



## **Sunday, March 19, 2023**

### **Fourth Sunday in Lent**

*Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.*

### **GATHERING**

#### **WELCOME**

This is the day the Lord has made.  
**We will rejoice and be glad in it.**

*(Please stand as you are able)*

#### **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

*All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, who journeys with us these forty days, and sustains us with the gift of grace.

**Amen.**

Let us acknowledge before God and one another our need for repentance and God's mercy.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Holy God,

**we confess to you our faults and failings. Too often we neglect and do not trust your holy word; we take for ourselves instead of giving to others; we spoil rather than steward your creation; we cause hurt though you call us to heal; we choose fear over compassion. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, as we seek to follow in your way of life. Amen**

Hear the good news: God so loved the world that God gave the only Son, so that all may receive life. This promise is for you! God embraces you with divine mercy, + forgives you in Christ's name, and revives you in the Spirit's power. **Amen.**

**OPENING SONG ELW 673** vs. 1,2 *God Whose Almighty Word*

- 1 God, whose almighty word  
chaos and darkness heard  
and took their flight:  
hear us, we humbly pray,  
and where the gospel day  
sheds not its glorious ray,  
let there be light.
- 2 Christ, who once came to bring,  
on your redeeming wing,  
healing and sight;  
health to the troubled mind,  
sight where illusions blind;  
oh, now to humankind  
let there be light.

Text: John Marriott, 1780-1825, alt.

**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.**

**CANTICLE OF PRAISE ELW 751** *O Lord, Hear My Prayer (first verse only, repeat)*

O Lord, hear my prayer,  
O Lord, hear my prayer:  
when I call, answer me.  
O Lord, hear my prayer,  
O Lord, hear my prayer:  
come and listen to me.

Text: Psalm 102:1-2; Taizé Community, adapt.

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**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us.

**By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen**  
*(Please be seated)*

**WORD**

**SPECIAL MUSIC**

**Reading: 1 Samuel 16:1-13**

*Samuel anointed David even though he was the eighth-oldest son of Jesse and did not match his brothers in height or other physical characteristics. With the anointing came endowment with the Spirit of the LORD, designating David as the LORD's chosen successor to Saul.*

<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Samuel, “How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons.” <sup>2</sup>Samuel said, “How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me.” And the LORD said, “Take a heifer with you, and say, ‘I have come to sacrifice to the LORD.’” <sup>3</sup>Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do; and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you.” <sup>4</sup>Samuel did what the LORD commanded, and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling, and said, “Do you come peaceably?” <sup>5</sup>He said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the LORD; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

<sup>6</sup>When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed is now before the LORD.” <sup>7</sup>But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the LORD does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.” <sup>8</sup>Then Jesse called Abinadab, and made him pass before Samuel. He said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” <sup>9</sup>Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the LORD chosen this one.” <sup>10</sup>Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, “The LORD has not chosen any of these.” <sup>11</sup>Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and bring him; for we will not sit down until he comes here.” <sup>12</sup>He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and had beautiful eyes, and was handsome. The LORD said, “Rise and anoint him; for this is the one.” <sup>13</sup>Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the presence of his brothers; and the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah.

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

*(Please stand as you are able)*

#### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** *Return to the Lord*

Return to the Lord, your God,  
For he is gracious and merciful,  
Slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love,  
And abounding in steadfast love.

Text: Evangelical Lutheran Worship

#### **Gospel: John 9:1-41**

*Jesus heals a man born blind, provoking a hostile reaction that he regards as spiritual blindness to the things of God.*

*(Words in Italic are not read.)*

*Reader:* As (Jesus) walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” *Jesus answered,*

*Jesus:* “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

*Reader:* When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him,

*Jesus:* “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”

*Reader:* (Siloam means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask,

*People:* **“Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?”**

*Reader:* Some were saying,

*People:* **“It is he.”**

*Reader:* Others were saying,

*People:* **“No, but it is someone like him.”**

*Blind:* "I am the man."

*Reader:* But they kept asking him,

*People:* **"Then how were your eyes opened?"**

*Blind:* "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight."

*People:* *They said to him, "Where is he?"*

*Blind:* "I do not know."

*Reader:* They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight.

*Blind:* "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

*Reader:* Some of the Pharisees said,

*Pharisee:* **"This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath."** [*But others said,*]

*Pharisee:* **"How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?"**

*Reader:* And they were divided. *So they said again to the blind man,*

*Pharisee:* **"What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened."**

*Blind:* "He is a prophet."

