

Worship in the Home: March 14, 2021

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Worship in the Home

Fourth Sunday in Lent, Year B

March 14, 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 fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

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, rich in mercy, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world and rescued us from the hopelessness of death. Lead us into your light, that all our deeds may reflect your love, 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: Numbers 21:4-9

Though God provides food and water for the Israelites in the wilderness, they whine and grumble. They forget about the salvation they experienced in the exodus. God punishes them for their sin, but when they repent God also provides a means of healing: a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole.

⁴From Mount Hor the Israelites set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." ⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people, ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

¹Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good,
for God's mercy endures forever.

²Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim
that God redeemed them from the hand of the foe,
³gathering them in from the lands;
from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

¹⁷Some were fools and took rebellious paths;
through their sins they were afflicted.

¹⁸They loathed all manner of food
and drew near to death's door.

¹⁹Then in their trouble they cried to the LORD
and you delivered them from their distress.

²⁰You sent forth your word and healed them
and rescued them from the grave.

²¹Let them give thanks to you, LORD, for your steadfast love
and your wonderful works for all people.

²²Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving
and tell of your deeds with shouts of joy.

Second Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

While we were dead in our sinfulness, God acted to make us alive as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus. We are saved not by what we do but by grace through faith. Thus our good works are really a reflection of God's grace at work in our lives.

¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which God loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved. With Christ ⁶God raised us up and enthroned us in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus ⁷so that in the ages to come might be shown the immeasurable riches of God's grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Gospel: John 3:14-21

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

To explain the salvation of God to the religious leader, Nicodemus, Jesus refers to the scripture passage quoted in today's first reading. Just as those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed, so people will be saved when they behold Christ lifted up on the cross.

[Jesus said:] ¹⁴Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son-of-Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶For God loved the world in this way, that God gave the Son, the only begotten one, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Reflection

Having read these readings, think on this:

The writers of the New Testament sought in many ways to present the meaning of the crucifixion of Jesus, a tragic event that at first seems too horrible to have any meaning. The Gospel according to John here means to transform our horror into hope, borrowing an Old Testament image to do so. In Numbers, the people are dying and serpents are giving out this death. At God's command, the serpent on the pole, as if it were death enthroned, gives life. The people look and live. So, for us, the man executed on the cross gives life to the world. We all are dead in sin. Christ shares the worst of our deaths. Now, not by looking but by looking in faith, by trusting what God has done, we are made alive together with Christ. The Spirit, poured out in baptism, lifts us up together with Christ into life. God loves the world and, giving us that gift of love, enables us also to love others with our good works.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "God Loved the World" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 323), "There in God's Garden" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 342), "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 779). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[God Loved the World](#)

[Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound](#)

Then pray these intercessions:

On this fourth Sunday in Lent, let us pray to our loving God for all the needs of the world, responding to each petition with words from today's psalm, "your mercy endures forever."

A brief silence.

O God, preserve your church through good times and bad. Empower pastors, missionaries, Young Adults in Global Mission, and all ministries of service for their work throughout this pandemic. Bless Lutherans around the world, our ecumenical partners, and everyone preparing for baptism at Easter.

A brief silence.

O God our Redeemer, receive our prayers:

your mercy endures forever.

Continue your creation of this good earth. Nourish seas and rivers, and give water to thirsty lands. Nurture spring growth that feeds hungry creatures, and bless the fields being prepared for the growing season.

A brief silence.

O God our Creator, receive our prayers:

your mercy endures forever.

In Brazil and wherever COVID-19 rages, send healing. In Myanmar and wherever tyranny rules, restore human rights. In Nigeria and wherever there is domestic terrorism, send concord. In Ethiopia and wherever there is bloodshed, bring peace. In Yemen and wherever people starve, give food and water. In the United States and wherever there is discrimination, inspire all residents to honor one another and to strive for justice. Prosper the work of those who care for victims of violence, and grant legislators wisdom in decision-making.

A brief silence.

O God our Protector, receive our prayers:

your mercy endures forever.

Give rest and welcome to migrants. Bring run-aways to places of safety. Protect all who are incarcerated. Provide caring families to children who seek adoption. Give a decent life to all who live on our streets.

A brief silence.

O God our Homeland, receive our prayers:

your mercy endures forever.

As you saved your people of old from snakebite, so now deliver all who suffer from disaster, hunger, disease, and despair, and those we name here before you. . .

A brief silence.

O God our Savior, receive our prayers:

your mercy endures forever.

Shine light into our darkness, make night into a blessing, and in mercy hear the prayers of our hearts:

A longer time of silence.

