

Worship in the Home: February 28, 2021

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Worship in the Home

Second Sunday in Lent, Year B

February 28, 2021

In this time of world-wide crisis, congregations throughout this church are not able to gather for worship as the body of Christ. While you cannot be together in person, we can hear the word of God and hold each other in prayer. We offer this brief resource as an aid for prayer in the home. As with our prayers in the gathered assembly for worship, you are encouraged to prepare or adapt them locally for your context.

The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

Find a peaceful place to pray, perhaps a table. You may wish to light a candle and place a bowl of water in remembrance of your baptism. One person may lead this acclamation and then pray the Prayer of the Day.

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

Amen.

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

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.

First Reading: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah's womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God's promise.

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."

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 22:23-31

²³You who fear the LORD, give praise! All you of Jacob's¹ line, give glory. Stand in awe of the LORD, all you off-¹spring 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,¹ the LORD hears them.

²⁵From you comes my praise in the¹ great assembly; I will perform my vows in the sight of those who¹ fear the LORD.

²⁶The poor shall eat¹ and be satisfied, Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts¹ live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn¹ to the LORD; all the families of nations shall bow¹ before God.

²⁸For dominion belongs¹ to the LORD, who rules o-¹ver the nations.

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow¹ down in worship; all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel be-¹fore the LORD.

³⁰Their descendants shall¹ serve the LORD, whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people¹ yet unborn, saying to them, "The¹ LORD has acted!"

Second Reading: Romans 4:13-25

Paul presents Abraham as the example for how a person comes into a right relationship with God not through works of the law but through faith. Though Abraham and Sarah were far too old for bearing children, Abraham trusted that God would accomplish what God had promised to accomplish.

¹³The promise that Abraham would inherit the world did not come to him 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 Abraham's 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 Abraham believed, who gives life

to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, Abraham 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 Abraham 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 God 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 the one who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

Word of God, word of life.
Thanks be to God.

Gospel: Mark 8:31-38

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

After Peter confesses his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples for the first time what is to come. Peter’s response indicates that he does not yet understand the way of the cross that Jesus will travel.

³¹Jesus 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. ³²Jesus said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, Jesus 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.
Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

In Mark, Jesus’ identity is a secret until it is told openly in the church after his death and resurrection. But in today’s Gospel reading, the first of three “passion predictions” in Mark, Jesus speaks boldly and openly about that coming death. All three of the passion predictions are accompanied with words about our discipleship. Today, resisting Peter, Jesus makes clear that this discipleship involves honesty about death. “Taking up the cross” is not self-torture. There is already enough suffering in the world. Rather it is telling the truth that we die and it is being ready to suffer for the gospel if we must. So Peter did suffer martyrdom. But death is never the last word. By the power of the Spirit poured out from Christ’s death, we are brought to faith like the faith of Abraham — trust in the God who gives life to the dead; trust from two old people who were “as good as dead.” In the resurrection, Jesus our Lord is made alive. By baptism God makes us alive together with Christ. Like Abraham and Sarah, we too are given a new identity: we are named children of God and co-heirs with Christ. And we are turned in love and service towards all those many people who are being invited also to trust in God like Abraham and Sarah.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read “Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 750), “All My Hope on God Is Founded” (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 757). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

On this second Sunday in Lent, let us pray for the church and for all people in need, responding to each petition with words from today's psalm, "hear us, we pray."

A brief silence.

God of mercy and might, bless your church throughout the world. Uphold those believers who suffer for the sake of your gospel. Strengthen the faith of all the baptized, and make your presence felt by those unable to assemble for worship.

A brief silence.

When we cry out, O faithful God,

hear us, we pray.

As this week we commemorate John and Charles Wesley, we ask you to bless the Methodist churches around the globe. Unite them in the promises of baptism, and in due time return us all to the joy of singing the hymns that Charles wrote.

A brief silence.

When we cry out, O warm-hearted God,

hear us, we pray.

