

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT
MARCH 20, 2022

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



PRELUDE

In Adam We Have All Been One
Setting: Dennis W. Zimmer

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN (Stand) #569

In Adam We Have All Been One

- 1 In Adam we have all been one,
One huge rebellious man;
We all have fled that evening voice
That sought us as we ran.
- 2 We fled Thee, and in losing Thee
We lost our brother too;
Each singly sought and claimed his own;
Each man his brother slew.
- 3 But Thy strong love, it sought us still
And sent Thine only Son
That we might hear His Shepherd's voice
And, hearing Him, be one.
- 4 O Thou who, when we loved Thee not,
Didst love and save us all,
Thou great Good Shepherd of mankind,
O hear us when we call.
- 5 Send us Thy Spirit, teach us truth;
Thou Son, O set us free
From fancied wisdom, self-sought ways,
To make us one in Thee.
- 6 Then shall our song united rise
To Thine eternal throne,
Where with the Father evermore
And Spirit Thou art one.

CONFESSIO AND FORGIVENESS

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

Amen.

Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

Our help is in the name of the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,
and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

(We kneel and observe a time reflection)

O almighty God, merciful Father,

I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ☩ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

INTROIT (from Psalm 25) (Stand)

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Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love,
For they are from of old.

Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

KYRIE

**Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

HYMN OF PRAISE (omitted during Lent)

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.

☩ ☩ ☩

THE LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST LESSON (Be seated)

Ezekiel 33:7-20

“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul.

“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?

“And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.

“Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just,’ when it is their own way that is not just. When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by them. Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 85 (Read responsively)

LORD, you were favorable to your land;
you restored the fortunes of Jacob.

**You forgave the iniquity of your people;
you covered all their sin.**

You withdrew all your wrath;
you turned from your hot anger.

**Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away your indignation toward us!**

Will you be angry with us forever?
Will you prolong your anger to all generations?

**Will you not revive us again,
that your people may rejoice in you?**

Show us your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us your salvation.

**Let me hear what God the LORD will speak,
for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints;
but let them not turn back to folly.**

Surely his salvation is near to those who fear him,
that glory may dwell in our land.

Steadfast love and faithfulness meet;
righteousness and peace kiss each other.

Faithfulness springs up from the ground,
and righteousness looks down from the sky.

**Yes, the LORD will give what is good,
and our land will yield its increase.**

Righteousness will go before him
and make his footsteps a way.

**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 10:1-13

I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL VERSE (Stand)

**O come, let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the founder and perfecter of our faith,
who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross,
despising the shame,
and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.**

GOSPEL

Luke 13:1-9

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 13th chapter

Glory to You, O Lord.

There were some present at that very time who told [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And he answered them, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

And he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. And he said to the vinedresser, 'Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?' And he answered him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ.

“When you see a cloud rising in the west, you say at once, ‘A shower is coming.’ And so it happens. And when you see the south wind blowing, you say, ‘There will be scorching heat,’ and it happens. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”

These words of Jesus (Luke 12:54-56) were spoken to the crowds right before the words of our text today. He said them because he wanted the people to think a little deeper about what God was doing through his ministry. Jesus was teaching, inspiring and healing people, yes. But did that mean he was just another prophet, calling the people to the same faith?

Jesus wanted the people to see that more was going on here. But of course people often need time for a changed perspective. And they tend to be pretty literal.

They also have a need to see things through the lens of everyday happenings. And perhaps that’s why the people then told him about the Galileans Pilate had killed while they were offering their sacrifices. Surely this was a sign of the times – another example of how those hated Romans were unjustly and violently interfering in the life of the people, even their religious life. The times seemed to be calling for revolution – especially if the killing of those Galileans was unjust, as most people assumed it to be.

Jesus was not going to weigh in on the justice of the situation. And he certainly wasn’t going to stoke the people’s passions and preach revolution.

But Jesus did use the comment to do some teaching. And here he pivots from an emphasis on interpreting the times to a question that is timeless. He challenges the people to think about God’s part in such tragedies, especially as this relates to God’s judgment upon sin.

You may recall that this was the question Job pondered many centuries before, in the days following his great loss. His friends suggested to him that he must have done something wrong to deserve his fate. And those suggestions didn’t just come out of left field, for they reflected the common wisdom of the time – which is a wisdom that still exists today. This is the thought that life is always just and that God or some kind of force like karma makes this happen, in ways that can be seen.

But God set Job and his friends straight. Life is not that simple. In fact, life is so complex that only God can understand all the workings of the world. While God may work justice according

to his great wisdom and as he sees fit, with ultimate justice coming in due time, there are no guarantees that it will happen in this life. Sometimes the wicked prosper. For quite a long time.

