

***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.... **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.”⁹ So 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.
The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

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

²**Let 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.

¹⁷**Some 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.

¹⁹**Then 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.

²¹**Let 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 he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his 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 he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

The word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

***GOSPEL: John 3:14-21**

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:] ¹⁴“Just 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.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, 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 that 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.**

APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell. On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen

OFFERING PRAYER

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: You sent your Son that the world might be saved through him. Inspire the witness of the church throughout the world. Empower missionaries, Bible translators, and ministries of service in your name. Bless our partners in ministry, our ELCA global partner churches, and Young Adults in Global Mission. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Leader: From east to west your steadfast love is shown. Nourish seas and deserts, wilderness areas and cities. Give water to thirsty lands; nurture spring growth that feeds hungry creatures; bless farmers as they prepare for the growing season. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Leader: You sustained your people in the wilderness. Give courage to all who lead in times of crisis and scarce resources. Prosper the work of those who aid victims of famine and drought. Bring peace in places where scarce resources cause violence.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Pastor: Your mercy endures forever. Deliver all who cry to you, especially those who are hungry or without homes. Give life in places where death seems triumphant; give healing to those who are sick and comfort to those who mourn (*especially we name*)...

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Leader: By grace we have been saved. Fill this congregation to overflowing with that grace, that we show mercy to others. Nourish any in our midst who are hungry, especially children, and bless our ministries of feeding and shelter. Give us patience and courage when the way seems long. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Leader: Your Son was lifted up that whoever believes might have eternal life. We praise you for all who have died in Christ. Bring us with all the saints into the fullness of your promises. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Pastor: We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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 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!