

March 20, 2022
Third Sunday in Lent



ST. STEPHEN
Evangelical Lutheran Church

*Congregation is invited to stand as able

Please be aware that video cameras are in use during our hybrid (combined) Worship Service and that images are being shared with the online participants.

You can receive our weekly email/letter with events and information, ways to grow in faith, opportunities for service and worship, as well as ways to support the ministry of the congregation by submitting your email address to office@ststephlc.org or by calling the office at 717-766-2168 and providing your email and/or your mailing address.

The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God's invitation to attentiveness: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live." The landowner's ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener's readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

Our Mission

We respond to Christ's love by feeding those who hunger in body, mind, and spirit.

Prelude

"Forty Days and Forty Nights"

arranged by Craig Penfield

Gathering

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

***Confession and Forgiveness**

In the name of God, who makes a way in the wilderness, walks with us, and guides us in our pilgrimage. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy One,

we confess that we have wandered far from you: we have not trusted your promises, we have ignored your prophets in our own day, we have squandered our inheritance of grace, we have failed to recognize you in our midst. Have mercy on us! Forgive us and turn us again to you. Teach us to follow in your ways, assure us again of your love, and help us to love our neighbor. Amen.

Beloved in Christ,
the Word draws near to you, and all who call out to God shall be saved. In Jesus, God comes to you again and again and gathers you under wings of love. In ☩ Jesus' name, your sins are forgiven. God journeys with you and teaches you how to live in love. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn

“Glorious Things of You are Spoken ”

Hymn#647 vs. 1,2

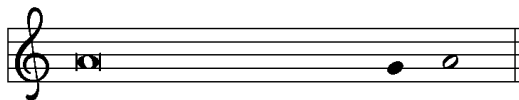
- 1 Glorious things of you are spoken,
Zion, city of our God!
He whose word cannot be broken
formed you for his own abode.
On the Rock of Ages founded,
what can shake your sure repose?
With salvation's walls surrounded,
you may smile at all your foes.
- 2 See, the streams of living waters,
springing from eternal love,
well supply your sons and daughters,
and all fear of want remove.
Who can faint, while such a river
ever will their thirst assuage?
Grace which, like the Lord, the giver,
never fails from age to age.

Text: John Newton, 1725-1807, alt.

*Apostolic Greeting

The boundless grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, and the light of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

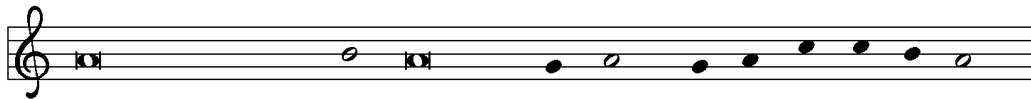
*Kyrie



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a-bove, and for our sal - vation, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



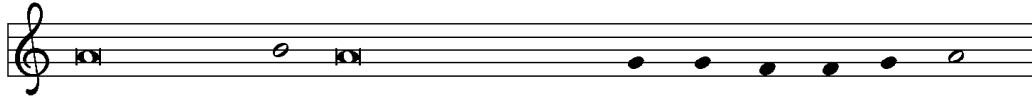
For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this holy house, and for all who offer here their wor-ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord. Lord have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de-fend us, gra-cious Lord. A - men.

***Canticle of Praise**



Assisting minister

Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.



All

Lord God, heav-en-ly King, al - might-y God and Fa - ther, we



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



Lord Je-sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of God,



you take a - way the sin of the world: have mer - cy on us;



***Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Word

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

The First Lesson

Isaiah 55:1-9

To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.

A reading from the prophet Isaiah, the 55th chapter.

¹Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.

²Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
³Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
⁴See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.
⁵See, you shall call nations that you do not know,
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.
⁶Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
⁷let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.
⁸For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.
⁹For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm

Psalm 63: 1-8

¹O God, you are my God; eager-¹ly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there¹ is no
water.
²**Therefore I have gazed upon you in your¹ holy place,
that I might behold your power¹ and your glory.**
³For your steadfast love is better than¹ life itself;
my lips shall¹ give you praise.
⁴**So will I bless you as long¹ as I live
and lift up my hands¹ in your name.**
⁵My spirit is content, as with the rich-¹est of foods,
and my mouth praises you with¹ joyful lips,
⁶**when I remember you up-¹ on my bed,
and meditate on you in¹ the night watches.**
⁷For you have¹ been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I¹ will rejoice.
⁸**My whole being¹ clings to you;
your right hand¹ holds me fast.**

The Second Lesson

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Paul uses images from Hebrew Scriptures and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ: He is our rock, our water, our food, and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God's faithfulness.

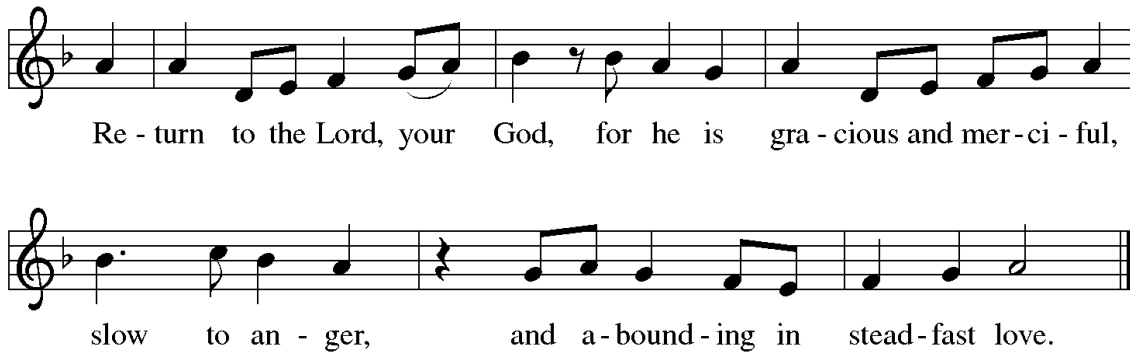
A reading from St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians. the 10th chapter.

¹I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." ⁸We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. ¹⁰And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹²So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. ¹³No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

Word of God. Word of Life. **Thanks be to God.**

***Gospel Acclamation**



***Gospel Reading**

Luke 13:1-9

Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.

A reading from the Gospel according to St. Luke, the 13th chapter. **Glory to You O Lord.**

¹At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²[Jesus] asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?" ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."

⁶Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' ⁸He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to You O Christ.**

Sermon

The Rev Matthew Best

Hymn of the Day

"There's a Wideness in God's Mercy"

Hymn#588 vs. 1-3

- 1 There's a wideness in God's mercy,
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in God's justice
which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows
are more felt than up in heav'n.
There is no place where earth's failings
have such kindly judgment giv'n.
- 2 There is welcome for the sinner,
and a promised grace made good;
there is mercy with the Savior;
there is healing in his blood.
There is grace enough for thousands
of new worlds as great as this;
there is room for fresh creations
in that upper home of bliss.
- 3 For the love of God is broader
than the measures of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.
But we make this love too narrow
by false limits of our own;
and we magnify its strictness
with a zeal God will not own.

Text: Frederick W. Faber, 1814-1863, alt.

***Apostles Creed**

AM: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us profess our faith, using the words of the Apostles Creed.

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

***Prayers of Intercession**

Congregational response after each petition:

AM: ...Merciful God **C: receive our prayer.**

Drawn close to the heart of God, we offer these prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church around the world in all its forms: for pastors, deacons, bishops, chaplains, and mission developers; for church councils, committee chairs, and all lay ministry leaders; for congregations that contemplate difficult decisions about the future of their ministry. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For the health of this planet and the well-being of its creatures: for lands impacted by droughts and at risk of wildfires; for fig trees and vineyards that produce fruit for our nourishment and delight; for animal habitats threatened by climate change. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For those called into positions of civic responsibility: for judges, attorneys, and court administrators tasked with uncovering truth and delivering justice; for activists and community leaders who cast a vision of a more compassionate and equitable society. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For those who call upon you for mercy: for all who live in poverty and experience hunger; for any who feel tested beyond their strength; for those who are hospitalized or near death, and for all in need of healing. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For the advocacy efforts of this congregation: for those whose faith leads them to speak difficult truths and engage in difficult conversations with policymakers; for those who promote mercy over vengeance or retaliation. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

For those whose earthly journeys have ended, we give thanks. With all the saints, we praise you for the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

Accept the prayers we bring, O God, on behalf of a world in need, for the sake of Jesus Christ.
Amen.

