

The Lutheran Church of the Covenant
“Reaching Out, Reflecting Christ, Renewing Lives”

***God, bless the labor
we bring to serve you,
that with our
neighbor we may be fed.***

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 7, 2021



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



We welcome you to worship here at the Lutheran Church of the Covenant! We continue to do our best in providing the safest environment possible for you to worship our Risen Lord with your whole heart, even during these COVID-19 times. Here are the precautions we are taking on behalf of our whole community of faith, so that we best care for one another and those we are around during the week.

- We ask you wear a mask the entire time you are in the building, unless you have a medical condition preventing you from doing so.
- Bulletins and individual Communion elements are available for you to pick up as you enter from the back of the sanctuary. The Communion elements are available in wine and grape juice form as well as wheat and gluten-free wafers. We will partake of the body and blood of Christ together from our respective seats.
- There will not be a separate time for an offering to be collected for supporting our congregational and wider-church ministry, and so an offering basket is placed beside the bulletins and Communion elements, for those who wish to give this day.
- We are asking you to refrain from singing, as we do our best to minimize the spread of droplets and aerosols around our masks. You may do so in your heart, where we believe God hears just as well as if spoken or sung aloud. We, also, ask that you continue participate throughout the worship by speaking the **bold** print, but doing so in a whisper voice.
- There will not be a time for sharing of the peace, but we encourage you to do so with one another before or after the worship (while maintaining the physical distancing recommendations of six feet).
- There will not be a processional or recessional of the cross, nor will there be a receiving line with the pastor after the worship. If you wish to speak for Pastor Brad, for any reason, please do not hesitate to contact him through email, text or calling him directly.

We thank you for your patience and understanding as we will always err on the side of caution while knowing that we can still transmit the virus even with the full vaccination.

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

In Isaiah the one God who sits above the earth and numbers the stars also strengthens the powerless. So in Jesus' healing work we see the hand of the creator God, lifting up the sick woman to health and service (diakonia). Like Simon's mother-in-law, we are lifted up and healed to serve. Following Jesus, we strengthen the powerless; like Jesus, we seek to renew our own strength in quiet times of prayer.

Prelude *O Christ, the Healer, We Have Come* (MARTIN)

*Confession & Forgiveness

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as we take time to recognize our shortcomings, while also remembering God's relentless grace.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
whose voice is upon the waters,
whose mercy is poured out upon all people,
whose goodness cascades over all creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the abundant grace of God.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Holy God,
you search us and know us.
You are acquainted with all our ways.
We confess that our hearts are burdened by sin—
our own sins and the broken systems that bind us.
We turn inward, failing to follow
your outward way of love.
We distrust those who are not like us.
We exploit the earth and its resources
and fail to consider generations to come.
Forgive us, gracious God,
for all we have done and left undone.
Even before the words are on our tongues,
you know them;
receive them in your divine mercy. **Amen.**

How vast is God's grace!
Through the power and promise of † Christ Jesus,
our sins are washed away
and we are claimed as God's own beloved.
Indeed, we are forgiven.
In the wake of God's forgiveness,
we are called to be the beloved community
living out Christ's justice
and the Holy Spirit's reconciling peace. **Amen.**

Gathering Hymn *Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing*

#886

Text: Charles Wesley, 1707-1788, alt.

- 1 Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
my great Redeemer's praise,
the glories of my God and King,
the triumphs of his grace!
- 2 My gracious Master and my God,
assist me to proclaim,
to spread through all the earth abroad
the honors of your name.
- 3 The name of Jesus charms our fears
and bids our sorrows cease,
sings music in the sinner's ears,
brings life and health and peace.
- 4 He speaks, and list'ning to his voice,
new life the dead receive;
the mournful, broken hearts rejoice,
the humble poor believe.
- 5 Look unto him, your Savior own,
O fallen human race!
Look and be saved through faith alone,
be justified by grace!

6 To God all glory, praise, and love
be now and ever giv'n
by saints below and saints above,
the church in earth and heav'n.

Prayer of the Day

Everlasting God, you give strength to the weak and power to the faint. Make us agents of your healing and wholeness, that your good news may be made known to the ends of your creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Lesson

Isaiah 40:21-31

The Judeans in exile have a good reason to be hopeful: the one who will bring them to freedom is the God who created the world, the God who subdues the rulers of the earth and gives strength to those who are weary.

