

THE FIFTH SUNDAY IN LENT

APRIL 3, 2022

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



PRELUDE

Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain Setting: Donald Rotermund

WELCOME

ENTRANCE HYMN #435

Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain

- 1 **Come to Calv'ry's holy mountain,**
 Sinners, ruined by the fall;
 Here a pure and healing fountain
 Flows for you, for me, for all,
 In a full, perpetual tide,
 Opened when our Savior died.

- 2 **Come in poverty and meanness,**
 Come defiled, without, within;
 From infection and uncleanness,
 From the leprosy of sin,
 Wash your robes and make them white;
 Ye shall walk with God in light.

- 3 **Come in sorrow and contrition,**
 Wounded, impotent, and blind;
 Here the guilty, free remission,
 Here the troubled, peace may find.
 Health this fountain will restore;
 They that drink shall thirst no more.

- 4 **They that drink shall live forever;**
 '**Tis a soul-renewing flood.**
 God is faithful; God will never
 Break His covenant of blood,
 Signed when our Redeemer died,
 Sealed when He was glorified.

CONFESSİON 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 (Stand)

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**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. Almighty God,
by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; 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

Isaiah 43:16-21

Thus says the LORD,
who makes a way in the sea,
a path in the mighty waters,
who brings forth chariot and horse,
army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
“Remember not the former things,
nor consider the things of old.
Behold, I am doing a new thing;
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness

and rivers in the desert.
The wild beasts will honor me,
the jackals and the ostriches,
for I give water in the wilderness,
rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
the people whom I formed for myself
that they might declare my praise."

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 126 (*Read responsively, by whole verse*)

When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who dream.
Then our mouth was filled with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts of joy;
then they said among the nations,
"The LORD has done great things for them."
The LORD has done great things for us; we are glad.

Restore our fortunes, O LORD,
like streams in the Negeb!
Those who sow in tears
shall reap with shouts of joy!
He who goes out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
bringing his sheaves with him.

**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

Philippians 3:8-14

Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL VERSE

**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 20:9-20

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke the 20th chapter

Glory to You, O Lord.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear [Jesus]. And the [Jesus] began to tell the people this parable: “A man planted a vineyard and let it out to tenants and went into another country for a long while. When the time came, he sent a servant to the tenants, so that they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent another servant. But they also beat and treated him shamefully, and sent him away empty-handed. And he sent yet a third. This one also they wounded and cast out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; perhaps they will respect him.’ But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Let us kill him, so that the inheritance may be ours.’ And they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them? He will come and destroy those tenants and give the vineyard to others.” When they heard this, they said, “Surely not!” But he looked directly at them and said, “What then is this that is written:

‘The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone’?

Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

The scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him at that very hour, for they perceived that he had told this parable against them, but they feared the people. So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor.

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:

Everybody likes a good story. When I preached on this text many years ago, I told a story about my Goddaughter, Magdalena. My parents had just visited her and her three brothers, back when she was about four years old. Apparently, she must have gotten tired of all the trips and book reading and activities during their visit, for one morning after breakfast she put her hands on her hips and announced to everyone: “today, I’m not going to do anything but play, play, play!”

Everybody likes a good story. They also like a good puzzle. Some people like crossword puzzles. Some people like jigsaw puzzles. Some like to read a good mystery and try to figure out the ending before it’s revealed.

In today’s Gospel reading, Jesus tells a story and gives a puzzle. Let’s begin with the story.

Jesus, as we know, told lots of stories. And his stories didn’t just relate humorous incidents. His stories had great meaning. Last week, for instance, we heard the story of the Prodigal Son, which was told to teach us of God’s great love and mercy, and to move us to have that kind of heart ourselves.

The story of Jesus we read today has a much different theme. In it, tenants working a field rebel against its owner – refusing his messengers and finally killing his son out of their greed. In response, the owner of the field kills the tenants and gives the field to others. It's a tragic story. We usually call it the Parable of the Wicked Tenants.

Jesus tells this parable to describe the past and predict the future. The story is an allegory about Israel. Israel is symbolized by the vineyard, as it often was in the Old Testament. The characters in the story represent key figures in Israel's life. The owner of the vineyard, quite clearly, is God. And the workers or tenants of the vineyard are the religious leaders of Israel. The servants of the owner – the ones sent by him to collect from the tenants – symbolize the prophets God sent to Israel. The son of the owner, very obviously, is Jesus himself.

The story is meant to show how the religious establishment of Israel had continually rejected God's prophets and will soon reject God's Son. What's more, it shares how that establishment will be destroyed by God, and Israel will then be led by others.

To those who heard the story, that last point was the most distressing. They cried out with a very emphatic "Surely not!"

To their protest, Jesus then offers a puzzle – something he often did to make people think a little deeper.