***Peace**

P: The Peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us show a sign of that peace!

***Offering**

The offering, whether in person or through digital means, is an act of worship. Worship, at its core, is a reverent love and devotion accorded to God. We give because God loves us first, and we are called to love God and neighbor as a result. The offering is one way we show our love of God.

To assist you in this act of worship, there are several ways to make your offering: Go to www.StStephenLC.org and scroll to the bottom of the page, and click **DONATE**.

Use Engage from your smart phone or Internet connected device at <https://engage.suran.com/sslc/> or QR code below:



Via PayPal: Enter PayPal@StStephenLC.org and then the amount you want to pay. . Use "Add a note" to provide designation (otherwise, it will go to the General Fund).



Select giving fund(s) and enter amount(s).
Furnish any additional information in "Gift Memo" box on the submit screen.

Text your offering dollar amount to 717-685-6947. Text "help" for options.

Set up regular electronic offerings by contacting Kevin, our office manager, at 717-766- 2168, Monday through Thursday from 9am – 2pm, or by email at office@StStephenLC.org to get set up.

Mail in your check, made payable to St. Stephen Lutheran Church. Our address is
30 W. Main St., PO Box 266, New Kingstown, PA 17072.

The offerings are used to carry out the ministry of the church, to share the Good News, to provide pastoral care, to worship as a community, and to create an environment where Jesus encounters people and their lives are transformed. All of these things continue to take place. Thank you for your generosity.

***Offertory Prayer**

Let us pray. Extravagant God,
you have blessed us with the fullness of creation. Now we gather at your feast where you

offer us the food that satisfies. Take and use what we offer here, come among us, and feed us with the body and blood of Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

