



Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 14, 2021

Prelude

Confession

P: Most holy and merciful God,

**C: we confess to you and to one another,
and before the whole company of heaven,
that we have sinned by our fault,
by our own fault,
by our own most grievous fault,
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done and by what we have left undone.**

We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength.

We diminish our respect and awe of You by not putting our relationship with you on the top of our priority list. We relegate You to being our god of convenience and comfort rather than Creator of the Cosmos, and, in this way, we limit the power you have in our lives. Have mercy on us, O God.

We let other voices speak to us of fulfillment, hope and peace.

We have been tempted to turn away from the truth you offer us. We have doubted your presence, your power and your promise. Have mercy on us, O God.

We have shut our ears to your call to love and serve others with the same compassionate love and service Christ offers us.

We have not been diligent in staying keenly aware of how we can be a source of comfort, hope and sustenance to those who suffer, or are in despair, or deprived of what they need to live. We have found security in protecting and preserving our abundant blessings. Have mercy on us, O God.

We misuse and abuse the role you have given us in and over creation.

We exploit and squander the earth's resources without inconveniencing ourselves with consideration for the sustainability of life in the future. We assume the power of gods, but fail to seek the wisdom of God in the use of our power, focusing too much on our satisfaction in this moment rather than comprehending the full scope of our actions. We privilege our lives over the lives of other creatures without respect for the depth of the interconnectedness of all life. Have mercy on us, O God.

We do not always own our own problems, nor do we take enough responsibility for working to solve them.

We scapegoat, we make excuses, we get distracted. We do not bring them to you and open ourselves to the Spirit's guidance through unexpected voices and resources. We become discontented because we resign to empty contentment. We default to following the norm rather than clinging to the distinction of being a Child of God. Hear us, O God, for your mercy is great.

Lenten Hymn

[tune: ELW 327]

*1. By making someone happy
As we pass along life's way,
We bring a bit of Heaven
To the longest, darkest day;
The world is full of shadows,
Full of sorrow, grief and woe,
And snares are set before us
Everywhere we go.*

Refrain

*A little human kindness
Brings a bit of Heaven near,
A little human kindness*

**Drives away our fear.
A little human kindness
Makes the souls of men akin,
And brings the joy of victory
To a world of sin.**

*2. So many weary pilgrims
Toiling onward up the height,
Are longing for a friendly word,
Ere fall the shades of night;
O lend a hand to help them,
Haste to speak a word of cheer,
And gloomy clouds will brighten*

When the day is drear. Refrain

Ever let them shine.

Somewhere beyond the sunset,

*3. Keep all the hope-fires lighted
By the torch of love divine;*

In a land supremely blest,

We'll find that human kindness

As beacons thro' earth's darkest valleys Paved the way to rest. Refrain

Greeting & Kyrie

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

C: And also with you.

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

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 mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen

Prayer of the Day

P: The Lord be with you

C: And also with you

P: Let us pray:

C: Merciful Father, in your love for us you always speak the truth about our faults and failures with the desire that we heal and grow. By your Spirit, open us to accept your critique and correction so that we may live more fully and faithfully. Soften our weaker hearts, hardened to speak truths and distortions about others' faults and failures out of our desire to cause pain and shame. Following in your Way, let us critique with humble compassion. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Now the snake was more shrewd than all the living-things of the field that Yahweh, God, had made.

It said to the woman, "Even though God said; 'You are not to eat from any of the trees in the garden . . .'"

2 The woman said to the snake, "We may eat of the fruit of the other trees in the garden; 3 but from the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden God has said, "You are not to eat from it and you are not to touch it, or you shall die."'

4 The snake said to the woman, "Die? You will not die! 5 Rather, God knows that on the day that you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods,* knowing good and evil."

6 The woman saw that the tree was good for eating and that it was a delight to the eyes and the tree was desirable to contemplate. She took from its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband beside her, and he ate.

R: The Word of the Lord!

C: Thanks be to God!

