

January 31st Worship
Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Introduction to the Day

In Deuteronomy God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses, who will speak for God; in Psalm 111 God shows the people the power of God's works. For the church these are ways of pointing to the unique authority people sensed in Jesus' actions and words. We encounter that authority in God's word, around which we gather, the word that prevails over any lesser spirit that would claim power over us, freeing us to follow Jesus.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
whose voice is upon the waters,
whose mercy is poured out upon all people,
whose goodness cascades over all creation.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the abundant
grace of God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy God,

you search us and know us.

You are acquainted with all our ways.

**We confess that our hearts are burdened by
sin—**

**our own sins and the broken systems that bind
us.**

**We turn inward, failing to follow
your outward way of love.**

We distrust those who are not like us.

**We exploit the earth and its resources
and fail to consider generations to come.**

Forgive us, gracious God,

for all we have done and left undone.

**Even before the words are on our tongues,
you know them;**

receive them in your divine mercy.

Amen.

How vast is God's grace!

Through the power and promise of † Christ Jesus,
our sins are washed away
and we are claimed as God's own beloved.

Indeed, we are forgiven.

In the wake of God's forgiveness,
we are called to be the beloved community
living out Christ's justice
and the Spirit's reconciling peace.

Amen.

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Prayer of the Day

Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Lesson – 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

¹Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ²Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; ³but anyone who loves God is known by him.

⁴Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." ⁵Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until

now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸“Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. ¹²But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

Gospel – Mark 1:21-28

²¹[Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Message

People of God, grace to you and peace from God, and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN.

We pick up in Mark's Gospel with Jesus having just called some disciples to be his followers, “come and follow me, and I will make you fish for people. Leave your nets! And they do, and they immediately follow him.”

And they come to Capernaum on the Sabbath day and they go to the synagogue. Jesus starts teaching and people are blown away. They hear his teaching and it is as though he is someone with authority. Aside from those who always taught in the synagogue, he was different, he had authority.

And at that time, there was a man with an unclean spirit.

The wording, and how we hear this exchange that is to come, is important. “Just then there was in the synagogue, a man with an unclean spirit. And he cried out, “What have you done with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. The Holy one of God,” but Jesus rebuked him.

Jesus denied him saying, (and who it is that the *him* is referring to is important for how we, as people of faith, hear this text,) “be silent and come out of him.”

Now, who that him is is answered in verse 26, “And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice came out of him.”

Context is important for us. How we hear this gospel text is important for us. And to realize that when Jesus was approached - he has this man yelling at him in the synagogue. “I know who you are.” - he's being challenged. This man is challenging this Jesus, this teacher who clearly has authority. He is, I imagined in his face and Jesus rebuked him. But when it says Jesus rebuked him, he's not talking about the guy who was yelling in his face, he's talking about that which made him do it. And the authority that he has, that thing that made him do it, listened. “The unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice - hearing Jesus rebuke - came out of the man.”

We always talk about context. We frequently talk about the importance of context when we hear scriptures. And there's two ways to look at that.

1) What else is happening in scripture? Where does this occur? We just had Jesus realized he can't do his ministry on his own. So, he calls disciples who are going to help him spread this good news. That is the scriptural context at play here.

2) This is you. The second contextual setting for these texts is you. It is how you hear these texts.

And so we continue with what we've heard. Shortly after his baptism Jesus realizes that he can't do this ministry thing on his own. In his baptism the heavens opened up, he is declared God's beloved, just as we are marked and claimed as God's beloved in our own baptism. That is the scriptural context that we hear in this.

But, in our own context, the second way that we can look at this is to ask ourselves what have we been hearing as people of faith here and now? We've been hearing that we are beloved. We have been hearing that we have a fight, and it is a fight, to ensure that each and every person sees themselves as God's beloved, no matter what the world might tell them. We've been hearing that Jesus can't do this on his own and calls us into this worthy calling of sharing the good news of God's love for God's people.

So what do we do with this? Because immediately after that, Jesus enters a synagogue and he is challenged by a man with an unclean spirit. And he could have tossed that man physically out of the synagogue. We've seen, or we will see, Jesus act out in the synagogue. In his life, he will enter the synagogue and be angry and throw tables. So it wouldn't have been out of the question for Jesus to physically throw this whole man out.

Instead he sees the man. He sees that this man is challenged by an unclean spirit and he rebukes him, not the man himself, but the unclean spirit. He says to the unclean spirit, "you come out of him.

He says to the man, "This thing is not who you are. You are not defined by this unclean spirit. You unclean spirit get out of this man."

That is the context for us as people of faith. Last week, we heard Jesus admit that this can't all be done on our own. He's challenging us to repent from thinking that it's all up to us.

Fresh off the heels of that challenge, Jesus sees us for who we are.

Jesus sees into our being for who God intended us to be.

He sees us with our flaws and our failings and says to "come out."

