

The Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 22, 2020
Online Worship

We worship this morning in the name of God our Creator,
God our Savior and God the Holy Spirit.

Welcome

Amen and welcome to St. Luke's second online Sunday worship service. I hope you can feel the connection between us as we worship through the power of the Holy Spirit and with the help of the internet.

I believe that this time, as we confront the threat of the coronavirus, is a profoundly spiritual time. It is an opportunity to explore our deepest feelings about our faith and about our fears; and to act in love to help our neighbors as a testament to God's love for us and for all people.

As you worship, you'll find internet links to the songs we are using. They are varied in style from Bruce Springsteen to a small Lutheran church choir. I hope you find your favorite and enjoy the others.

Now let us draw near to God and to one another and worship!

Opening Song

"Here I Am to Worship"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qhq0kDw0E8c>

Light of the world, You stepped down into darkness,
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore you,
Hope of a life spent with You.

Chorus: So here I am to worship;
Here I am to bow down;
Here I am to say that You're my God.
And You're altogether lovely,
Altogether worthy,
Altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days, oh, so highly exalted,
Glorious in heaven above,
Humbly You came to the Earth You created,
All for love's sake became poor.

(Chorus)

**And I'll never know how much it cost
to see my sin upon that cross. (Repeat) (Chorus)**

Words and Music by Tim Hughes, @2001 Kingsway's ThankYou Music, CCLI#155874

Opening Litany Psalm 23

The LORD is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.
He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.
Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.
You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the LORD
forever.

Song

“This Little Light of Mine”

ELW #677

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R0qAYq1GVec>

**This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.**

Ev'ry where I go, I'm gonna let it shine,
Ev'ry where I go, I'm gonna let it shine,
Ev'ry where I go, I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Jesus gave it to me, I'm gonna let it shine,
Jesus gave it to me, I'm gonna let it shine,
Jesus gave it to me, I'm gonna let it shine,
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Confession and Forgiveness

(time for reflection)

Pastor: Almighty God, hear us,

**All: for if we could not come to you and confess,
the burden of our sin would crush us.**

We want to live as your disciples, yet we realize that we can never be perfect.

We fail to trust you and too often go our own way.

We still struggle to learn how to love and how to forgive.

**We memorize the 10 Commandments but act as if they are merely a list of
suggestions written only for people in an ancient time and place.**

Awaken us to our sin and lead us to walk with you.

Forgive us God. We love you.

Amen.

Pastor: Through God's great love and mercy our sins are forgiven, and our spirits are renewed. Go in peace---you are Christ's new creation.

All: Amen. Thanks be to God.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHXdMEIriqE>

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found;
Was blind but now I see. (John 9:25)

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

Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.

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

When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Prayer of the Day

Pastor: Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Jesus, and continue to live among us.

All: By your gracious life and death, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, so we may share your glorious light with the world that can't see your truth. Anoint us with your Spirit, giving us calm, patience and courage for the living of these days. Amen.

The Word

1 Samuel 16:1-13

(King Saul had disobeyed God's command and instead did what the people of Israel wanted him to do. God was angry and told the prophet Samuel that Saul was no longer to be King.)

Now the Lord said to Samuel, "You have mourned long enough for Saul. I have rejected him as king of Israel, so fill your flask with olive oil and go to Bethlehem. Find a man named Jesse who lives there, for I have selected one of his sons to be my king."

But Samuel asked, "How can I do that? If Saul hears about it, he will kill me." "Take a heifer with you," the Lord replied, "and say that you have come to make a sacrifice to the Lord. Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you which of his sons to anoint for me." So Samuel did as the Lord instructed. When he arrived at Bethlehem, the elders of the town came trembling to meet him. "What's wrong?" they asked. "Do you come in peace?"

"Yes," Samuel replied. "I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Purify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." Then Samuel performed the purification rite for Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice, too.

When they arrived, Samuel took one look at Eliab and thought, "Surely this is the Lord's anointed!"

But the Lord said to Samuel, "Don't judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. **The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**"

Then Jesse told his son Abinadab to step forward and walk in front of Samuel. But Samuel said, "This is not the one the Lord has chosen." Next Jesse summoned Shimea, but Samuel said, "Neither is this the one the Lord has chosen." In the same way all seven of Jesse's sons were presented to Samuel. But Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Then Samuel asked, "Are these all the sons you have?"

"There is still the youngest," Jesse replied. "But he's out in the fields watching the sheep and goats."

"Send for him at once," Samuel said. "We will not sit down to eat until he arrives."

So Jesse sent for him. He was dark and handsome, with beautiful eyes.

And the Lord said, "This is the one; anoint him."

So as David stood there among his brothers, Samuel took the flask of olive oil he had brought and anointed David with the oil. And the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David from that day on. Then Samuel returned to Ramah.

Ephesians 5:8-14

⁸ For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true.

Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said,

“Awake, O sleeper,
rise up from the dead,
and Christ will give you light.”

John 9

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth. “Rabbi,” his disciples asked him, “why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents’ sins?”

“It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man’s eyes. He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “sent”). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

His neighbors and others who knew him as a blind beggar asked each other, “Isn’t this the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹ Some said he was, and others said, “No, he just looks like him!”

But the beggar kept saying, “Yes, I am the same one!”

They asked, “Who healed you? What happened?”

¹¹ He told them, “The man they call Jesus made mud and spread it over my eyes and told me, ‘Go to the pool of Siloam and wash yourself.’ So I went and washed, and now I can see!”

“Where is he now?” they asked.

“I don’t know,” he replied.

Then they took the man who had been blind to the Pharisees, because it was on the Sabbath that Jesus had made the mud and healed him. The Pharisees asked the man all about it. So he told them, “He put the mud over my eyes, and when I washed it away, I could see!”

¹⁶ Some of the Pharisees said, “This man Jesus is not from God, for he is working on the Sabbath.” Others said, “But how could an ordinary sinner do such miraculous signs?” So there was a deep division of opinion among them.

Then the Pharisees again questioned the man who had been blind and demanded, “What’s your opinion about this man who healed you?”

The man replied, “I think he must be a prophet.”

¹⁸ The Jewish leaders still refused to believe the man had been blind and could now see, so they called in his parents. They asked them, “Is this your son? Was he born blind? If so, how can he now see?”

²⁰ His parents replied, “We know this is our son and that he was born blind, ²¹ but we don’t know how he can see or who healed him. Ask him. He is old enough to speak for himself.” His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who had announced that anyone saying Jesus was the Messiah would be expelled from the synagogue. That’s why they said, “He is old enough. Ask him.”

²⁴ So for the second time they called in the man who had been blind and told him, “God should get the glory for this, because we know this man Jesus is a sinner.”

“I don’t know whether he is a sinner,” the man replied. “But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!”

“But what did he do?” they asked. “How did he heal you?”

“Look!” the man exclaimed. “I told you once. Didn’t you listen? Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples, too?”

Then they cursed him and said, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! We know God spoke to Moses, but we don’t even know where this man comes from.”

³⁰ “Why, that’s very strange!” the man replied. “He healed my eyes, and yet you don’t know where he comes from? We know that God doesn’t listen to sinners, but he is ready to hear those who worship him and do his will. Ever since the world began, no one has been able to open the eyes of someone born blind. If this man were not from God, he couldn’t have done it.”

“You were born a total sinner!” they answered. “Are you trying to teach us?” And they threw him out of the synagogue.

³⁵ When Jesus heard what had happened, he found the man and asked, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”

The man answered, “Who is he, sir? I want to believe in him.”

“You have seen him,” Jesus said, “and he is speaking to you!”

“Yes, Lord, I believe!” the man said. And he worshiped Jesus.

Then Jesus told him, “I entered this world to render judgment—to give sight to the blind and to show those who think they see that they are blind.”

Some Pharisees who were standing nearby heard him and asked, “Are you saying we’re blind?”

“If you were blind, you wouldn’t be guilty,” Jesus replied. “But you remain guilty because you claim you can see.”

The Word of our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

The Sermon

Do you feel like the whole world has been turned upside down? Are you filled with questions and unsettled by the answers you hear? The world as we understand it just doesn’t make sense anymore. I trust you realize you are not alone in feeling this way.

We know at various times humanity has suffered the deaths of tens and hundreds of thousands of people from pandemics, wars and natural disasters. It’s just that it has never happened to us before! Not like this.

Right now, most of us are probably not suffering physically. Most of us can wait out this time in the comfort of our own homes. My heart goes out to people who have lost jobs or are working around the clock in essential jobs. And my admiration and prayers are with all those who are caring for people who are sick.

But even if we have no physical pain, many of us are in pain. Emotional pain can be debilitating. Our anxiety may be related to fear of illness and death, concern over jobs and the desire to graduate on time. Will we have enough left in our 401K’s that we can retire? Will things ever return to normal?

Hiding behind those very real issues is another I think is fundamental. Not just during a crisis but throughout our lives, we engage with God in a struggle over who is in control of our life. It is so very hard to let go of our plans and trust that God is in control! In tough times we sometimes live as with a death grip on the steering wheel in case our life goes off the road, crashes and all is lost.

Throughout the Bible God’s people have tried, with disastrous results, to deny God’s supreme authority. We humans think we have a better idea, a better way to handle our problems since we really understand what is at stake. Perhaps God should just step out of the way and let us handle it.

This kind of thinking is addressed in the very First Commandment, “You must have no other gods besides Me.” Don’t look to other “gods” to fix your problems, whether it be a doctor, a politician or your financial advisor. When we are frightened, God might appear too distant and uninvolved, so we can be tempted to put our trust in many gods.

