**3rd sunday of lent- March 7, 2021**

**zion lutheran church, philipsburg**

**st peters lutheran church, linwood**

Welcome to everyone on this 3rd 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. The days are getting longer, the sap is running, the sun feels warmer, and vaccines are becoming more plentiful….thanks be to God.

Our Lent in a bag item this week is the shell, which is an ancient symbol of baptism. As you place the shell on the sand, take a moment to reflect on what it means to be given new life as a beloved child of God through the waters of your baptism.

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 Jim Slack**

As we gather, may we be honest with you, O God, and with all of our sisters and brothers. *Silence.*

God of the cold, dark days of winter...

wake us from the slumber of apathy and despair that we might follow your lead as we confront injustice and fear. *Silence.*

God of the approaching, verdant spring...

turn our dry and lifeless hearts to tender and compassionate ones, that we might enter your season of love and mercy. *Silence.*

God of death...

As we grieve the deaths of loved ones and contemplate our own demise, help us catch a glimpse of you in the shadows of our sorrow and grief. *Silence.*

God of life...

Remind us that you alone transform death into life, that we might cling to you, and witness Easter’s surprise.

May the Creator turn us from the end of things to new beginnings.

May the Son of grace free us from our guilt and sin.

And (+)may the Spirit coax us to joyful faithfulness. **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.

Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG*God of Grace and God of Glory* (ELW 705)**

1 God of grace and God of glory,
on your people pour your pow'r;
crown your ancient church's story;
bring its bud to glorious flow'r.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the facing of this hour,
for the facing of this hour.

2 Lo! the hosts of evil round us
scorn the Christ, assail his ways!
From the fears that long have bound us
free our hearts to faith and praise.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage
for the living of these days,
for the living of these days,

3 Cure your children's warring madness;
bend our pride to your control;
shame our wanton, selfish gladness,
rich in things and poor in soul.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
lest we miss your kingdom's goal,
let we miss your kingdom's goal.

4 Save us from weak resignation
to the evils we deplore;
let the gift of your salvation
be our glory evermore.
Grant us wisdom, grant us courage,
serving you whom we adore,
serving you whom we adore.

**WORD**

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

**FIRST READING: Exodus 20:1-17**

A reading from Exodus.

1God spoke all these words:
  2I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; 3you shall have no other gods before me.
  4You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, 6but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.
  7You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.
  8Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. 9Six days you shall labor and do all your work. 10But the seventh day is a sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. 11For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.
  12Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you.
  13You shall not murder.
  14You shall not commit adultery.
  15You shall not steal.
  16You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
  17You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

**The word of the Lord.**

**PSALM: Psalm 19**

 1The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky proclaims its maker’s handiwork.
 2One day tells its tale to another, and one night imparts knowledge | to another.
 3Although they have no words or language, and their voices | are not heard,
 4their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world, where God has pitched a tent for the sun.
 5It comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber; it rejoices like a champion to run its course.
 6It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens and runs about to the end of it again; nothing is hidden from its burning heat.
 7The teaching of the Lord is perfect and revives the soul;
  the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.
 8The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart;
  the commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to the eyes.
 9The fear of the Lord is clean and endures forever; the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous  altogether.
 10More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold,
  sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.
 11By them also is your servant enlightened, and in keeping them there is great reward.
 12Who can detect one’s own offenses? Cleanse me from my secret faults.
 13Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion over me; then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a  great offense.
 14Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable you’re your sight, O Lord, my strength and my redeemer.

**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

18The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19For it is written,
 “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”
20Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. 22For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, 23but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25For God’s foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.

**The word of the Lord.**

**GOSPEL: John 2:13-22**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

13The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 14In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. 15Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. 16He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father’s house a marketplace!” 17His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” 18The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” 19Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” 20The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” 21But he was speaking of the temple of his body. 22After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The gospel of the Lord.

**SERMON**

Our readings this morning contain two well-known pericopes or stories where God seeks out a relationship with God’s people. Our first reading from the book of Exodus is the giving of the 10 Commandments to the Israelites from God. So often we believe the commandments to be laws or moral principles of how we are to live ….and they are in a way, but that was not the reason why God gave the commandments to the Israelites. God gave the commandments as a gift of divine love and as a covenantal partnership between the Israelites and God.

