

Fourth Sunday in Lent | March 14th, 2021

In-Person Reader: TBD | Online Reader: 8th Grade Confirmation Class

Announcements

- Today is the Fourth Sunday in the Season of Lent (and Daylight Savings Time)!
 - We will use the hymn *Were You There* to mark our journey through this season.
- We will have our midweek worship services in-person at 11:30 and 7:00 throughout the season. No need to RSVP for these services.
- Our annual Communion class/retreat will be next Sunday, March 21st from 10:00 - 12:00 in the Fellowship Hall. We will celebrate our Communion milestone the following Sunday. Any and all ages are welcome -- parents are not required to attend, but are definitely welcome to join. Please RSVP to Pastor Ally by March 14th.

Confession + Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer. **Amen.**

God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

(Silence is kept for reflection)

Fountain of living water, **pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.**

Beloved, God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are ☩ forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn | *The Glory of These Forty Days* ELW 320

*The glory of these forty days we celebrate with songs of praise;
For Christ, through whom all things were made, himself has fasted and has prayed.*

*Alone and fasting Moses saw the loving God who gave the law;
And to Elijah fasting, came the steeds and chariots of flame.*

*So Daniel trained his mystic sight, delivered from the lions' might;
And John, the Bridegroom's friend, became the herald of Messiah's name.*

*Then grant, O God, that we may, too, return in fast and prayer to you.
Our spirits strengthen with your grace, and give us joy to see your face.*

Greeting

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

O God, rich in mercy, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world and rescued us from the hopelessness of death. Lead us into your light, that all our deeds may reflect your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Children's Message [online]

First Reading | Numbers 21:4-9

Though God provides food and water for the Israelites in the wilderness, they whine and grumble. They forget about the salvation they experienced in the exodus. God punishes them for their sin, but when they repent God also provides a means of healing: a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole.

They marched from Mount Hor on the Reed Sea road around the land of Edom. The people became impatient on the road. The people spoke against God and Moses: "Why did you bring us up from Egypt to kill us in the desert, where there is no food or water. And we detest this miserable bread!" So the Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people and they bit the people. Many of the Israelites died.

The people went to Moses and said, "We've sinned, for we spoke against the Lord and you. Pray to the Lord so that he will send the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people.

The Lord said to Moses, "Make a poisonous snake and place it on a pole. Whoever is bitten can look at it and live." Moses made a bronze snake and placed it on a pole. If a snake bit someone, that person could look at the bronze snake and live.

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-21

“Give thanks to the Lord because he is good, because his faithful love lasts forever!”

That’s what those who are redeemed by the Lord say, the ones God redeemed from the power of their enemies,

the ones God gathered from various countries, from east and west, north and south.

Some of the redeemed were fools because of their sinful ways. They suffered because of their wickedness.

They had absolutely no appetite for food; they had arrived at death’s gates.

So they cried out to the Lord in their distress, and God saved them from their desperate circumstances.

God gave the order and healed them; he rescued them from their pit.

Let them thank the Lord for his faithful love and his wondrous works for all people.

Second Reading | Ephesians 2:1-10

While we were dead in our sinfulness, God acted to make us alive as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus.

We are saved not by what we do but by grace through faith. Thus our good works are really a reflection of God’s grace at work in our lives.

At one time you were like a dead person because of the things you did wrong and your offenses against God. You used to live like people of this world. You followed the rule of a destructive spiritual power. This is the spirit of disobedience to God’s will that is now at work in persons whose lives are characterized by disobedience. At one time you were like those persons. All of you used to do whatever felt good and whatever you thought you wanted so that you were children headed for punishment just like everyone else.

However, God is rich in mercy. He brought us to life with Christ while we were dead as a result of those things that we did wrong. He did this because of the great love that he has for us. You are saved by God’s grace! And God raised us up and seated us in the heavens with Christ Jesus. God did this to show future generations the greatness of his grace by the goodness that God has shown us in Christ Jesus.

You are saved by God’s grace because of your faith. This salvation is God’s gift. It’s not something you possessed. It’s not something you did that you can be proud of. Instead, we

are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

***Gospel Acclamation**

Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love

***Gospel Reading | John 3:14-21**

To explain the salvation of God to the religious leader, Nicodemus, Jesus refers to the scripture passage quoted in today's first reading. Just as those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed, so people will be saved when they behold Christ lifted up on the cross.

Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so must the Human One be lifted up so that everyone who believes in him will have eternal life. God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him won't perish but will have eternal life. God didn't send his Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him isn't judged; whoever doesn't believe in him is already judged, because they don't believe in the name of God's only Son.

“This is the basis for judgment: The light came into the world, and people loved darkness more than the light, for their actions are evil. All who do wicked things hate the light and don't come to the light for fear that their actions will be exposed to the light. Whoever does the truth comes to the light so that it can be seen that their actions were done in God.”

Sermon

Hymn of the Day | God Loved the World ELW 323

*God loved the world so that he gave his only Son the lost to save,
That all who would in him believe should everlasting life receive.*

*Christ Jesus is the ground of faith, who was made flesh and suffered death;
All who confide in Christ alone are built on this chief cornerstone.*

*If you are ill, if death draws near, this truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus rescues us from death; that is the firmest ground of faith.*

Be of good cheer, for God's own Son forgives all sins that you have done,

And justified by Jesus' blood, your baptism grants the highest good.

All glory to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Three in One!

To you, O blessed Trinity, be praise now and eternally!

***Apostles' Creed**

Let us confess our faith using the words of the Apostles' Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

***Prayers of Intercession**

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

You sent your Son that the world might be saved through him. Inspire the witness of the church throughout the world. Empower missionaries, Bible translators, and ministries of service in your name. Bless our partners in ministry, our ELCA global partner churches, and Young Adults in Global Mission. Hear us, O God. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

From east to west your steadfast love is shown. Nourish seas and deserts, wilderness areas and cities. Give water to thirsty lands; nurture spring growth that feeds hungry creatures; bless farmers as they prepare for the growing season. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You sustained your people in the wilderness. Give courage to all who lead in times of crisis and scarce resources. Prosper the work of those who aid victims of famine and drought. Bring peace in places where scarce resources cause violence. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your mercy endures forever. Deliver all who cry to you, especially those who are hungry or without homes. Give life in places where death seems triumphant; give healing to those who are sick and comfort to those who mourn. We pray especially for Pastor Dave, Nancy

Gjerde, Jane Lorsung, and Laurie Roemhildt, as well as the families and friends of Ron Germsheid and Galen Krueger. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

By grace we have been saved. Fill this congregation to overflowing with that grace, that we show mercy to others. Nourish any in our midst who are hungry, especially children, and bless our ministries of feeding and shelter, especially Second Harvest Heartland and our Le Sueur County Foodshelf. Give us patience and courage when the way seems long. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your Son was lifted up that whoever believes might have eternal life. We praise you for all who have died in Christ. Bring us with all the saints into the fullness of your promises. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

***Great Thanksgiving**

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

***Words of Institution**

***Lord's Prayer**

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray: **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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us, and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

***Final Blessing**

You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. **Amen.**

Sending Hymn | *Were You There* v. 4

ELW 353

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

Oh, sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.

Were you there when the sun refused to shine?

***Dismissal**

Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**