

**The Green Hill Presbyterian Church**  
**Sunday, March 15, 2026 – Table Copy**

**SILENT PREPARATION**

The psalm for this Sunday is the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm. What keeps me from fully trusting in Jesus, the Good Shepherd?

*“Trust the past to God’s mercy, the present to God’s love,  
and the future to God’s providence.”* — Saint Augustine of Hippo

**PRAYER OF INVOCATION (*Unison*)**

**Holy God, we sense your involvement in our lives. Like a shepherd, you watch over us, and provide abundantly beyond our needs. You lead us in the right paths when we are tempted to go astray. You refresh us with living water that overflows with your generosity. Let your light shine on us now, to reveal truth we have not seen, and open our eyes to possibilities we may not have realized, for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

Most Gracious God, whose eye is on the inward thoughts and inclinations of the heart: Grant that – by the reading and hearing of your Word this day – the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened, that we might both see – and understand – what is really important. May we then so order our lives for the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

**FIRST READING: I Samuel 16:1-13**

*Our first reading comes from the first book of Samuel,  
one of the historical books in the Hebrew scriptures.  
As we come to our reading, Saul – the first king of Israel –  
has disobeyed the word of the LORD,  
and the LORD – therefore – has rejected Saul as king...*

The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul?  
I have rejected him from being king over Israel.  
Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite,  
for I have provided for myself a king among his sons."

Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me."  
And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you,  
and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.'  
Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do;  
and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you."

Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem.

The elders of the city came to meet him trembling,  
and said, "Do you come peaceably?"  
He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD;  
sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice."  
And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought,  
"Surely the Lord's anointed is now before the LORD."

But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance,  
or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him;  
for the LORD does not see as mortals see;  
they look on the outward appearance,  
but the LORD looks on the heart."

Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel.  
He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."  
Then Jesse made Shammah pass by.  
And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one."  
Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel,  
and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these."

Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?"  
And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep."  
And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him;  
for we will not sit down until he comes here."

He sent and brought him in.  
Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome.  
The LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one."  
Then Samuel took the horn of oil,  
and anointed him in the presence of his brothers;  
and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.

Samuel then set out, and went to Ramah.

**SECOND READING:** Ephesians 5:1-2, 6-17

*Our second reading comes from Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus.*

*As Paul begins to bring this letter to a close,*

*he outlines the do's and don't's of being imitators of God in Jesus Christ.*

*And – to make his argument even more clear –*

*he uses the metaphors of light and darkness.*

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children,  
and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us,  
a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Let no one deceive you with empty words,  
for – because of these things –  
the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient.  
Therefore do not be associated with them.

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light.  
Live as children of light —  
for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.

Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord.

Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.  
For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly;  
but everything exposed by the light becomes visible,  
for everything that becomes visible is light.

Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise,  
making the most of the time, because the days are evil.  
So do not be foolish,  
but understand what the will of the Lord is.

## SERMON

### “Third Culture Thinking”

Where are *you* from?

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That’s a **common question** –  
asked at **parties**, or anytime **strangers get together**.

But – in a **world** that’s both increasingly *mobile* – and increasingly *global* –  
it’s a **question** that’s a lot *more complex* than it used to be.

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According to **one research study**,  
**six in 10 Americans** *have moved* to a **new community** –  
*at least once* in their lives.

And – as a result –  
the **definition** of where one’s “home” is has become *much more fluid*.

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Consider this:

**38 percent of Americans** *do not* consider the *place they are now living*  
to be “home.”

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**Some** consider “home” to be *where they were born and raised*.

**Others** say it’s *where they lived the longest*,  
**others**, where *their family comes from*,  
or – **still others** – *where they went to high school*.

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And – if there’s **domestic confusion** about “home” –  
it’s even more apparent in the **highly-globalized world**,  
where *international travel* – and *living abroad* –  
are *now quite common*.

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**Previous generations** tended to *stay put* –  
unless **someone** was in the *military*,  
the *foreign service*,  
or on the *mission field*.

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But, **emerging generations** – in the **United States** –  
are *now increasingly more likely* to spend at least part of their lives  
living in a *completely different culture* in **another country**.

