



Hope Ev. Lutheran Church

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✠ THE HOPE LUTHERAN ✠

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Into the Valley of the Shadow of Lent

On January 24 we celebrated the Transfiguration of Our Lord. On the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus revealed Himself most gloriously as the God-Man and our Savior from sin and death.

Jesus had to come down from the mountain, however, and His disciples had to leave behind their "mountaintop experience." We might say they had to descend from the mountain in order to travel with Jesus through "the valley of the shadow of Lent." In our liturgical life, we too come down from the mountain on Transfiguration Sunday in order to travel through "the valley of the shadow of Lent."

Pre-Lent

For three Sundays before Lent—January 31, February 7 & 14 this year—the Church gives us a chance to prepare for the Lenten "journey." Think of it as planning a long road trip. We need time to plan the trip itself, choosing the destination and the route to travel. We need time to pack suitcases and get the car ready.

In the Sundays of Pre-Lent we take time to get ready for the season of Lent. On

"Septuagesima" (Jan. 31; about 70 days before Easter) we hear how our life with God in His kingdom comes only by grace. Yes, we are called to labor in the vineyard—laboring in hearing and learning God's Word, confessing our sins, devoting time to prayer at home and at church, giving to the poor, etc.—but our "reward" of life

and salvation with God comes only by His grace.

On "Sexagesima" (Feb. 7; about 60 days before Easter) we hear how our life with God in His kingdom comes only by His Word. God sows the Seed of His Word—Jesus—and we get to hear His message of forgiveness and life. How we hear the message of Jesus, through Lent and on Easter Sunday, makes

all the difference in the world. When we hear with the "good soil" of "an honest and good heart" our Lord gives abundant fruit of faith and life.

On "Quinquagesima" (Feb. 14; 50 days before Easter) we hear the blind man crying out to Jesus in faith: "Son of David, have mercy me!" Our life with God in His kingdom comes only by faith—faith in His mercy, faith in His Son who loved us and gave Himself for us in His suffering and



death, faith in His victory over death. The blind man teaches us that Lent is a time for crying for the Lord's mercy.

Thus we prepare ourselves for Lent by remembering that our Lord comes to rescue us from the muck and mire of our sin and death, and we receive His merciful salvation only by grace, only by His Word, and only by faith.

Lent

During the season of Lent we take a more solemn and even somber approach to our worship life together and our life as individual Christians. We have celebrated the joys of Christmas and Epiphany—the Word taking on our flesh and revealing Himself as our God and Lord. Now we turn our attention to the great price that our salvation cost Him: His very life.

On Ash Wednesday (February 17) we will have the opportunity and privilege to remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return. We will come in somber honesty, confess our sins, and admit that we human beings have brought sin and death (and all of their evil, unsavory fruits) into the world. We truly deserve to die!

However, we will also hear how merciful our Lord God is. After all, He has sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sin. He takes our place in suffering death and God's wrath, and He reunites us to our God who loves us. No one is beyond this magnificent love.

As we begin the journey through Lent, we do so under the shadow of Jesus' cross. No, Lent is not time to flagellate ourselves for Jesus' death. Rather, it is time to reorient our lives to receiving and clinging to His merciful forgiveness and salvation. It is time to hear and cling to His words; it is time to find sustenance in His Holy Meal; it is time to treasure His washing of forgiveness. May our gracious Savior grant us all a blessed journey through the valley of the shadow of Lent.

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The Penitent Should Remember His Baptism

It will be no small gain for a penitent to lay hold, before all else, on the memory of his Baptism, confidently to recall the promise of God which he has forsaken, and to plead it before the Lord, happy that he is still within the stronghold of salvation, is baptized, and abhors his wicked ingratitude of falling away from faith and its truth. For wondrously will his heart be comforted and he will be encouraged to hope for mercy when he considers that the divine promise which God made to him and which cannot lie is still intact and unchanged, nay, unchangeable by any sins, just as Paul says (2 Tim. 2:13): "If we believe not, he continueth faithful, He cannot deny Himself." This truth of God, I say, will so sustain him that if all else goes to ruin, this faith of his will not fail him. For in it he has a shield against the assaults of the enemy, a reply to the sins that trouble his conscience, an antidote for the horror of death and the judgment, and, in fine, a comfort in every temptation, namely, the one truth that he expresses when he says: God is faithful in His promises; His sign have I received in Baptism; if God be for me, who is against me? (Rom. 8:31). (*What Luther Says*, #3872)

LCMS Stewardship Ministry Newsletter article – February 2021

“I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:8-9).

