

TRINITY EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH - Saskatoon

Lent 4 – March 14, 2021

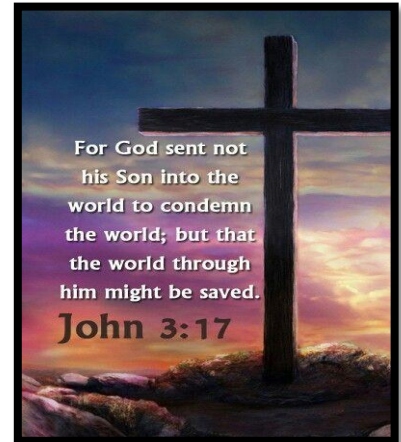
Order of Service

Welcome

Brief Order of Confession and Forgiveness

Gathering Song: **“Mighty to Save”**

Prayer of the Day - **O God, rich in mercy, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world and rescued us from the hopelessness of death. Lead us into your light, that all our deeds may reflect your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**



SCRIPTURE READING: Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

SCRIPTURE READING: Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

The Gospel Acclamation: **“Create in Me”**

THE HOLY GOSPEL: John 3:14-21

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ‘For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ‘Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgement, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.’

Sermon

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. What wonderful weather we have received as of late. I pray that you are able to enjoy the sunlight, warmth and that the Lord is shining on your life.

(Read Numbers 21:4-9 & John 3:14-21). One day a truck driver was traveling through a seldom used road in a desert. He had been driving all night and, as the sun began to rise, he felt the need to stretch his legs. So he pulled over to the side of the road, got out and walked in the sand.

As he was standing there, looking around at the beauty of the early morning, he noticed a lever sticking out of the ground. The truck driver walked around that lever, looking it over closely. Then he reached out and took hold of it. Just as he grabbed it, he heard a voice say, *“Don’t pull that lever!”*

The driver jumped about two feet off the ground and quickly looked around for the source of the voice. But there was no one to be seen, so he thought it must just be his imagination playing tricks on him. So again, he took hold of the lever. And, again, he heard – *“I said, don’t pull that lever!”*

Even though he was still startled, the man looked around more closely and, underneath a nearby bush, he saw a small snake. Hesitantly, the man asked, *“Was that you that just spoke?”*

The snake replied, *“Yes. I have to keep people from touching that lever because, if the lever is pulled, it will be the end of the world!”*

The driver was beside himself, and he said, *“This is incredible! What is your name? And will you talk on TV?”*

The snake told the man that his name was Nate but that he wasn’t interested in talking on TV because he had to stay and make certain that no one pulled the lever. But the driver persisted and said, *“Look, I’ll get the TV News Channel to send camera crews out here and, also, that way you can inform the entire world about the danger of pulling that lever.”*

Nate the snake thought about it and decided that this idea made a lot of sense. Besides, then he could do something with his life other than lying by that lever all day. Sure enough, the truck driver was true to his word and he got the news channel to come out and interview Nate, and he was able to warn the entire world of the danger of moving that lever.

A couple of weeks later a different truck driver was going through the area when he had a blowout. The truck swerved out of control and he found himself headed straight for the lever. In a flash he remembered seeing Nate’s interview on TV telling about the danger of hitting the lever. And he knew that if he struck it he would cause the world to end. Struggling with all his might he fought to gain control of the truck. And, at the last moment, he was able to swerve enough to avoid the lever but, sadly, he ran over Nate and flattened him.

And the moral of the story is that *“it’s better Nate than lever!”* (Feel free to groan)

Are you afraid of snakes? It’s said that Ophidiophobia, or the fear of snakes, is one of the most common phobias that there is. For many people, the sight of a snake slithering along or even just lying still in the grass is enough to send them running.

In the Old Testament reading today, we heard about the people of Israel and the very good reason they had for being afraid of snakes as they were on their journey toward the Promised Land. They were afflicted with poisonous snakes as a sign of their sin – as a sign that they have turned away from trusting God.

And because of their sin, and through the snakes that come into their midst because of that sin, death surrounds the Israelites. Then, in a remarkable act of Divine reversal, the very sign of sin and death – the snake – is used by God to become the sign of healing and life. The bronze serpent is raised up upon a pole and the Israelites need only look up and see it and they will live.

And both our Second Reading & Gospel reading take up that same theme. In our reading from Ephesians, St. Paul says that while we were dead in our trespasses the power of Christ comes to us to make us alive. And, as Paul writes just a little further – by grace we have been saved through faith. We need only look up and live.

For when we look up we see the cross. Just as the serpent – the sign of sin and death – is raised in the desert for the sake of the people. So also is Christ raised on the cross for the healing and bringing of life to the world. On the cross, the one who knew no sin is made sin so that the power of sin and death might be broken.