And, the **reasons** include *parental moves*,  
*study abroad* programs,  
or a myriad of other reasons –  
linked to the **emerging global economy**.

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Sociologist and anthropologist **Ruth Useem**  
*calls these young nomads “Third Culture Kids”* –  
the *acronym* is TCK.

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And, **she** defines such as

“a person who has *spent a significant part* of his or her developmental years *outside* the parents' culture.

“The **TCK** frequently *builds relationships to all* [that is, to each] of the cultures, *while not having full ownership in any*.

“Although *elements from each culture* may be assimilated into the **TCK**'s life experience, the sense of belonging is *in relationship to others of similar background*.”

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So – if the “*first culture*” is the **parents' home culture**, and the “*second culture*” is the **new culture** in which they *are now living* – then the “*third culture*” is a **kind of hybrid** of the two.

And, **this reality** – then – leads the **TCK** to *pause a minute or two* when asked the question, “***Where are you from?***”

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**TCKs** – then – do life a little differently.

Here are **some of the signs** – so that *you might recognize* one:

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- The person's *accent changes* – depending on *who's with them*.
  - They are really good at *calculating time differences* – because they have to do it every time they make a phone call.
  - They spend a crazy amount of time in *airports*, and on *airplanes*.
  - Their *circle of friends* is as racially – and ethnically – diverse.
  - They can *swear convincingly* in five different languages.
  - They don't call a country “*home*,” they call it their “*passport country*.”
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Accordingly,

TCKs tend to gravitate toward *those who are like them* –  
regardless of their **nationality** –  
rather than to those from their “*passport country.*”

And – for **this reason** –

*we can say that they live in a culture that’s all their own.*

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*In a similar way,*

we get a sense – from *reading the letters* of the **apostle Paul** –  
that **he** was also a *third culture kind of guy.*

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**Paul** was born in **Tarsus** in **Cilicia** – modern day **Turkey** –  
a **Roman center for trade.**

He was educated in **Jerusalem** – a *thoroughly Jewish culture.*

Then – *after his conversion* – on the road to **Damascus** –

**Paul winds up traveling** throughout the **Mediterranean** world,  
visiting a *myriad of other cultures* –  
from **Asia Minor**,  
to **Greece**,  
to **Rome.**

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And – in **each place** – he *learns how to communicate* –

using the *symbols* – and *conventions* – of **that particular culture** –  
in order to *bring the good news* about **Jesus** to *them.*

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Indeed, **Paul** describes this *strategy*

in his **First Letter** to the **Corinthians:**

(9:19-23)

“For *though I am free* with respect to all,  
I have *made myself a slave* to all,  
so that *I might win more* of them.

To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews.

To those under the law I became as one under the law  
(though I myself am not under the law)  
so that I might win those under the law.

To those outside the law I became as one outside the law  
(though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law)  
so that I might win those outside the law.

To the weak I became weak,  
so that I might win the weak.

I have become all things to all people,  
that I might by all means save some.

I do it all for the sake of the gospel,  
so that I may share in its blessings.”

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**Paul's passport** would *certainly have looked*  
like it *had been to Hades* – and back:

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It would – most probably – have included:  
some *blood-stained* and *torn pages* – from all those beatings,  
*water damage* – from shipwrecks,  
and maybe a few *government notations* –  
to put him on a *watch list as a potential troublemaker*.

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But – even as he moved from place to place –  
**Paul** recognized that the **three cultures** – the ones he was dealing with –  
were not really about:P  
where one was *born.....*,  
what *borders* one crossed.....,  
or what *accent* one used.....

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Rather, **Paul** was *looking at culture* through the **lens of Christ**  
and the **kingdom of God**.

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And *that* gave him a *very clear sense of home* –  
as well as *a way of relating to whatever culture* he *found himself in*.

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Indeed – as he wrote to the **Ephesians** –  
**Paul** gave them a remarkable *lesson in sociology*.

That is, what it means to be **Christ-followers** –  
who *live in* the world, but are not actually *from it*.

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And – *in so doing* – **Paul** gives us a look  
at the *three cultures* in which every **follower of Jesus** lives:

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**The First Culture is the Culture of Relationship.**

For *those who follow Christ*, the *first culture* – our “*home*” –  
*is not* as much about **location**, as it is about **relationship**.