Without commands or even arm-twisting, St. Paul encourages, even challenges, the Church in Corinth to demonstrate the sincerity of their faith by their generosity in giving. He does this because giving generously is a gift of the Spirit given to us through the Gospel.

St. Paul wrote: “But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us—see that you also excel in this grace of giving” (2 Corinthians 8:7). In other words, just as we grow in faith and speech and knowledge of eternal things by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God, so also do we grow in giving from the same Spirit through the same Word.

The problem is that the grace of generosity often grows cold in us. It’s not so much that we stop giving, but we don’t put it first. We treat it like all the other bills that must be paid. It becomes a chore, just one more thing to check off a list of things to do. That empties it of its spiritual power and robs us of the joy that Christ and the Scriptures assign to it.

On top of that, since this generosity is linked to faith and knowledge of divine things, a lack of excelling in giving is sure sign that our faith and knowledge of God are under attack as well.

Thus St. Paul points to the foundation of generosity: the generosity of Christ Himself. Even though He was rich, He became poor so that we who are poor might become rich. Thus, the incarnation, suffering, and death of our Lord on the cross is the reason, source, and driving force for our generosity in giving to the church.

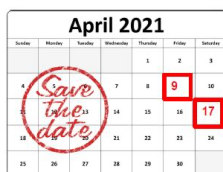
And since Christ who was rich became poor so that we might be rich in His grace—of which generous giving is part—so we also who are rich in His grace can excel in pressing His grace into service toward the gracious work of the church.

Pay attention to what you give to the church so that you may excel at it. And if you find that your heart has grown cold or indifferent toward it, immerse yourself in God’s Word. Read it at home. Attend Bible Class. Hear and listen to it preached in the Divine Service. Be reminded of what Christ has done for you in His incarnation, suffering, and death. For this will strengthen your faith and knowledge. And where that excels, so will the grace of giving excel also.



“All ceremonies should serve the purpose of teaching the people what they need to know about Christ” (Augsburg Confession, 24:3). This month we begin our spiritual pilgrimage to Calvary in the great 40 days of Lent. For the great 40 days of Lent, we focus on God’s great works of saving us from our sin and death. The time of Lent draws our attention to Christ and His great Suffering (“Passion”) and Crucifixion to save us sinners. In April our somber repentance will turn to joyous gladness as we celebrate our Lord’s victory over death. He certainly has trampled down death by His death, and He gives us His new, resurrected, eternal life! The Lord’s Service in the Lord’s House will shape us this way:

Date	Day in Church Year	Gospel Reading	Gospel Focus (Theme of the Day)
February 7	Sexagesima (“About 60 Days”)	Luke 8:4-15	The Fourfold Field - The parable of the sower and the four kinds of ground on which the good seed is cast. God sows His vibrant, life-giving Word in various “soils” of people who receive it in different ways.
February 14	Quinquagesima (“50 Days”)	Luke 18:31-43	Up to Jerusalem - Christ opens our eyes to see Him as God’s Lamb on the way to Jerusalem. As the blind man begged for Jesus’ mercy, we also learn to beg for and rely on His mercy.
February 21	First Sunday in Lent	Matthew 4:1-11	Temptation- Our Lord’s temptation. Because our Lord rejects the means of “victory” that Satan offers Him (bread, miracle, power), His way leads to the cross. But by His cross Jesus conquers Satan and temptation for us.
February 28	Second Sunday in Lent	Matthew 15:21-28	The Servant of the Lord - The Canaanite woman shows us how prayer addressed to our Lord is heard. Even though Jesus “hides” behind His threefold “No” she still trusts His healing mercy.



CHRISTIAN FRIENDS OF NEW AMERICANS
Virtual Events Via Zoom
SAVE THE DATE!

Invite you family and friends from around the world to play Trivia April 9 and April 17, or both nights, and bid on the fantastic auction items available all through the week, to support the work of CFNA.

In 2020, CFNA served 407 new contacts – this almost doubled the new contacts served in 2019. Covid-19 brought many needy people and Covid-19 is still with us. The opportunities to share Christ’s love in Word and deed is immense. Let’s raise funds for ministry among refugees and immigrants- so important in this crisis.

“Welcome to CFNA” entertainment begins online April 9 and April 17, 2021 at 6:20 pm CDT and Trivia Questions start at 6:45pm CDT. (check-in begins at 6:00).