



St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
 Wilton, WI  
 Last Sunday after Epiphany  
 February 21, 2021  
**Inviting People to  
 Journey with Christ's Family  
 in Spreading God's Love and Mercy**

*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.*

### Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song



1 *Jé - sus, je vou - drais te chan - ter sur ma rou - te;*  
 1 Lord Je - sus, you shall be my song as I jour - ney;  
 2 Lord Je - sus, I'll praise you as long as I jour - ney.  
 3 As long as I live, Je - sus, make me your ser - vant,  
 4 I fear in the dark and the doubt of my jour - ney;



*Jé - sus, je vou - drais t'an - non - cer à mes voi - sins par - tout,*  
 I'll tell ev - 'ry - bod - y a - bout you wher - ev - er I go:  
 May all of my joy be a faith - ful re - flec - tion of you.  
 to car - ry your cross and to share all your bur - dens and tears.  
 but cour - age will come with the sound of your steps by my side.



*car toi seul es la vie et la paix et l'a - mour:*  
 you a - lone are our life and our peacc and our love.  
 May the earth and the sea and the sky join my song.  
 For you saved me by giv - ing your bod - y and blood.  
 And with all of the fam - 'ly you saved by your love,



*Jé - sus, je vou - drais te chan - ter sur ma rou - te.*  
 Lord Je - sus, you shall be my song as I jour - ney.  
 Lord Je - sus, I'll praise you as long as I jour - ney.  
 As long as I live, Je - sus, make me your ser - vant.  
 we'll sing to your dawn at the end of our jour - ney.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, heavenly Father, in the waters of the flood you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING

*Today's reading is the conclusion to the flood story. Because of human sin, God destroys the earth by flood, saving only Noah, his family, and the animals on the ark. Yet divine destruction gives way to divine commitment. As in the first creation, God blesses humanity and establishes a covenant with all creatures.*

### Genesis 9:8-17

<sup>8</sup>God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>"As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, <sup>10</sup>and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. <sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." <sup>12</sup>God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup>I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup>When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." <sup>17</sup>God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

### Psalm 25:1-10

<sup>1</sup>To you, O LORD,  
I lift up my soul.  
<sup>2</sup>My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be put to shame,  
nor let my enemies triumph over me.  
<sup>3</sup>Let none who look to you be put to shame;  
rather let those be put to shame who are treacherous.  
<sup>4</sup>Show me your ways, O LORD,  
and teach me your paths.  
<sup>5</sup>Lead me in your truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all the day long.  
<sup>6</sup>Remember, O LORD, your compassion and love,  
for they are from everlasting.  
<sup>7</sup>Remember not the sins of my youth and my transgressions;  
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your goodness, O LORD.  
<sup>8</sup>You are gracious and upright, O LORD;  
therefore you teach sinners in your way.  
<sup>9</sup>You lead the lowly in justice  
and teach the lowly your way.  
<sup>10</sup>All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast love and faithfulness  
to those who keep your covenant and your testimonies.

## SECOND READING

*As God acted through Christ's suffering and death to bring us to God, so God acts through baptism to save us from a sinful existence. This spiritual cleansing marks our new life in Christ.*

### 1 Peter 3:18-22

<sup>18</sup>Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, <sup>19</sup>in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup>who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. <sup>21</sup>And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup>who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

## HOLY GOSPEL

*The Spirit that comes upon Jesus at his baptism sustains him when he is tested by Satan so that he might proclaim the good news of God's reign.*

### Gospel: Mark 1:9-15

<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup>And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

## SERMON

Today, I'm going to begin with a story of a person I know who attended a family get-together (pre-COVID). A beautiful buffet had been laid out on a table. Family members were lining up, excitedly chatting with each other as they looked forward to eating some delicious food.

The man in this story has food allergies. Due to this, instead of joining in the excitement, he was carefully looking over the food options while trying to determine what he could safely eat. (Perhaps his taking extra time to scrutinize the options slowed down the line. His lack of decisiveness may also have kept others from getting their food quickly.)