 The people of Israel had lived for centuries as slaves to the Egyptians. Their national identity was that of forced labour and oppression. When God finally freed the Israelites, God promised that he would be the people’s God, and that the Israelites would one day be adopted as a holy nation of freedom and relationship. In the giving of the commandments, God was prescribing a new way of living, giving the people freedom to know and believe that God would provide for all. Can you imagine how the Israelites must have felt being in relationship with a God of divine love?

         Our gospel reading from John is another well-known story, where we see another example of new life in relationship with God. But this time through the person of Jesus Christ. We also see the humanity of Jesus in his emotional outburst or as some folks call it, a temple tantrum. The setting of our gospel reading is at the temple just before the arrival of Passover. Now the temple was a huge place consisting of the temple itself as well as a courtyard. Jesus likely arrived at the courtyard where he found the temple crowded with people, sheep, cattle, and doves all in preparation for Passover. Moneychangers were prevalent, and the sound of coins clanging and changing hands could be heard throughout the massive building. I wonder if the temple courtyard resembled a busy Saturday morning at the St. Jacobs Farmers Market!

         Now I should note that the selling and sacrificing of animals and the exchange of money in the temple was completely legal and allowed. The book of Leviticus spends much time explaining the importance of animal sacrifice to God as an atonement of sins in Jewish culture and religion. There was also a yearly temple tax that needed to be paid to the Romans, so changing money into Roman currency was a lawful practise.

 It is interesting to note that in the Synoptic gospels, Jesus calls the temple, “a den of thieves,” because of the profits made by corrupt sellers and moneychangers who took advantage of both Jewish and Roman laws. They overcharged and oversold to folks knowing that the temple tax needed to be paid and the need for blemish-free animals was vital to the atonement sacrifices. In the gospel of John, however, there is no mention of thievery or deceit. Notice in our reading that Jesus does not drive the moneychangers away, yes he overturns the tables and tips over the containers of money, but it was the animals whom he drove away. So, what exactly is going on in this story? Was Jesus really angry or were there other emotions at play here?

         Professor and theologian Karoline Lewis in the podcast *Sermon Brainwave*contends that Jesus was not angry. She believes that Jesus was acting out of passion, because Jesus had a different understanding of the divine love of God. There was no longer a need to sacrifice animals for the sake of atonement because God was present, God was standing directly in front of the crowds in the person of Jesus. Lewis suggests that, “God had left the building” but then she went on to add that, “actually God was never in the building to begin with!”[[1]](#footnote-1)  Just as God had offered a new relationship with the Israelites, God was offering a new relationship with the world through the person of Jesus Christ, through the grace and mercy in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

         I find Lewis’ explanation to be very timely for us this year, because as we are well aware, many churches have been shuttered due to the pandemic. And I hope that we have all come to realize that God is not found only ibn the physical building of the church! God through the humanity and grace of Jesus Christ is all around us, wherever we are, whether it be at home, or work, in nature, or lying in a bed in a lonely hospital room. For so many years, Christians accepted that the church was the defining location of God in that hour long Sunday morning worship service. The focus was inward and in doing so, we missed seeing the face and heart of God through Jesus in those around us, sometimes even standing right in front of us! Now do not get me wrong, the church is a truly important part of our ministry. It is where we meet in community to share our joys and struggles, it is where we hear our beloved and timeless hymns, it is where we share in the meal of bread and wine, and where we are given new life in the waters of our baptism. We go to church to worship together, to learn together, and to live out and share the good news of the resurrection with a world in need of unconditional and divine love.  But if we see the church as being the only place to truly know God, what type of relationship are we focused on? Are we being vulnerable and open, giving our faith an opportunity to grow?