²¹Have you not known? Have you not heard?
Has it not been told you from the beginning?
Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

²²It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,
and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;
who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,
and spreads them like a tent to live in;

²³who brings princes to naught,
and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

²⁴Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,
scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,
when he blows upon them, and they wither,
and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵To whom then will you compare me,
or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see:
Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them,
calling them all by name;
because he is great in strength,
mighty in power,
not one is missing.

²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,

“My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God”?

²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.

He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.

²⁹He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.

³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;

³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm

Psalm 147:1-11, 20c

¹Hallelujah! How good it is to sing praises to our God!
How pleasant it is to honor God with praise!

²The LORD rebuilds Jerusalem,
and gathers the exiles of Israel.

³The LORD heals the brokenhearted
and binds up their wounds.

⁴The LORD counts the number of the stars
and calls them all by their names.

⁵Great is our LORD and mighty in power;
there is no limit to God's wisdom.

⁶The LORD lifts up the lowly,
but casts the wicked to the ground.
⁷Sing to the LORD with thanksgiving;
make music upon the harp to our God,
⁸who covers the heavens with clouds
and prepares rain for the earth, making grass to grow upon the mountains.
⁹God provides food for the cattle
and for the young ravens when they cry.
¹⁰God is not impressed by the might of a horse,
and has no pleasure in the speed of a runner,
¹¹but finds pleasure in those who fear the LORD,
in those who await God's steadfast love. ^{20c}Hallelujah!

Second Lesson

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

God entrusted Paul with the responsibility of bringing the gospel to diverse people. Hence the focus of Paul's ministry is not his own rights or privileges as an apostle but the privilege of serving God by freely sharing the good news of Christ with others.

¹⁶If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe to me if I do not proclaim the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward; but if not of my own will, I am entrusted with a commission. ¹⁸What then is my reward? Just this: that in my proclamation I may make the gospel free of charge, so as not to make full use of my rights in the gospel.
¹⁹For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. ²⁰To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. ²¹To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law) so that I might win those outside the law. ²²To the weak I became weak, so that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. ²³I do it all for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

*Gospel

Mark 1:29-39

Everywhere Jesus goes, many people expect him to set them free from oppression. Everywhere he goes, he heals people and sets them free. Disease, devils, and death are running for their lives. The forces that diminish human life are rendered powerless by Jesus.

²⁹As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, "Everyone is searching for you." ³⁸He answered, "Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do." ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

This is the holy Gospel of our Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Hymn of the Day *Praise and Thanksgiving*

#689

Text: Albert F. Bayly, 1901-1984, alt.

- 1 Praise and thanksgiving, God, we would offer
for all things living, you have made good:
harvest of sown fields, fruits of the orchard,
hay from the mown fields, blossom and wood.
- 2 God, bless the labor we bring to serve you,
that with our neighbor we may be fed.
Sowing or tilling, we would work with you,
harvesting, milling for daily bread.

- 3 Father, providing food for your children,
by Wisdom's guiding teach us to share
one with another, so that, rejoicing
with us, all others may know your care.
- 4 Then will your blessing reach ev'ry people,
freely confessing your gracious hand.
Where you are reigning, no one will hunger;
your love sustaining showers the land.

**Prayers of Intercession*

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

A brief silence.

Holy God, empower your wider church: from our Covenant family and throughout the world. Strengthen ministries of healing and wholeness, for hospital, hospice, and military chaplains, for those serving in prison ministry, for all who proclaim freedom and release in the name of Christ. Hear us, O God, **for your mercy is great.**

Creating God, tend to the insects in the grass, clouds on the mountaintops, cattle and the rainwater they drink; and the humility to take our place among all creatures of the earth. Hear us, O God, **for your mercy is great.**

God of all nations, give wisdom to all who lead in cities and towns, states and countries; for community organizers, and school officials; for international health organizations, that in times of trial, fear, or hopelessness, they find freedom in service to those most in need. Hear us, O God, **for your mercy is great.**

Compassionate God, we lift up all who are wearied by life's burdens: for those who are poor, for those lacking supportive relationships, for those crushed by debt, for those struggling with chronic pain or other sickness, for those exhausted from overwork or stress, and for all who cry out to you. Hear us, O God, **for your mercy is great.**

Eternal God, we give you thanks for the faithful departed, who were called by name and now rest from their labors. Help us to remember their lives as witnesses to your bountiful goodness. Hear us, O God, **for your mercy is great.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

*Thanksgiving at the Table

Blessed are you, O holy God:
you are the Life and Light of all.
By your powerful word you created all things.
Through the prophets you called your people to be a light to the nations.

