

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

JANUARY 24, 2021

ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, FALLS CHURCH, VA

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



PRELUDE *O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright* Setting: Philip Gehring

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #395 STS. 1, 3, 5 *O Morning Star, How Fair and Bright*

- 1 **O Morning Star, how fair and bright!**  
You shine with God's own truth and light,  
Aglow with grace and mercy!  
Of Jacob's race, King David's son,  
Our Lord and master, You have won  
Our hearts to serve You only!  
Lowly, holy!  
Great and glorious,  
All victorious,  
Rich in blessing!  
Rule and might o'er all possessing!
  
- 3 **Lord, when You look on us in love,**  
At once there falls from God above  
A ray of purest pleasure.  
Your Word and Spirit, flesh and blood  
Refresh our souls with heav'nly food.  
You are our dearest treasure!  
Let Your mercy  
Warm and cheer us!  
O draw near us!  
For You teach us  
God's own love through You has reached us.
  
- 5 **O let the harps break forth in sound!**  
Our joy be all with music crowned,  
Our voices gladly blending!  
For Christ goes with us all the way—  
Today, tomorrow, ev'ry day!  
His love is never ending!  
Sing out! Ring out!  
Jubilation!  
Exultation!  
Tell the story!  
Great is He, the King of Glory!

## CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

In the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

**But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

*Brief silence for reflection and self-examination.*

Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

**Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## KYRIE

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above and for our salvation let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

**Amen.**

## GLORIA IN EXCELSIS

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to His people on earth.

**Lord God, heavenly king, almighty God and Father:**

**We worship You, we give You thanks, we praise You for Your glory.**

**Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God:**

**You take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.**

**You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.**

**For You alone are the Holy One, You alone are the Lord,**

**You alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,**

**in the glory of God the Father. Amen.**

*THE PRAYER OF THE DAY*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God,

**mercifully look upon our infirmities and stretch forth the hand of Your majesty to heal and defend us; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**



*FIRST LESSON*    Jonah 3:1–5, 10

Then the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it the message that I tell you.” So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly great city, three days’ journey in breadth. Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s journey. And he called out, “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” And the people of Nineveh believed God. They called for a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least of them. . . .

When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil way, God relented of the disaster that he had said he would do to them, and he did not do it.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*PSALM 62*

For God alone my soul waits in silence;  
from him comes my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress;  
I shall not be greatly shaken.

How long will all of you attack a man  
to batter him,  
like a leaning wall, a tottering fence?  
They only plan to thrust him down from his high position.

They take pleasure in falsehood.  
They bless with their mouths,  
but inwardly they curse.

For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence,  
for my hope is from him.

He only is my rock and my salvation,  
my fortress;  
I shall not be shaken.

On God rests my salvation and my glory;  
my mighty rock, my refuge is God.

Trust in him at all times, O people;  
pour out your heart before him;  
God is a refuge for us.

Those of low estate are but a breath;  
those of high estate are a delusion;  
in the balances they go up;  
they are together lighter than a breath.  
Put no trust in extortion;  
set no vain hopes on robbery;  
if riches increase, set not your heart on them.

Once God has spoken;  
twice have I heard this:  
that power belongs to God,  
and that to you, O Lord, belongs steadfast love.  
For you will render to a man  
according to his work.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

*SECOND LESSON* 1 Corinthians 7:29–35

This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*CHILDREN'S SERMON*

*ALLELUIA VERSE*

**Alleluia.  
Lord, to whom shall we go?  
You have the words of eternal life.  
Alleluia, alleluia.**

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter.

**Glory to You, O Lord.**

After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men.” And immediately they left their nets and followed him. And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ**

*SERMON*

Last Sunday we heard Jesus calling the first two of His disciples according to John’s Gospel. Today’s Gospel from Mark follows immediately after Jesus’ baptism and temptation. It is how Jesus began His ministry according to Mark, right after His baptism. A couple of weeks ago Pr. Mark reminded us that one of the purposes of Jesus’ Baptism was God’s affirmation of His work, “....**with You I am well pleased.**” What Jesus did first was call 4 specific people to His side, to work with Him. “**Fish for people,**” is how Jesus announced their mission statement. The Church still uses this metaphor – “**Fish for people,**” - for her witnessing and evangelism work. When I was ordained to the Ministry, the pastors in the LCMS were all wearing fish hooks on their suit lapels – openly declaring by that intentional act that they too had been called and ordained to “**fish for people.**” This metaphor fit; these 4 disciples understood fishing so Jesus described their new work with the language of the sea. One of the commentators on Mark that I read suggested that this metaphor meant Jesus was calling these disciples to action, not as mere observers. A fisherman is only a fisherman if he is fishing!

