

April 16 Adult Spiritual Growth Class Synopsis

Let There Be Light: A Study of FPC Stained-Glass Windows – The House of the Lord (Psalm 42)

First Presbyterian Church has been blessed with parishioner memorial gifts of 15 beautiful stained-glass windows over the years, as summarized in the wonderful guide put together by Virginia Wiley in 1990, as part of the 175 year anniversary celebration of the church. The window of focus is that of the House of the Lord, located in the Vestibule on the left from the front entrance.

The window is one of two in the Vestibule, which are the newest in our church. The window was installed in 1973 with the theme of “I went to the house of the Lord” from Psalm 42:4, suggested by Dr. Jerold Shetler, the pastor at the time.

The window combines Biblical figures, with Jesus the most pictorially significant, along with our church in the right background, symbolizing the perpetuation of Christ’s Church to today. We see Jesus shrouded fully by His glory, standing on greenery symbolizing everlasting life. With Holy Nimbus and robed in light purple/violet, Jesus is shown as the royal ‘Prince of Peace and King of Kings’, with His human lineage coming from the house of King David. The nail markings in His hands and His tunic colored red signify His suffering and sacrifice on the cross. Interestingly, the tunic is tucked into His sash (belt), possibly representing the belt of truth as in *Ephesians 6:13-14*: ‘take up the whole armor of God ... having fastened on the belt of truth’, which is founded in Jesus’ prayer for His disciples: “Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

The window depicts four men, two kneeling in praise and two standing, as if asking questions while being taught by Christ. The man kneeling and robed in royal purple is likely King David given the Psalm 42 reference scripture. The other man in the foreground, robed in turquoise with gold tunic and kneeling on pebbles of stone, is possibly the Apostle Peter. Christ granted Peter as head of His Church in *Matthew 16:17-19*: “...thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church...” The Greek name of the New Testament that Christ gave Peter was *petros*, meaning a pebble or small stone. The word for rock in Greek is *petra*, meaning a massive rock or bedrock. Jesus was thus making the point of the truth that God had revealed to Peter, the pebble, about Jesus being the Christ, the rock.

The two men standing in the background are robed in brown tunics signifying humility. The two men, shown with skull caps, which are not consistent with headwear of Jesus’ time, and with robes appearing to be clerical, could be early church fathers from the 2nd century, Although the headwear is not consistent with that of the 16th century, the two men may be John Calvin, reformed Protestant theologian known for the doctrines of predestination and God’s absolute sovereignty, and John Knox, founder of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

The background of the window is blue representing Christ’s hope in and through His Church.

Psalm 42 is the reference scripture for the window. Most likely, the setting of the psalm is that the sons of Korah—the leaders of tabernacle worship to whom the psalm is attributed—were accompanying King David as he was driven from Jerusalem by his rebellious son Absalom into the northern hills of Mount Hebron. As David and those faithful to him fled for their lives, they looked back in sadness at their home of Jerusalem, remembering and longing for times of joyful communal worship to God and faithful fellowship in the temple more than 100 miles away. Psalm 42 is a record of their thoughts in that time of exile.

The sons of Korah were Levites, from the family of Kohath. By David's time they served in the musical aspect of the temple worship. Korah led a rebellion of 250 community leaders against Moses during the wilderness days of the Exodus. God judged Korah and his leaders and they all died, but the sons of Korah remained. They may have been so grateful for this mercy that they became notable in Israel for praising God.

The songwriter laments his great need and thirst for God's presence like a deer panting for streams of water. The emphasis is on the desperation of the need where sorrow is always a sense of lack. The exiles were longing for their Savior in tears while their enemies taunted them, even to the point that they had no appetite in their feeling of isolation. Cut off from Jerusalem, they could only remember what it was like to take part in worship with shouts of joy in the festive processions. In the reminiscing, the songwriter attempts to encourage himself in the Lord and place his hope in God. The songwriter waffles between confident hope that he would soon be able to praise the Lord as he had in the past, and despair of a "downcast soul" over his present affliction.

Perhaps in the presence of a waterfall in the exiled high country, the psalmist laments figuratively, "*Deep calls to deep in the roar of your waterfalls; all your waves and breakers have swept over me*". The Hebrew word translated here as "deep" refers to the deepest depths of the sea. The sons of Korah exiled with David had lost all footing, and they felt as if recurring waves of trouble had plunged their souls into a bottomless ocean of sorrow and despair. The psalmist is expressing the fact that his soul was in profound deep need of God and His unfathomable greatness and depth. F.B. Meyer thought of this as the depths of God answering to the depths of human need. "Whatever depths there are in God, they appeal to corresponding depths in us. And whatever the depths of our sorrow, desire, or necessity, there are correspondences in God from which full supplies may be obtained. The deep of divine redemption calls to the deep of human need. The deep of Christ's wealth calls to the deep of the saint's poverty. The deep of the Holy Spirit's intercession calls to the deep of the Church's prayer."

The psalmist pauses from the painful memory to challenge his own soul. He does not surrender to his feelings of spiritual depression and discouragement. Instead, he challenges them and brings them before God. "*Hope in God. He will come through because He has before.*" Even in this low time, there remains hope. He is assured by '*God's love directed by day and at night by God's song within him, giving praise*'.

The psalmist has the confidence to call God his Rock – his place of security, stability, and strength. At the same time he could honestly bring his feelings to God and ask, "Why have You forgotten me?" It was because he regarded God as his Rock that he could pour out his soul before Him so honestly. The psalmist senses God sustaining him, but his battle is not over. There is the constant oppression of the enemy. The taunt, "Where is your God?" continues from them. As the *oppression of the enemy* continues, so the psalmist continues to speak to himself and challenge his own sense of discouragement, repeating the helpful and encouraging words that the psalmist and everyone buried under discouragement needs – '*keep hope in God and keep confidence that I shall yet praise Him*'.

We recall in Psalm 84:10 that there was no place in the world that David regarded or cared to be in comparison to God's presence: "*A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.*" In Psalm 27:4, David exclaims, "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple."

The prophet Isaiah speaks to the joy that God promised long ago: *"Then will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people."* (Isaiah 56:7)

As spoken by David and Isaiah, may it always be so for each of us and for our church family

A song to reflect and pray on

[\(131\) Lord From Sorrows Deep I Call \(Psalm 42\) - YouTube](#)

Looking ahead – Sunday April 23

Vestibule Window II – First Miracle in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11)