St. Matthew’s—NoHo Mid-Week Lenten Zoom Gatherings
“God’s Vision for Healing and Ending Harm”
Wednesdays in Lent, 6-7pm on Zoom
Zoom link: stmatthewsnoho.org/endingharm

March 9: God’s Vision for Healing and Ending Harm—establishing the Biblical foundation for this theology to end harm

OPENING INTRODUCTIONS AND CHECK-IN
Welcome, ground rules, sharing names, prayer concerns

OPENING PRAYER
We lift up concerns for one another and for the world up to God.

DEFINITIONS: SIN VS. HARM
According to Augustine of Hippo: Sin is a word, deed, or desire in opposition to the eternal law of God (Against the Manicheans).

General Definition: Sin is an act of offence against God by despising God’s persons and Christian biblical law, and by injuring others.

Romans 3:23: “23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Martin Luther: “The sin underneath all our sins is to trust the lie of the serpent that we cannot trust the love and grace of Christ and must take matters into our own hands.”

What, then is harm? Harm is the consequence of sin.
Ordinary harm, extraordinary harm, moral and non-moral

WHAT HARMS DOES GOD SPEAK TO IN SCRIPTURE?
God speaks to a host of harms experienced by people both by portraying the harm, and by presenting remedies to harm. How would you describe the harms referred to or revealed in these passages?

Matthew 2:2-6

2 In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.” 3 When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and calling together all the chief
priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. 5 They told him, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

6 ‘And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, 
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; 
for from you shall come a ruler 
who is to shepherd my people Israel.’”

Luke 4:16-21

16 When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

18 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, 
because he has anointed me 
to bring good news to the poor. 
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives 
and recovery of sight to the blind, 
to let the oppressed go free, 
19 to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Matthew 5:1-12

5 When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 
4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 
5 “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 
6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 
7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. 
8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 
9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 
10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 
11 “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.
HEALING AND ENDING HARM AS GOD’S VISION IN SCRIPTURE

Philippians 2:2-8

2 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. 5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.

Mark 2: 1-12

2 When he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many gathered around that there was no longer room for them, not even in front of the door; and he was speaking the word to them. 3 Then some people came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4 And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him; and after having dug through it, they let down the mat on which the paralytic lay. 5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” 6 Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, “Why does this fellow speak in this way? It is blasphemy! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” 8 At once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves; and he said to them, “Why do you raise such questions in your hearts? 9 Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Stand up and take your mat and walk’? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the paralytic— 11 “I say to you, stand up, take your mat and go to your home.” 12 And he stood up, and immediately took the mat and went out before all of them; so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

SUMMARIZING GOD’S VISION FOR HEALING AND ENDING HARM