*Reader:* The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them,

*Pharisee:* **"Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?"**

*His parents answered,*

*Parents:* "We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself."

*Reader:* His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind,

*Pharisee:* **"Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."**

*Blind:* "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

*Pharisee:* **"What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"**

*Blind:* "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

*Reader:* Then they reviled him, *saying,*

*Pharisee:* **"You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."**

*Blind:* "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

*Pharisee:* **"You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?"**

*Reader:* And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, *he said,*

*Jesus:* "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

*Blind:* "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."

*Jesus:* "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."

*Blind:* "Lord, I believe."

*Reader:* And he worshiped him. *Jesus said*

*Jesus:* “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.”

*Reader:* Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him,

*Pharisee:* “**Surely we are not blind, are we?**”

*Jesus:* “If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, ‘We see,’ your sin remains.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

*(Please be seated)*

**Music:** *Jesus Loves Me* – ELW #595

## CHILDREN’S SERMON

**Music:** *Lord, Listen to your Children Praying* – ELW #752

## SERMON

**SONG OF THE DAY ELW #815** vs.1, 3 *I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light*

- 1 I want to walk as a child of the light.  
I want to follow Jesus.  
God set the stars to give light to the world.  
The star of my life is Jesus.

### *Refrain*

In him there is no darkness at all.  
The night and the day are both alike.  
The Lamb is the light of the city of God.  
Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

- 3 I’m looking for the coming of Christ.  
I want to be with Jesus.  
When we have run with patience the race,  
we shall know the joy of Jesus. *Refrain*

Text: Kathleen Thomerson, b. 1934

Text © 1970, 1975 Celebration

*(Please stand as you are able)*

Let us confess our faith in the words of the

## NICENE CREED

**We believe in one God,**

**the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is, seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,**

**the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father;  
through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,**

**was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;**

**he suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again**

**in accordance with the Scriptures;**

**he ascended into heaven  
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,  
who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the world to come. Amen**

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

*A brief silence.*

Eternal God, you seal us by the Holy Spirit and mark us with the cross of Christ forever in baptism. Inspire us by your love as together we strive for justice and peace in all the earth. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Creating God, by your word you have made all things, and you hate nothing you have made. Teach us to perceive the beauty of the breadth of your creation, from the grandest mountain range to the smallest springtime bud. Be with your people who are suffering following various weather related crisis', floods, snow melt, tornados, and protect all those who rush in to help. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Powerful God, you anoint kings and establish rulers. Guide the work of heads of state and elected officials. Encourage them to lead with justice and to remove barriers that impede the well-being of all. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Shepherding God, you lead us beside still waters and restore our souls. Keep watch over those who weep; tend all who are sick and comfort those who grieve. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God our host, you fill us at your table with more than we could ever ask. Feed us with hunger for justice. Equip the feeding ministries of this congregation and community, bless all those who participate in our Little Pantry. Nourish us so we can nourish our neighbors. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Accept our thanksgiving for the people you surround us with, especially for those who celebrate their lives and birth this week:

Katie Sojka

Wanda Brogren

enrich them with a sense of joy and grace for yet another year. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

Save us from ourselves, from racism in all its hidden forms, from hollow words without actions, forgive us, renew us, call us to action Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

For those fighting cancer and other serious illnesses, grant strength and grace. We pray for doctors, nurses, technicians, researchers and all who work toward treatments and cures. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

For police officers and firefighters, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

For the people of Ukraine, grant continued protection, strength and hope for a better tomorrow. Bring peace and an end to the war. Merciful God,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of history, with thanksgiving we remember our ancestors in faith who cared for your people *especially Joseph, Guardian of Jesus*. We praise you for the ways they formed the faith of others and continue to inspire us. Merciful God,

**receive our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **PEACE**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

Share the peace ...

*(Please be seated)*

## **MEAL**

### **OFFERING**

*The Worship/Communion Registration Card may be placed in the offering plate as it is passed.*

*Thank you for your support of our ministry.*

*(Please stand as you are able)*

### **OFFERTORY ELW #186 *Create In Me a Clean Heart***

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

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

Restore to me the joy of your salvation,  
and uphold me with your free Spirit.