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Earlier in his letter – in **Ephesians 3:14** –  
**Paul** reminds his readers that it is **God the Father** –  
“*from whom every family in heaven and on earth takes its name.*”

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In the book of **Genesis**,  
we learn that *we are created in God’s image* –  
*to be in relationship with God*,  
and to *reflect his glory* through our **life, and work**.

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And – as such – **Paul** says – we are created to be “*children of light.*” (v. 7)

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**Our home** – then – is in **God**.

And – *wherever* we find ourselves –  
we recognize that **God** is *already there*.

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For **Paul** himself,  
being “*at home*” is to be “*filled with the Spirit*” of **God**.

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So **home** – then – is a **place** where *the custom is*  
to sing **songs of praise** – and **thanksgiving** – to **God**. (vv. 19-20)

And, it is this “*home*” that produces in us the “*fruit of the light*” –  
all that is “*good, and right, and true,*”  
and “*pleasing to the Lord.*”

(v. 9)  
(v. 10)

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**This** – then – is the way *that we were meant to live: At home with God.*

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Notice that **Paul** *does not* say that *heaven* is our **permanent home**,  
and that – as the **old hymn** says –  
we’re “*just a-passin’ through.*”

Rather – from beginning to end –  
**Scripture** is all about how **God** makes **God’s home** –  
**God’s dwelling place** –  
with *us*.

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We were *created to live* with **God** *within* creation –  
a **home** that’s both our past, *and* our future.

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**The Second Culture is the Culture of Darkness.**

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The *problem* is that – from the beginning –  
humans have *wanted to move away* from **home**,  
*and away* from **God**.

Our *rebellious nature* – often called the *sin nature* –  
invites us to *look elsewhere* for a **home**.

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That is, somewhere where we can be *autonomous*,  
and *create a name* for ourselves.

Remember, so it was with the **people** who *began to build* the **Tower of Babel** –  
**they** wanted *make a name* for themselves.... (Genesis 11:1-9)

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And – when *that* happens –  
we become “*darkened in [our] understanding,*  
*alienated from the life of God*  
*because of [our] ignorance and hardness of heart.*” (4:18)

Sin – then – *moves us* from “*light*” to “*darkness*,”  
and into a culture that is really a *form of exile* from home.

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The **second culture of sin** has its *own language and customs* as well.

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Paul calls them the “*unfruitful works of darkness*,” (v. 11)  
and lists some of the accents they take on:

fornication,  
impurity,  
obscene, silly and vulgar talk,”  
drunkenness,  
and debauchery.

(vv. 3-4, 18)

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And – like those TCKs –  
it’s *pretty easy* for **us** to adopt the **way of life**  
lived in this **second culture**.

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We can begin to *make our home* there,  
to the point that we *forget from where it is* that we *came*,  
and to *what family we truly belong*.

And – like the **Ephesians** – *we can become* so much “*in darkness*”  
that *we forget* that **we are** – *actually* – **children of light**. (v. 8)

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**BUT HERE IS THE INHERENT CHALLENGE:**

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Because these **two cultures** are *so distinct* from each other,  
it is possible to be *so entrenched* in one that we *never engage* the other.

And, this is a *particular problem* for those  
who only stay spiritually at home in the first culture.

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**That is to say,**  
if *all we are focused on* is **our personal home** with **God**,  
then *we will never reach out* to **those** in the **second culture**.

And – *as a result* – **second culture people**  
*will never hear* the **good news** – and *come to lead* a **new life**.

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**Therefore**, we need to live in a **third culture** –  
one that's *more like* the one that **Jesus describes** for his disciples –  
a **culture** that is *always on the go* – into the world.

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Here, we remember **Jesus's words** –  
in *what we know* as the **Great Commission**....

**“Go, into all the world, and make disciples....”**

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*Speaking of Jesus' words,*  
one of the *great misquotes* of **Jesus**  
concerns **what he said** about the *relationship*  
of *his kingdom* – of light –  
to the *present world of darkness*.

