

**Faith Lutheran Church**  
**Sunday, January 31, 2021**  
**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany**



**Welcome**

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God,  
whose voice is upon the waters,  
whose mercy is poured out upon all people,  
whose goodness cascades over all creation.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the abundant grace of God.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Most Holy God,

**you search us and know us.**

**You are acquainted with all our ways.**

**We confess that our hearts are burdened by sin—  
our own sins and the broken systems that bind us.**

**We turn inward, failing to follow**

**your outward way of love.**

**We distrust those who are not like us.**

**We exploit the earth and its resources  
and fail to consider generations to come.**

**Forgive us, gracious God,**

**for all we have done and left undone.**

**Even before the words are on our tongues,  
you know them;  
receive them in your divine mercy.**

**Amen.**

How vast is God's grace!

Through the power and promise of ☩ Christ Jesus,  
our sins are washed away

and we are claimed as God's own beloved.

Indeed, we are forgiven.

In the wake of God's forgiveness,  
we are called to be the beloved community  
living out Christ's justice  
and the Spirit's reconciling peace. **Amen.**

**Gathering Hymn:** ELW #310 (*verses 1 & 2*)

*“Song of Thankfulness and Praise”*

**Opening Prayer**

Please join me in the Prayer of the Day:

**Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

## **Readings and Psalm**

- Deuteronomy 18:15-20      *The prophet speaks with God's authority*
- Psalm 111      *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. (Ps. 111:10)*
- 1 Corinthians 8:1-13      *Limits to liberty: the case of food offered to idols*

## **The Holy Gospel according to Mark 1:21-28**

*Forces that would bring death and disease have taken hold of a man, yet they recognize Jesus and know what his power means for them. Jesus commands these forces to leave and people are amazed at his authority.*

<sup>21</sup> [Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.<sup>22</sup> They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup> Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>24</sup> and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” <sup>25</sup> But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” <sup>26</sup> And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. <sup>27</sup> They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” <sup>28</sup> At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ.**

## **Sermon**

**Grace, Mercy, and Peace from God our father and our Lord and savior Jesus Christ!**

Our Gospel readings, during Epiphany season have been reflecting on what it means for Jesus to live amongst us? What do these words mean for followers of Christ?

The story of Jesus began with Jesus' baptism in the Jordan River by John the Baptist, and God Himself declaring that Jesus is the Son of God. Immediately after Jesus' baptism, Jesus was led into wilderness for forty days and forty nights confronting Satan, as he preached about the kingdom of God.

The Holy Gospel for today marks the beginning of Jesus' public ministry amongst us. The text describes a scene in a Synagogue—a setting of prayer, teaching, worshipping, and community gathering. The beginning of our text says, “*They went to Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath Jesus entered the Synagogue and was teaching. And they were astonished at His teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority, and not as the scribes.*” (v.21-22)

We notice that Jesus has the final authority and final word. It is interesting to notice that God himself walked among humans, gathered as one community in the Synagogue and speaks to them directly with great authority. God Himself reached out to teach and speak in the gathered community with His mighty authority and power. In the same way Jesus is present amongst us even today. Jesus is present in our hearts and speaking to us directly with that same mighty authority, assuring us that we are His children, abided in His everlasting love. This is a wonderful and comforting reminder that His presence is with us always.

Today, let us once again focus on the great love God has for us. In our troubled world, in our personal lives, in our joys and sorrows, it is comforting to know that Jesus is present with us in every situation.

Many people in our congregation expressed their appreciation for the music in our service. Some might like the prelude to the worship, and some like to sing during our worship service. It's no wonder that music and songs are the life of our Sunday worship service. During my seminary days, all pastoral candidates were required to take Spiritual Formation class in order to graduate. This subject was designed to teach future pastors how to spend time alone with God, either reading scripture, meditation, or just quiet prayer time. It was all about developing the habit of spending time with God. And I believe singing songs and listening to preludes or postludes to the worship is also time alone with God. It is the only time all week when we can just sit back, and spend some time with God.

