



## preparing

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Ever gotten stuck in the mud? Tires spin, but the car doesn't quite move forward? Perhaps you've found yourself stuck from time-to-time? In a pattern of doing or saying the very thing you wish you wouldn't. Or feeling like you aren't where God wants you to be, but you're not sure what to do next. Psalm 40 reminds us that the Lord hears us when we call out to him and in his perfect timing he will set things right. I wonder where you might be feeling stuck and how a simple, "Lord. Help." prayer can give you a firm place to stand – even in the waiting.

## settling and listening

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You might want to have this conversation while at home or in the car or any time that you hear that still small voice cheering you on.

If at home and if you make it a practice at home to set aside a special time and place, consider laying out a cloth and lighting a candle as you say

LEADER: Come, let us draw near to God.

**PEOPLE: And God will draw near to us.**

Prayer leader can pray. ***"Come, Holy Spirit. As we make space for you, open our ears to hear. Open our mind to understand. Stir our heart. Help us to know and love you more. Amen."***

[pause]

If the nudge to speak comes at a time when you are out and about, just go for it!

***“I wonder if you have ever played in the dirt?”*** Wait to listen and gather their thoughts. ***“I wonder if you have ever mixed dirt with water? What happens?”*** Share responses. ***“That’s right! Mixing dirt and water makes mud! I wonder what mud makes you think of?”*** Listen for responses.

***“As we read from both a Psalm and the Gospel of John today, I want us to listen to how mud is talked about. I wonder what it will make you think of?”***

Invite someone to read Psalm 40:1-3.

***A reading from Psalm 40:1-3.***

1 I was patient while I waited for the Lord.

He turned to me and heard my cry for help.

2 I was sliding down into the pit of death, and he pulled me out.

He brought me up out of the mud and dirt.

He set my feet on a rock.

He gave me a firm place to stand on.

3 He gave me a new song to sing.

It is a hymn of praise to our God.

Many people will see and have respect for the Lord.

They will put their trust in him.

***Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.***

***“What do you notice in this Psalm? How does the Psalmist talk about mud?”***

***“How do you think God ‘brought him up out of the mud and dirt’? What do you think it means that he gave him a firm place to stand on and a new song to sing?”***

Pause to share responses.

***“Now. Let’s hear another story about mud. I wonder what connections you’ll make between this story and the Psalm we just read? I wonder what this story will make you wonder about Jesus?”***

Invite someone to read John 9:1-7.

***A reading from John 9:1-7.***

1 As Jesus went along,  
he saw a man who was blind.  
He had been blind since he was born.  
2 Jesus' disciples asked him,  
"Rabbi, who sinned?  
Was this man born blind because he sinned?  
Or did his parents sin?"  
3 "It isn't because this man sinned," said Jesus.  
"It isn't because his parents sinned.  
He was born blind  
so that God's power could be shown  
by what's going to happen."  
4 While it is still day,  
we must do the works of the one who sent me.  
Night is coming. Then no one can work.  
5 While I am in the world,  
I am the light of the world."  
6 After he said this, he spit on the ground.  
He made some mud with the spit. Then he put the mud on the man's eyes.  
7 "Go," he told him. "Wash in the Pool of Siloam."  
Siloam means Sent.  
So the man went and washed.  
And he came home able to see.

***The Word of the Lord.***

***Thanks be to God.***

***"I wonder what you notice about Jesus in this story? I wonder what connections you make between Psalm 40 and this story in the Gospel of John?"***

As you talk through this next part, you'll be doing a silent demonstration. Please note the steps as you talk.

***"Did you notice in this story that the people believed that the man was blind because he or his parents sinned?"*** Put a few scoops of dirt into a bowl.

***"We know that all of us have sin-sick hearts that cause us to do things that separate us from God."*** Pour a little water into the container and begin to mix it into mud with your hands.

***"And, oh. That sin is not pretty, is it?"*** Hold up your hands that are caked in mud.

***"What do we do when we realize we've done the very thing that we wish we had not done? The very thing that reveals our sin-sick hearts?"*** Use your hands to "wipe" off the mud. ***"Well. Sometimes we push it away pretend it's not there, but we can still see it, can't we?"*** Hold up your mud-stained and still slightly mud-caked hands.

***"Or we try to hide and pretend like it never happened."*** Use a towel to wipe off your hands and then cover up your hands with the muddy towel. ***"But we can still see it, can't we? On the outside . . ."*** Show them the dirty towel. ***"And on the inside."*** Remove the towel to reveal the still mud-stained hands.

***"So what are we to do? What's the ONLY way we can get rid of our sin and clean our muddied hearts?"***

Wait for responses.

***"That's right. We have to wash."*** Pour clean water over your hands as you wash them. ***"Just like Jesus told our blind man friend to wash so that he could now see, Jesus' sacrifice for us on the cross and his resurrection is the washing that our hearts need. By believing in him – and all that he has done for us – we, too, can be forgiven – washed of our sin – and 'see' anew! Isn't that amazing?! Thanks be to God!"***

## **praying**

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Seal your time and conversation by giving thanks to God by saying together the Lord's Prayer or singing the Doxology.