He said something to his brother-in-law (who was behind him), about needing to be careful about his selections. His brother-in-law, who knew all about the man's allergies, quickly picked up some finger food from the table (food that the man was allergic to), and said, "It's really very easy," and he popped the food into his mouth! The takeaway from the brother-in-law's words and actions was--you don't need to think about this, just

do what you want! So what if you are allergic to this food. Just eat it, and forget about it. Don't make such a big deal out of it!

The brother-in-law, of course, wasn't going to have to live with the consequences. He wasn't going to have a gut ache, rash, or any of the other allergic reactions that the man would have if he ate certain foods. It was easy for the brother-in-law to simply pretend that the man's eating something he was allergic to was no big deal. By his words and actions, the brother-in-law suggested that giving in to temptations is a way, perhaps the way that he prefers, to make decisions. It is a message that communicates--do what you want to do, not what you should do. And in regards to this story, it communicates an example of peer pressure--the rest of us want to eat, and get on with our lives, and you are holding up the line!

Of course, there are many different kinds of temptations. While this example may seem minor, our reflection and silent prayers on Ash Wednesday probably brought to our minds a wide variety of temptations to which we have faltered and/or succumbed. (If you have not yet reflected on your words and actions, my sermons and the daily devotionals during this Lenten season provide opportunities for you to reflect, pray, and ask God's forgiveness.)

"And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." We know these words very well. Immediately, we recognize them as part of the Lord's Prayer. "Temptation"--we understand this word and the setting for this word in our gospel passage for today. It is exemplified in Jesus' temptations in the wilderness. We know from Jesus' responses to Satan's temptations that temptation seeks to draw us away from what we should do, and more specifically, to draw us away from God in whom we are to put our trust. Temptation revolves around the issue of self-restraint. Will we exhibit self-restraint, succumb to temptation, or something in-between? Succumbing to temptation can involve avoiding the voice of reason and the voice of the Holy Spirit. It can be as extreme as following "the evil," not, "the good." It can result in doing whatever is easiest, rather than what is best.

We have all been tempted, succumbed to temptation, and fallen short of God's desires for us. We have all sinned against God, whether intentionally or unintentionally. And during this Lenten season, we can all benefit from hearing God's word and reminders of how we can faithfully follow God's path.

The Psalmist says, "To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust..." This passage begins by acknowledging the need for trust. But this is not referring to trust in our own abilities and devices. It is not about trust in one's earthly power, glory, wealth, or fame. It is about trust in God. We display our trust in God when we seek God's wisdom in our decision making and allow God to direct our paths. We do so not exclusively with our soul, but with our whole being; our heart, soul, mind and strength!

The Psalmist asks not to "be put to shame." The Psalmist asks God to not put him, or others who "wait on God" to shame, or to let the "treacherous" or "his enemies" exult over him. We too, know this word, "shame." We, like the Psalmist, are to do what is right for ourselves and others. In this way, both individually

and collectively, we will not be weighed down with shame.

Another Psalm provides insight regarding God's ways. Per James Lingberg, Psalm 1 tells us what we need to do to follow God's ways. It states, "...don't follow the advice of wicked people, don't take the paths that sinners take; and don't associate with cynics and scoffers... [for]...those who are truly happy...are those people who take delight in the Lord's teaching." (The Psalms, p. 2)

How wonderful it is to think of being truly happy! When we delight in the Lord's teaching, we can be happy. When we do God's will, we can be happy. When we follow God's ways, we can be happy!

The Psalmist in our scripture passage today, asks for instruction in how to follow God's ways. He says, "Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth, and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all day long." He is imploring God to allow him to walk alongside God, as we do especially during the Lenten season. We walk with Jesus as his disciples in order to be taught and to be lead, because we know that God alone is our help, God alone is our strength, God alone is our salvation.

"Be mindful of your mercy, O Lord, and of your steadfast love, for they have been from of old." The Psalmist reminds the Lord of his "mercy" and "steadfast love" in preparation for what the Psalmist is to say next. He needs God's mercy and forgiveness due to his sinfulness! He needs God's steadfast love! He states, "Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for your goodness' sake, O Lord!"