Bless the earth. Save the animals and their habitats from wild and uncontrolled weather. Teach humanity to live respectful of nature and to join you in tending to creation's well-being. We ask you to smile also on Mars.

A brief silence.

When we cry out, O wondrous God,

hear us, we pray.

Bless the nations of the world. 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. Lead all people around the world to receive the COVID-19 vaccine with gratitude to you. Grant to our Congress the wisdom and the will to improve the lives of all our residents.

A brief silence.

When we cry out, O righteous God,

hear us, we pray.

Bless all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit. We beg that you bring an end to the pandemic. Restore medical systems, and comfort all who are sick or dying. Lead us out of the practices of discrimination. Bring vindication for victims of injustice and relief to oppressed minorities. We remember before you

A brief silence.

When we cry out, O benevolent God,

hear us, we pray.

Bless families: those in our community, those waiting at national borders, those whose struggles are known only to you. Keep children safe; sustain expectant parents and those facing infertility; protect women in childbirth. Accompany everyone who lives alone. Equip the ministries and services of church and state that attend to families in their needs.

A brief silence.

When we cry out, O loving God,

hear us, we pray.

Fill each one of us with hope, and receive our personal prayers.

A brief silence.

When we cry out, O gracious God,

hear us, we pray.

Praises to you, O God, for centuries of saints whose faithfulness inspires our Lenten journey. Bless those who mourn the half million dead of the virus. Be our way, our truth, our life, and strengthen our faith in the gift of your final salvation.

A brief silence.

When we cry out, O everlasting God,

hear us, we pray.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "How Firm a Foundation" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 796), "Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 808). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[How Firm a Foundation](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Gracious God, who has named and claimed us, calling us your beloved children, you know the secrets of our hearts. When we sin and stray from your paths, you astound us with your saving grace. For this Word of life,

we give you thanks.

Loving Jesus, living Word, in you the Kingdom of God has come near; through you all that was lost has been found. Help us to boldly follow wherever you may lead, trusting your promise that we need not fear, for you are with us. For this Word of life,

we give you thanks.

Holy Spirit, the mystery in which we dwell, into our scarcity, your abundance flows. Enliven all communities with your good news. Guide us to love and serve Jesus, giving ourselves away for the sake of the world. For this Word of life,

we give you thanks.

All glory to you, holy God, now and forever.

Amen.

Merciful God, accompany our journey through these forty days. Renew us in the gift of baptism, that we may provide for those who are poor, pray for those in need, fast from self-indulgence, and above all that we may find our treasure in the life 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.

Offering

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you. (For your information, we have a secure mail box.)

Offering Prayer

Faithful God, you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven. Accompany us in this meal, that we may pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

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

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Then speak the Blessing:

Almighty God, Father, + Son and Holy Spirit, bless us now and forever.

Amen.

Devotional Music Links: For your individual or group devotion, you may choose to listen to the following choral recordings made available through Augsburg Fortress: "[Be Thou My Vision](#);" "[We Trust in God Alone](#);" "[Jesus Calls Us](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday (commemoration of George Herbert, hymnwriter, 1633) Psalm 105:1-11, 37-45. **Tuesday** (commemoration of John Wesley, 1791; Charles Wesley, 1788; renewers of the church) Hebrews 11:1-3, 13-19. **Wednesday** Jeremiah 30:12-22. **Thursday** Psalm 19. **Friday** Exodus 19:9b-15. **Saturday** Exodus 19:16-25. **Second Sunday in Lent** (commemoration of Perpetua and Felicity and companions, martyrs at Carthage, 202) Exodus 20:1-17; Psalm 19; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; John 2:13-22.

Daily Prayer Resources are available, including simple forms of Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer; Responsive Prayer; and prayers for mealtimes and other occasions.

Due to copyright restrictions, we are only able to provide downloadable hymns that are in the public domain and selected hymns for limited use. Other suggestions provided above may be found in *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*. To purchase copies of *Evangelical Lutheran Worship* and *All Creation Sings* for the home, visit the [Augsburg Fortress website](#) or call 1-800-328-4648. Selected hymns from *All Creation Sings* will be provided for limited use.

