

**Feb 28, 2021 Second Sunday in Lent ~ Diaconal Sunday
Service of Word and Prayer**

We are using parts of the Service of the Word liturgy this morning, from your green hymn book, the Lutheran Book of Worship, page 126. The prayers are based on Sundays & Seasons. Shut off all the distractions in your home. Enjoy the quiet for a bit – take in some deep breaths. Light your candle. May your family be blessed in this time together.

The Gathering

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

Call to Worship:

God of the ages, who sweeps throughout the whole of history: we are but simple creatures who need your guidance and care. It is to you we turn in our sadness and joy; in our despair and in our triumphs. You protect us and uphold us, your presence enfolds us. Hear us as we come together in worship. May our prayers be from our hearts, and may our ears be open to your words. Amen.

Hymn: ELW 808 - Lord Jesus you shall be my song

God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our 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 church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Lord be with you ~ and also with you.

Prayer of the day: O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us a means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God now and forever. Amen

The Word

The Old Testament lesson is from **Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16**

Psalms 22:23-31, found on page 224

The New Testament lesson is from **Romans 4:13-25**

Please rise for the gospel lesson. *Holy, Holy, Holy, our hearts adore you. Our hearts are glad to say the words: you are Holy God.*

Gospel: **Mark 8: 31-38**

Today is Diaconal Sunday in the ELCIC, a day when we uphold the ministries of deacons in our Church. While every baptized Christian carries out diaconal ministry in their daily life, sharing God's love where they live and work, deacons have special responsibility for leading and equipping God's people in their service. The ELCIC roster of deacons is modest in size and spread out across the country. Each deacon's area of expertise is unique and I would encourage you to search out a deacon in your synod to ask them about their role. We have Deacon Pamela Harrington in the Valley – a member of St. Timothy's Lutheran Church in Pembroke. **Today's message has been written by Deacon Scott Knarr. Scott has musical training and expertise and works with the peoples of the Six Nations.**

Deacons are called to locate themselves at the edge-places or margins of church and society. This means they may hang out with individuals, or spend time networking in communities, which are not usually at the centre of church life. Deacons could find themselves in unconventional settings as they create opportunities to serve in new ways. They invite others into relationship, nurturing contexts for healing as congregation members and community resource people accompany them to work alongside those whose voice is discounted or not able to be heard.

One shining example of this action – going out to meet people where their need is greatest – is found in the person of Jesus Christ. The Gospel narratives are full of stories of Jesus crossing social boundaries and eating with people, healing people, and telling people things they do not want to hear. In today's Gospel reading Jesus, the prophetic deacon, says plainly that he will suffer, be rejected, killed and then after three days rise again. But the disciples don't want to hear that news. It is not the kind of story they expect from the Son of God. It isn't too difficult to believe that the thought of Jesus rising from the dead is beyond their understanding. And Jesus doesn't even wait for them to catch up – he takes things to the next level. He insists that we deny our lives, take up the cross of Jesus as our own cross, so that in losing our life we will save it.

We should take a moment to remind ourselves that the cross is a horrific and dishonourable image in the Roman Empire. It is where criminals were hung to die in pain and agony along the roadway where all would witness their plight. This is not a pretty accessory to wear around one's neck. It isn't shiny, clean and polished but rather a gruesome symbol of the Roman Empire's power. To follow in the way of the cross is to follow Jesus the criminal who was convicted of attempting to overthrow the civic leadership of Jerusalem. The consequences of following Jesus are no less than giving up your very life.

We have experienced a great deal of loss over the past year. We've lost our ability to grieve together in person, sharing stories and eating together. We have lost opportunities to celebrate joyful occasions as well, no longer meeting in large gatherings with plentiful

banquets. We have lost a sense of certainty and control as we strive to find safe ways to gather in community. We have needed to modify our patterns and rituals and to change our whole way of thinking about community life.

This pandemic has pushed us to reevaluate how we do things. It's prompted us to reimagine what ministry means for today's context. Sacred moments mediated through zoom, livestream connections and telephone calls have brought the intimacy of spiritual conversation right into our living rooms. It has also renewed our awareness of disparities and privilege in our church and in our society.

I want Jesus to walk with me – and I will take up the cross of racial justice, educating myself about how my assumptions are contributing to discrimination and privileged thinking.

I want Jesus to walk with me – and I will hear the cry of broken hearts, broken lives and broken communities and I will not look away.

I want Jesus to walk with me – and I call on the church to decolonize policies and systems which harm relationships with marginalized communities.

Abraham and Sarah were faithful to God, trusting that God will accomplish what God promises. In Romans, Paul writes that God's gift of grace to Abraham is offered to all people and fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection. Through faith in Christ all may be made righteous. Douglas John Hall describes the righteous one as being "for real" or genuine; "being right for the vocation to which one is called."

This action of God "making us right" is what enables each of us to become our true authentic selves.

Clifton Black writes: "In the economy governed by the gospel, the only way to be made whole is to let go of everything society reckons most valuable. There is no benefit in gaining the entire world – values and aspirations as people define them – if in so doing one forfeits one's deepest soul."

Letting go of the benchmarks of success – like program finances, numbers of participants and profile within the community – is not easy. To be made whole, my soul needs God’s grace to be open to the other, open to doing things in ways that may rub up against empire, open to being transformed by the resilience of my Indigenous neighbors, and open to the inexhaustible promise of the Gospel. Amen

Hymn: ELW 735 / WOV 769 - Mothering God

Our Response

OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious God, receive our gifts as you receive us. You walk beside us and you meet us in hunger with bread from heaven. 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.**

Prayers of the People by Marilyn Kropp

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

Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation’s well-being. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit.

Restore all who are sick or grieving. Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression (*especially*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We await the day of Christ's coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you. 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.**

The peace of Christ be with you always and also with you.

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray **The Lord's Prayer:**

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.

Hymn: ELW802 LBW487 - Let us ever walk with Jesus

Benediction

God the creator strengthen you; Jesus the beloved fill you; and the Holy Spirit the comforter keep you in peace. Amen.

Dismissal Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.