

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

MARCH 7, 2021

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

SERVICE OF WORD AND PRAYER



PRELUDE *The Law of God is Good and Wise* Setting: Dietrich Buxtehune

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #579 *The Law of God is Good and Wise*

- 1 The Law of God is good and wise  
And sets His will before our eyes,  
Shows us the way of righteousness,  
And dooms to death when we transgress.
- 2 Its light of holiness imparts  
The knowledge of our sinful hearts  
That we may see our lost estate  
And turn from sin before too late.
- 3 To those who help in Christ have found  
And would in works of love abound  
It shows what deeds are His delight  
And should be done as good and right.
- 4 But those who scornfully disdain  
God's Law shall then in sin remain;  
Its terror in their ear resounds  
And keeps their wickedness in bounds.
- 5 The Law is good; but since the fall  
Its holiness condemns us all;  
It dooms us for our sin to die  
And has no pow'r to justify.
- 6 To Jesus we for refuge flee,  
Who from the curse has set us free,  
And humbly worship at His throne,  
Saved by His grace through faith alone.

INVOCATION

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

**Amen.**

CALL TO WORSHIP

Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful,  
**Slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

Jesus said: If any man would come after me,  
**Let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.**

Christ was wounded for our transgressions;  
**He was bruised for our iniquities.**

#### *CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS*

God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Therefore, let us be reconciled to God and to one another. (*silence for reflection and self-examination*)

Gracious God,  
**have mercy on us. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things done and left undone. Uphold us by your Spirit so that we may live and serve you in newness of life, to the honor and glory of your holy name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.  
**Amen.**

#### *KYRIE*

O God, Father in heaven, have mercy upon us.

**Your heart, O God, is grieved we know  
By every evil, every woe;  
Upon your cross-forsaken Son  
Our death is laid, and peace is won.**

O Son of God, Redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us.

**Your arms extend, O Christ, to save  
From sting of death and grasp of grave;  
Your scars before the Father move  
His heart to mercy at such love.**

O God, Holy Spirit, have mercy upon us.

**O lavish giver, come to aid  
The feeble child your grace has made.  
Now make us grow and help us pray;  
Bring joy and comfort; come to stay.**

#### *THE PRAYER OF THE DAY*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. O God,

**whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; 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* Exodus 20:1-17

And God spoke all these words, saying,

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

“You shall have no other gods before me.

“You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

“You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain, for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes his name in vain.

“Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor, and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, you, or your son, or your daughter, your male servant, or your female servant, or your livestock, or the sojourner who is within your gates. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

“Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

“You shall not murder.

“You shall not commit adultery.

“You shall not steal.

“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house; you shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor’s.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*PSALM 19*

The heavens declare the glory of God,  
and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.

Day to day pours out speech,  
and night to night reveals knowledge.

There is no speech, nor are there words,  
whose voice is not heard.

Their measuring line goes out through all the earth,  
and their words to the end of the world.

In them he has set a tent for the sun,  
which comes out like a bridegroom leaving his chamber,  
and, like a strong man, runs its course with joy.

Its rising is from the end of the heavens,  
and its circuit to the end of them,  
and there is nothing hidden from its heat.

The law of the LORD is perfect,  
reviving the soul;  
the testimony of the LORD is sure,

making wise the simple;  
the precepts of the LORD are right,  
rejoicing the heart;  
the commandment of the LORD is pure,  
enlightening the eyes;  
the fear of the LORD is clean,  
enduring forever;  
the just decrees of the LORD are true,  
and righteous altogether.  
More to be desired are they than gold,  
even much fine gold;  
sweeter also than honey  
and drippings of the honeycomb.  
Moreover, by them is your servant warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

Who can discern his errors?

Declare me innocent from hidden faults.  
Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins;  
let them not have dominion over me!  
Then I shall be blameless,  
and innocent of great transgression.

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart  
be acceptable in your sight,  
O LORD, my rock and my redeemer.

**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 1:18-31

The word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

Where 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? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made

