

**TRINITY LUTHERAN CHURCH
THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT
MARCH 14, 2021**



WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with us all.

Amen.

GATHERING SONG: "Dearest Jesus, at Your Word"—ELW #520

1 Dearest Jesus, at your word
we have come again to hear you;
let our thoughts and hearts be stirred
and in glowing faith be near you
as the promises here given
draw us wholly up to heaven.

3 Radiance of God's glory bright,
Light of light from God proceeding,
Jesus, send your blessed light;
help our hearing, speaking, heeding,
that our prayers and songs may please you,
as with grateful hearts we praise you.

2 All our knowledge, sense, and sight
lie in deepest darkness shrouded
till your Spirit breaks the night,
filling us with light unclouded.
All good thoughts and all good living
come but by your gracious giving.

4 Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,
Praise to you and adoration!
Grant us what we need the most:
All you gospel's consolation
while we here on earth await you,
till in heaven with praise we greet you.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

L: Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer.

P: **Amen.**

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

Fountain of living water,

P: 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 hearers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

L: 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.

P: Amen.

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 TIME

SONG: "No, Not One" Group VBS You Tube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qGTYuTkgf3A>

FIRST READING: Numbers 21: 4-9

⁴From Mount Hor the Israelites set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." ⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people, ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.



PSALM OF THE DAY: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

¹Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good, for God's mercy endures forever.

²Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim that God redeemed them from the hand of the foe,

³gathering them in from the lands; from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

¹⁷Some were fools and took rebellious paths; through their sins they were afflicted.

¹⁸They loathed all manner of food and drew near to death's door.

¹⁹Then in their trouble they cried to the LORD and you delivered them from their distress.

²⁰You sent forth your word and healed them and rescued them from the grave.

²¹Let them give thanks to you, LORD, for your steadfast love and your wonderful works for all people.

²²Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving and tell of your deeds with shouts of joy.

SECOND READING: Ephesians 2: 1-10

¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which God loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. With Christ ⁶God raised us up and enthroned us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ⁷so that in the ages to come might be shown the immeasurable riches of God’s grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

GOSPEL READING: John 3: 14-21

[Jesus said:] ¹⁴“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son-of-Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶For God loved the world in this way, that God gave the Son, the only begotten one, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

SERMON: Paul Strike

SONG: “Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing”—ELW #807

CONFESSION OF FAITH: 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.

OFFERING

OFFERING SONG: “Lead Me, Guide Me”—ELW #768

OFFERING PRAYER

Faithful God, you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven. Accompany us that we may pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

On this fourth Sunday in Lent, let us pray to our loving God for all the needs of the world, responding to each petition with words from today's psalm, "**your mercy endures forever.**"

O God, preserve your church through good times and bad. Empower pastors, missionaries, Young Adults in Global Mission, and all ministries of service for their work throughout this pandemic. Bless Lutherans around the world, our ecumenical partners, and everyone preparing for baptism at Easter.

A brief silence.

O God our Redeemer, receive our prayers:
your mercy endures forever.

Continue your creation of this good earth. Nourish seas and rivers, and give water to thirsty lands. Nurture spring growth that feeds hungry creatures, and bless the fields being prepared for the growing season.

A brief silence.

O God our Creator, receive our prayers:
your mercy endures forever.

In Brazil and wherever COVID-19 rages, send healing. In Myanmar and wherever tyranny rules, restore human rights. In Nigeria and wherever there is domestic terrorism, send concord. In Ethiopia and wherever there is bloodshed, bring peace. In Yemen and wherever people starve, give food and water. In the United States and wherever there is discrimination, inspire all residents to honor one another and to strive for justice. Prosper the work of those who care for victims of violence, and grant legislators wisdom in decision-making.

A brief silence.

O God our Protector, receive our prayers:
your mercy endures forever.

Give rest and welcome to migrants. Bring run-aways to places of safety. Protect all who are incarcerated. Provide caring families to children who seek adoption. Give a decent life to all who live on our streets.

A brief silence.

O God our Homeland, receive our prayers:
your mercy endures forever.

As you saved your people of old from snakebite, so now deliver all who suffer from disaster, hunger, disease, and despair, and those we name here before you . . . **the Tomaich family and the Dundas Family**

A brief silence.

O God our Savior, receive our prayers:
your mercy endures forever.

Shine light into our darkness, make night into a blessing, and in mercy hear the prayers of our hearts:

A longer time of silence.

O God our Friend, receive our prayers:
your mercy endures forever.

We praise you for all the saints who have lived and died in Christ, especially Patrick and Joseph, and we remember before you all who have died from COVID-19. At the end, bring us with them into life in your presence.

A brief silence.

O God our Comforter, receive our prayers:
your mercy endures forever.

To you, O God, our only God, we entrust all for whom we pray, through Jesus Christ our loving Lord.

Amen.

THE LORD’S PRAYER (all are invited to unmute)

L: Gathered together by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

P: 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.

LENTEN PRAYER

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

THE 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 SONG: “God is For Us” by CityAlight

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xxl1EOhJiRA>

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, share the Good News.

Thanks be to God.

AFTER THOUGHTS

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

Look and Live

The cure for the ancient Israelites, following Moses, is to look directly at what is killing them, rather than avoid or hide from it. Healing occurs in the confrontation.

In today's gospel, Jesus likens his crucifixion to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness so the Israelites might be saved from the venom of desert snakes. In doing so, Jesus communicates that he came so we might look at what is killing us. He came to shine a light on that which poisons our lives so we might live.

In today's gospel, we catch Jesus in the middle of a conversation with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who is slinking around in the night to get a word in with Jesus, presumably so he is not seen. In this conversation Jesus gives a judgment that shines a light on Nicodemus: you, Nicodemus, seem to prefer the darkness because there is something you are doing that you want to hide, thus making it easier for you to live in the dark. This sounds an awful lot like the experience of shame. Jesus is naming the way shame has dictated Nicodemus's life, relegating him to shadows where he will not be seen for what he really is. Notice the lack of condemnation. Jesus is simply a light, showing Nicodemus to himself.

Jesus is also a light to us, showing us to ourselves. Looking at Jesus lifted up on the cross, we see the poison that is killing us: power used to protect the status quo; our instinct to blame one in order to save the rest. We see the fruit of our defenses against what the light reveals: the death of an innocent man at the hands of those in power.

Christ has come so that we will see what is poisoning us and that, in seeing, we might turn and live.

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