

## St. John's Lutheran Church Fourth Sunday in Lent March 22, 2020

Welcome as we join together in spirit to worship our Lord and pray for our world. In the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

- P In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- C Amen
- P Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
- C Amen
- P If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

- P Most merciful God,
- C we confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen
- P In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for you, and for his sake God forgives you all your sins, To those who believe in Jesus Christ he gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit.
- C Amen

Kyrie

- A In peace, let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.
- A For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.
- A For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.
- A For this holy house, and for all who offer here and at home their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.
- C Lord, have mercy.
- A Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.
- C Amen

### Prayer of the Day

(Prayers and lessons can be found on the Celebrate insert)

Lessons and Psalm Gospel Acclamation

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

Holy Gospel

- P The Holy Gospel according to John the ninth chapter.
- C Glory to you, O Lord.

(after the reading)

P The Gospel of the Lord. C Praise to you, O Christ.

## Message ~ Rev. Ela J. Robertson

This is a time when people are asked to be mindful of their habits, to seek solitude, to do without, to realize our common vulnerability and mortality, to care for others as we care for ourselves, to have hope and to turn to God.

Pause for a moment. Did you read this as talking about Lent? - - or the COVID-19 pandemic? Yes, as a pastor this is the essential vocabulary of the season of Lent <u>and</u> these are the same words we hear in response to the current world health crisis with one major difference. Millions more people are heeding these words in response to the corona virus than to God, thinking of their own self preservation than acting in sympathy and solidarity with practices modeled by Jesus in his 40 days in the wilderness.

Fear and anxiety are a present reality. How many people have woken up with a little cough in the morning fearful they might have contracted the coronavirus? How do we cope with fear and anxiety? — Pretending the source of the anxiety doesn't really exist? Believing we are invulnerable? Buying everything we can to protect ourselves? Gathering lots of information whether from reputable sources or not?

With the Bible as our source, the Psalm for this week provides another alternative: depend on the Lord. Of any of the Psalms this is one people will know by heart: "the Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want . . ." Though often thought of as the 'Funeral Psalm' it is first and foremost an affirmation of trust in God rather than in ourselves or the things of this world. While the King James version shows the psalmist walking through "the valley of the shadow of death," biblical scholar, J. Clinton McCann, points out that in Hebrew this is more appropriately "the darkest valley," referring to the lowest points in our lives, the "point of greatest threat and vulnerability." For many, in the shadow of the corona virus, that is now!

Corona means 'crown' in Latin and in astronomy 'a luminous ring or halo.' Both images can point us towards Christ, our shepherd, our savior, our source of hope, light and Love. As we take up the changes in our daily life style called for in these times, these sacrifices for the sake of the world, let us do them with prayers of thankfulness for the grace of God who gave us Christ so that we may live. Do this now. Next year taking on these meaningful Lenten practices will be a snap!

God's love be with you, God's grace upon you, Pastor Ela The Apostles' Creed

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

- I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into Hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again 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 ~ Celebrate insert

## The Lord's Prayer (in unison)

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

## Offertory

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit.

### Prayer

We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life; and we pray that in your mercy you would strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

# Amen

## Benediction

- P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with mercy and grace. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace.
- C Amen.

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While our church building may be closed to meetings and worship for the time being, the church office will be open 8:00am till 1:00pm next Tuesday, March 24 and Friday the 27<sup>th</sup>. Phone and email messages will also be checked frequently.

Along with the bulletin for next Sunday, we will be working on the April newsletter and hope to have it emailed/mailed to members by April 1<sup>st</sup> with "updated information". If you have anything you would like to submit or see included, please email/call the church office.

An Excerpt from a letter from Bishop Collins:

As normal gatherings at the church are limited, please remember that this only refers to physical distancing. Please be in communication with each other and pay attention to the needs of others. A simple phone call, delivery of a hot meal, and running errands can mean so much to someone. Remember that we are still the church together. Pray with and for one another, seek opportunities to study God's word and remember to continue your financial support of your congregation and its ministries. (St. John's family may mail your offering to the church and we hope to soon be setting up online giving.)

We are hopeful that by the end of March these mandates will be reevaluated and we will hear that we can resume at least some of our "normal" routines and schedules for Holy Week and Easter. We all need to do our part, for the sake of the whole.

Be comforted by saying and praying this prayer of protection.

St. Patrick's Breastplate Prayer

Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ beside me, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ beneath me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me, Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.

> Offering for 3/15/20 ~ \$1,912.00 Attendance ~ 34 YTD Income \$ 46,059.80 Expense \$ 38,220.05 Net Income \$ 7,839.75 Parking Lot Donations ~ \$3,300.00

Daycare YTD Income ~ \$ 63,693.20 YTD Expense ~ \$ 60,239.14 Net Income \$ 3,454.06



Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.

# Prayer of the Day

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

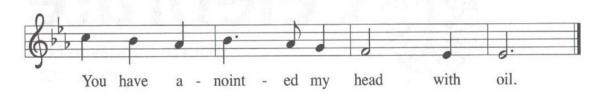
# First Reading

## 1 Samuel 16:1-13

Samuel anointed David even though he was the eighth-oldest son of Jesse and did not match his brothers in height or other physical characteristics. With the anointing came endowment with the spirit of the LORD, designating David as the LORD's chosen successor to Saul.