Sometimes we feel too busy to stop and do nothing for a few moments each week. This is true for me too sometimes. We feel we need to be active every minute of the day. But we can still find Jesus in the midst of our busy time. We can always find time to slip off to a quiet place to pray. Mark's Gospel tells us how after Jesus' baptism by John, Jesus immediately was led into the wilderness.

Today's Gospel story tells us about how Jesus spoke with courage, truth, and wisdom. It shows how his words touched ordinary people. He spoke with great courage and authority against the evils that existed in the society. He rebuked those who misused the power to dominate others. And Jesus also cast out demons among those present in the crowd.

What are some demons or evils that dominate us in today's world? Is there a demon present in our relationships with our neighbor, in politics, in economics and so on? Are we able to cast them out with courage and authority? The Holy Spirit gives us the courage and authority to cast out demons and evils that exist within us and within our society.

Last Friday I found myself reading a story about a woman from San Diego who was shot and killed by capitol police as she attempted to occupy the capitol and overturn the elections. We have been reading many such incidents during the last couple of weeks. It was very strange to me; it disturbs me to read such incidents. I tried to keep away from such news for a while, but we cannot run away from reality. The world keeps turning and life and death keep happening around us. Later that night I ended up feeling pity for this woman, who had died. I find it hard to acknowledge this, as the action of people like her led to the killing of a capitol police officer and the deaths of three other people. It is frightening. But the truth is, that evil cannot captivate us without our consent.

That is why we pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit to cast out demons like hatred, madness, and destruction, that exists within us and throughout our society. But the ever-present Holy Spirit gives us the power to expel them and gives us hope, love, and courage to resist the voice of violence. We need to resist the socio-political structures that exist and try to overpower the goodness that God created within us.

The Holy Spirit gives us the power to expel evil demons. It gives us hope, love and courage to resist the voice of violence that surrounds us. The amazing grace of God gives us strength and sustains us and keeps us from falling into evil.

Today's Gospel text tells us that people were amazed by Jesus' authority over Law, commandments of God. Jesus teaching the Word of God with authority amazed everybody.

Jesus healed many people, he fed 1000s, cast out demons, calmed the sea, he walked on water, he confronted Satan in the wilderness, he raised Lazarus from the dead, and finally Jesus died on the cross and rose again on the third day to save humanity. His power is amazing. His love towards His children is never ending. Jesus is still amazing to us even today. He brought never ending Grace to all those who believe in Him.

Today we pray that our God's amazing grace is renewed within our lives. We pray that the Holy Spirit guides us, keeps us safe, and binds us together in the love of Christ. God Himself came down and lived amongst us to expel the demons that exist in our society, so that we may follow Him and set an example for others.

As we seek to love and serve in this world, may the everlasting love of God give us courage to speak against the evil, violence, and destruction. Jesus walks amongst us and is always present in our lives and in our hearts.

**Amen.**

**Hymn of the Day:** ELW #779 (verses 1 & 2)

**"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound"**

### **Blessing**

The peace of the lord be with you always  
**and also with you. Amen.**

### **Nicene Creed**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.**

**Amen.**

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

***A brief silence.***

For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For the whole church of Christ, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and all congregations, our national Bishop, Elizabeth, our synodical Bishop Katherine, and our pastor Rita. let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For all God's works in creation: plants and animals, water and soil, forests and farms; and for those tasked with protecting our natural resources and all that exists, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For government and leaders: cities and nations, rescue professionals and legal aid attorneys, elected officials and grassroots organizers; for all responsible for the well-being of civil society, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: those who are sick and hospitalized, those living with HIV/AIDS, those who are hungry or homeless, and all in any need; for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For the concerns of this congregation: those who travel, those absent from worship, those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries; for the people of God in this place and for others in need in our community, especially: Beverly Tankersly, Pastor Matthew Lamb, Connie Mattson, Lori Strickland, Eric Marken, Eva Mohr, Al Picotte, Bill Duff, Bill Vaneffen, Sandra Kaye, Lois Stoppel, Teri DePlonty, Bert Kinnear Jr. and the family and friends of Adam Sanderson, Corri Darou, and Tom Krause. For whom and what else do we pray silently or out loud? (Pause...), let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

For the covenant God made with us in the waters of baptism, in thanksgiving for the baptized who have died in the Lord, let us pray.

**Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **Offering**

*It is generally at this time during the service that worshipers are invited to share their gifts for the Mission and Ministry of the church. Whether you choose to pause at this time or make your contribution following this service, we encourage you to continue your support of the ministry. We are grateful for the community's continued generous support especially during these trying times.*

## **Offertory Prayer (please join in prayer)**

**O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like parents receive their children, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace. Amen.**

## **Our Lord's Prayer**

*I invite you to join in praying the prayer our Lord Jesus taught us...*

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,**

**Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

**Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.**

**For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen**

## **Benediction**

God the creator strengthen you;

Jesus the beloved fill you;

and the Holy Spirit the comforter <sup>☩</sup> keep you in peace.

**Amen.**

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ!

**Thanks be to God.**

**Sending Hymn:** ELW # 856 (verses 1 & 2)

***"How Great Thou Art"***

Sources:

Copyright © 2020 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License # SAS103560.

Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE,  
License # A-737326. All rights reserved.

## **VIRTUAL AFTER SERVICE COFFEE HOUR**

Join us on Jan 31, 2021 at 11:30 AM for a  
Virtual Coffee Hour on Zoom, following Sunday's service.

1. Go to [www.zoom.us](https://www.zoom.us)
2. Along the top towards the right corner, click on **“Join A Meeting”**

Enter the following information when asked for it...

Meeting ID: **897 9656 1726**

Passcode: **885647**

If not using a computer or smartphone, you can join by simply calling in and following the prompts.

Phone number: **1(301)715-8592**

*(enter this information when asked)*

Meeting ID: **89796561726#**      Participant ID: **0#**      Passcode: **885647#**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### ❖ In-person Worship Services at Faith will resume Sunday, February 7<sup>th</sup>!

We urge everyone to follow the guidelines set forth to ensure the safety of everyone in attendance. We hope to see you there!

Faith's Annual Meeting will be held February 14, 2021. There are 3 seats to be filled on the council this year. If you are interested please get your information in to the office or to a Council Member.

We also need 2 delegates to represent us for the Synod Assembly.

#### **Faith Lutheran Church Annual Meeting 2021 Zoom Information**

February 14, 2021 at 11:30 AM for  
Faith's Annual Meeting 2021

1. Go to [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)
2. Along the top towards the right corner, click on “Join A Meeting”

Enter the following information when asked for it...

Meeting ID: **896 1171 6468**

Passcode: **639417**

If not using a computer or smartphone, you can join by simply calling in and following the prompts.

Phone number: **1(301)715-8592**

*(enter this information when asked)*

Meeting ID: **896 1171 6468#** Participant ID: **0#** Passcode: **639417#**

### ❖ Pastor Rita is available for any pastoral needs by phone, email, and Zoom! ❖

If you would like to speak with Pastor Rita, please call or email her at:

**(312) 478-6212** or [critawilliam@gmail.com](mailto:critawilliam@gmail.com)

From there if you'd like to set up a Zoom meeting, just ask!

**Watch Faith's Worship Service Live on Sundays on our Facebook page!** - You can catch our Service at 10:20am every Sunday at [www.facebook.com/FaithLC1966](https://www.facebook.com/FaithLC1966). You can also find us online by searching for **FaithLC1966** in any browser. If you have any questions or comments, please call the church office at (906) 632-7246.