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Most often, **Jesus** is quoted as saying – to **Pontius Pilate** –  
**“My kingdom is not OF this world.”**

(John 18:36)

The original **Greek** – however – clearly has **Jesus** saying,  
**“My kingdom is not FROM this world.”**

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So, *it is not* that **Jesus** is focused on a *heavenly kingdom* – somewhere *far away* –  
that's our **permanent home address**.

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Rather, **Jesus** says that *his kingdom*  
*is not* the kind of **second culture kingdom**  
that the **present world** *makes its home in*;  
it is not *from* this world.

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But, *it is* a **kingdom** that *is certainly* **FOR** this world.

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Otherwise, **Jesus** *would not* have **taught us to pray**,

**“your kingdom come, your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.”**

(Matthew 6:10)

And so – according to both **Jesus and Paul** –  
we need to become **Third Culture Christians**.

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The **Third Culture** – then – is the Culture of **Engagement**.

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Our “*citizenship*” – our *passport country* –  
is indeed heavenly in nature.

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But – nevertheless – *our calling*  
is to *colonize a dark world* with the **light of Christ**:

The **Savior** *who is coming* into the world,  
to  *dwell with us* forever,  
and – *finally* –

to *make all cultures one* in **his kingdom**. (Philippians 3:20)

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And, it is the **light of his kingdom** that *makes everything visible*:

“*for everything that becomes visible is light,*” (5:13)

a **kingdom** where *those who were dead* – in **darkness** –  
will be *raised again* –

because the **light of Christ** *shines on them*. (5:14)

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It is this **third culture** that *requires us to live* with a *foot in both worlds*.

And so – **Paul** cautions the **Ephesians** –  
*not to associate* with them,  
and *not to be like* them,

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But, that *does not* mean that we *don't engage* **second culture people**  
with the **good news**. (v. 7)

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Rather, we *identify* with **second culture sinners** –  
because *we've been there* ourselves.

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But – all the while –  
*we remember where we've come from.*

We remember that our *real home* is with **God**,  
in **God's new creation**,  
*a home made possible by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.*

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We are not *from* the **world of darkness**,  
but we are certainly *made to continue* **Christ's work** for that **world** –  
a **world** that **Christ** loved – enough to die. (John 3:16)

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So, *what* – then – *might our living* in this **third culture** mean for us?

A few suggestions – then – for **Third Culture Thinking**:

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- That **we're at home** – *wherever we are* –  
because we know that **God** is *already there*.
  
  - That **our accent changes** –  
*when we're with others* who live in the **second culture**.
  
  - That is, that we *have* an **accent of love, compassion, and forgiveness** –  
*rather than condemnation* – or **judgment**.
  
  - That our **circle of friends** *expands beyond* just other **Christians**,  
to include *those who may come to know* **Christ** through us.  
  
[Make a friend; be a friend; bring a friend to Christ....]
  
  - That **we learn how** to “*bless*” – in a lot of **different languages**.
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Friends, *it is* a **big, wide, wonderful world** in which we *live*.

And, *it was created* by **God** – for **us** to  *dwell with him*.

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May we – then – be **Third Culture Christians**.

May we *live* – and *work* – in it;  
to bring **God's light**,  
and to increase **God's glory**.

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**It is time for us to *seriously engage* in Third Culture Thinking!**  
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**In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit: *Amen*.**  
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**\*AFFIRMATION OF FAITH (*Unison*)**

Adapted from the Second Helvetic Confession (1561)

**Now the works we do by faith are pleasing to God and are approved by God. Because of faith in Christ, those who do good works do them by God's grace through the Holy Spirit. For St. Peter said, "In every nation any one who fears God and does what is right is acceptable to God." And Paul said, "We have not ceased to pray for you...that you may walk worthily of the Lord, fully pleasing him, bearing fruit in every good work."**

**We teach that God rewards our good deeds, yet at the same time we teach that God does not crown in us our merits but his gifts. Accordingly we say that whatever reward we receive is also grace, and is more grace than reward, because the good we do, we do more through God than through ourselves. "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them."**

**CHARGE AND BLESSING**

God's grace is truly amazing.

Indeed, God's grace is so amazing that it must be shared.

But, it will require Third Culture Thinking to share it effectively.

Let us receive the Lord's blessing....