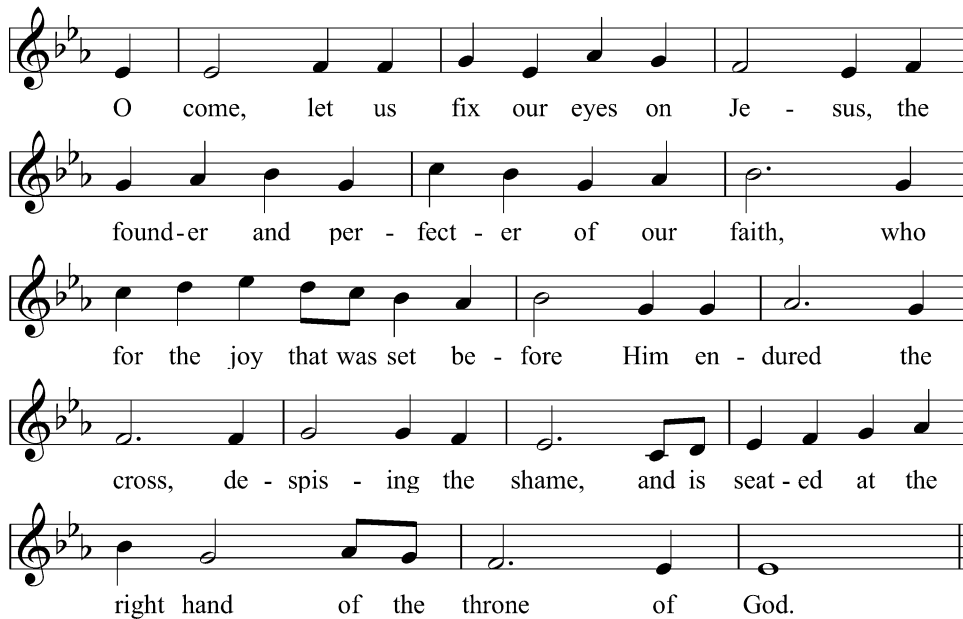
our wisdom and our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Therefore, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

This is the Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*CHILDREN'S SERMON*

*GOSPEL VERSE #198 from One and All Rejoice O Come, Let Us Fix Our Eyes on Jesus*



O come, let us fix our eyes on Je - sus, the  
found-er and per - fect - er of our faith, who  
for the joy that was set be - fore Him en - dured the  
cross, de - spis - ing the shame, and is seat - ed at the  
right hand of the throne of God.

*GOSPEL John 2:13-22*

The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter.

**Glory to You, O Lord.**

The Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found those who were selling oxen and sheep and pigeons, and the money-changers sitting there. And making a whip of cords, he drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and oxen. And he poured out the coins of the money-changers and overturned their tables. And he told those who sold the pigeons, "Take these things away; do not make my Father's house a house of trade." His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."

So the Jews said to him, "What sign do you show us for doing these things?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking about the temple of his body. When therefore 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.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to You, O Christ**

*SERMON*

When we hear the commandments announced and explained in Exodus, it is clear that the energy and focus of the commands, by the sheer detail in the text, is on the first 3, concerning our relationship

to God. There is both fear and awe in the way the writer announces God's rules for being His people. His singular and holy majesty stand out. Most of us probably don't remember trembling before God, or before His altar, but Israel did. The awesome presence of Yahweh on Mt Sinai made them beg Moses to do all the speaking for them. We take great liberties with God's Name, with keeping His Sabbath rest. They invented a literary device, still in place, to avoid ever even speaking God's Name, lest they abuse it. We have become a generation which views these commands as suggestions, among which we will pick and choose. As our starting point today, please notice with me that God does not invite our suggestions or innovations regarding His commands. **"I Am The Lord!"** It says it all.

It is also an unusual experience for us to follow Jesus into the Temple in this Gospel, as He makes a whip out of materials at hand and drives out those who sold animals and exchanged money. Once again that same word Pr. Mark underscored 2 weeks ago that St. Mark used to describe the Holy Spirit **"driving"** Jesus into the wilderness, is the word John uses to describe what Jesus did in the Temple. He **"drove them out."** There is both demand and force in the word. Jesus did not negotiate.

I need to say a couple of things about this event in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of John. **First of all**, John has put it right at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus cleanses the Temple on Monday of Holy Week, and the shadow of the cross is all over this action. **Second**, this is the first of three trips to Jerusalem for Passover in John, while in the Synoptics there is only one. Remembering the cleansing of the Temple at the very beginning of His Ministry, John pictures Jesus as in charge of all that happens from the very outset. In fact, for John the Scribes and Pharisees and the Chief Priests and Elders are unable to use this kind of force against Jesus until His time had come (John 7.30, 44). He powerfully declared the Temple His Father's House, and with authority like we are used to hearing in Mark's Gospel, He asserts His right to cleanse it.

But what John focuses on most of all in this cleansing story is in vs 19, **"Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up."** This answer comes after the cleansing, when the Temple Leaders demand **"what sign can you show us for doing this?"** John loves the word **"sign."** You may very well imagine stop signs or traffic signs when you hear this word, but John means all of that and much more. Like a **"stop sign"** a sign in John is big enough to get attention. But there is more. At Cana, where Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding, John says that this was the first of Jesus' **"signs,"** and Jesus revealed the glory that He had set aside (it was almost hidden) in His earthly days of ministry. But most important, **"the disciples believed in Jesus"** through the power of the sign.

Of all the signs that will appear in John's Gospel, none is the equal of **"Destroy this Temple and in three days I will raise it up."** Lest we miss that, John tells us that Jesus spoke about His resurrection, and not about this monumental temple built by King Herod. Jesus asserted His own resurrection from the dead, declaring it 3 years before the cross and tomb. And He invoked it as His authority to cleanse His Father's House. Just as at Cana, also here, John remembers that this sign and this sign moment was a vehicle in the grounding and strengthening of the Apostles' faith in Jesus.

