

March 21, 2021 Fifth Sunday in Lent ~ 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.

May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight O God.

Hymn: LBW 377 / ELW 660 - Lift High the Cross

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, with steadfast love you draw yourself to us, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death, we may live in 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 **Jeremiah 31:31-34**

Psalms 51:1-12 found on page 239

The New Testament lesson is from **Hebrews 5:5-10**

Please rise for the gospel lesson. ***Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.***

Gospel: **John 12:20-33** Sermon Pastor Norine

Sometimes some things need to actually die and allow new life to spring forth. . . .so that we can clearly see Jesus. Sometimes new seeds need to be sown and allowed to grow in our faith communities so that all can see Jesus here.

Let me tell you a true story.

I was an intern in the fall of 2003 at a church in Grey Bruce County – that is up near Owen Sound. There were lots of farms in our area and many parishioners were farmers. Everyone in the family was involved in the farm work. Grandma was in charge of meals, and the adults worked the farm. There were chickens and geese and cats and always a dog and a horse and lot of cows and pigs. Everything you can imagine.

A well that pumped water and a wooden swing. It was a very different lifestyle found in the country. The farmers - let's call them John & Gerda - did it all. Eventually it was too much work so they had a hired hand come esp. for the harvest season. There were never just 3 adults at the dinner table. And there were always pies for dessert. In years gone by Gerda would make lunch and walk it out to the field that John was working in so he could stay on the tractor and continue working.

Eventually the farm was not enough to make a living so John had to make a change and work “out” or off the farm part time to keep things going. Eventually Gerda did the same thing. So they were both working the farm and working elsewhere to provide for themselves and their family. There was no one walking out to the field to bring lunch to anyone, anymore.

Their lifestyle had changed – It had to - to be able to adapt to the changing economic conditions of the day and farming quotas and gov’t regulations that had come about over the years. They had to widen their long laneways so the milk trucks could get up to the barns safely. They had to have certain refrigeration systems to keep the milk in. They had to change if they wanted to maintain their farms. They sacrificed a lot. People sometimes feel broken by their sacrifices, but Christ promises that out of them emerges new life.

There also has been a shift too in our generation. Husbands and wives are both out working to ensure the security of their family. The pace of life is pretty fast these days. There are few households where an adult is “just” at home all day long. If not retired, most of them are working at jobs from home, while supervising children at their schooling on the internet.

We believe that we have a faith community that is like a family. It is a community of people committed to a common goal of wanting do the right thing - not just for yourselves but for the community we live in. We exist with a unity of purpose – and that purpose is be a people in mission for others - so that the other can see Jesus. We too deal with the present realities around us, and strive to connect our church effectively with the culture we live in, for that ever changing world around us.

We are building on the resources and the underpinnings that we have. These changes do not change our theology of God’s grace in our lives. As a matter of fact these changes support that Grace as we move forward. We believe in a God of the resurrection. Willing to rise and try something, putting our emphasis on and seriously engaging people where they are in their life cycle. Engaging a new generation who do not sing the Lords song the way we do. Transformation requires that something dies so that new life can be created. If we want to transform our churches then we need to become masters of allowing things to die and midwives to the new life that is blossoming into being.

We all need transformation. When that grain of wheat needs to fall into the ground and die to live, that is its transformation.

Think of all the weird conversations that Jesus had with people. With the woman at the well, the woman he called a dog, the man at the pool. These conversations were not about change - they were about transforming the underlying story of defeat to a new way of being for those people.

We can find metaphors for the Christian life in plants springing from the ground, being drawn towards the light, and bearing fruit according to their nature. Jesus uses the dead seed coming to life as a metaphor for his own crucifixion and being raised up on our behalf.

The Greeks asked to see Jesus. They wanted to see him to have that word of comfort - that word of transformation for their lives. If I paraphrase Jesus response it might be something like this. "If you want to see me, look down in the dirt, and then look up at the cross." the connection point is deep service one to the other.

We can see that what Jesus did by dying and then being raised up was a once in a lifetime thing. He gave us the opportunity to become a child of God and the opportunity to grow and blossom where we have been planted. That is here and now- so let's make the most of this gift of grace. Renewed in our faith we go out from worship, by Gods' grace to be the body of Christ in the world today, looking for signs of His presence along the way. Amen.

Hymn: ELW 516 - Almighty God, Your Word is Cast

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 Randy Zimmerling

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION MARCH 21

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

You wash us through and through and remember our sin no more. Make your church a community of forgiveness throughout the world. Give your people courage to forgive; through them show the world new possibilities. Bless ministries of repentance and reconciliation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You fill the earth—from tiny grains of wheat to the mighty thunder—with your presence, and you call us to attend to your will for all creation. Grant weather that prepares the soil for seeds; protect all from violent storms, flooding, and wildfires. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You promise to write your law on our hearts. Guide citizens throughout the world to shape communities that reflect your mercy, justice, and peace, and give them creativity to work for the welfare of all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You sustain us with your bountiful Spirit. Restore the joy of all who need to know your presence: those who are lonely or feel unforgivable, those who need healing of mind or body, those who are dying, and all who grieve. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Jesus calls us to follow him in life and death. Empower this congregation in discipleship. Give us your truth and wisdom and teach us to follow Jesus. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the cross of Christ, your name is glorified. We praise you for those who have given us words to worship you. With all those who have died in Christ, bring us into life everlasting. 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: LBW 107 / ELW 338 - Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Benediction

May 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.**