Blessed are you for Jesus, your Son.
He is your Light, shining in our darkness
and revealing to us your mercy and might.

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.

Remembering, therefore,
his preaching and healing,
his dying and rising,
and his promise to come again,
we await that day when all the universe
will rejoice in your holy and life-giving light.

Bless us and this meal,
that, refreshed with this heavenly food,
we may be light for the world,
revealing the brilliance of your Son.

Through him all glory and honor is yours,
Almighty Father, with the Holy Spirit,
both now and forever. **Amen.**

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

Communion

Music Interlude *On Eagle's Wings* (WAGNER)

You may use this time to offer your own personal prayers to God.

Prayer after Communion

Christ Jesus,
from this table we have feasted on your very life
and are strengthened for our journey.
Send us forth from this banquet
nourished in body and in spirit
to proclaim your good news
and serve others in your name. **Amen.**

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you;
Jesus the beloved fill you;
and the Holy Spirit the comforter † keep you in peace.
Amen.

Sending Hymn *I Love to Tell the Story*

#661

Text: Katherine Hankey, 1834-1911

1 I love to tell the story
of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory,
of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story,
because I know it's true;
it satisfies my longings
as nothing else would do.

Refrain

I love to tell the story;
'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story
of Jesus and his love.

2 I love to tell the story:
how pleasant to repeat
what seems, each time I tell it,
more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story,
for some have never heard
the message of salvation
from God's own holy word. *Refrain*

3 I love to tell the story,
for those who know it best
seem hungering and thirsting
to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory,
I sing the new, new song,
I'll sing the old, old story
that I have loved so long. *Refrain*

Dismissal

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ!

Thanks be to God.

Postlude *Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing* (SHACKLEY)

Praying Together

... for those who are homebound, ill, hospitalized or recuperating: Gayle Agg, Bob Buettner, Alexis Carr, Joan Clarke, John Crawford, Nicole Crawford, Barbara Fossa, Carolyn Frajter, Ken Frajter, Nealie Gage, Barb Gaglione, Michelle Garnett, Rosa Garnett, Judy Jones, Dylan King, Jason Lanese, Andrea Lanzalaca, Sara Mendes, Phyllis Nemeth, Bernice Novak, Don Rusher Jr., Claudia Senderak, Arlene Stoltz, Marie Storms, Tim Susanek, Tom Susanek, Phyllis Treichel, Phyllis Welker, Linda Wright, Wilma Dancy, Bill Helmick, Nancy Helmick, Robert Lambrecht, Kim (Novak) Leonhardt, Laura Mele, Judy Morgan, Kris Sandor, Bill Wilkens, Eugene Winfrey, the Copeland/Lane Family

LAST WEEK

General Fund receipts for week ending 1/31/2021: \$1329

To the glory of God and in loving memory of Don Schirmer: memorials were given by Alex & Paula Hohenstein, Gerald & Frances Thomas, Suzanne Bohning and Bonita Bock



Given that it would be best for both our congregations not to gather in the same location, in minimizing size of crowds while the vaccines continue to be rolled out, we will worship together virtually with our siblings in Christ of Church of the Master. We will do so through YouTube videos, including for Ash Wednesday. Ashes will be available to be picked up here at Covenant beforehand.

Lectionary Blog: Jesus Came to Preach

At first glance, this week's passages could not be more different in terms of God and Jesus' publicity. The Isaiah passage asks again and again: "Do you not know? Have you not seen? Has it not been told to you from the beginning? Have you not understood since the founding of the earth? Have you not heard? (Isaiah 40:21, 28). Readers of Isaiah are challenged about why they have not understood what God has done.

This week's reading from Mark, however, furthers the idea of the Messianic secret. The secrecy in this passage is similar to last week's Gospel lesson where Jesus drove out an unclean spirit in the synagogue at Capernaum. In Mark 1:29-34, we learn that Jesus drove out demons at the door of Peter's mother-in-law's house but would not let them speak "because they knew who he was" (34). In this Gospel lesson, Jesus tried to keep who he is a secret, at least at first.