The Church has chosen to link this Gospel to the prophetic ministry of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC prophet Jonah. Within the writings of the prophets Jonah is unique, chiefly because His ministry was to Israel’s great enemy, Assyria, not to a king or issue in Israel. When Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, “**love your enemies,**” He wasn’t really breaking new ground. Jonah had already acted out that part of God’s love for those thought of as enemies by going to Nineveh.

But Jonah took up his task kicking and screaming. **First,** He tried to run from God, and learned the truth of the 139<sup>th</sup> Psalm, “**If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand hold me fast (vs 9-10).**” Jonah ran away and God brought him back. **Second,** Jonah chose to proclaim only judgment in Nineveh; he did not invite Nineveh to repent as prophet’s almost always did, because Jonah did not love this enemy, he despised them. But Nineveh heard God’s mercy in Jonah’s announcement anyway, because it was a word from God, and they responded as Yahweh always called on Israel to respond, by repenting. Who knows, said the king. The Lord might relent from His announced judgment. And **Finally,** when Nineveh repented, and God mercifully forgave them, Jonah went off and pouted. Jonah was no Elijah, but nowhere else in the prophetic writings does God’s mercy for all the world shine so brightly.

Mercy is what God is all about: mercy for His people; mercy for the enemy; mercy for the lost ones; even mercy for a grumpy and stubborn prophet. It is mercy which will be at the center of Jesus’ preaching, and when or if these 4 disciple fishermen forgot that, Jesus would remind them.

In the waning days of President Trump's term as President, he pardoned a whole host of folks. More than a few of them were members of his own administration who had been convicted of criminal behavior. There is a great deal of grumbling about these pardons, much of it along political lines. But think about them for a moment. Some criticize pardons for people who do not seem sorry for their crimes. Some criticize the pardons because they mostly went to administration loyalists. Some criticize the wisdom of the president. But there is no doubt that our constitution gives the President, like all state Governors, that breathtaking power to wash the record clean. No matter what you think of who a president pardons, nothing on earth and in civil society is more breathtaking than seeing a criminal washed clean. Pardons can never really be earned and remain pardons, otherwise payback is all that is at work. And a pardon on earth is as close as you can come on earth to the majesty and beauty of God pardoning work in heaven. If we had to deserve mercy and pardon, we would remain lost. Nineveh did not deserve God's mercy!

To fish for people for this Christ made the disciples part of God's breathtaking, pardoning mercy for sinners. That which we never want to admit -- that my sin is awful and that I deserve God's punishment -- that is front and center every time a disciple absolves a sinner, or even lets a sinner know about mercy. We say with Paul, "**while I was a rebellious sinner, Christ reached out and died for me.**" We say it with Paul, but it is rare for us to face the full truth that while I was loving me more than thee and God, while I was disobedient like Cain, while I was running to my own drumbeat like Jonah, Jesus reached down and washed all my sins away. Let Jesus take your breath away by the sheer size and quality of His mercy. Let Jesus be your song because you know you can never deserve His grace. And then join these disciples in our Christ given mission: carry His mercy into the center of every Nineveh, even the Nineveh that you do not want to be forgiven.

One of the characteristics of Mark's Gospel is the urgency or forward movement of his text. He uses fewer words than the other Evangelists to tell the same story, and in particular he uses the word "**immediately**" to connect various scenes and seemingly speed up Jesus' event schedule. But Mark doesn't use this word to explain how long it took Jesus to do something; he uses "**immediately**" to underscore our Lord's power and authority. He is like God on creation's first morning. He says "**Let there be,**" and by the power of His word everything happens without delay. Our Gospel today ends with 4 fishermen saying yes to Jesus without any space between Jesus' call and their response. That is all about the power and authority, and grace, of Jesus. They leave their nets and obey. What a wonderful detail. All that went before is already over. These four move into what is next.

This little detail, the "**immediately**" of Mark, shows us what repentance ought to look like, it ought to look like Nineveh putting on sack cloth, like James leaving his father and his nets, like me renouncing my sin for a brand new life. Incarnate mercy walked into the lives of these 4 Galilean fishermen in the person of Mary's Son, and their world was as changed as on creation's first morning. He still comes next to us, still offers us this breathtaking new life. "**I was buried with Christ by baptism into death,**" Paul says. Changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the mercy of Jesus. Each morning, Luther taught us, get up in that baptismal mercy, drown your sin and put on the fresh garb of all that it means to be Christ's man and woman, and go and do your new day.