Jesus declares to us that this is God’s love for you and me, this is God’s never-ending love for the world – that he would bear the penalty for us. He would die so that we might live. It is a gift that he gives to us.

When we feel weighed down by guilt or despair or burdens that seem to great to bear – Jesus calls us to look up and live. Look up and draw near to him and know that his grace is sufficient.

The very creator of the universe knows you and loves you. There was a little girl who one day was telling her aunt about learning in Sunday School that God is watching over her at all times. Her aunt asked her, “Doesn’t it bother you to know that God is always watching you and sees everything that you do?”

And the little girl replied, “Oh no, it doesn’t bother me. Because it means that God loves me so much that God can’t keep his eyes off of me!”

That is the love that God has for us and for the world. God’s grace has been poured out for all creation through the cross of Christ. And, by grace, God’s love can reach into any human heart to bring about the joy and life that comes in God’s presence.

May we all hear the call and invitation to look up and live, this day and every day. As we gaze upon the one who was lifted up for us, may the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord fill our hearts with joy and keep us in his presence.

Hymn of the Day: “Amazing Grace/My Chains are Gone”

Apostles’ Creed

Prayers of Intercession and the Lord’s Prayer

Holy Lord, you promise your people life and you send proclaimers of your word throughout the world. We pray that you would bring joy to our bishops, pastors, church leaders and to all Christians. Raise us up with your Son and grant us life in his name that we might share your precious grace with all people as we sow peace to all in need. Lord, in your mercy...

Lord God, we pray for a world that, all too often, seems shrouded in darkness. Teach nations and people to put an end to violence and oppression. May those who have much share with those who have little. May mutual concern and respect for each person’s dignity and care for your creation guide us all. Lord, in your mercy...

Heavenly Lord, we pray that our daily living and work might be enlivened by the Spirit of God. Wherever we are and in whatever we find ourselves engaged, remind us that we are your people. Bless our worship, bless our relationships and bless our daily work so that we would know that you are with us – and so that you might be glorified through them. Lord, in your mercy...

Loving God, we pray that your presence would be made known to those who are sick or in hospital, those whose life has been impacted by Covid, the dying and those who mourn. Comfort and strengthen them with the presence of your healing Spirit. Uplift and uphold all who we hold in our hearts and hold before you in prayer (Name those people and situations you would bring before the Lord). Lord, in your mercy...

Almighty and Everlasting God, your Son was lifted up so that we might be reconciled to you and lifted up also to new life. We rejoice in the grace you have so freely given and we pray that you would order our lives to make us witnesses of your love and mercy.

All these things, and whatever else you know that we need, we entrust to your strong hand; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Benediction and Blessing

Sending Song: “The Wonderful Cross”

“Mighty to Save”

Everyone needs compassion
love that’s never failing,
let mercy fall on me
Everyone needs forgiveness
The kindness of a Savior,

the hope of nations.

Savior, He can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save.
He is mighty to save.
Forever, author of Salvation

He rose and conquered the grave.
Jesus conquered the grave.

So take me as You find me
all my fears and failures.
Fill my life again.
I give my life to follow
everything I believe in.
Now I surrender

Savior, He can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save.
He is mighty to save.
Forever, author of Salvation
He rose and conquered the grave.
Jesus conquered the grave.

Shine Your light and let the whole world see
We're singing
for the glory of the risen King, Jesus
Shine Your light and let the whole world see
We're singing for the glory of the risen King.

Savior, He can move the mountains
My God is mighty to save.
He is mighty to save.
Forever, author of Salvation
He rose and conquered the grave.
Jesus conquered the grave.

“Create in Me”

Create in me a clean heart, O God
That I might serve You
Create in me a clean heart O God
That I might be renewed.
So fill me and heal me,
and bring me back to You.
Create in me a clean heart, O God
That I might serve You.

“Amazing Grace/My Chains Are Gone”

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost, but now I'm found
Was blind, but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

[Chorus]

**My chains are gone, I've been set free
My God, my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love Amazing grace**

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

[Chorus]

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God who called me here below
Will be forever mine, will be forever mine
You are forever mine

“The Wonderful Cross”

When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died
My richest gain I count but loss
And pour contempt on all my pride

**[Chorus] O the wonderful cross,
O the wonderful cross
Bids me come and die
and find that I may truly live
O the wonderful cross,
O the wonderful cross
All who gather here
by grace draw near
and bless Your name**

See from his head, his hands, his feet
Sorrow and love flow mingled down
Did ever such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown

[Chorus]

Were the whole realm of nature mine
That were an offering far too small
Love so amazing, so divine
Demands my soul, my life, my all

[Chorus]