A few weeks ago, we read Luke's account of the witnesses of Hannah and Simeon as they proclaimed Jesus in the temple. Those stories from Jesus' childhood aren't part of Mark's witness. Jesus' status as the messiah was a secret, but only from humans. At his baptism, God identified the beloved Son. Although the demons who were being driven out knew who Jesus was, he didn't want them to tell. Why? I think Jesus wanted to keep people focused on his mission rather than on his titles.

When we look back at the Isaiah passage, God's work is described in three main categories. God creates and stretches out the heavens (22, 26 and 28). God acts against princes and rulers of this world and brings them to nothing (23, 24 and 25). And, finally, God strengthens the weary and increases the power of the weak (29-31). These signs should be manifest to anyone observing the world, according to Isaiah's thinking. No matter how arrogant or prideful, the tyrant grasp on power crumbles. The poor and weak somehow have the strength to carry on, even in the midst of systemic oppression. Most tellingly, for Isaiah, the created world continues to exist. This is all due to the active intervention of God.

The work of Jesus in Mark is not as grandiose, initially. After gaining notoriety around Capernaum, such that everyone was looking for him (37), Jesus suggested going somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so that he could preach (38). The first disciples must have been perplexed at this. Healing and driving out demons were bringing tremendous crowds and fame to Jesus. Isn't this a successful ministry: fame and growing

numbers of people attending? Not only would Jesus not let the demons testify to the people that he was the messiah, but he also refused to stay in one place and become a popular miracle worker. Jesus said explicitly that *preaching* was the reason that he came (Mark 1:38).

Ask most Christians “Why Jesus?” and you will receive many different answers, but probably most will focus on his salvific work on the cross. But in the Gospel of Mark, Jesus plainly stated that his reason for coming was to preach. Being too famous, or letting people know who he was too early in his ministry, would have distracted from what he actually came to do: proclaim how the kingdom of God is at hand.

In the days before Covid-19 (and hopefully after!), when a band released a new album and went on tour to promote it, most fans just wanted to hear the old classics that made the group famous. Jesus was wary that he would become famous for working miracles or even being the promised messiah, and that no one would be interested in hearing his reinterpretation of the law and his new teachings. So he shunned the spotlight and didn’t proclaim who he was at first, at least according to Mark. I wonder if, today, our Christology and soteriology prevent us sometimes from really hearing and taking seriously what Jesus said.

To be sure, Jesus didn’t refuse to heal people or perform miracles. He did that wherever he went. But Jesus kept his focus on the real reason that he came: teaching about the kingdom of heaven that was breaking into the world in a radically new way. The challenge for us, then, is to take Jesus at his word—that the reason he came was to teach. Scripture is a rich library, and there are many different perspectives on Jesus’ life. This multivocal witness is a treasure, and we do well to embrace it. So let us, this year at least, sit with Mark’s Gospel and consider Jesus’ words in the red letters as *the* reason for his coming.

This, and other resources for the journey of faith, available at LivingLutheran.org.



Cory Driver is a minister of word and service, and the director of the Transformational Leadership Academy in the Indiana-Kentucky Synod. He earned his doctorate in Jewish religious cultures from Emory University, Atlanta. Cory lives with his family in Indianapolis.

Farm Life

Word Search Puzzle



H T R A C T O R J X H A R V E S T
O O Z N M W E B N P A S T U R E F
R Z C N L H L I V E S T O C K F R
S C A R E C R O W P B S M N Q A E
E S P H N A N M O Q D Z U L S R S
B P A A A M P R Q L R N H X N M H
A B I D U Y C E E M T R O U G H E
R C A P D F L I R O O S T E R O G
N O H R S L F O C A T T L E B U G
R U P O N N E L F U L D R U Y S S
E N P Y R C W L S T X H M T T E K
K T S O H E A W H H C P S E C R F
O R C A G F S T L I K T L S P A D
B Y L R L O P G C G Y G N H V B K
W H E A T K A J C H I C K E N S M
R M C Z L R C T L P Z G P E R S R
V R W M X U R T S S M T R P O E V



ALFALFA	FARMHOUSE	PIGLETS
BARN CAT	FRESH EGGS	ROOSTER
CATTLE	GOATS	SADDLE
CHICKENS	HARVEST	SCARECROW
CHORES	HAYLOFT	SHEEP
CORN FIELDS	HORSE BARN	TRACTOR
COUNTRY	LIVESTOCK	TROUGH
CROPS	PASTURE	WHEAT