

March 6th Worship – First Sunday in Lent

Introduction to the Day

These forty days called Lent are like no other. It is our opportune time to return to the God who rescues, to receive the gifts of God's grace, to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth the wonder of God's love in Jesus, and to resist temptation at every turn. This is no small pilgrimage on which we have just embarked. It is a struggle Jesus knew. It is a struggle Jesus shares. The nearness of the Lord, in bread and wine, water and word, will uphold and sustain us.

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.

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 Song "I Want Jesus to Walk with Me"

#325

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, you led your people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide us now, so that, following your Son, we may walk safely through the wilderness of this world toward the life you alone can give, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Lesson – Deuteronomy 26:1-11

¹When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." ⁴When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, ⁵you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. ⁶When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ⁷we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹and he brought us into this place and gave us this

land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me.” You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. ¹¹Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

Children’s Message

Gospel – Luke 4:1-13

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread.” ⁴Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone.’”

⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, “To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours.” ⁸Jesus answered him, “It is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here, ¹⁰for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you, to protect you,’

¹¹and

‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

¹²Jesus answered him, “It is said, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

Message

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

On top of having the theme for our midweek Lent worship of “In spite of…” our theme for our Sunday morning worship is, “Who are we?”

A couple of years ago we underwent the process of redoing our Mission Statement to determine who it is that we say we are as a congregation.

Through conversation and reflection we landed:

Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd
Your neighborhood church
Where each is known – seen – loved

Throughout the Sundays in the Season of Lent we are going to pick that statement apart, and truly look into what it means to say that we are “Your neighborhood church: Where each is known – seen – loved.”

And we begin with the question of, “What does it mean to be a neighborhood church?”

Those who have been at The Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd since its beginning know exactly what being a Neighborhood Church means. The legend of Doctor Hegge walking the streets of Eau Claire’s Upper Westside Neighborhood Church and inviting neighbors is often told. And that first worship service, the seats in the old sanctuary were filled.

Times have changed. The understanding of “neighborhood,” especially in this digital age, has changed. But, not just in the digital age. With the ease of travel coming into the picture, the understanding of neighborhood evolved. As we were coming up with this mission statement, knowing that being a neighborhood church was central to Good Shepherd’s identity, we realized that acknowledging the evolution of the understanding of neighborhood was important as well. We joked that, at the time of writing the mission statement, that our most recent Council President lived in Chippewa Falls while the current Council President lived on the south side of town, and our Pastor could, without completely going out of his way, could go past all but one of the other 7 ELCA churches in town.

Neighborhoods change.

Just last week I heard from a friend in Moorhead that she enjoyed worship that day. And I’ve heard of relatives and friends from Baldwin to Alma Center who tune in for worship as well.

What it means to be a neighborhood church has changed.

But, what it means to be church has not.

In our text from Deuteronomy we hear of a church that meets us where we are. Sure, it actually talks about coming into the land that you possess, that when those were wandering found “their place,” the home for their worship, they would know it, and they would make a home there.

This indeed is not so different from a church body noting a need for a congregation in a neighborhood and planting one there.

But again, church evolves.

Eventually the church, and churchgoers realize a need or desire to find their home, rather than going to what is convenient. People look for a place that is their home.

So, what makes a home? Especially, what makes a church home?

We are quick to find the cliché answers. Dare I say, we are tempted to give only the cliché answers?

Yes, it feels good to hear, “welcome, good to see you, glad you are here.” And, it does feel great to tell ourselves that we are welcoming to all and we are so friendly, and I’m not about to say that we aren’t those things.

But, the temptation is to stop at that.

The truth is, the evolving church, those seeking a church home, are looking for more than those things. Yes, they want to be know – seen – loved, but many people are looking for a church that is FOR its neighborhood, and not just in it.

That as we give the first fruits of our labor, our bounty, we are giving back out into our neighborhood, our community, and more.

The understanding of Neighborhood Church has shifted from church in the neighborhood, to church FOR the neighborhood.

People of God, let us be THAT church.

Thanks be to God. Amen

Apostle’s Creed**Prayers**

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

We pray for the church. Sharpen its proclamation of the word so that your people learn to reject voices of deception and distraction. Strengthen all who are tempted to believe lies about themselves or others. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for the earth and all its creatures. Protect wilderness places and all plant and animal species that call them home. Sustain farmers and all laborers who work the land and harvest the fruits of its abundance. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for the nations of the world. Awaken elected leaders and government officials to the needs of those who are oppressed and grant them compassion to deal mercifully with immigrants and refugees who reside among us. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for those in need. Rescue those experiencing mental illness or contending with addiction. Ease the anxiety of those who live with dementia. Command your angels concerning all who are sick (*especially Peyton, Kathy, Matt, Bob and Joanne, Jim and Sandy, Bob, Joe, Bill and Bonnie, David, Cassie, Keith and JoJo, Frank and Heather, Sherm and Mary*). Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We pray for this assembly. Bless those who bake bread and prepare the table for our communion celebration. Accompany those who share the bounty of this meal with those who are homebound or hospitalized. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

We give thanks for those who have died (*especially*). Gather them with all the saints into your heavenly dwelling place. Encourage us with the promise that all who call upon your name are saved. Merciful God,

receive our prayer.

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

Amen.

Offering**Offertory Prayer**

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.

Words of Institution – We invite you to find bread and wine or juice and partake in this Holy Meal.

(Holding the bread) In the night in which we was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread and broke it, gave thanks and gave it for all to eat saying, “This is my body broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

(Holding the cup) Again after supper he took the cup, and after giving thanks he 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 sins. So often as you do this, remember me.”

Once you’ve taken the elements say, 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.

Lord’s Prayer

Sending Song **“Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross”** **#335, vs. 1,2,4**

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.

Go in peace. Jesus meets you on the way.

Thanks be to God.

Announcements

Lent

Our theme for Lent this year is "In spite of..."

In spite of all of the reasons we might give ourselves for NOT being worthy of what comes at Easter, it still happens. So, let's talk about it.

Join us each Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m. in person or online.

Shepherd's Closet will be having their quarterly trip to Saver's.

If you have items to donate, please have them in tall kitchen garbage bags, labeled SAVERS. Drop them off by Tuesday, March 8.

Easter lilies

If you are interested in helping to beautify the Sanctuary for Easter worship, and to provide flowers for either your home or a shut-in, please fill out the form and return it to the church office by Sunday, March 20.

We will be purchasing all of the flowers from one source. Cost is \$10. We ask that your payment for the flowers accompany your request. Checks should be made payable to Good Shepherd.

Academy for Lifelong Learners (formerly Senior Americans Day)

This positively ageless program will once again provide a fun day of education, resources, and social interaction. Featuring keynote speaker, Wisconsin Public Radio show host, Dr. Zorba Paster.

New this year, portions of Academy for Lifelong Learners will be live-streamed. Registration opens on Tuesday, March 8. Cost is \$59 per person. Learn more at uwec.ly/ALL or call UW-Eau Claire Continuing Education.