redemption is not just for one tribe or one people. It demands justice to and from every nation, every tribe and everyone.
   3. God’s plan is contrary to the way the world or human pride would work to get out of the pit. While the Israelites lived in exile as a broken and conquered people, their spiritual, emotional and even physical sufferings always pointed to the need to understand what it meant to be God’s people. But these passages speak hope and proclaim that they will get out of this hole, but not by a means that they could imagine. Isaiah 53:4-6
   4. The Messiah’s strength is demonstrated through humility, suffering and mercy. It is through his suffering as a servant and scandalous love for humanity that Israel is redeemed and continues to redeem us today.
   5. Jesus is the skyscraper that God is building, that God indeed has built.
   6. The hole—the suffering—wasn’t the end for the people of Israel. It isn’t the end for us.
2. **Current Context/Challenge – Miscalculation of the servant’s importance**
   1. Many people today miscalculate the importance of Jesus’ life and work. When Jesus was physically present on earth, Israel miscalculated the importance of the servant-Messiah.
   2. Although Jesus would not attract a large crowd based on his physical appearance, he would be the one to bring salvation and healing.
   3. Jesus understands the systemic nature of social poverty. He sees people who are both spiritually poor and socially poor as being held captive. They are oppressed. They are victims of their circumstances.
   4. Jesus came and died to make possible for those who are socially and spiritually poor to have eyes to see beyond the pit that they are in and envision a brighter future.
3. **Our Response – God’s will for us today**
   1. God has gone through great lengths to make possible his will for us…a right relationship with Him and each other.
   2. Genesis 22:18 reveals God’s plan to redeem the world by setting apart Israel as his people through whom salvation would come to all the nations of the earth.
   3. Although they failed at their task, God remained true to his covenant with them.
   4. Through the preserved line of David (the tribe of Judah) God sent a Savior to the world.
   5. The world still needs faithful disciples today to point out Jesus’ extraordinary nature and mission.
   6. The world we live in today does not have to be the way it is. Racism, homophobia, xenophobia, classism, sexism, and all the things that drive wedges between us are meant to pass.
   7. Both passages in Isaiah provided the people of Israel a glimpse into God’s future plan to use the suffering of the Messiah and the resulting forgiveness made available to all mankind.
   8. We have the benefit of hindsight to see and know the identity of the promised Messiah who has come and died for our sins.
   9. Isaiah 53 foretold this, and it was fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ.
   10. God’s ultimate plan for the world is that it is full of grace and mercy for one and all.

**Conclusion:**

The hole we experience in our lives is not the finished product….it is just the beginning of creating a sure foundation. No matter how big our pit may feel, we worship Jesus who reminds us that our world isn’t finished yet. This hole is not the end.

Jesus invites us right here and now to see that there is so much more to building a skyscraper than making a big hole. If we read just a little farther, we will find that Isaiah 58:9-10, which was written after the people returned from exile in Babylon, describes what the skyscraper may look like:

***9*** *Then you will call and the Lord will answer;*

*you will cry for help, and God will say, “I’m here.”*

*If you remove the yoke from among you,*

*the finger-pointing, the wicked speech;*

***10*** *if you open your heart to the hungry,*

*and provide abundantly to those who are afflicted,*

*your light will shine in the darkness,*

*and your gloom will be like the noon.*

Isaiah 58:9-10 (CEB)

**[Print in Bulletin]**

**Focus for the Week:**

Take 5 minutes each day to ask yourself: What might be holding me back in this season of Lent to fully being present? Allow yourself the time to write your responses and by the end of the week, offer your responses as a prayer to God.

del Rosario, DJ. *Wind in the Wilderness.* Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2016.