

## **Let It Go: Presumptions**

Rev. Cameron D St.Michael – March 15 2026

4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent

**Readings:** 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41 CEB

**Reflection:** Luke 12:16-21

**Call to Worship:** As God's choice, holy and loved, let us put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Be tolerant with each other and let us forgive each other. As the Lord forgave you, so also forgive each other. Over all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. The peace of Christ must control your heart, a peace into which we are called as a thankful people. (Colossians 3)

**Prayer:** Everlasting God, because of your tender mercy toward all people, you sent your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon himself our flesh, and to suffer death up on the cross, that all should follow the example of his great humility. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of his patience and also be made partakers of his resurrection. In this season of preparation, help us to learn to let go of the things that hold us back from your grace and love. Help us to let go of temptation, entitlement, division, presumptions, and doubt. May you strengthen us in your goodness and let us be a reminder of your light. Help us by self-denial, prayer, and meditation to prepare our hearts for deeper penitence and a better life. And give us a true longing to be free from sin, through the deliverance won by Jesus Christ our Redeemer. Amen.

**Reflection:** Luke 12:16-21

*<sup>16</sup> Then he told them a parable: "A certain rich man's land produced a bountiful crop. <sup>17</sup> He said to himself, What will I do? I have no place to store my harvest! <sup>18</sup> Then he thought, Here's what I'll do. I'll tear down my barns and build bigger ones. That's where I'll store all my grain and goods. <sup>19</sup> I'll say to myself, You have stored up plenty of goods, enough for several years. Take it easy! Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself. <sup>20</sup> But God said to him, 'Fool, tonight you will die. Now who will get the things you have prepared for yourself?' <sup>21</sup> This is the way it will be for those who hoard things for themselves and aren't rich toward God." (Luke 12:16-21 CEB+)*

We read the words of Luke 12, and we hear of how we should be weary of storing up things for ourselves now. That we shouldn't put off until tomorrow the good we could be doing today. The we must let go of presumptions about the future and live for today. That God will be with us in every step of our journey. What are you giving up for Lent to draw you closer to God? How will you reach out to your neighbor in this time of reflection? Who can you lift up in your prayers? What does Lent mean to you?

**Prayer:** Gracious God, you know our hearts and our lives; we are ever before you exposed and vulnerable. We turn to you once more as we seek your guidance and your mercy in our lives. May you bless us and keep us in all that we are and do. We give thanks for the many wonderful things we see every day. We thank you for the joys we share here together and for the joys that

stir in our secret heart. We also turn to you with the concerns that we have, knowing that you are always listening. We look to you as our rock in shifting sand and as the calm in the storm. We lift up to you the worries that we keep deep inside and the worries that we share as a community. May you pour out your Holy Spirit upon us in this season of preparation so that our hearts may be renewed in your love. Let us turn from those things that draw us from you, that we may let go of the ways that pull us from your love and mercy. May you lead us through the good and the bad, through the confusion and the unknown, that we may follow you always. May we walk with you through sorrow and joy, knowing that you are our all in all. May we rest assured because of the salvation we find in your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

### **Sermon:**

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading is from 1 Samuel chapter 16, verses 1 through 13.

*16 The Lord said to Samuel, "How long are you going to grieve over Saul? I have rejected him as king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and get going. I'm sending you to Jesse of Bethlehem because I have found my next king among his sons." 2 "How can I do that?" Samuel asked. "When Saul hears of it he'll kill me!" "Take a heifer with you," the Lord replied, "and say, 'I have come to make a sacrifice to the Lord.' 3 Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will make clear to you what you should do. You will anoint for me the person I point out to you." 4 Samuel did what the Lord instructed. When he came to Bethlehem, the city elders came to meet him. They were shaking with fear. "Do you come in peace?" they asked. 5 "Yes," Samuel answered. "I've come to make a sacrifice to the Lord. Now make yourselves holy, then come with me to the sacrifice." Samuel made Jesse and his sons holy and invited them to the sacrifice as well. 6 When they arrived, Samuel looked at Eliab and thought, That must be the Lord's anointed right in front. 7 But the Lord said to Samuel, "Have no regard for his appearance or stature, because I haven't selected him. God doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart." 8 Next Jesse called for Abinadab, who presented himself to Samuel, but he said, "The Lord hasn't chosen this one either." 9 So Jesse presented Shammah, but Samuel said, "No, the Lord hasn't chosen this one." 10 Jesse presented seven of his sons to Samuel, but Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord hasn't picked any of these." 11 Then Samuel asked Jesse, "Is that all of your boys?" "There is still the youngest one," Jesse answered, "but he's out keeping the sheep." "Send for him," Samuel told Jesse, "because we can't proceed until he gets here." 12 So Jesse sent and brought him in. He was reddish brown, had beautiful eyes, and was good-looking. The Lord said, "That's the one. Go anoint him." 13 So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him right there in front of his brothers. The Lord's spirit came over David from that point forward. Then Samuel left and went to Ramah. (1 Samuel 16:1-13 CEB+)*

Our second reading is from Ephesians chapter 5, verses 8 through 14.