Reflection text: Gordon Lathrop. Intercessory Prayer: Gail Ramshaw

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Thank you to those who clean the Church following worship.

Annual Meeting March 14th following worship.

Special Meeting, April 11th following worship.

Synod Assembly, 30 April – 2 May.

Please keep in your prayers this week: Kevin Johnson, Barbara Metzger, Rob Johnson and Steve Lindberg (Streeter Family Friend's & Kin), Cal Curtis & Patty Thompson (Carole Holten's Son-in-Law & Sister), Emily (Ben & Casey's Daughter), Bob Broberg, Carole Holten, Donna Jackson-Hein.

Pastor Bill Sass – Sermon for Sunday, February 21, 2021

FACE -TO-FACE WITH THE DEVIL

First Sunday of Lent

Mark 1:9-15

Today we have the season of Lent, that forty-day period that leads us to the cross and empty tomb. We begin our journey in the wilderness. That is where the Spirit had driven Jesus, according to Mark's Gospel. Perhaps Jesus was seeking a time of self-examination. Perhaps He wanted time to reflect on the ministry about to begin. Perhaps He knew this would be the last opportunity He would get to truly be alone. Whatever the motivation, it was in the wilderness that Jesus confronted Satan face-to-face.

THERE COMES A TIME WHEN ALL OF US MUST CONFRONT SATAN. There are times when all of us are tempted. None of us ever escapes some form of temptation. Of course, some of us are tempted more than others.

William Willimon tells an amusing and yet sad story about something that occurred in a Women's Bible Study he was leading in his church. The group was studying Jesus' temptations. Dr. Willimon

asked the group, "Have any of you ever been faced with temptation and, with Jesus' help resisted?"

One woman said, yes, just the week before, there was some confusion in the supermarket checkout line. Before she knew it, she was standing in the parking lot with a loaf of bread she had not paid for. She said because of her Christian convictions, she went back into the store and paid for the bread.

Dr. Willimon asked if there was anyone else who would like to share. A young woman who was attending her first Bible Study raised her hand. Verleen was different from the rest of the women present; she lived on the wrong side of town. "A couple of years ago," she began, "I was into cocaine really big. You know what that's like! You know how that stuff makes you crazy." She told the women that a few years before, she and her boyfriend robbed a gas station. "It was as simple as taking candy from a baby," she said. That night, her boyfriend also wanted to rob a convenience store, but something inside Verleen told her it was wrong. Her boyfriend beat her up for refusing to go along with him, but she felt good saying no, "cause that was the only time in my life, I ever said no to anything," she told the group.

Through stunned silence Dr. Willimon muttered, "Well, er, uh, that's resisting temptation. That's what this text is about." He then led the group in the closing prayer.

Temptation is relative. We need to be aware there are people who are tempted daily, with situations you and I cannot even imagine.

Out in the wilderness, for forty days, Jesus confronted evil head on. He was tempted by Satan just as we all are tempted. We all face temptations large and small. When we are tempted, we need to learn from Jesus. Jesus confronted Satan head-on.

There is something else we ought to bear in mind. WE BECOME STRONGER WHEN WE RESIST TEMPTATION. This is something we need to understand about the power of the tempter: the more we give in, the weaker we become. The more we resist, the stronger we become. OF COURSE, JESUS WAS NOT ALONE IN HIS CONFRONTATION WITH THE TEMPTER, AND NEITHER ARE WE. The Psalmist proclaims, "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth." It is interesting that, according to Matthew's version of this story, Jesus resisted Satan with words taken from Deuteronomy, "You shall not tempt the Lord your God." He was putting Satan on notice, that Satan was confronting not simply man's power, but the very power of God. That same power is available to us. JESUS WAS NOT LEFT ALL ALONE IN THE WILDERNESS—God was with Him.