The LORD said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." <sup>2</sup>Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the LORD said, "Take a heifer with you, and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.' <sup>3</sup>Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to vou." 4Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, "Do you come peaceably?" <sup>5</sup>He said, "Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup>When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely the LORD's anointed is now before the LORD." <sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart." 8Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." <sup>9</sup>Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the LORD chosen this one." 10 Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The LORD has not chosen any of these." <sup>11</sup>Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here." <sup>12</sup>He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, "Rise and anoint him; for this is the one." <sup>13</sup>Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.



The LORD | is my shepherd;

Psalm

I shall not be in want.

<sup>2</sup>The LORD makes me lie down | in green pastures

and leads me be- | side still waters.

<sup>3</sup>You restore my <sup>1</sup> soul, O LORD,

and guide me along right pathways <sup>1</sup> for your name's sake. <sup>4</sup>Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall <sup>1</sup> fear no evil;

for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they <sup>1</sup> comfort me. **R** <sup>5</sup>You prepare a table before me in the presence <sup>1</sup> of my enemies;

you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is I running over.

<sup>6</sup>Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days <sup>1</sup> of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the <sup>1</sup> LORD forever. **R** 

# Second Reading

# Ephesians 5:8-14

Because we now live in the divine light which is Jesus Christ, we conduct our lives in ways that reflect the light of Christ, so that our activity is truly pleasing to God.

<sup>8</sup>Once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—<sup>9</sup>for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. <sup>10</sup>Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; <sup>13</sup>but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, <sup>14</sup>for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

"Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Jesus heals a man born blind, provoking a hostile reaction that he regards as spiritual blindness to the things of God.

As [Jesus] walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>His disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3Jesus answered, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him. 4We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. <sup>5</sup>As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." 6When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man's eyes, <sup>7</sup>saying to him, "Go, wash in the pool of Siloam" (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. 8 The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask, "Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?" <sup>9</sup>Some were saying, "It is he." Others were saying, "No, but it is someone like him." He kept saying, "I am the man." <sup>10</sup>But they kept asking him, "Then how were your eyes opened?" 11 He answered, "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight." <sup>12</sup>They said to him, "Where is he?" He said, "I do not know."

<sup>13</sup>They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup>Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them, "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see." <sup>16</sup>Some of the Pharisees said, "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath." But others said, "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?" And they were divided. <sup>17</sup>So they said again to the blind man, "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened." He said, "He is a prophet."

<sup>18</sup>The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight <sup>19</sup>and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" <sup>20</sup> His parents answered, "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; <sup>21</sup>but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself." <sup>22</sup> His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. <sup>23</sup>Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him."

<sup>24</sup>So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." <sup>25</sup>He answered, "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." 26 They said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" 27 He answered them, "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?" <sup>28</sup>Then they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. <sup>29</sup>We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from." <sup>30</sup>The man answered, "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. <sup>31</sup>We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. <sup>32</sup>Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. <sup>33</sup>If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." 34 They answered him, "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?" And they drove him out.

<sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" <sup>36</sup>He answered, "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him." <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he." 38 He said, "Lord, I believe." And he worshiped him. 39Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." <sup>40</sup>Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" <sup>41</sup>Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

# Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Turning our hearts to God who is gracious and merciful, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

#### A brief silence.

God of insight, open the hearts of the church and the world to all who testify to your deeds of power (*like Jonathan Edwards*, *whom we commemorate today*). Raise up voices in your church that are often silenced or overlooked due to age, gender expression, race, or economic status. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great**.

God of insight, empower us to care for the land and all living things that dwell in it and beneath it. Provide rich soil for crops to grow. Bring rain to lands suffering drought. Protect hills and shorelines from damage caused by erosion. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

God of insight, bring peace to all people and nations. Anoint leaders who seek goodness, righteousness, and truth on behalf of all. Frustrate the efforts of those who would seek to cause violence or terror. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

God of insight, you care for our needs even before we ask. Come quickly to all who seek prayer this day (*especially*). Accomplish healing through the work of doctors, nurses, physical therapists, nutritionists, and all who tend to human bodies. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

God of insight, help this assembly lift up the unique gifts of each person who enters, no matter their physical capacity, cognitive ability, or sensory need. Help us to be creative and brave in making our facilities and our ministries accessible to all. Hear us, O God.

### Your mercy is great.

Here other intercessions may be offered.

God of insight, you call out to those who are asleep and awaken them to new life with you. We give thanks for your saints (*especially*). Join us together with them as your children in this world and the next. Hear us, O God.

### Your mercy is great.

According to your steadfast love, O God, hear these and all our prayers as we commend them to you; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

# **Preparing for Next Week**

Monday Psalm 146. Tuesday (commemoration of Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, died 1980) Isaiah 42:14-21. Wednesday (Annunciation of Our Lord) Luke 1:26-38 Thursday Psalm 130. Friday Revelation 11:15-19. Saturday Ezekiel 36:8-15. Fifth Sunday in Lent (commemoration of Hans Nielsen Hauge, renewer of the church, died 1824) Ezekiel 37:1-14; Psalm 130; Romans 8:6-11; John 11:1-45.

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