Go and be the salt of the earth. Go and change the world. Turn it upside down again as the Apostles did. "**You are the light of the world,**" so light up the world with the brilliant glories of Jesus. Forgive sinners, especially those who don't know that they need mercy and forgiveness and salt and light. And you will be "**fishers of people,**" direct descendants of these Galilean fishermen. Get up, leave your nets and get going. Nothing can be the same, because Jesus has come, and called you.

**Refrain**

**Shine, Jesus, shine  
Fill this land with the Father's glory  
Blaze, Spirit, blaze, Set our hearts on fire  
Flow, river, flow  
Flood the nations with grace and mercy  
Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.**

**Lord, the light of your love is shining  
In the midst of the darkness, shining  
Jesus, Light of the world shine upon us  
Set us free by the truth you now bring us  
Shine on me, Shine on me. *Refrain***

**Lord, I come to your awesome presence  
From the shadows into your radiance  
By the blood I may enter your brightness  
Search me, try me, Consume all my darkness  
Shine on me, shine on me. *Refrain***

*APOSTLES' CREED*

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.**

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

*OFFERING* *Shine, Jesus, Shine* Organ: Kantor Aaron

*PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH*

Let us pray for the whole Church of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs.

Lord God, heavenly Father, You desire not the death of sinners but that all would turn to you and live. In the epiphany of Your Son Jesus Christ, Your salvation has come near. Give faithfulness and urgency to Your Church to proclaim the Gospel of salvation to all people, that many would come to faith and receive the everlasting life that you give. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Lord of the harvest, as You called Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John to follow You and become fishers of men, so also raise up faithful workers in your kingdom today. Work powerfully among the congregations, seminaries, colleges and institutions of our Church as they encourage and train kingdom workers. And increase in all of us a spirit of generosity to support such work. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal Lord, in view of every current distress as the present form of this world passes away, give constancy and contentment to Your people in their God-given stations. Give comfort and faithfulness to families and strengthen them to pass on the faith to the next generation. And show your kindness to all who seek to live as your people in their homes, their work and in their community, that they would be freed from anxiety and attend to holiness in body and spirit, undividedly devoted to You. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, preserve our nation and lead it in the way of peace and true prosperity. Call to repentance those who have forgotten You. Uphold, sustain and protect our leaders, including Joseph, our president; Ralph, our governor; and all who serve for the good of this people. Save and heal us in this time of pandemic, and do not let disaster befall us but preserve us in peace and quietness. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Merciful Father, turn us from all distractions and cares of this world that would draw our hearts away from Your blessed Gospel. Give us instead a confidence in the resurrection and the peace of a clean conscience by the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name. Graciously behold and help those who are facing difficult times, especially those for whom we pray at this time, including [\_\_\_\_\_]. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Lord, in Your Holy Sacrament You deliver the Gospel of salvation through the true body and blood of your Son. Prepare with repentance and faith all who commune this day and unite them in a sincere confession of Your divine truth. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

All these things and whatever else You know that we need, grant us, Father, for the sake of Him who died and rose again and now lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### *THE LORD'S PRAYER*

**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.**

#### *BENEDICTION*

The Lord bless us and keep us.

The Lord make His face shine on us  
and be gracious to us.

The Lord look upon us with favor and ✠ give us peace.

*Refrain*

Leader:

Listen,

**All:**

**listen, God is calling  
Through the Word inviting,  
Offering forgiveness,  
Comfort, and joy.**

1 Leader:

Jesus gave His mandate:

**All:**

**Share the good news**

Leader:

That He came to save us

**All:**

**And set us free. Refrain**

2 Leader:

Let none be forgotten

**All:**

**Throughout the world.**

Leader:

In the triune name of God

**All:**

**Go and baptize. Refrain**

3 Leader:

Help us to be faithful,

**All:**

**Standing steadfast,**

Leader:

Walking in Your precepts,

**All:**

**Led by Your Word. Refrain**

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

*DISMISSAL*

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*POSTLUDE* Listen, God is Calling Setting: Anne Krentz Organ

Altar Flowers: "For all the great grandparents living through covid and away from family". By Ian and Kristen Chang

**Acknowledgments**

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