

Wandering Heart

"Teach me"

The Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 17, 2024

8:00 & 10:30 AM

ASCENSION LUTHERAN CHURCH—ELCA

*As Lutheran Christians, we are redeemed by Christ to be people of God,
inviting all to faith-filled worship, challenging all to grow in faith,
reaching out to all in faithful service and witness.*

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PRELUDE

Fugue and Harmonization on "St. Anne"

The Old Rugged Cross

Lamb of God

Prelude in C Minor

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Why are you here?

**I am seeking God with my whole heart,
with my entire mind,
with a fire burning in my bones.**

I see it! You're in the right place!

This is God's house. The door is open to you.

Why are *you* here?

I am seeking God with my whole heart,
with my entire mind,
with a fire burning in my bones.

We see that in you! You're in the right place.

This is God's house. The door is open to you.

Let us worship God.

Let us learn from the Spirit. Amen!

CALL TO CONFESSION

Friends, when you study Peter's story in scripture
it's almost impossible to ignore how much he loved to ask questions.

He asks Jesus: "What does the parable mean?"

"Where are you going?"

"How many times should we forgive?"

Like a tenacious toddler, Peter was full of questions, because Peter was eager to learn.

I wish I was more like that.

I still have so much to learn.

So friends, let's be like Peter.

Let's return to Christ with the humility of a student
as we pray together the prayer of confession.

Let this be a moment of learning. Please pray with me:

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

We pray together:

Holy God,

We long to be lifelong learners.

We long to approach you with curiosity and an open mind.

Instead, we often live as if we know best.

We forget that the disciples called you "Rabbi, Teacher."

Forgive us for the times when we fail to be curious.

Forgive us for the times when we assume we know best.

Forgive us for the moments when we imagine that our learning is done
 and that we have all the answers.
 Like Peter—who was brave enough to ask,
 “How many times should we forgive?”— make us brave.
 Spark a desire in us to learn,
 and may our curiosity carry our faith into deeper waters.
 With hope and humility we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF FORGIVENESS

Family of faith, When Peter asked Jesus, “How many times should I forgive?” Jesus
 responded with abundance. That abundance exists for you as well. No matter what you have done or left un-
 done, no matter what lessons you have learned or are still learning, God’s abundant grace exists for you.
 God’s love will never run out. So hear and rest in this good news: You are forgiven. You are loved. You are
 invited to serve.

Thanks be to God! Amen.

GATHERING SONG: *Love Your Neighbor and Forgive*
 (SUNG TO “GETHSEMANE,” ELW 347)



“Love your neigh- bor and for -give:” words so sim - ple yet so hard.
 Sounds of bombs and bull - ets ring: war is all we’ve e - ver known.
 Love is ris - ky, peace is faint, and for -give- ness feels na - ive.



We have wounds be - cause we’ve lived; cal - lu - ses en - fold our hearts.
 Pa - ci - fists are framed as weak; we re - ly on might a lone.
 All are sin - ners, all are saints, and we all God’s grace re - ceive.



Je - sus reach - es out to touch wounds and hearts that hold too much.
 Je - sus paves the paths of peace, e - ven as the threats in - crease.
 So we fol - low mer - cy’s way, sof - ten - ing our hearts to grace.

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

KYRIE

The leader and the congregation sing the word "Lord" simultaneously.

In peace, in peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

For the reign of God, and for peace throughout the world,
for the unity of all, let us pray to the **Lord, have mercy...**

For your people here who have come to give you praise,
for the strength to live your word, let us pray to the **Lord, have mercy...**

Help, save, and defend us, O God.



PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION

Teaching God,

We want to learn your ways.

We want to learn the ways of forgiveness.

We want to learn the ways of grace.

We want to learn your ways of love.

That is part of why we return to your text week after week,
because we are hungry to be more like you.

So as we prepare to listen to your good Word,
calm the noise in our minds.

Center our spirits to focus on you

so that we might learn and hear what we have missed in this story before.

God, we want to learn your ways.

Meet us here. Speak your truth. Help us listen.

Amen.

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

PSALM: Psalm 51:1-12

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

²**Wash me through and through from my wickedness,
and cleanse me from my sin.**

³For I know my offenses,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴**Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;
so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.**

⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my mother's womb.

⁶Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom deep within.

⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my wickedness.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹Cast me not away from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION *Nothing in All Creation*



Noth-ing in all cre - a - tion can sep - a - rate us from the love of God.



Noth-ing in all cre - a - tion can sep - a - rate us from the love of God.

GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-22

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹⁵If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. ¹⁶But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. ¹⁷If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. ¹⁸Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

²¹Then Peter came and said to him, "Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?" ²²Jesus said to him, "Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY *Forgive Our Sins As We Forgive* (ELW 605)



1 "For - give our sins as we for - give," you taught us, Lord, to pray;
2 How can your par - don reach and bless the un - for - giv - ing heart
3 In blaz - ing light your cross re - veals the truth we dim - ly knew:
4 Lord, cleanse the depths with - in our souls and bid re - sent - ment cease;



but you a - lone can grant us grace to live the words we say.
that broods on wrongs and will not let old bit - ter - ness de - part?
how tri - fling oth - ers' debts to us; how great our debt to you!
then, by your mer - cy rec - on - ciled, our lives will spread your peace.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

We believe that questions are a building block of faith.

