

Order of Worship for March 7, 2021_

Welcome

Sermon | *Children are invited to come forward*

Gathering Hymn ELW # 324 In the Cross of Christ I Glory (*Sing in your hearts or quietly hum*)

1 In the cross of Christ I glory, tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time. All the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.	2 When the woes of life o'ertake me, hopes deceive, and fears annoy, never shall the cross forsake me; lo, it glows with peace and joy.
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Confession/Forgiveness

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the whole world has been brought within the reach of God's saving embrace. Therefore, we must let go of the old life and take hold of the new life.

Holy and life-giving God, we confess our failure to love you as we should. You created us in your image, you breathed life into us and gave us all things, but we have turned from you. We do not love you. We worship shrines made from human hands – wealth, possessions, and fame – and we fail to follow your command to love our neighbor as ourselves. Hear us and forgive us. Pour upon us the Spirit of truth that we may abide in your love, now and forever.

Do not fear what others fear, and do not be intimidated. Believe in the good news. In Jesus Christ, we are forgiven.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First reading: Exodus 20:1-17

¹God spoke all these words:

²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me.

⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and

consecrated it.

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³You shall not murder.

¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵You shall not steal.

¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel reading: John 2:13-22

The gospel according to _____. **Glory to you, O Lord**

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. ¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" ¹⁹Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." ²⁰The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken. The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon II

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.

Last week, I read an article about the strangest laws on the books in this country and I must say that the content lived up to what was advertised. For example, did you know that it's illegal to walk around with an ice cream cone in your pocket in the state of Georgia? Also, you can't label something as a pickle unless it can bounce in the state of Connecticut. Finally, and perhaps my favorite one from the article, apparently in the state of Arkansas it's illegal to honk a car horn in front of a restaurant after 9 pm. Well even though there's nothing in the bible about car horns or pickles or ice cream cones, it also contains what may seem like some strange laws or commands.

Of the biblical laws, the most famous are the Ten Commandments which God gave to the Israelites in our first reading from Exodus this morning. I'm sure that many of you remember the story of the Israelites and how God freed them from the life of slavery they suffered under for many years in Egypt. Our reading is happening right after they were liberated and they're now in the process of becoming God's people, but they're not there yet, right now they're still a young faith community trying to find their identity. At this point in the history of this community, God gives them these 10 instructions not as some set of arbitrary rules they have to follow, but rather as sort of a guide that will help them become the community God created them to be by strengthening their relationship with God and by strengthening their relationships with the rest of God's creation. You see, what really matters to God is the well-being of all of humanity and following the Ten Commandments helps ensure people's well-being. Jesus later affirmed this when in the New Testament when he

summarized all the commandments in scripture in just 2 simple sentences, "love the Lord your God with all of your heart and all your soul and all your mind. And love your neighbor as yourself". That's really the whole purpose behind every law in the bible just like how many of the laws humans have made were created to ensure humanity's well-being as well. That article I read about the strangest laws in this country showed that same point by also describing the history that led to the creation of some of those laws. For instance, the reason you can't walk around with an ice cream cone in your pocket is because that's how people used to steal horses, they'd go to the store buy some ice cream and put it in their back pockets and walk up to a horse who'd bend down to start eating the ice cream and the person would then start slowly walking away with the horse following behind continuing to eat the ice cream cone and no one else would realize what was happening until it was too late. Also the reason pickles have to bounce is because vendors used to sell bad produce and the customers wouldn't know it until after they'd taken it home and it was too late, so to prevent that from happening again the state created these specifications for what could be labeled as produce.