There is a fascinating story of the 1989 earthquake that almost flattened Armenia. This deadly tremor killed over 30,000 people in less than four minutes. In that short interval, countless other lives were forever changed. In the midst of all the confusion of the earthquake, a father left his wife securely at home, and rushed to his son's school. When he arrived there, he discovered the building was flat as a pancake.

He remembered his son's classroom was in the back right corner of the building. The father rushed there, and started digging through the rubble. As he was digging, other grieving parents arrived, clutching their hearts, saying: "My son!" "My daughter!" Other well-meaning parents tried to pull him off what was left of the school saying: "It's too late!" "They're dead!" "You can't help!" "Go home!" Even a police officer, and a fire-fighter, told him he should go home. To everyone who tried to stop him he said, "Are you going to help me now?" When they did not answer him, he continued digging for his son, stone by stone.

Courageously he proceeded alone because he needed to know for himself: "Is my boy alive, or is he dead?" The man dug for eight hours and then twelve and then twenty-four and then thirty-six. Finally, in the thirty-eighth hour, as he pulled back a boulder, he heard his son's voice. He screamed his son's name, "ARMAND!" And a voice answered him, "Dad? It's me, Dad!" then the boy added these priceless words, "I told the other kids not to worry. I told them that if you were alive, you'd save me, and when you saved me, they'd be saved. You promised, "No matter what, I'll always be there for you!" You did it, Dad!"

The father worked more intently now, clearing the way for his son, and his classmates. "Come on out!" the father said. "No, Dad!" his son replied, "Let the other kids out first, cause I know you'll get me! No matter what, I know you'll be there for me!"

That's a very special relationship between a father and son, isn't it? You and I have that same relationship with God. When we come face to face with the tempter, we need not fear, because God is there with us.

A camp counselor was questioning a little girl about her faith. Trying to prepare her for temptations she would surely face back in the real world, the counselor inquired, "What if the devil comes to your door, and tries to lead you astray?" The little girl replied, "I'll ask Jesus to answer the door for me."

God promises each one of us that, no matter what, He will be there for us. We have God who loves us unconditionally. We have God who never gives up on us. We have God who will not let us fall. If we ask for His strength, He will give it.

We will be tempted. Nothing in this world is surer than that. We need to respond as Jesus responded. We need to confront the tempter head-on, and reject without hesitation, that which would weaken and destroy us. And we have this promise. God will be there for us. If we ask, He will surely help us to overcome.

AMEN!

Mid-week pastoral message for February 24, 2021

Father Aaron Walker is an Orthodox priest who wrote an article entitled "Giving thanks to God for all things," re-printed in the Feb. 17 Brainerd paper. Here's the last third of it for our mutual edification:

The transformative power of giving thanks to God is nowhere better illustrated than in the book, "The Hiding Place," by Corrie Ten Boom. The climax of this story takes place in Ravensbruck death camp where Corrie and her sister Betsy were sent for hiding Jews in their home during the Nazi occupation of Holland. Malnourished, freezing, driven to slave labor, they are herded into filthy barracks, with bunk beds full of fleas.

Corrie asks, "How can we live in such a place?"

Betsy prays: "Show us. Show us how...That's it Corrie!" That's His answer. 'Give thanks to God in all circumstances!' That's what we can do. We can start right now to thank God for every single thing about this new barracks."

The day comes when they do thank God, even for fleas. The guards' avoidance of the bunk house allows them to worship God uninterrupted.

"Our Bible was the center of an ever-widening circle of help and hope. Like waifs clustered around a blazing fire, we gathered about it, holding out our hearts to its warmth and light. The blacker the night around us grew, the brighter and truer and more beautiful burned the word of God."

This experience in Ravensbruck proves the only limits of our blessings are limits of our gratitude. The more we thank God for everything, by offering everything up to Him ("Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven") the more fully we appreciate His blessings in our life.

This is the essence of thanksgiving – truly thanking God for everything, the good and bad – by offering it back to Him so He can transform it all by filling it with Himself.

The Bible says "you are...a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light" (1 Peter 2:9). God invites all people to fulfill their priesthood within the Christian Church, and giving thanks to God for all things.