**2nd sunday of lent- february 28, 2021**

**zion lutheran church, philipsburg**

**st peters lutheran church, linwood**

Welcome to everyone on this 2nd Sunday of Lent where we continue to gather in love for one another from the safety of our homes. I am Leanne Darlington, pastor at Zion, Philipsburg and interim pastor at St. Peters, Linwood. We have had some lovely weather this week, the sun was shining, the sky was blue and I think I might have even smelled some spring in the air.

The March Messenger was sent out by email this week. Look for your paper copy to arrive in the mail this coming week.

Our Lent in a bag item this week is the rock. In the wilderness, Jesus was tempted by Satan to turn a rock into bread. Jesus resisted the temptation knowing that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). When we struggle in life our hearts may feel hardened like that of the stone. We are hurting and may feel alone. Have faith in the word and trust that we God is with us in our struggles and that we are never alone. We are loved! Let the stone remind you of the unconditional love of God.

A reminder that out Goto Coffee hour takes place today at 11:00. Please join us! Zion relies on your continued support to meet our monthly expenses during this continuing pandemic and shutdown. If you have not contributed lately, please consider ding so. Thank you to all, for your continued prayers and support.

**GATHERING**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS – Rev. Brooklynn Lane**

Three in one God, Creator, Child, and Holy Spirit,☩

We give thanks for your mercy and ask for forgiveness. Amen. *Silent reflection*

Loving God,

**Forgive us.**

We have neglected to see the face of Christ in our neighbour.

We have walked past the person begging on the street and neglected to recognize their humanity.

We have become estranged from humanity, forgetting the web of life connects us all.

**Forgive us.**

We are quick to anger, to cast judgement, and our words pierce like swords when we speak from these places.

We let fear, doubt, and unknowingness guide our actions.

**Forgive us.**

We confess are self-centeredness, need to succeed, and capitalistic-like thinking has turned us from you and your message of justice and love.

**Forgive us.**

God who meets us in the face of each person we meet.

Who paints the sky with colours that calm the soul,

Who creates a soundscape of rushing rivers,

Who gives grace to the world through the winds of the Holy Spirit,

**Open our hearts to be transformed and changed.**

You are forgiven.

Through the love of God, in the name of God, ☩ your sins are forgiven. Baptism remains forever. God’s love is here!

Inspiring God, guide us to be agents of change, knowing that our decisions, our actions and inactions affect all people. Help us to have the courage and strength to move forward, to let our hearts and minds be overflowing with love, grace, and a deep awareness that you are with us, guiding us on the journey.

Compassionate God, Three in one.☩. **Amen**

**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**

Let us pray.

O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the 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 Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song* (ELW 808)**

1 Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey;
I'll tell ev'rybody about you wherever I go:
you alone are our life and our peace and our love.
Lord Jesus, you shall be my song as I journey.

2 Lord Jesus, I'll praise you as long as I journey.
May all of my joy be a faithful reflection of you.
May the earth and the sea and the sky join my song.
Lord Jesus, I'll praise you as long as I journey.

3 As long as I live, Jesus, make me your servant,
to carry your cross and to share all your burdens and tears.
For you saved me by giving your body and blood.
As long as I live, Jesus, make me your servant.

4 I fear in the dark and the doubt of my journey;
but courage will come with the sound of your steps by my side.
And with all of the family you saved by your love,
we'll sing to your dawn at the end of our journey.

**WORD**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**FIRST READING: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16**

A reading from Genesis.

1When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. 2And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” 3Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, 4“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 5No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. 6I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”
  15God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

**PSALM: Psalm 22:23-31**

 23You who fear the Lord, give praise! All you of Jacob’s line, give glory.
  Stand in awe of the Lord, all you offspring of Israel.
 24For the Lord does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither is the Lord‘s face hidden from them; but when they cry out, the Lord hears them.
 25From you comes my praise in the great assembly; I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the Lord.
 26The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
  Let those who seek the Lord give praise! May your hearts live forever!
 27All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord;
  all the families of nations shall bow before God.
 28For dominion belongs to the Lord, who rules over the nations.
 29Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;
  all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel befhyore the Lord.
 30Their descendants shall serve the Lord, whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.
 31They shall proclaim God’s deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying to them, “The Lord has acted!”