When you get down to it, the Ten Commandments really show how we're intrinsically linked with God and with all of humanity. Even the way the commands themselves are written show those connections; "I am **your God**, you shall have no gods before **me**", and "**you** shall not bear false witness against **your neighbor**." The language is all me and you and neighbor, echoing this tie between God and God's people. Martin Luther himself also wrote about this important aspect of the Ten Commandments in something else some of you may have had to memorize back in Confirmation class, *The Small Catechism*. You might remember how Luther explains that each commandment is about more than just refraining from certain behaviors, they're also about looking out for our neighbor's needs which are threatened by the behaviors prohibited in the commandments. For example, most people that I've talked to are fairly certain that they've never broken the fifth commandment; "you shall not murder", but then when we look at Luther's explanation to the fifth commandment, we discover that it's about so much more than just not killing. Luther wrote that this commandment means, "We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm the lives of our neighbors, but instead **help and support them in all of life's needs**". So, in other words, following the fifth commandments means doing everything in our power to ensure that every human being can live a healthy and happy life because of the deep bond we share, and whenever one of us is suffering it throws that bond off. The whole reason that the Ten Commandments exist is to ensure that doesn't happen. You see ultimately, I don't think God really cares that much about how well we can recite the Ten Commandments or how good we have them memorized, I think God only cares about how well these commandments and the intentions behind them are lived out people's lives. We're called to walk the walk as the saying goes, and returning to the summery Jesus offered that means trusting in God and caring for God's creation. So friends, what might that look like today? How does putting our faith in God above everything else and loving our neighbors as ourselves take shape in the here and the now? Let us find the answers to these questions, by living out the ten commencements and the intensions behind them. So now may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen.

Hymn of the Day ELW p.151 Return to the Lord (*Sing in your hearts or quietly hum*)

Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful,
Slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Apostles' Creed

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

Prayers of Intercession

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

A brief silence.

There is no God before you. Purify the faith of your church, that your people place their trust in nothing beside you. Your name is holy. Guide your church, that in every situation your people's words and actions honor your name. God of life, **hear our prayer.**

The heavens declare your glory. Renew your creation. Provide leaders in the struggle for clean air and water; protect creatures and crops that rely on healthy ecosystems; give all people the willingness to repent when our way of life pollutes the earth and skies. God of life, **hear our prayer.**

Your foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Fill leaders with the foolishness of your peace and mercy. Your law defends the vulnerable. Work through legislators, judicial systems, and systems of law enforcement to protect the wellbeing and freedom of all (*especially*). God of life, **hear our prayer.**

Your weakness is stronger than human strength. Protect those who are vulnerable and give courage to all who are suffering (*especially*). Defend victims of crime and bring redemption to those who have harmed others. Give Sabbath rest to all who labor. God of life, **hear our prayer.**

You call us to proclaim Christ crucified. Give clarity to this congregation and our leaders, so that we might follow Christ beyond our own habits and comfort. Clear out anything in our common life that would obscure the gospel or that serves our own interests. God of life, **hear our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

The cross of Christ is your power for all who are being saved. Thank you for (*Perpetua, Felicity, and*) all the martyrs whose witness reveals the power of the cross. Give us the same trust in life and in death. God of life, **hear our prayer.**

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

Offering Prayer *You may hold out your offering.*

Almighty God, **who made us who we are, we offer all of ourselves to You. Take our talents, our energy and our joy, and use us to share Your love. Take our mistakes, our regrets and our pain, and use us to bring Your healing. Magnify the gifts we offer before You today, to spread Your peace in the world. Amen.**

Announcements

Sharing of the Peace *Children are invited to help from their seating area. You may stand, but we ask that you stay in your area, observing social distancing. Might we suggest you wave, do the 'peace sign', text, or make a sign and hold it up. If viewing the live stream, drop an emoji of a wave, the 'peace sign', or make a sign and post it in the comments! Be creative!*

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **And also with you!**

Words of Institution

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:

Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and 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 sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

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.**

Meal of Holy Communion

Prayer after Communion

Compassionate God, **you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Sustain us in our Lenten**

pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Blessing

Go forth into the world to serve God; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. **Thanks be to God.**

Sending hymn ELW # 652 Built on a Rock *(Sing in your hearts or quietly hum)*

1 Built on a rock the church shall stand,
even when steeples are falling;
crumbled have spires in ev'ry land,
bells still are chiming and calling—
calling the young and old to rest,
calling the souls of those distressed,
longing for life everlasting

3 Christ builds a house of living stones:
we are his own habitation;
he fills our hearts, his humble thrones,
granting us life and salvation.
Where two or three will seek his face,
he in their midst will show his grace,
blessings upon them bestowing.

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Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

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Offering prayer: reWorship.blogspot.com submitted by Gill LeFevre