

March 21st Worship
5th Sunday in Lent

Introduction to the Day

God promises Jeremiah that a “new covenant” will be made in the future: a covenant that will allow all the people to know God by heart. The church sees this promise fulfilled in Christ, who draws all people to himself when he is lifted up on the cross. Our baptismal covenant draws us to God’s heart through Christ and draws God’s love and truth into our hearts. We join together in worship from our homes, sharing in word and song, leaving strengthened to share God’s love with all the world.

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
the keeper of the covenant,
the source of steadfast love,
our rock and our redeemer.

Amen.

God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in
Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of
compassion.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Fountain of living water,
pour out your mercy over us.
Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free.
Rebuild what we have ruined
and mend what we have torn.

Wash us in your cleansing flood.
Make us alive in the Spirit
to follow in the way of Jesus,
as healers and restorers of the world you so love.
Amen.

Beloved, God’s word never fails.
The promise rests on grace:
by the saving love of Jesus Christ,
the wisdom and power of God,
your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them
no more.

Journey in the way of Jesus.

Amen.

Prayer of the Day

O God, with steadfast love you draw us to yourself, and in mercy you receive our prayers. Strengthen us to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, that through life and death we may live in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lesson – Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Gospel – John 12:20-33

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Message

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

In our gospel text we find ourselves still in the book of John, many chapters later, but still living in some of those same themes that we have heard in our previous texts from John's Gospel. Last week we heard the themes of judgment and condemnation and this seemingly final nature of those words, that in all reality are the exact opposite.

The judgment that Jesus speaks of in John 3:16 is a currently lived judgment and not an eternally lived judgment. The grace in that text is that Jesus is not condemning Nicodemus to an eternity of judgment, but rather that living in that non-belief is the judgment that Nicodemus has experienced. And these ideas continue in our gospel text for today in John chapter 12.

“Those who love their life lose it. And those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”

Those who remain in that judgment – those who don't seek that repentance – those who don't seek that reconciliation – will remain in that life of judgment.

This season of Lent, now in the Fifth Sunday, the final Sunday before Palm Sunday and Holy week, which are technically in the Season of Lent, but we're going to put a little bit of a bow on the season of Lent today here in this Fifth Sunday.

I don't know if you've noticed or how intently you've followed along with the Old Testament texts that we have heard, or the Introductions to the Day that we have seen at the beginning of our worship, but today I want to focus on those two things and the themes that our gospel texts have been drawing from those texts.

We have heard the covenants that God makes with God's people. Going back to Ash Wednesday when we remembered that each and every one of us as children of God is marked as God's beloved. And each and every one of us, as children of God, in this Journey Towards Wholeness sees in our neighbor, God's beloved. We're reminded that – with all of our differences and with all of our quarrels and with all of our things that might tear us apart – in this community that is the Body of Christ, we all are marked the same. We find our community and we find our wholeness in that mark that we all share.

Our old Testament texts have brought us back to that and the covenants that God makes with God's people and the promises that God has made with God's people throughout history. We look at those through the lens of our baptism.

I want to quickly review the introductions from each of the past five Sundays going back to the first Sunday in Lent, just after Ash Wednesday, when we heard the story of Noah and the rainbow in the sky as a sign of God's promise to God's people..

On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.

God's promise to Abraham and Sarah – a multitude of nations

The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ

The Commandments given to Moses

The third covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the central one of Israel's history: the gift of the law to those God freed from slavery. The commandments begin with the statement that because God alone has freed us from the powers that oppressed us, we are to let nothing else claim first place in our lives. When Jesus throws the merchants out of the temple, he is defending the worship of God alone and rejecting the ways commerce and profit-making can become our gods. The Ten Commandments are essential to our baptismal call: centered first in God's liberating love, we strive to live out justice and mercy in our communities and the world

The serpent in the Wilderness

The fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

The promise of a future

God promises Jeremiah that a "new covenant" will be made in the future: a covenant that will allow all the people to know God by heart. The church sees this promise fulfilled in Christ, who draws all people to himself when he is lifted up on the cross. Our baptismal covenant draws us to God's heart through Christ and draws God's love and truth into our hearts.