But before we look at that puzzle, let's pause and think first about the people's protest.

Their protest had to do with change and loss. They were comfortable with their religious leadership and the practice of their faith. They didn't want things to be different.

We can sympathize with them. We don't like change either.

But Jesus was telling the people that change was needed. God had been sending his prophets, and the people weren't listening. The nation was mired in sin and faithlessness. The leadership was entrenched and focused on the wrong things. Something needed to be done.

In Jesus, God was doing the new thing Israel needed. The people and leaders should have been able to see it – for not only was God addressing their present situation, but he was also fulfilling what the prophets had said about a new covenant soon to come.

The people didn't see it. But God would have his way. He is Lord and he will establish his kingdom. He would bring about change, and the people would have to accept it.

As you might imagine, this parable spoke powerfully to the people of that day. For it made a bold prediction about events to come.

For us, the story reminds us of important history, because the changes Jesus predicted all came true.

That being said, we should also hear this parable being spoken to us in second way. The parable should make us ask ourselves whether our own religion has gotten stale. And whether we too might be mired in sin and faithlessness.

Too often, the answer to both of these questions is "yes." And because of this, we need repentance and renewal.

God sends his church to call people to repentance. We must hear that message and pay heed to it.

Repentance has been the dominant theme of our Lenten observance. And it is always a part of our message.

As for renewal, for that we always turn to God's Word.

So, let's return to our Gospel reading. After Jesus tells his story, he then offers his puzzle. He says: "What is the meaning of that which is written, "the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone?"

Here Jesus is quoting a verse from Psalm 118. The Psalm was well-known because it was appointed to be sung during the Passover observance. Over the years, Rabbis had debated the meaning of the Psalm, with many of them concluding that it must be talking about the coming

Messiah. Jesus clearly agrees with this. The Messiah will be the cornerstone for what God next builds. And that cornerstone will have been rejected by the established builders.

By quoting this Psalm and offering it as a puzzle, Jesus is stating ever more clearly his message regarding himself. In the verses immediately before today's text, Jesus was approached by the chief priests and teachers of the law who were inquiring by what authority he taught. Jesus would not tell them directly, for then he would be arrested before his time. But in this story and puzzle, Jesus is beginning to reveal more. The teachers of the law and the chief priests understand him clearly. They know what he is saying. They've figured out the puzzle. The rest of the people are wrestling with his statements and forming their own opinions.

As the Psalm predicts, Jesus was rejected by the builders of his community – meaning those in established positions. We see this clearly in the Gospel accounts. Jesus' parable predicts this rejection by the establishment too, for in it the son was killed not by the vineyard– his people in totality– but by the tenants, those who made a living by serving the vineyard. They were the shepherds who did not care for the sheep, as another prophet predicted.

But let us not forget, Jesus went to his death because of more than just that rejection. His death was not caused by circumstances beyond his control. He went to his death out of love. He went to his death because of sins – those of all people, including us.

Today's story does not capture this aspect of Jesus' message. But we know it to be true. And we must be sure to state it lest some get the wrong idea about the assigning of blame to one particular group. "Upon him was laid the iniquity of us all," says the scripture (Isaiah 53:6).

The message of Jesus in today's parable talks about judgment. It declares a judgment upon the nation and its leaders at that time. But it should remind us, too, that all people fall under judgment. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We all are deserving of death.

God, however, is merciful. And in his mercy, he has made possible another outcome besides death. Jesus explains it to us as a second part of his puzzle. He says, "Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

The two possible outcomes of our lives, as stated here, are that we are either broken or we are crushed. And while neither of these might sound very good, there is a big difference between the two.

If you fall and break your arm, there's a good chance that it will heal up again. But if your arm is crushed, the chances for recovery are slim.

So also, when we encounter the presence of Jesus Christ, the cornerstone, the one sent by God, we can either be broken by his presence or crushed by it. There are no other alternatives.

To be crushed means to be judged and found guilty. It means to be destroyed. This is the certain outcome for one not saved from death's sentence. Jesus reminds us of this.

To be broken is different. To be broken means to be humbled. And this is the outcome Jesus wants. For the one who is humble before God will receive forgiveness.

St. Paul knew of this distinction, and of the hope that exists in Christ Jesus. He said of himself and his fellow believers: "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies" (2 Corinthians 4:8–10).

In the breaking Jesus gives there is hope. Think about this. Jesus breaks that which hinders us from living fully as he desires. And Jesus breaks the barriers that exist between us and God, and between us and others.

In the breaking Jesus gives there is healing. And this healing can make us better than before.

It is often said that we can either get bitter or we can get better. It is a struggle of faith. Yes, our bodies will eventually succumb to the crushing weight of sin and the penalty of death, but when we put our trust in Christ Jesus, we know that they will be raised to life eternal. As Christians our lives are built on a cornerstone that will last forever.