**SECOND READING: Romans 4:13-25**

A reading from Romans.

13The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. 14If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. 15For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.
  16For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, 17as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. 18Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” 19He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. 20No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, 21being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. 22Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” 23Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, 24but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, 25who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

**GOSPEL: Mark 8:31-38**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

31[Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.32He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. 33But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”
  34He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. 35For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. 36For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? 37Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? 38Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

 Our gospel reading for today might sound a little familiar. That is because it is the reading that I included in my Transfiguration sermon a few weeks ago. The lectionary can be confusing at times! It jumps back and forth depending on the seasons of the church year, which sometimes makes it hard to preach!

 So, let us do a little recap! The disciples are with Jesus in Caesarea Philippi, a village about 25 miles north of the Sea of Galilee. Caesarea was sort of a ‘retirement village’ for Roman officials. Caesarea Philippi was thought to be the birthplace of the Greek god Pan so there would have been shrines and temples built in Pan’s honour throughout the village. So, as the disciples walked with Jesus through the village, they would have seen the temples and the idols, and the images of the gods and it was at that moment that Jesus asked them a simple question: “Who do people say that I am?’

 Peter responded that he was the Messiah. Now, Jewish folks had been waiting for the Messiah to deliver them from the oppression and injustices that they had faced all their lives, and the first-century Jewish folks were no different. Living under Roman rule and oppression was difficult. So, news that the Messiah had come would have been revolutionary; there would have been a renewed sense of hope and promise for the future.

 They continue their walk and then Jesus drops a bombshell on them. He told them that he was going to suffer and die, and when he did this he stated it openly. All throughout the gospel Jesus has asked that his identity remain a secret, but he was open about his suffering. I cannot imagine the confusion that the disciples must have felt. They know who Jesus is and believe things are going to improve, but now suddenly they hear that the Messiah was going to die. This could not be happening….Peter experienced firsthand the healings and miracles of Jesus, and he enjoyed the power, glory, and prestige of being with him those past months. Things would finally be different; Israel would hold the power politically again. Messiahs were strong and mighty; they did not suffer and die at the hands of chief priests and elders. Power is power right?

 Peter was so blinded by his own prejudices that he did not understand that Jesus’ power was radically different then what they were accustomed to. Jesus’ mission and agenda in the world was not about political power and domination. His mission was goal was service and humility, love and justice, sacrifice and compassion, and for Jesus that could only come with his suffering and death on the cross.

 Jesus goes on to explain further when he meets with the crowds who had gathered to hear him. He had just finished his conversation with Peter, where Peter rebuked Jesus for such crazy thoughts. Jesus then tries to get his point across in a different way; he turns to the crowd and states, “ If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it” (Mark 8:34-35). Jesus was inviting the world to his mission, his mission of radical love, grace, and mercy. He was calling out to the world, empowering the world to deny themselves, to learn a new understanding of power, to give up the need for control and domination of others. Jesus was calling the world into a new relationship with God, a new covenant that would transform their lives just like the lives of Abraham and Sarah were transformed when they were called into a new relationship with God in our reading from Genesis this morning.

 We are also invited into Jesus’ mission to deny ourselves and take up our crosses. However, denying ourselves and taking up our crosses is contrary to what the world teaches us. We so often trade self-denial for self-gratification, we believe that money will make our problems go away, we are arrogant and full of pride. We look the other way when we see a homeless person sleeping on a bench as we walk by. We walk a little faster when we see a person struggling with alcohol or drug addiction. We want safe injection sites and homeless shelters; we just do not want them in our backyards.