But Jesus was also acknowledging His death here, at the very beginning of His ministry. As Pr Mark warned last week, in what he called the temptation to avoid the cross and suffering, Jesus set His sights on laying down His life from the very beginning of His ministry. That makes John's wondrous title for Jesus all the more powerful: **"Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world."** It is a fundamental confession of Who Jesus is when we join with all the ancients in acknowledging that Jesus' cross is His Throne, and that His Kingdom does not come except by the cross. We are crying out with more than 20 centuries of faith grandmothers and grandfathers, when we sing: **"Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world, have mercy on us."** We can not follow Jesus, even from the very beginning of His

ministry without following Him in His suffering and without worshipping Him Who carries the marks of the nails.

What sign along your path will ever be the equal of the cross, or those nail marks? Yet they come, this world's signs, they come relentlessly, tempting you to forget the cross and our Savior and think first of yourself and your needs and pleasures. Avoiding suffering is not only a mark of the world. Even our hymns sometimes make it seem that picking up the cross is the unfortunate fate of some instead of the kingdom task of us all: "**If anyone would follow me, let Him take up His cross.....**" Jesus says.

Everywhere along our paths of life there are signs that allure, offering fame. Think of the value we place on the acceptance by our peers. Weigh that against cross bearing. Then there is the attention of the powerful ones. We have an Achilles heel in wanting to feel their warm glances. And interspersed, coming at us again and again, the world's call to seek first your comforts and ease. Lay up for yourselves treasures on earth they all say. And then because moth and rust can ruin these things we gather, and because thieves do break in and steal, we ignore Jesus' counsel, listen instead to the world, and put up security devices on our windows and doors and insure everything to the hilt.

We have much to bring to Calvary again this Lent. In a year of pandemic, which has warned us about the frailty of life, the uselessness of our things and the fragility of the largest economy in the world, in such a Lent let us resolve to name our real sins to our Savior, and write them in large letters admitting that we have done them all. Let us come to the Lamb, and rend our hearts, not our garments. Let us come to the Lamb and resolve to rise up and walk a baptismal path. Let us come to the Lamb for the washing that alone matters, the one that Jesus gives in His gracious cleansing. For Christ our Passover Lamb sacrificed Himself because we have sinned. And He is the One Who invites us to full forgiveness and a life hugely changed, all of which begin at the cross.

*HYMN OF THE DAY #426 When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

- 1 When I survey the wondrous cross  
On which the Prince of Glory died,  
My richest gain I count but loss  
And pour contempt on all my pride.**
- 2 Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast  
Save in the death of Christ, my God;  
All the vain things that charm me most,  
I sacrifice them to His blood.**
- 3 See, from His head, His hands, His feet  
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!  
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet  
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?**
- 4 Were the whole realm of nature mine,  
That were a tribute far too small;  
Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all!**

*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*    *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*    Setting: Robert Buckley Farlee

#### *PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH*

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

O Lord, our God, save us and the generations that will come after us by filling us with Your Son's zeal for Your house, that we may cast out every idol from our hearts and love only You and Your commandments. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our God, You have brought us out of slavery to sin through Christ Jesus, whom You have made to be our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. Bless all those whom You send to preach Christ crucified to us, that we may ever know and live in the truth of Your power. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, preserve and bless all Christian households, that husbands and wives would live in love and service to each other, that fathers and mothers would diligently bring up their children in Your fear, and that children would honor their parents and be well-equipped for service to their neighbors in this life. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord of the perfect Law, You have called us to honor our parents and all other authorities, that it might go well in our land. Bless all those who watch over and govern us in Your stead. Make them wise in Your ways, that Your justice may be upheld among us. And help us to serve and obey them in accord with Your will. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, whose steadfast love in Christ is good, turn in Your abundant mercy to all who suffer in our midst, especially \_\_\_\_\_, that the flood may not sweep over them nor the pit close its mouth on them. Deliver them from sinking into the mire and deep waters, and grant them healing, comfort and peace. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, You bless this day and make it holy with Your Word and the gifts of Your altar. Grant us to come before You in humble repentance to feast at your table, that we may not boast in ourselves but in Christ alone. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer, as the temple of Your Son's body was destroyed by wicked men and raised after three days, so also grant that on the Last Day we and all the saints who now rest in Your presence may share in the glory of His resurrection. 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 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.

*SENDING HYMN #427 In the Cross of Christ I Glory*

- 1 In the cross of Christ I glory,  
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.  
All the light of sacred story  
Gathers round its head sublime.**
- 2 When the woes of life o'ertake me,  
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,  
Never shall the cross forsake me;  
Lo, it glows with peace and joy.**
- 3 When the sun of bliss is beaming  
Light and love upon my way,  
From the cross the radiance streaming  
Adds more luster to the day.**
- 4 Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure  
By the cross are sanctified;  
Peace is there that knows no measure,  
Joys that through all time abide.**

*ANNOUNCEMENTS*

*DISMISSAL*

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**Acknowledgments**

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