In his first epistle, Peter uses that image of Christ the cornerstone to inspire the people to a greater faith and more genuine hope. And he quotes another Old Testament prophecy which uses the image too. Let's conclude our sermon with his words:

"As you come to him, the living Stone— rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him— you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in scripture it says, "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame" (1 Peter 2:4).

May these things be so among us. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY #430 Sts. 1, 2, 6, 7

My Song Is Love Unknown

- 1 My song is love unknown,**
 My Savior's love to me,
 Love to the loveless shown
 That they might lovely be.
 Oh, who am I
 That for my sake
 My Lord should take
 Frail flesh and die?
- 2 He came from His blest throne**
 Salvation to bestow;
 But men made strange, and none
 The longed-for Christ would know.
 But, oh, my friend,
 My friend indeed,
 Who at my need
 His life did spend!
- 6 In life no house, no home**
 My Lord on earth might have;
 In death no friendly tomb
 But what a stranger gave.
 What may I say?
 Heav'n was His home
 But mine the tomb
 Wherein He lay.

7 **Here might I stay and sing,**
 No story so divine!
 Never was love, dear King,
 Never was grief like Thine.
 This is my friend,
 In whose sweet praise
 I all my days
 Could gladly spend!

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

Offerings support the church's mission work – both here and through our many partners. Offerings may be placed in the box at the sanctuary entrance or sent to the church through our website or the mail. Fellowship Cards help us welcome new people and track participation. Please fill one out and place it in the offering box following the service.

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH (Kneel)

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

O Lord, You gave Your Son to be rejected by sinners, that we sinners might be welcomed into Your kingdom. Keep us in faith that we may never reject your teachings nor your words of correction to us. And renew us and lead us as we have need. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, deliver us from contending that we are righteous before You because of who we are and what we have done. Teach us instead to hold fast to the righteousness which comes from faith in Christ and to count everything as loss compared to the surpassing worth of knowing him. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, preserve Your Church in the righteousness won for us by Christ crucified and risen. Give faithfulness to the preaching of Your Word and the administration of Your Sacraments, and let Your people receive these gifts with penitence and faith. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, extend your blessing to every family. Strengthen the love between husbands and wives. And endow parents with every good gift to teach their children Your ways, that they may live in the confidence of Your grace and salvation. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, You shield us and lift up our heads. Provide for our common life together in our community and in our nation. Give us civil authorities who discourage evil and encourage good. And keep us ever mindful that our true hope is in You. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, You sustain us each day, granting us sleep and waking us again. Be the consolation of those who live in anxiety and fear, assuring them of Your mercy and deliverance in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, bestow Your kindness to those in need, especially our Catechumens in their time of preparation, those on our prayer list who are in need of healing, those in our world who are under attack or forced from their homes, and all whom we name before you in our hearts at this time... Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, give us repentant hearts, that we would abandon all confidence in our flesh and so receive Your Son's body and blood in today's communion for the forgiveness of our sins. Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, in our Baptism You have shared Christ's suffering, death and resurrection with us, that we might be raised from the dead. Preserve us from taking His sacrifice for granted. Encourage us to forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead, until we attain the resurrection from the dead; through the same 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 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. We ask that the wine be consumed away from the tray table. Empty cups should be dropped into the receptacles.

COMMUNION MUSIC

Rhosymedre Setting: Ralph Vaughan Williams

NUNC DIMITTIS

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**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 #429

We Sing the Praise of Him Who Died

- 1 We sing the praise of Him who died,
Of Him who died upon the cross.
The sinner's hope let all deride;
For this we count the world but loss.**

- 2 Inscribed upon the cross we see
In shining letters, "God is love."
He bears our sins upon the tree;
He brings us mercy from above.**

- 3 The cross! It takes our guilt away;
It holds the fainting spirit up;
It cheers with hope the gloomy day
And sweetens ev'ry bitter cup.**

- 4 It makes the coward spirit brave
And nerves the feeble arm for fight;
It takes the terror from the grave
And gilds the bed of death with light;**

- 5 The balm of life, the cure of woe,
The measure and the pledge of love,
The sinner's refuge here below,
The angels' theme in heav'n above.**

- 6 To Christ, who won for sinners grace
By bitter grief and anguish sore,**

**Be praise from all the ransomed race
Forever and forevermore.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS (Be seated)

DISMISSAL

POSTLUDE *We Sing the Praise of Him Who Died* Setting: Tim Shewmaker

Those serving:

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

Greeter: Steve Berg
Comm. assist: Judy Koucky
Reader: Judy Koucky

10:30 a.m.:

Greeter: Christine M. Bell
Comm. assist: Jill Hecht
Reader: Charles Fisher

Acknowledgements

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