God answers these fears: “Be not afraid. I am with you always!” Certainly we use the expertise and wisdom of others, but with faith in God, we do not have to become anxious or panic about the outcomes.

We are so very blessed to know we are God’s beloved children. You can hear and feel a difference in a Christian’s response to fear. 1 Thessalonians 4:13,18 reflect the power of our trust and therefore, our hope.

“You do not [grieve] like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. We will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage one another.” (paraphrased)

Not only do Christians not grieve like others, but we do not worry, we do not panic as do those who do not know Jesus. Through our faith we are able to deal with our isolation and loneliness, our fear, our disappointment.

What can we learn from John’s Gospel today that provides increased understanding for us during this stressful period? Jesus healed a man who had been blind since birth.

If history repeats itself, people will be asking those sick with the coronavirus how they got sick, how did they come in contact with Covid-19. Often these “how” questions are looking for an answer that will take the questioner off the list of potential victims. Such as “Did you ride the bus to go shopping?” If the answer is yes, then that person doesn’t have to worry because he/she followed directions and did what we were supposed to do. But misfortune doesn’t work that way.

Jesus answers a similar question put to him by his disciples: “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind.” Jesus answered, “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s work might be revealed through him.” v 2-3 God does not cause sickness, but when it occurs God works through the situation with signs that point to the light of God.

“We know that all things work together for good for those who love God.” *Romans 8:28*

The man who received sight from Jesus had never encountered him before. He gives his testimony several times to those wondering who it was who healed him. So in his story he identified Jesus not by name, but through the signs that he performed. This is similar to the

Samaritan woman Jesus encountered at a well. She too did not identify Jesus by name but by what he had done.

“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!” *John 4:29*

We too, often give our most effective testimony without even using Jesus’ name. Instead, people see the signs. Signs of love which include our acting to protect our neighbors (self-distancing so others do not get sick); our actions to provide for our neighbors (by not hoarding or scamming); and times when we offer words of encouragement and hope to others. Sometimes the sign is simply the peace that simply exudes from us.

We can only see these signs of power and love through the light of Jesus. His light shines for us most brightly when we realize we are not the ones in control. Even, especially, when the world seems upside down, we have only to turn to Jesus with trust and faith. And we are changed.

Amen.

Prayers of the People

Pastor: We are led by the Holy Spirit to pray for the church, for our Creator’s universe, and for all who need special blessings.

Great and mighty God,
When we feel uncertain and fearful help us to remember all the times you have proven that we can trust in your goodness. As the coronavirus pandemic threatens to not just disrupt our lives but to bring sickness and death to many, curb our fears and turn us so we look to you for strength and guidance.

Give strength and compassion to medical personnel who diagnose and treat those who become sick; give wisdom and insight to those in charge of planning how best to deal with this new problem; calm those who are filled with worry and dread.

We pray for people who face economic hardships during this crisis. We pray for family members separated by being quarantined.

Bless your church and this congregation. Make us examples of your call to serve our neighbors. Show us what to do in these uncertain times. Keep us faithful to you, and to our brothers and sisters, in our time of separation.

Those in need of physical, mental or emotional healing: June Smithson, Kevin Grace, Susan McGuire, Jim Buras, Renato Magturo, Susan Dougherty, Anne O'Connell, Barry & Bonnie Long, Rose & Bill Wimer, Emma Metzger, Carl Long, Barbara Lewis, Laura Murias, Marian Mathur, Ronnie Long, Amanda Boyd, Pat Edwards, Tim Sanner, Tim Steltenpohl

Other Needs: Kevin Grace

Those who mourn: The family and friends of Bill Kettering; the family of Sherry Mills, stepdaughter of Erika Davis; Beth & Gregg Molek, Tony & Narrie Magturo; and the family and friends of Anne Speicher, Tony Hill and Bud Johnson

(Please add your own prayers)

For all these things we pray, and for all the things you know we need, we trust to your mercy and grace. We pray in the name of Jesus the Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The 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.

Benediction

May the Lord bless us and keep us,

May the Lord guide our steps throughout this week,

May the Lord give us faith, hope and peace

And may we share the love of God with our neighbors.

Amen.

Closing Song

"Shine, Jesus, Shine"

ELW #67

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uaTwx0ehbvM>

Refrain: Shine, Jesus, shine,

Fill this land with the Father's glory;

Blaze, Spirit, blaze,

Set our hearts on fire.

**Flow, river, flow,
Flood the nations with grace and mercy;
Send forth your Word, Lord,
And let there be light!**

**Lord, the light of your love is shining,
In the midst of the darkness shining;
Jesus, light of the world, shine upon us,
Set us free by the truth you now bring us.
Shine on me, shine on me:
(refrain)**

**As we gaze on your kingly brightness,
So our faces display your likeness,
Ever changing from glory to glory,
Mirrored here, may our lives tell your story.
Shine on me, shine on me:
(refrain)**

AMEN