*I will extol you, my God and King,
and bless your name forever and ever.*

**Every day I will bless you,
and praise your name forever and ever.**

*Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;
his greatness is unsearchable.*

**One generation shall laud your works to another,
and shall declare your mighty acts.**

*On the glorious splendor of your majesty,
and on your wondrous works, I will meditate.*

**The might of your awesome deeds shall be proclaimed,
and I will declare your greatness.**

*They shall celebrate the fame of your abundant goodness,
and shall sing aloud of your righteousness.*

**The Lord is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

*The Lord is good to all,
and his compassion is over all that he has made.*

**All your works shall give thanks to you, O Lord,
and all your faithful shall bless you.**

*They shall speak of the glory of your kingdom,
and tell of your power,*

**to make known to all people your mighty deeds,
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.**

*Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and your dominion endures throughout all generations.*

Second Lesson

Ephesians 4

I exhort you, therefore - I, a prisoner in the Lord - to walk about worthily, in the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, enduring one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all. . . speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love. . . So then, having put away what is pseudo, you all must speak truth to each neighbor, for we are members of one another. You must not be made angry and must not sin! The sun must not set on the basis of your anger. You must not give the devil any real estate! . . . All words that are worthless must not come out of your mouth, but only what is good for the need of building up, so that they may give grace to those who are listening. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. All bitterness and wrath and anger and clamoring and blasphemy must be taken from you with all evil. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has forgiven you.

L: The Word of the Lord!

C: Thanks be to God!

Verse

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*1 Help us accept each other as Christ accepted us;
teach us as sister, brother, each person to embrace.
Be present, Lord, among us and bring us to believe*

We are ourselves accepted, and meant to love and live.

2 Teach us, O Lord, your lessons, as in our daily life
we struggle to be human and search for hope and faith.
Teach us to care for people, for all, not just for some,
to love them as we find them, or as they may become.

3 Let your acceptance change us, so that we may be moved
in living situations to do the truth in love;
to practice your acceptance until we know by heart
the table of forgiveness, and laughter's healing art.

4 Lord, for today's encounters with all who are in need,
who hunger for acceptance, for justice, and for bread,
we need new eyes for seeing, new hands for holding on;
renew us with your Spirit; Lord, free us, make us one!

Gospel Acclamation

P: The Holy Gospel according to Matthew the 25th Chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord!

Gospel

Matthew 25

But whenever the Son of Man may come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. And all the nations will be gathered together before him, and he will separate them one from one another as a shepherd now separates the sheep from the goats, and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left.

Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are that are being blessed by my Father. Inherit what has been prepared for you - the Kingdom from the foundation of the cosmos. For, I hungered and you gave me food. I thirsted and you gave me drink. I have been a stranger and you gathered me in; naked, you clothed me, ailing, you cared for me. I have been imprisoned and you came to me.'

Then the righteous will answer him saying, 'Lord, when have we seen you hungering and we gave you to eat, or thirsting and we quenched? And when have we seen you stranger and we gathered, or naked and we clothed? And when have we seen you ailing or in prison and we came to you?'

And the king will answer them, "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of my brothers, you did it to me.'

Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me you who are being cursed, into the eternal fire that has been prepared for the devil

and his angels. For, I was hungry and you did not feed me. I was thirsty and you did not quench me. I have been a stranger and you did not gather me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not care for me.'

Then they also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungering, or thirsting, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not serve you?'

Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of those who are least, you did not do it to me.'

And these will go away into eternal correction, but the righteous into eternal life."

P: *The Gospel of our Lord!*

C: Praise to you, O Christ!

Sermon

Hymn of the Day

[tune: ELW 654]

*Be kind to one another, be tender-hearted too —
forgiving one another, as Christ has pardoned you.*

Refrain from any gossip, for gossip is a sin.

Be open to new friendships, and welcome people in.

*Be kind in all your speaking and hear what others say.
Be open to Christ's teaching, and in all matters, pray.*

Be gentle, loving, faithful and keep a humble mind.

Remember what is truthful. In everything be kind.

*Be kind within your circle, but look past what you see;
Be kind to those in trouble — the poor, the refugee.*

The world is filled with violence; write letters, call out sin!

Don't ever sit in silence and let the evil win.

*O God of love, you've taught us. You've shown us what to do:
Be just, commit to kindness, walk humbly here with you.*

Your Spirit gives us courage to truly live this way.

May love become our message; may kindness win the day.

Apostles Creed

P: I ask you to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church, the faith in which we baptize. Do you renounce all the forces of evil, the devil, and all his empty promises?

C: We do with the help of God.

P: Do you believe in God the Father?

**C: I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

P: Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**C: I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived of the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

P: Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**C: 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**

Offering

P: Let us pray:

**C: Loving God, we give you thanks for the bounty and
blessings of our lives, returning these offerings as signs of
our gratitude. May these gifts further your work and
sustain your kingdom among us. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.**

Prayers of the Church & Lord's Prayer Benediction & Dismissal

Grace Lutheran Church

Christopher Chantelau, *Pastor* • Becki Advocate, *Dir. of Music*

Kristen Halderman, *Parish Administrator* • Vinnie Tipa, *Sexton*

Rev. Dr. Timothy Kennedy, *Pastor Emeritus*