"How many times should I forgive?"

"Jesus, where are you going?"

"What must I do to inherit eternal life?"

We believe that humble curiosity can open our eyes.

"Where does it hurt?"

"What do you need?"

"How can I help?"

We believe that God is a teacher.

"Speak, Lord, your servant is listening."

"Here I am."

"Send me."

We believe that faith invites our whole being to engage,

with all our heart,

with all our mind,

with all our strength.

We believe.

Help our unbelief.

In Christ's name we pray.

Amen.

PRAYERS FOR OTHERS AND OURSELVES

Each petition concludes:

Lord, when we call to you,

you hear us as we pray.

The prayers are concluded:

We lift these prayers with the many unspoken prayers known only to you into your outstretched arms of mercy and love, through your beloved Son Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

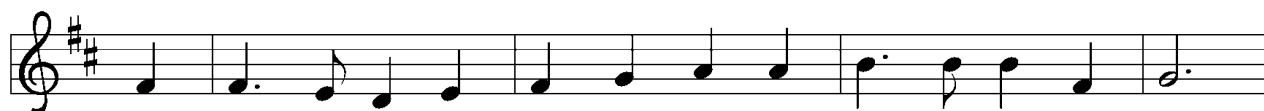
OFFERING *Beneath the Cross of Jesus* (ELW 338)



1 Be - neath the cross of Je - sus I long to take my stand;
2 Up - on the cross of Je - sus, my eye at times can see
3 I take, O cross, your shad - ow for my a - bid - ing place;



the shad - ow of a might-y rock with - in a wea - ry land,
the ver - y dy - ing form of one who suf - fered there for me.
I ask no oth - er sun - shine than the sun - shine of his face;



a home with-in a wil - der - ness, a rest up - on the way,
And from my con - trite heart, with tears, two won - ders I con - fess:
con - tent to let the world go by, to know no gain nor loss,



from the burn - ing of the noon - tide heat and bur - dens of the day.
the . . . won - der of his glo - rious love and my un - wor - thi - ness.
my . . . sin - ful self my on - ly shame, my glo - ry all, the cross.

OFFERING PRAYER

God of all goodness,

you call us to be your disciples

and equip us with all we need to follow.

Take the gifts of ourselves and our treasure

to show others your mercy and love

as we strive to be good stewards of all you have created.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ.

You call your people to cleanse their hearts
and prepare with joy for the paschal feast,
that, renewed in the gift of baptism,
we may come to the fullness of your grace.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and



God of might, heav - en and earth are full of your



glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.



Bless - ed is the one who comes in the name of the



Lord. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

SONG DURING THE MEAL *Lamb of God*

Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on

us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have

mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the

world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

TABLE BLESSING

The body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.
Amen.

SONG AFTER THE MEAL: *Lamb of God, Your Only Son* (ELW 336)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Generous God,
at this table we have tasted your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus, the Bread of life.

Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

Beloved wanderer,
as you leave this place,
may you carry your curious heart on your sleeve.
May you look for God in every face.
May you find the courage to get out of the boat,
to run to the tomb,
and to speak of your faith.
And when the world falls apart,
may you hear God's voice deep within,
saying, "Take heart, it is I, be not afraid."
You are called.
You are blessed.
In both your ups and your downs,
you always belong to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: *Help Us Accept Each Other*, SUNG TO "ANGEL'S SONG," (ELW 820)



1 Help us ac-cept each oth - er as Christ ac - cep - ted us;
2 Teach us, O Lord, your les - sons, as in our dai - ly life
3 Let your ac - cep tance change us, so that we may be moved
4 Lord, for to - day's en - coun - ters with all who are in need,



teach us as sis - ter, bro - ther, each per - son to em - brace.
we strug - gle to be hu - man and search for hope and faith.
in liv - ing sit - u - a tions to do the truth in love;
who hun - ger for ac - cept - ance, for jus - tice, and for bread,



Be pre - sent, Lord, a - mong us and bring us to be - lieve
Teach us to care for peo - ple, for all, not just for some,
to prac - tice your ac - cep - tance un - til we know by heart
we need new eyes for see - ing, new hands for hold - ing on;



we are our - selves ac - cep - ted, and meant to love and live.
to love them as we find them, or as they may be come.
the ta - ble of for - give - ness, and laugh - ter's heal - ing art.
re - new us with your Spi - rit; Lord, free us, make us one!

DISMISSAL

Go now in peace, trusting the good news.

Thanks be to God.

POSTLUDE

My Song Is Love Unknown



"Seventy-seven Times"

by Rev. Lauren Wright-Pittman

Digital Painting

"Perhaps craving more tangibility and practicality, Peter asks how many times he should forgive someone who has wronged him, and Jesus says, "Not seven times, but I tell you, seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22). This piece contains seventy-seven people and flowers to represent the abundance of grace that Jesus calls us into. The gold represents the divine presence of empathy, compassion, grace, and love throughout this dance from isolation toward community, from brokenness toward wholeness, and from guilt and shame toward freedom.

From sundaysandseasons.com.

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