Meal

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

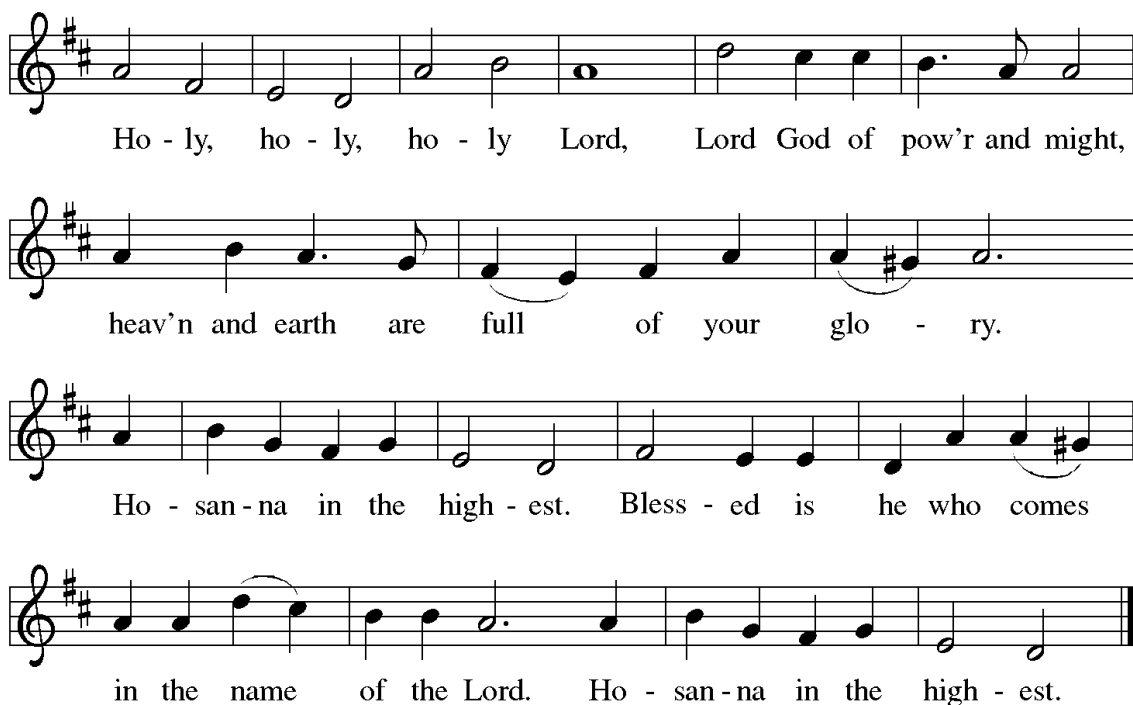
***The Great Thanksgiving**

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.**

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:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age. Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth. Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood. Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea. Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness to the land of milk and honey. Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one. Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ. Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

In the night in which he was handed over, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying:

This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's passover from death to life as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

O God of resurrection and new life:

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine. Bless this feast. Grace our table with your presence.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread. Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world. Breathe new life into us. Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.

Come, Holy Spirit.

With your holy ones of all times and places, with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God, blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.

Amen.

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

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.

***Invitation to Communion**

Here is food and drink for the journey.

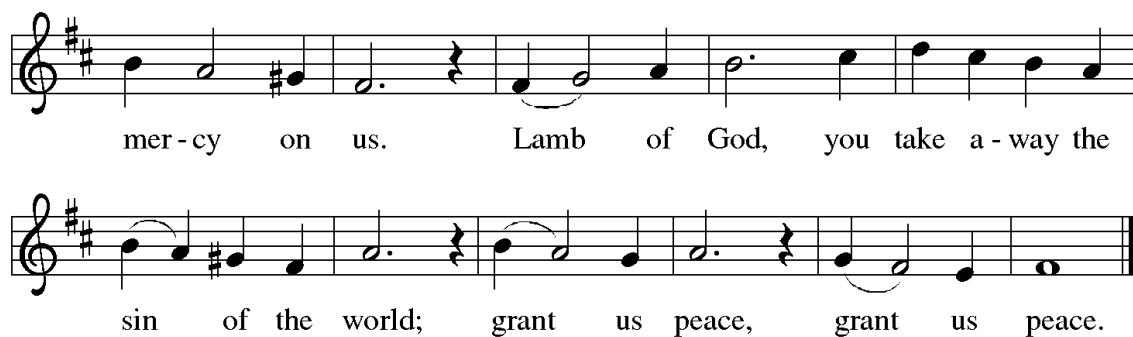
Take and be filled.



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



***Post Communion Prayer**

Let us pray. Blessed Jesus,
in this rich meal of grace, you have fed us with your body, the bread of life. Now send us forth
to bear your life-giving hope to a world in need. **Amen.**

Sending

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

***Blessing**

You are children of God, anointed with the oil of gladness and strengthened for the journey.
Almighty God, motherly, majestic, and mighty, ☩ bless you this day and always.
Amen.

Sending Hymn

“ Through the Night of Doubt & Sorrow “

Hymn #327 vs. 1,2

- 1 Through the night of doubt and sorrow,
onward goes the pilgrim band,
singing songs of expectation,
marching to the promised land.
Clear before us through the darkness
gleams and burns the guiding light;
pilgrim clasps the hand of pilgrim
stepping fearless through the night.
- 2 One the light of God's own presence
on the ransomed people shed,
chasing far the gloom and terror,
bright'ning all the path we tread.
One the object of our journey,
one the faith which never tires,
one the earnest looking forward,
one the hope our God inspires.

Text: Bernhardt S. Ingemann, 1789-1862; tr. Sabine Baring-Gould, 1834-1924, alt.

***Dismissal**

Go in peace. Jesus meets you on the way.
Thanks be to God.

Postlude

“ The Saints' Delight “

arranged by Dale Wood