He sees us with everything that others have to say and says, "you are mine."

He rebukes, he denies, the things that people would say would separate us from his love and says, "no, this is who God made you to be. You are God's beloved."

We struggle with this because we hear this and we think we have to rid ourselves of all those things. We have to rid ourselves of those flaws. We have to rid ourselves of those failings. But, we know it doesn't just happen. It's not just the snap of your fingers. We know it's a journey.

And it is a journey we go about as God's beloved. Perhaps the first step in the journey is to not give people reasons to think that they aren't loved. I love to ask myself, "what is this doing for the body of Christ?" If we all lived our lives asking these questions

"what does this action do for the body of Christ?"

“What does this understanding of who belongs and who doesn't do for the body of Christ?”

I think we'd see a lot more beautiful, a lot more whole, picture of the body of Christ that God intended.

It takes some repentance. –

- to repent from thinking that it is all up to us
- to repent from thinking that we can look at our neighbor and determine if the Mark on their forehead is as perfect as ours
- to repent from thinking if our neighbor is worthy of those same promises that we receive in baptism, that “we are beloved, but my neighbor, I'm not so sure.”

Instead, Jesus would look at those things that we have determined to make ourselves and our neighbors not worthy and rebuke them and say, “come out. You are my child. You are my beloved.

Jesus sees into our being, our whole being, for who God intended us to be.

He sees us with our flaws and failings and says to come out.

He sees us with everything that others have to say and says, you are mine. You are my beloved. You are worthy of this.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For all God's works in creation: plants and animals, water and soil, forests and farms; and for those tasked with protecting our natural resources and all that exists, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For government and leaders: cities and nations, rescue professionals and legal aid attorneys, elected officials and grassroots organizers; for all responsible for the well-being of civil society, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: those who are sick and hospitalized, those living with HIV/AIDS, those struggling with mental illness, those who are hungry or homeless, and all in any need (*especially*); for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For the concerns of this congregation: those who travel, those absent from worship, those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries; for the people of God in this place and for other needs in our community (*especially*), let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

For the covenant God made with us in the waters of baptism, in thanksgiving for the baptized who have died in the Lord, let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Offering

Our 1st Quarter Well Offering / Mission Offering will be determined by you, the people of Good Shepherd. A theme for us for the coming year is going to be Extravagant Generosity. Instead of US telling YOU what our Mission Offering for the first quarter is going to go to, we are going to have YOU tell US. If there is a local cause that you are passionate about, we want to hear about it. At the conclusion of the 1st Quarter, the Leadership Team will meet to discuss the causes that folks are passionate about, and determine the distribution of funds from there.

Offertory Prayer

O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your tender care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace.

Amen.

At Home Communion Liturgy

+WORDS OF INSTITUTION+

(Holding the bread) In the night in which he was betrayed, 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."

(Holding the cup) 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 all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me." When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(Tear the bread, share with each person – invite them to dip into the cup of wine/grace juice) +

LORD'S PRAYER +

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION +

Christ Jesus, at this table we have feasted on your very life and are strengthened for our journey. Send us forth from this banquet nourished in body and in spirit to proclaim your good news and serve others in your name.

Amen.

BLESSING EACH OTHER +

(Using your pointer finger, dip it in the bowl of water, and make the sign of the cross on another's forehead or the back of their hand)

"Child of God, marked as God's own, Jesus loves you, and will love you forever. AMEN"

Take turns until each person has been blessed.

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you;

Jesus the beloved fill you;

and the Holy Spirit the comforter ✠ keep you in peace.

Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

The Annual Meeting of the Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd will be held on the morning of January 31st. at 11 am. This meeting will be happening via Zoom. **YOU DO NOT NEED A COMPUTER TO JOIN A ZOOM MEETING.** There will be Zoom test meetings on Tuesday and Thursday at 2 pm of this week to help work out any kinks and worries that folks may have. Zoom Fellowship will start at 10 am on the 31st to get folks squared away before the meeting starts at 11.

To phone in use the following information:

Zoom Annual Meeting – January 31 – Fellowship at 10 – Meeting at 11 am

Dial: 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 883 1364 6104

After this step you will be asked if you have a personal ID. If not, hit #.

Passcode: 1120703

Annual Reports are available at church and there will be someone there Sunday morning for you to pick up to have for the meeting.

Please be patient with this process. There will be rules stated at the beginning of the meeting to make clear how we will navigate any times that folks have questions. We will have members participating with video, and others simply by phone. It will take patience from all involved, but this can, and will, work.

Today we welcome NEW MEMBERS to the Congregation

Sherm and Mary Toufar

Jeff and Crystal Miller

Emily Carden

Jake and Kassie Dunbar – Kade and Kinsley

Travis and Meghan Bourget – Karsen Kidd, Maren, Macelyn

Matt and Shelby Sivertson – Jackson, Maggie, Tommie