"According to your steadfast love remember me." Perhaps these words remind us of a response that we sing on Good Friday. The words relate to those of the criminal who is crucified along with Jesus, "Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom. Jesus remember me, when you come into your kingdom."

What would happen, if we as Christians sought to do as the Psalmist's describes? What if we were to make decisions based not only on ourselves--our wants and our desires-- but on the effects our decisions have on others. What if we were, in this way, to truly share Jesus' love with others! As Interim Bishop Boerger describes in his sermon of Ash Wednesday, we need to go beyond ourselves. We need to go beyond the four walls of the church and out into the world!

The Psalmist says, "Good and upright is the Lord; therefore he instructs sinners in the way." We are sinners, and so is everyone we know! All human beings whom God has created can benefit from knowing and experiencing God's forgiveness, mercy, grace and love! The Psalmist states, "He leads the humble in what is right, and teaches the humble his way."

We, as Christians, know of God's unconditional love. We also know people who would benefit from learning about and experiencing God's grace, mercy and love. Perhaps, during this Lenten season, we are just the person, just the people, just the congregation to share Jesus' love with others in the world, and in so doing, help them to learn about and know Jesus! For as the Psalmist says, "All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his decrees."

We know many of the Lord's ways and teachings, and we know that it is important to trust in God and follow God's path. During this season of Lent, we will be going on a journey, walking with Jesus from Ash Wednesday to his crucifixion. We will continue after Lent to journey with God, holding on to these new insights, as we delight in the Easter story. Yes, we will have temptations during our journey. But, the Psalmist reminds us to seek the Lord's instruction. Through praying, reading the Bible and daily devotionals, participating in the Lenten study, meditating on God's word, and demonstrating Jesus' unconditional love for others, we can faithfully walk with Jesus. Let us journey together with Jesus this day, this Lenten season, and every day. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

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

In Jesus your realm has come near to us in every place and time. Give your church throughout the world a spirit of humility and repentance; teach us to trust always in the good news of your salvation. Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

You have made a covenant of mercy with every living creature. Protect all the earth's creatures from destruction. Empower the work of biologists, conservationists, and science educators.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

All your paths are steadfast love and faithfulness. Direct the words and actions of leaders in our community and throughout the world, that they may maintain justice for the lowly.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

Even in the wilderness you are with us. Walk alongside migrants and refugees crossing dangerous lands. Tend to those whose lives feel desolate. Give healing and strength to all who suffer especially, Katie, Judy, Darlene, Paul, Pam, Alrita, Frank, Jeff, Tessa, Lisa, Bud, Gary, Jim, Harvey, and those we name aloud and in our hearts, that Christ our healer transform sickness into health, loneliness into companionship, bereavement into consolation, and suffering into peace, let us pray.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

In the covenant of baptism you claim us as beloved children. Nurture us in our baptismal identity and teach us to live within it for the sake of others. Strengthen this congregation's ministries of care and concern.

Hear us, O God.

**Your mercy is great.**

In baptism you join us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We praise you for all those who have died trusting in your faithfulness. Bring us with them to the fullness of your reign.

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.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

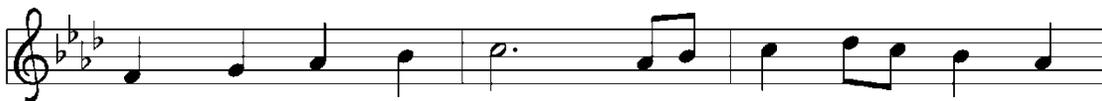
Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

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.

### O Lord, throughout These Forty Days



1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you  
2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your  
3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and  
4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and



prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance  
faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your  
fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -  
all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal



for our sin, and free us from our past.  
skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.  
ny our - selves that we may know God's love.  
Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

Text: based on Claudia F. Hernaman, 1838–1898; para. Gilbert E. Doan Jr., b. 1930

Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davison, *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816

Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.