<sup>8</sup> You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord, so live your life as children of light. <sup>9</sup> Light produces fruit that consists of every sort of goodness, justice, and truth. <sup>10</sup> Therefore, test everything to see what's pleasing to the Lord, <sup>11</sup> and don't participate in the unfruitful actions of darkness. Instead, you should reveal the truth about them. <sup>12</sup> It's embarrassing to even talk about what certain persons do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But everything exposed to the light is revealed by the light. <sup>14</sup> Everything that is revealed by the light is light. Therefore, it says, Wake up, sleeper! Get up from the dead, and Christ will shine on you. (Ephesians 5:8-14 CEB+)

Our final reading is from John chapter 9, verses 1 through 41.

**9** As Jesus walked along, he saw a man who was blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> Jesus' disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?" <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered, "Neither he nor his parents. This happened so that God's mighty works might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> While it's daytime, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." <sup>6</sup> After he said this, he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and smeared the mud on the man's eyes. <sup>7</sup> Jesus said to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (this word means sent). So the man went away and washed. When he returned, he could see. <sup>8</sup> The man's neighbors and those who used to see him when he was a beggar said, "Isn't this the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup> Some said, "It is," and others said, "No, it's someone who looks like him." But the man said, "Yes, it's me!" <sup>10</sup> So they asked him, "How are you now able to see?" <sup>11</sup> He answered, "The man they call Jesus made mud, smeared it on my eyes, and said, 'Go to the pool of Siloam and wash.' So I went and washed, and then I could see." <sup>12</sup> They asked, "Where is this man?" He replied, "I don't know." <sup>13</sup> Then they led the man who had been born blind to the Pharisees. <sup>14</sup> Now Jesus made the mud and smeared it on the man's eyes on a Sabbath day. <sup>15</sup> So Pharisees also asked him how he was able to see. The man told them, "He put mud on my eyes, I washed, and now I see." <sup>16</sup> Some Pharisees said, "This man isn't from God, because he breaks the Sabbath law." Others said, "How can a sinner do miraculous signs like these?" So they were divided. <sup>17</sup> Some of the Pharisees questioned the man who had been born blind again: "What do you have to say about him, since he healed your eyes?" He replied, "He's a prophet." <sup>18</sup> The Jewish leaders didn't believe the man had been blind and received his sight until they called for his parents. <sup>19</sup> The Jewish leaders asked them, "Is this your son? Are you saying he was born blind? How can he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know he is our son. We know he was born blind. <sup>21</sup> But we don't know how he now sees, and we don't know who healed his eyes. Ask him. He's old enough to speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they feared the Jewish authorities. This is because the Jewish authorities had already decided that whoever confessed Jesus to be the Christ would be expelled from the synagogue. <sup>23</sup> That's why his parents said, "He's old enough. Ask him." <sup>24</sup> Therefore, they called a second time for the man who had been born blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup> The man answered, "I don't know whether he's a sinner. Here's what I do know: I was blind and now I see." <sup>26</sup> They questioned him: "What did he do to you? How did he heal your eyes?" <sup>27</sup> He replied, "I already told you, and you

*didn't listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?"*  
<sup>28</sup> *They insulted him: "You are his disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. <sup>29</sup> We know that God spoke to Moses, but we don't know where this man is from."* <sup>30</sup> *The man answered, "This is incredible! You don't know where he is from, yet he healed my eyes! <sup>31</sup> We know that God doesn't listen to sinners. God listens to anyone who is devout and does God's will. <sup>32</sup> No one has ever heard of a healing of the eyes of someone born blind. <sup>33</sup> If this man wasn't from God, he couldn't do this."* <sup>34</sup> *They responded, "You were born completely in sin! How is it that you dare to teach us?" Then they expelled him. <sup>35</sup> Jesus heard they had expelled the man born blind. Finding him, Jesus said, "Do you believe in the Human One?" <sup>36</sup> He answered, "Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him." <sup>37</sup> Jesus said, "You have seen him. In fact, he is the one speaking with you." <sup>38</sup> The man said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshipped Jesus. <sup>39</sup> Jesus said, "I have come into the world to exercise judgment so that those who don't see can see and those who see will become blind." <sup>40</sup> Some Pharisees who were with him heard what he said and asked, "Surely we aren't blind, are we?" <sup>41</sup> Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you wouldn't have any sin, but now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains. (John 9:1-41 CEB+)*