We have looked at these Gospel texts through the lens of the Baptismal promise. We have looked at the roller coaster of living a life of faith through this baptismal lens, that we start at the epitome of wholeness as people of faith when we are washed in the waters of Baptism, and it is a journey that leads to the eventual new life that is

in Christ – that no matter how long we put off claiming that promise, and acknowledging that promise, and affirming that promise in our lives, in our death, we are given new life.

Our journey towards wholeness is a journey to live into that promise.

We don't live in that promise so that we receive new life. But rather, because of it.

We live into that promise because we know of this new life that comes to us in Christ.

We live into that promise because we have that sign on our foreheads that we share with each and every person we encounter. Each and every one of us is marked, claimed, called, gathered, and sent out into the world as God's beloved.

That is our journey towards wholeness.

That is the covenant we live into today.

Thanks be to God. AMEN.

Apostle's Creed

Prayers

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

You wash us through and through and remember our sin no more. Make your church a community of forgiveness throughout the world. Give your people courage to forgive; through them show the world new possibilities. Bless ministries of repentance and reconciliation. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You fill the earth—from tiny grains of wheat to the mighty thunder—with your presence, and you call us to attend to your will for all creation. Grant weather that prepares the soil for seeds; protect all from violent storms, flooding, and wildfires. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You promise to write your law on our hearts. Guide citizens throughout the world to shape communities that reflect your mercy, justice, and peace, and give them creativity to work for the welfare of all. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You sustain us with your bountiful Spirit. Restore the joy of all who need to know your presence: those who are lonely or feel unforgivable, those who need healing of mind or body, those who are dying, and all who grieve. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

Jesus calls us to follow him in life and death. Empower this congregation in discipleship. Equip children and teachers in Sunday school, confirmation, and learning ministries. Give us your truth and wisdom and teach us to follow Jesus. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

In the cross of Christ, your name is glorified. We praise you for those who have given us words to worship you. With all those who have died in Christ, bring us into life everlasting. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offertory Prayer

Faithful God,
you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven. Accompany us in this meal, that we may pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.
Amen.

Lord's Prayer

Blessing

You are what God made you to be:
created in Christ Jesus for good works,
chosen as holy and beloved,
freed to serve your neighbor.
God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing,
in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.
Amen.
Go in peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS! ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Holy Week at Good Shepherd

- **Palm Sunday**
 - Worship for Palm Sunday will be virtual with videos premiering online at 9 am
- **Maundy Thursday**
 - **YOU ARE INVITED** to Maundy Thursday Worship in the parking lot.
 - **From the comfort of your car - Worship with Holy Communion at 7 pm**
 - **If the hour of day is difficult for you, you are invited to stop in throughout the day to receive the Sacrament of Holy Communion**
- **Good Friday**
 - Worship will be a collaborative effort of the 8 ELCA churches of Eau Claire and we will hear song and reflection on the Seven Last Words of Christ
- **Easter Sunday**
 - Worship for Easter Sunday will be virtual and will premiere at 9 am

When are we going to re-open our doors for worship?

There is growing hope and optimism that the day when we return to physical worship in our building is drawing near. We do not have a date set in mind but we do have a couple of target dates in mind, but nothing confirmed that we are ready to share at this time.

Re-Connect Opportunities are available to you!

We hope you will join us for any, or all, of these Re-Connect Opportunities throughout the week!

Stop in for coffee and conversation at 9 am on Mondays

TUESDAYS be sure to stop by for Bible Study starting at 11, followed by Lunch and Laughter at noon.

Wednesdays will continue to be our Faith Formation Days

Thursdays we will have the sanctuary open for prayer for 8 am to 3 pm.