 When we take up our crosses, we become servants for the sake of others; we are turning the world upside-down with the radical love of God through the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. The message of the cross is not just about what Jesus does for us; it is also about who Jesus expects and calls us to be in the world. True freedom and worth are found in the giving of ourselves, in fighting for what is just in the world. To take up our crosses is an act of love that we undertake out of our love for Jesus Christ. And it means that we go to those hard places in our lives and in the lives of others. Taking up our crosses takes us out of our comfort zones, it takes our churches out of their comfort zones! It can be difficult reaching out to those who are deemed to be unlovable, knowing that the love may not be returned. Yet we keep on doing it because that is what we are called to do as disciples of Jesus Christ, and as beloved children of God.

 Yes, taking up our crosses is a true act of love. It is patient and kind. It is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way. It is not irritable or resentful, and it does not rejoice in wrongdoings but rejoices in the truth. Taking up our crosses bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things and endures all things. Taking up our crosses never ends. These are the familiar words that Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:4-8. Without love we are nothing, and if we live our lives without taking up our crosses and be in service to others, our lives can feel empty. Our true strength and love for others and God is measured in our vulnerability and sacrifice in taking up our cross.

 As we continue on in this season and journey of Lent, let us reflect on what it means to deny ourselves, take up our crosses and follow in the path of Jesus. Let us join him in his mission of radical love through the power and goodness of the Holy Spirit. Let us trust in God and empower God to use us as God used Abraham and Sarah to become ancestors of all the nations. That is true power, that is discipleship, that is love. Amen

**HYMN OF THE DAY Come, Follow Me, the Savior Spake (ELW 799)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjo40gsrIrk>

1 "Come, follow me," the Savior spake,
"all in my way abiding;
deny yourselves, the world forsake,
obey my call and guiding.
Oh, bear the cross, whate'er betide;
take my example for your guide."

2 "I am the light; I light the way,
a godly life displaying;
I bid you walk as in the day;
I keep your feet from straying.
I am the way, and well I show
how you should sojourn here below."

3 "I teach you how to shun and flee
what harms your soul's salvation;
from ev'ry guile your heart to free,
from sin and its temptation.
I am the refuge of the soul
and lead you to your heav'nly goal."
4 Then let us follow Christ, our Lord,
and take the cross appointed,
and, firmly clinging to his word,
in suffering be undaunted.
For those who bear the battle's strain
the crown of heav'nly life obtain.

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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 and honouring 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. Defend victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression 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. We especially remember Eddy, Elaine B, Susie, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Alea, Mary Ann, Cheryl, Bonnie, Mary, Ruth, Tilly, John, Danielle, Kyle, and their new arrivals Mila, and Theo, the family of Laverne Wagler, Nancy, and those we name in the stillness of our hearts, 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.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

**Amen.**

**LORD’S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

**SENDING**

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

**BLESSING- Rev. Martin Malina**

God of silent creation,

Son of healing touch,

Spirit of desert-leading,

Bless our Lenten journey. **Amen**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Share the good news.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG*If You But Trust in God to Guide You* (ELW 769)**

1 If you but trust in God to guide you
with gentle hand through all your ways,
you'll find that God is there beside you
when crosses come, in trying days.
Trust then in God's unchanging love;
build on the rock that will not move.

2 What gain is there in anxious weeping,
in helpless anger and distress?
If you are in your Savior's keeping,
in sorrow will he love you less?
For Christ who took for you a cross
will bring you safe through ev'ry loss.

3 The Lord our restless hearts is holding,
in peace and quietness content.
We rest in God's good will unfolding,
what wisdom from on high has sent.
God, who has chosen us by grace,
knows very well the fears we face.

4 Sing, pray, and keep God's ways unswerving,
offer your service faithfully.
Trust heaven's word; though undeserving,
you'll find this promise true to be.
This is our confidence indeed:
God never fails in time of need.

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