         Both of our readings today speak of the gift of a new covenant and relationship with God. They speak of God turning the world upside down offering unconditional love to all. The gift of the 10 commandments so many centuries ago does not show us what we need to do to receive the grace of God, the commandments continue to light the way just as Jesus lights our way through the darkness into the eternal light. As we continue on in this journey of Lent 2021 may we take some time to reflect on these gifts given to us freely by God. May they continue to deepen our faith and shape our lives in the image of Jesus Christ, so that we can be the hands and feet of Jesus turning the world upside down by sharing our love and compassion with all around us. Let it be so. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY Canticle of the Turning (ELW 723)**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN1_iZU-OWE>

1 My soul cries out with a joyful shout
that the God of my heart is great,
and my spirit sings of the wondrous things
that you bring to the ones who wait.
You fixed your sight on your servant's plight,
and my weakness you did not spurn,
so from east to west shall my name be blest.
Could the world be about to turn?

Refrain
My heart shall sing of the day you bring.
Let the fires of your justice burn.
Wipe away all tears, for the dawn draws near,
and the world is about to turn.

2 Though I am small, my God, my all,
you work great things in me,
and your mercy will last from the depths of the past
to the end of the age to be.
Your very name puts the proud to shame,
and to those who would for you yearn,
you will show your might, put the strong to flight,
for the world is about to turn. Refrain

3 From the halls of pow'r to the fortress tow'r,
not a stone will be left on stone.
Let the king beware for your justice tears
ev'ry tyrant from his throne.
The hungry poor shall weep no more,
for the food they can never earn;
there are tables spread, ev'ry mouth be fed,
for the world is about to turn. Refrain

4 Though the nations rage from age to age,
we remember who holds us fast:
God's mercy must deliver us
from the conqueror's crushing grasp.
This saving word that our forebears heard
is the promise which holds us bound,
till the spear and rod can be crushed by God,
who is turning the world around. Refrain

**PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

There is no God before you. Purify the faith of your church, that your people place their trust in nothing beside you. Your name is holy. Guide your church, that in every situation your people’s words and actions honor your name. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

The heavens declare your glory. Renew and replensh your creation. Provide conscientious leaders in the struggle for clean air and water; protect creatures and crops that rely on healthy ecosystems; give all people the willingness to repent when our way of life pollutes the earth and skies. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Fill leaders with the foolishness of your peace and mercy. Your law defends the vulnerable. Work through legislators, judicial systems, and systems of law enforcement to protect the wellbeing and freedom of all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Your weakness is stronger than human strength. Defend victims of crime and bring redemption to those who have harmed others. Give sabbath rest to all who labor Protect those who are vulnerable and give courage to all who are suffering with illness or injury, we especially remember Eddy, Elaine B, Susie, Donelda, Lynette, Barb, Sarah, Alea, Mary Ann, Cheryl, Bonnie, Mary, Ruth, Tilly, Danielle, Kyle, and their new arrivals Mila, and Theo, Nancy, and those we name in the stillness of our hearts,. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You call us to proclaim Christ crucified. Give clarity to this congregation and our leaders, so that we might follow Christ beyond our own habits and comfort. Clear out anything in our common life that would obscure the gospel or that serves our own interests. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

The cross of Christ is your power for all who are being saved. Thank you for all the martyrs whose witness reveals the power of the cross. Give us the same trust in life and in death. 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**

Let us pray.

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God, **we give you thanks and praise.**

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; 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**

You are what God created you to be

Created in Christ Jesus for good works,
chosen as holy and beloved,

Freed to serve your neighbour,

**Amen.**

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG*Lift High the Cross* (ELW 660)**

Refrain
Lift high the cross,

the love of Christ proclaim,
till all the world adore his sacred name.

1 Come, Christians, follow where our captain trod,
our king victorious, Christ, the Son of God. Refrain

2 All newborn servants of the Crucified
bear on their brows the seal of him who died. Refrain

3 O Lord, once lifted on the glorious tree,
as thou hast promised, draw us all to thee. Refrain
4 So shall our song of triumph ever be:
praise to the Crucified for victory! Refrain

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1. Karoline Lewis, in *Sermon Brainwave, #772: Third Sunday in Lent (B) – March 7, 2021,*accessed March 5, 2021, <https://www.workingpreacher.org/podcasts/772-third-sunday-in-lent-b-march-7-2021>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)