Jesus knows all this. So when the people tell him about the death of those Galileans at the hand of Pilate, he says to them: “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered in this way?”

Many of those listening probably concluded that they were. That conclusion would give them an explanation for something that was difficult and troubling.

But Jesus answers with a clear and emphatic: “No.”

Then, to make his point even clearer, Jesus offers another example. He says: “Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem?”

And here Jesus gives an example with no political overtones and no clear source of blame. The tower simply fell – on no particular group or type of people. No one could blame it on some kind of stereotypical behavior as they could with those supposedly hot-headed Galileans. The tower just fell. On 18 random people.

Jesus was making his point. And in case there was any doubt about the point he repeats his emphatic pronouncement: “No, they were not worse sinners.”

Jesus’ strong statements here should catch our attention. And his point should serve to warn us. We need to be very careful when assigning blame. And we should never try to identify God’s acts of judgment. For he carries them out in ways we cannot fathom.

Yes, actions always have consequences. And sometimes we can see when a bad choice leads directly to a painful outcome. But to try and pin these consequences on a person’s sinfulness – quantifying these things by concluding that some are worse than others – is beyond our ability. And especially since we cannot look into another’s heart or know all their considerations in making their decisions.

After giving his strong “no,” Jesus then leads the people in the direction of right thinking. He says: “but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” And here Jesus moves us to think about ourselves instead of others. And to move past the quantifying of better or worse – leading us instead to realize what we all have in common.

As with his strong and emphatic “no” earlier, Jesus speaks strongly here also about the importance of repentance. He doesn’t suggest repentance as something merely helpful, as if it were just a bit of advice to make our life a little better. He tells us that it’s essential – something we must do if we want to live.

Our second reading today speaks also to this essential nature of repentance, pointing out that many people in Old Testament times did not repent and were punished for it. According to the

text these people should serve as examples for us, reminding us of the need to turn away from sin.

At the same time, the reading also encourages us – telling us that we will not be tempted beyond what we can bear. And this is good news, for our temptations can sometimes seem overwhelming.

This news, however, also speaks to our need for forgiveness. For it reminds us that we have no excuse for falling into sin.

In our Old Testament reading, God gives the prophet Ezekiel a number of messages about repentance. The first of these – consistent with the advice of Jesus – is for the prophet to start by looking at himself. Ezekiel, according to his calling, must not fall into the temptation of avoiding hard messages. He must point out God’s judgment on sin, or he himself will be sinning.

Then God tells him to address Israel’s despair. The people were saying: “Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?” (v.10). To their feelings of frustration and hopelessness, Ezekiel is to preach good news – assuring them that God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but instead desires that the wicked turn from their way and live (v.11). God has given a path toward life. The people can be saved. They need not despair.

This path forward is the way of repentance – a turning away from sin and a turning toward the God of mercy and forgiveness. About this way, God then says even more. He says: “And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness” (v.12). In other words, a man’s righteousness won’t save him. It can’t because the man is still a sinner. A person can only be saved when he repents from sin. Likewise, once a man has repented, his former wickedness doesn’t condemn him. That sin is forgiven.

And here in these teachings we see that God is pointing us more to the state of our hearts than to the state of our behaviors. Bad behaviors are still a problem, but they can be changed. And they often come in our times of weakness. A bad heart, on the other hand, is a bigger problem. The one who is callous toward God's law and refuses to repent will continue to break it.

The scriptures teach us to say: "create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." They teach us this because God has mercy on the one who cries out to him. With the cry of faith, God can work in our heart and turn us from our sin – leading us in the paths of righteousness.

And this hope and desire of God for his people is seen in the parable Jesus gives which concludes today's text. In it, the fig tree with no fruit represents people who do not live according to God's ways. These people, because they bear no fruit, are not helpful to others and deserve to be taken down.

God, represented here by the landowner, is ready for this sentence to be carried out. He has been patient beyond expectation but must act according to the requirement of justice.

And yet, when he asks the vinedresser to do the cutting down, the vinedresser urges more time – believing that with more work and some special care he can bring forth good fruit. And here the vinedresser represents Jesus himself, who will, yes, one day come as judge against people's sins, but who also works with people first to turn their hearts to God and bring forth good fruit – and especially the fruit of faith.

Jesus works with people by spreading his holy word. In fact, he is working with us right now as we consider again his callings and review his promises.

Today's word calls us to repent. You and I are to repent of our sins of thought, word and deed. And we are to repent of our sometimes-callous hearts and our too-often-wavering faith.

Once we have repented, we are then ready to hear of Jesus' most powerful work – that of paying for our sins by his death on the cross. This payment assures our forgiveness. And brings us again to life.

