

Sunday, March 7, 2021

Third Sunday in Lent

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

As we come before God this Lent, let us pray together.

Almighty God, you know us from before we are born. You are always with us in our past, present, and future. You know our joys and our flaws. You know our outward successes and our innermost failings.

We come before you now wanting to spend time with you and worship you.

Forgive us when we stray in our relationship with you.

Bring us closer to your Spirit once again. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

God of mercy,

We confess that we have not always stayed close to you, God.

We do not always trust in your path for our lives.

We do not always follow your call for us. We let worry and fear consume us.

We do not always treat our neighbors as ourselves.

For the sake of your Son, have mercy on us.

Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may return to you again and glorify your holy name in all that we say and do. Amen.

God is merciful and just. Christ was crucified and died for us and for all our sins.

As a minister of the church of Christ, I declare to you that God forgives all of your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the † Son, and of the Holy Spirit. God never leaves us or forsakes us. Return to the Lord your God with a new spirit, ready to accept God's gift of grace.

Amen

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray together.... **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.**

FIRST READING: Exodus 20:1-17

After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how to live in community. The Ten Commandments proclaim that God alone is worthy of worship.

Flowing from God, the life of the community flourishes when based on honesty, trust, fidelity, and respect for life, family, and property.

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. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 19

¹The heavens declare the glory of God, / and the sky proclaims its maker's handiwork.

²**One 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,
⁴**their 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.
⁶**It 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 re- | vives the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure and gives wisdom to | the simple.
⁸**The statutes of the Lord are just and re- | joice the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light | to the eyes.**

⁹The fear of the Lord is clean and en- | dures forever;
the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous | altogether.
¹⁰**More 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 ser- | vant enlightened, / and in keeping them there is | great reward.
¹²**Who 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.
¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable | in your sight,
O Lord, my strength and | my redeemer.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

The word of the cross is pure foolishness and nonsense to the world because it claims that God is mostly revealed in weakness, humiliation, and death. But through such divine foolishness and weakness, God is working to save us. The center of Paul's preaching is Christ crucified.

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. **Thanks be to God.**

***GOSPEL: John 2:13-22**

Jesus attacks the commercialization of religion by driving merchants out of the temple. When challenged, he responds mysteriously, with the first prediction of his own death and resurrection. In the midst of a seemingly stable religious center, Jesus suggests that the center itself has changed.

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. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. Let us pray. All-Knowing God,

You are Creator of all that is in heaven and on earth. We rejoice that we are able to give back some of our blessings to you. You have changed our lives forever with your mercy and grace. Give us opportunities to change the lives of others with your Gospel message. Bless our congregation, this community, and everything we give back to you to continue your holy work, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Pastor: Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

Leader: 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.

Leader: Creator God, the heavens declare your glory. Renew your creation. Guide leaders in the struggle for clean air and water; protect creatures and crops that rely on healthy ecosystems; give all people the willingness to do better when our way of life pollutes the earth and skies. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Leader: All Knowing God, you are wiser than human wisdom. Fill all leaders with your peace and mercy. Grant endurance and fruitful ministry to churches. Defend the vulnerable in and around our community. 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.

Pastor: Almighty and Everlasting God, your weakness is stronger than human strength. Today we pray for all who are caught up in depression, anxiety, fear, grief and loss, and for all who are sick. We pray especially for all those whom we name now or in our hearts *especially...* Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Leader: The cross of Christ reminds us of your grace, love, and forgiveness for all of us. Thank you for all the saints 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.**

Pastor: O Faithful God, we entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you both spoken and unspoken, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING PRAYER

Let us pray. Lord God, we are living in difficult times. As we have worshipped with you this day, you have refreshed us with your Word and given us new hope. Send us into the next week as witnesses of your Gospel message, that we may be light for the world, as we continue through this season of Lent. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May the Almighty God bless you and keep you.

May Christ's mercy and forgiveness remind you to go and sin no more.

May the Spirit guide you and keep you safe from evil in the world.

And finally, may God's love bring you comfort and ☩ give you hope. **Amen.**

DISMISSAL

Go in the humbleness of the Lenten season and serve God with kindness! **Thanks be to God!**