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

This week we look at how we learn to let go of presumptions. This one is interesting because it touches on many things that happen in our lives. Because we make presumptions about things all the time. We may make presumptions about the people that we meet, about the way the world works, about what people have done, and about how things should be done. The issue with presumptions is that they are often just based on an opinion and not on how things actually are. And they often start from a place of ignorance.

To explain what I mean by this, we start with our reading from John. Because I think it sets the tone for the rest of our readings. Because the first thing that happens in our reading is that Jesus and his followers see a man who is blind from birth. The question the disciples have is, "Rabbi who sinned so that he was born blind, this man or his parents?" Now the reason this is an interesting question is that it starts with a presumption. It does not ask if anyone sinned for this man to be born blind. It starts from the premise and the assumption that somebody had to have sinned. That this was someone's sin being born out. The response Jesus gives is to reject the assumption being made. To say that it was not sin that caused this. He explains that this man is blind so that Jesus can heal him. That Jesus will take this unfortunate thing and turn it into something positive. He's doing God's work. He bends down, makes mud and puts it on the man's eyes. The man washes it and can see. This starts a whole new chain of issues for this man that has been healed. All because of the presumptions being made about him. Now we're going to circle back around to this man's story. But I wanted to start there because that question highlights just how easy it is for us to make an assumption and to presume that we already know something that we in fact don't know.

We see this again in 1 Samuel. Here the Lord has told Samuel to go find the new king. Samuel goes to see Jesse in Bethlehem. They are looking at all of the sons of Jesse. Every time Samuel sees one, he thinks that this must be the Lord's anointed. He sees someone who is exactly what he imagines a king to be and because that's what he imagines a king to be, he

makes the assumption and presumes that this is the one God has chosen. God speaks to Samuel and says, "Have no regard for his appearance or stature, because I haven't selected him. God doesn't look at things like humans do. Humans see only what is visible to the eyes, but the Lord sees into the heart." Samuel has based his idea on this presumption that he knows what it is God is looking for. And it turns out he's wrong. This is something that happens an awful lot with our presumptions. We quickly find out that we have made a guess from ignorance. We think that our limited knowledge is all the knowledge possible to have. Every son is presented and Samuel and none are found to be the next king. Samuel has to ask if this actually is all of Jesse's sons. The youngest, the last, the least of Jesse's sons has not been called in because he's out tending the sheep. They didn't think David was important enough to bring to Samuel. But when David comes, Samuel anoints him. Not the oldest, but the youngest, overturning any of the presumptions that were made about who it is that would be chosen.

Ephesians talks about how we have to test our presumptions. Because we were once of darkness and now we are of light. But we must make sure that everything that we do conforms to the light and that we don't persist in the darkness. That we find justice and goodness and truth. That we need to test everything. What I think Paul means by this in his letter to the Ephesians is that we need to evaluate everything in our lives to make sure that we're not making presumptions about what will happen. That we are not making presumptions about whether or not it's good and that we test it to know if it is good. We test it to know if somebody is benefiting or hurting from our actions. We test what people tell us. Not just assuming that they are correct, but testing it to make sure that it is true and that it is right and that it is good. Because the truth matters. We should be of the light, letting all we know come into the light. That we need to make sure that we are paying attention to the things going on around us and that we aren't making presumptions that will land us in trouble. That we shouldn't participate in those hidden actions of darkness, but that we should bring everything into the light and judge it accordingly. That if we find something to be lacking then we should let it go. That we should look at it with fresh eyes so that we are not assuming that we already do know.