Today's Prayer of the Day does a great job of summarizing all this teaching. And it leads us well in our turning to God in faith. So, hear it again as I read it and pray it in your hearts with me: "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.

HYMN OF THE DAY (Stand) #571

God Loved the World So That He Gave

- 1 God loved the world so that He gave
His only Son the lost to save,
That all who would in Him believe
Should everlasting life receive.**
- 2 Christ Jesus is the ground of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death;
All then who trust in Him alone
Are built on this chief cornerstone.**
- 3 God would not have the sinner die;
His Son with saving grace is nigh;
His Spirit in the Word declares
How we in Christ are heaven's heirs.**

- 4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son
Forgives all sins which you have done;
And, justified by Jesus' blood,
Your Baptism grants the highest good.
- 5 If you are sick, if death is near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death;
That is the firmest ground of faith.
- 6 Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To You, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!

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

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH (Kneel)

In peace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For repentance and faith in Christ, that God would guard us from doubt and deliver us to life and salvation, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For a faithful proclamation of truth, that God would embolden the church to warn of sin and death and give it strength to defend that message so that sinners would be turned to life, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the protection of our homes against the sins of immorality, that God would make our dwelling places havens of chastity and godly instruction and fill marriages with fidelity and love, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For Joseph our President and for all those in authority, that God who establishes justice by His Law would enlighten them to rule justly for true good, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who cry to the Lord for mercy in a world where towers fall and sinners work evil, especially those on our prayer list and those we name in our hearts... that the Lord would deliver and heal them and strengthen their faith to look to Him for help, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all good works, that we, brought into God's vineyard and appointed to bear fruit, would show forth His love and grace in all we say and do, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Almighty God, You led Your people, Israel, through the sea and fed them in the wilderness until You delivered them to the Promised Land. And you have faithfully enlivened Your people with Christ by means of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion. Receive our thanks for Your kindness to the saints who now rest from their labors, and sustain us by Your Means of Grace until You deliver us also to heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever. **Amen.**



THE LITURGY OF HOLY COMMUNION

PREFACE TO HOLY COMMUNION

p. 194

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up unto the Lord.

Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God.

It is meet and right so to do.

It is truly good right and salutary...evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of Sabaoth;

heav'n and earth are full of Thy glory.

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is He, blessed is He, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

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.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

PAX DOMINI

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

Amen.

AGNUS DEI

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, have mercy upon us.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that takest away the sin of the world, grant us Thy peace. Amen.

DISTRIBUTION (Be seated)

The Communion Assistant will come forward to receive first, then those from the pulpit side – by order of pew, front to back. Communicants will come up the center aisle and return via the side aisle. When all from the pulpit side have communed, the baptismal font side will commune in the same manner. Distancing must be maintained between all communicants. We ask that the wine be consumed away from the tray table. Empty cups should be dropped into the baskets.

COMMUNION MUSIC

God Loved the World So That He Gave

Setting: Wayne L. Wold

NUNC DIMITTIS

p. 199

**Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace according to Thy word,
for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people,
a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Thy people Israel.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.**

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT (Stand)

BENEDICTION

SENDING HYMN #420 Sts. 1, 3, 5, 7

Christ, the Life of All the Living

- 1 Christ, the life of all the living,
Christ, the death of death, our foe,
Who, Thyself for me once giving
To the darkest depths of woe:
Through Thy suff'rings, death, and merit
I eternal life inherit.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.**
- 3 Thou hast borne the smiting only
That my wounds might all be whole;
Thou hast suffered, sad and lonely,
Rest to give my weary soul;
Yea, the curse of God enduring,
Blessing unto me securing.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.**
- 5 Thou hast suffered men to bruise Thee,
That from pain I might be free;
Falsely did Thy foes accuse Thee:
Thence I gain security;
Comfortless Thy soul did languish
Me to comfort in my anguish.
Thousand, thousand thanks shall be,
Dearest Jesus, unto Thee.**

**7 Then, for all that wrought my pardon,
For Thy sorrows deep and sore,
For Thine anguish in the Garden,
I will thank Thee evermore,
Thank Thee for Thy groaning, sighing,
For Thy bleeding and Thy dying,
For that last triumphant cry,
And shall praise Thee, Lord, on high.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Be seated)

DISMISSAL

POSTLUDE

Christ, the Life of All the Living
Setting: James L. Brauer

Those serving:

Sunday, March 20, 8:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Steve Janssen
Comm. assist: Dede Dixon
Reader: Melissa Hecht

10:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Marian Robinson
Comm. assist: Jill Hecht
Reader: Lynn Jaquez
Acolyte: Noah Starck

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