O God our Friend, receive our prayers:

your mercy endures forever.

We praise you for all the saints who have lived and died in Christ, especially Patrick and Joseph, and we remember before you all who have died from COVID-19. At the end, bring us with them into life in your presence.

A brief silence.

O God our Comforter, receive our prayers:

your mercy endures forever.

To you, O God, our only God, we entrust all for whom we pray, through Jesus Christ our loving Lord.

Amen.

If you have a hymnal, you may now sing or read "O Christ, Our Hope" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 604), "What Wondrous Love Is This" (Evangelical Lutheran Worship 666), "By Grace We Have Been Saved" (All Creation Sings 1006). Selected hymns are provided below for those without a hymnal at home.

[O Christ, Our Hope](#)

[What Wondrous Love Is This](#)

[By Grace We Have Been Saved](#)

Then conclude with these prayers:

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Holy God,

our living Water, our faithful Companion, our true Guide,
by your Word you created a world with rivers and seas, wells and springs,
and in mercy you provided water for your people in the wilderness.

For your Word with the water of baptism, we thank you, O God.

We thank you, O God.

We praise you for Christ, who joined us in our desert, calling us to righteousness, granting forgiveness, and walking with us into newness of life.

For Jesus, your gracious Word, we glorify you, O God.

We glorify you, O God.

Through these days of Lent we plead for your Spirit, that strengthened by your Word, we may care for others and for the world you made, and work for justice and peace for all.

For your Word in our hearts and minds, we praise you, O God.

We praise you, O God.

Receive our thanksgiving, and grant us your blessing, 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 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.**

Please remember to mail in your offerings so that Grace can continue to serve you.

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: "[God So Loved the World](#);" "[Jesus, Lover of My Soul](#);" "[Amazing Grace](#)."

Readings for the Week:

Monday Psalm 107:1-16. **Tuesday** 1 Corinthians 10:6-13. **Wednesday** (commemoration of Patrick, bishop, missionary to Ireland, 461) Isaiah 60:15-22. **Thursday** Psalm 51:1-12. **Friday** (Joseph, Guardian of Jesus) Matthew 1:16, 18-21, 24a. **Saturday** John 12:1-11. **Fifth Sunday in Lent** (commemoration of Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury, martyr, 1556) Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12 *or* Psalm 119:9-16; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33.

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.

Daylight Saving Time begins March 14th, set your clocks ahead.

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, Lois Goossen (Friend of Newgard's).

Pastor's mid-week message for March 10

The church is like a trio that Frank Messenger and his family heard one Sunday in an African church in Zimbabwe. Midway through the service, two young men came forward to sing. They were awful! People began to snicker and even laugh out loud. A third young man stood up in the congregation, came forward, and joined in the singing. When the trio filled out, they sounded great! They received an enthusiastic response when they finished. Frank saw this as a parable of balance (or harmony). All parts of the Body of Christ are needed to make beautiful music. Our church cannot be the church that God has called it to be, if each of us is not doing our part.

BECAUSE WE ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST, THE SUM IS FAR GREATER THAN THE INDIVIDUAL PARTS. That is, the church is not simply another human institution. The church relies not only on the commitment of its members. The church relies on the Spirit of the living God. And because the church relies on the Spirit of the Living God, we accomplish far more than human institutions can ever hope for.

There is a story of an ancient king of Babylon who came back to life and visited one of our modern cities. His host showed him the underside of the city: brothels, gambling, and drug dens, taverns, and the like. The king was polite, but bored. He said, "We had all these things in Babylon three thousand years ago, and on the whole we did it better. Have you nothing new to show me?"

So his guide reversed his field, and took his guest to churches, day care centers, libraries, schools, hospitals, public health centers, research laboratories, transient centers, institutions for the disabled, and soup kitchens.

"Ah," said the king, "all this is new. We didn't have these things in Babylon."

No, they didn't have those things in Babylon because they did not have the church of Jesus Christ. I challenge you to go into any non-Christian nation in this world, and find the level

of ministry to the intellectual, social, physical, and spiritual needs of people that you will find in those countries in which Christians are the majority. Search out the histories of our great universities, our great hospitals, our great benevolent societies, and you will find more often than not, that they were begun in the name of Christ. The church is an institution unlike any other in this world, and the reason is that our founder is still with us. He breathes life into His weary followers; He still beckons with the call, "Follow me." We are his body. All of us are important. There is something each of us can do in His service. Most importantly of all, He is alive, and He is with us. AMEN!!