Text: Lutheran Book of Worship

### **THE LORD'S SUPPER: Words of Institution**

#### **Grace at the table: 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

*(Please stand as you are able)*

## **COMMUNION SONG** *Lamb of God*

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Text: Evangelical Lutheran Worship

## **COMMUNION BLESSING**

### **POST COMMUNION CANTICLE ELW #208** *Praise to You, O God of Mercy*

Praise to you, O God of mercy:

thanks be to you forever!

Raising high the weak and lowly:

thanks be to you forever!

Text: *Now the Feast and Celebration*, Marty Haugen, b. 1950

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## **SENDING**

*(Please be seated)*

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **BLESSING**

May the Lord bless you and keep you,

may the Lord smile upon you and be gracious to you,

may the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace. + Amen.

### **SENDING SONG ELW# 793** vs 1 *Be Thou My Vision*

1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;

naught be all else to me, save that thou art:

thou my best thought both by day and by night,

waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Text: Irish, 8th cent.; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935, alt.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve in love.

**Thanks be to God.**

## ADDITIONAL READINGS FOR THE DAY

Psalm 23

Ephesians 5:8-14

## NEXT WEEK'S READINGS FOR

March 26, 2023

### **Fifth Sunday in Lent**

**Ezekiel 37:1-14**

*The dry bones of Israel brought to life*

**Psalm 130**

I wait for you, O LORD; in your word is my hope. (*Ps. 130:5*)

**Romans 8:6-11**

*Life in the Spirit*

**John 11:1-45**

*Baptismal image: the raising of Lazarus*

## GOSPEL MESSAGE

### FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

#### What? Or Why?

What do we believe? Our Lutheran heritage is rooted in theological debate, and such conversations have always been a part of our tradition. Disagreements about theological propositions and biblical interpretations have led to split after split among Lutheran church bodies and congregations. At the same time, our theological and biblical commitments have led us to seek the unity of the church with mergers among Lutheran denominations and with common communion agreements with our ecumenical neighbors. In our broader culture it also seems that theology often leads the way in conversations about faith. Theological principles from various religious communities are used to argue for or against laws, corporate practices, and cultural expectations.

In today's gospel story we find something different leading the way: the blind man's experience of the healing power of Jesus. This experience is at odds with the theological thought of the religious leaders. The narrative reads like a trial, one in which the primary witness is hostile to the line of questioning from the prosecution. The conversations the leaders have with the man and his parents are a mess of misunderstanding that leads to insult and accusation. They are talking about theology; he and his parents are talking about experience. No one is there to translate between the two.

Why do you believe? Our understandings of God are certainly shaped by the communities of which we have been a part and theologies we have learned. Yet, God's grace is not something we logic our way through; it is something we experience. The early church debated all sorts of theological positions, but their witness was grounded in their experience of death and resurrection. *What* we believe is important, but as we step into each day as witnesses of God's love for the world, *why* we believe may be the most hope-filled message we have to share.

From [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com).

## **Upcoming Commemorations**

### **Joseph, Guardian of Jesus**

**Sunday, March 19, 2023**

Though the Bible tells us little about the husband of Jesus' mother Mary, we know that he was a carpenter or builder by trade. He is also shown as being devoted both to God and to Mary and Jesus. It is assumed that he died before Jesus became an adult.

### **Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury, martyr, died 1556**

**Tuesday, March 21, 2023**

Cranmer's lasting achievement is contributing to and overseeing the creation of the Book of Common Prayer, which remains (in revised form) the worship book of the Anglican Communion. He was burned at the stake under Queen Mary for his support of the Protestant Reformation.

### **Jonathan Edwards, teacher, missionary to American Indians, died 1758**

**Wednesday, March 22, 2023**

A Puritan minister in Connecticut, Edwards is remembered as being a great preacher. Though his most famous sermon talks at length about hell, he was more concerned with God's love. He served both as missionary to the Housatonic people in Massachusetts, and as president of the future Princeton University.

### **Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, died 1980**

**Friday, March 24, 2023**

Romero was deeply concerned with injustices evident toward the poor and powerless in El Salvador, and worked forthrightly against political repression. He was assassinated while presiding at the eucharist in a chapel near the cathedral in San Salvador.

### **Annunciation of Our Lord**

**Saturday, March 25, 2023**

Nine months before Christmas we celebrate the annunciation, in which the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God. The ancient church believed that this was also the date of the world's creation and of Jesus' death on the cross.

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