Now, this circles back around into our reading from John. Because we see an ever-growing list of presumptions that have been made. Because people can't believe what they see with their own eyes. Because once this blind man is healed by Jesus, his neighbors start to say that it is not him. That he is someone who looks like him because he couldn't have been healed. The neighbors take this man to the Pharisees because it's the Sabbath. They presume anybody who does work on the Sabbath is bad. That Jesus must be a sinner. They can't understand how a sinner could do anything good. The blind man claims that Jesus is a prophet. The religious leaders cannot accept this because they have made the presumption that whoever did this has to be a sinner and cannot be a good person. All because they have misinterpreted the law. They ask his parents and his parents confirm the healed man is their son but know nothing beyond that. They suggest asking him. The leaders want him to proclaim that Jesus was a sinner. The man born blind says he does not know if this Jesus is a sinner. What he does know is that he once was blind but now can see. They want to know how he did it. They're so insistent that he asks if they're wanting to become his disciples too. They talk about how they don't want to be his disciples because they don't even know where he's from. And the blind man says, "This is incredible! You don't know where he is from, yet he healed my eyes!" They are presuming that since Jesus did this on the Sabbath that he can't be good. They are missing the fact that this man born blind has been healed. The man proclaims that

Jesus has to be from God. Because otherwise he wouldn't have been able to heal him. They respond with their own prejudice, born of their presumptions. That he was born completely in sin, so he can't tell them anything and they kick him out. Jesus finds him and Jesus welcomes him. He talks about how those who don't see can see and those who see will become blind. The Pharisees are incensed, thinking there's no way they could be called blind. We've heard how much they hate that idea. Because they presume that this man was born into sin and that if they're blind, they must have that same sin.

That's the thing about presumptions. They become so pervasive that we may not even realize we have made them. We assume something is true and we hold to it. Sometimes it happens because it's something we were told as children and we have never taken the time to think on whether or not it's true. We have never taken the time to evaluate critically the things that we have been told. The issue is that that kind of presumption can lead to all sorts of prejudice. It can lead us down the wrong path because we haven't stopped to ask, is this true? We have made assumption after assumption, not stopping to discern what the truth of the matter is, not stopping to think about what it is God wants from us. And if we have not stopped to ask what it is God wants from us, then surely we are going to run into an issue because our presumptions will lead us away from God. It's what we saw in our readings. Had Samuel not listened to God and followed his presumptions, he would have picked the wrong son of Jesse. The disciples and the Pharisees all thought that the man born blind was blind because of someone's sin and couldn't fathom that his blindness was not related to someone else's failure. But it also caused them to be blind themselves to this man's suffering. And that's the problem that we face when we face our presumptions is that they can cause us to be blind to the reality around us because we see the reality we have created in our own minds. That is the danger that we run into because we don't end up following the Christ who was crucified so that we could be set free from sin and death. We end up following the Christ we have created in our own minds because of presumptions. It is only when we learn to love our neighbor and to love God without presumptions. We must see God for who he is, and to see our neighbor as people deserving of love. Only then are we truly walking with Christ. We must overcome our presumptions.

So, I say, let it go. Let go of the need to presume that we know more than we actually do. Let go of the presumptions that we make about our neighbors that keep us from loving them as we love ourselves. Learn discipline and learn self-control so that you can learn to make observations based not on assumptions but on reality, and to be quick to forgive instead of to judge. Because we must be willing to overcome our own ideas and adhere to what it is Christ teaches us. That we must let go of the assumptions that we make that divide us from our fellow human beings. That we must humble ourselves before God, admitting that we do not know everything. Because instead of making presumptions, we should be full of grace, so that we may walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ our Lord. We must let the Holy Spirit guide us because our Heavenly Father will always remind us of his mercy to help us to overcome any presumptions. And if we are willing to follow, we can always learn to let it go. Amen.

**Offering:** If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

**Lord's Prayer**

**Dismissal with Blessing:** May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

### **Our Current Series – Let It Go**

Our series for Lent is all about what we can give up as we follow Christ. "Let It Go" starts with an introduction on Ash Wednesday and then goes through the different things we can let go of. We explore the idea of giving things up for Lent as we explore how we can let go of temptation, entitlement, division, presumptions, and doubt. Let us work together to let go of worldly desires as we walk towards the cross.

2/18: Learning to Let Go      2/22: Temptation      3/1: Entitlement

3/8: Division      3/15: Presumptions      3/22: Doubt

#### **Neoga Grace UMC**

752 Walnut  
PO Box 610  
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(217)895-2809  
Worship 10:30am

#### **Toledo UMC**

Madison & Ohio St  
PO Box 267  
Toledo, IL 62468  
Worship 8:15am

#### **Etna UMC**

2799 Etna Rd  
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