**Worship Plan for Sunday, March 23, 2025** **\* Third Sunday in Lent**

**Introduction to the day**

The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God’s invitation to attentiveness: “Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live.” The landowner’s ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener’s readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

**GOSPEL MESSAGE: We Have Choices**

We have choices, right? Obviously. There’s little question about that; it’s a fact. Many of these choices are piled and piling up in the lockboxes of our upbringing and experiences, of our moral certainties, religious convictions, political opinions, or economic maneuverings. We make choices about our educational endeavors, vocational callings, use of our days and years, relationship commitments, dietary habits, travel destinations, color coordination, hairstyles, sexual behaviors, EV or gas, whole or skim, movie or book. All these choices—be they monumental or minuscule, automatic or sleep-depriving, public or private, frivolous or practical, courageous or cowardly—we shuffle, sort, and seal in one envelope or another: one labeled right and one marked wrong, the good envelope and the bad envelope.

Our choices mostly happen like that until for some reason, hard telling what reason, our certainties are disturbed and our absolutes begin to rattle like loose bolts under the frame of an old truck on a potholed road. It’s what happens when, by mistake or under force, good or bad luck, we discover that broccoli isn’t disgusting, snakes aren’t slimy, the earth isn’t flat, men may love men, more might not be better, aliens need not be strangers, and God’s justice surely demands mercy.

Jesus started tugging at a snag of choices with a parable about a tree, a vineyard, a gardener, a saw, and manure. The tree was a no-hoper (there could be lots of reasons). With not a fig on a limb, if it had been another variety of fruit tree you’d call it a “bad apple.” The choice: saw or donkey dung. Jesus rejects the blade, chooses the excrement.

Martin Luther (liking Latin) said, “Simul justus et peccator,” meaning we are at the same time both saint and sinner. Or as Jesus put it, love those bum branches down to their roots, put your hands in the dirt, and see what fruit they bear.

**Processional**

**AM: Welcome**

Welcome to Faith Lutheran Church where grace and love abound. It’s a joy to be with you all this morning! A special welcome to those of you here for the first time, to those joining us online, and to our guest pastor, Pr. Rich Ajer. During this season of Lent, we focus on our Savior’s journey to the cross and the supreme sacrifice he made there for all of us. As we follow the path Jesus walked, we trust in God’s faithfulness and guidance - in our continued search for a permanent pastor, and in all areas of our ministry to and for God’s people. Join in as we journey to the cross together. All are welcome!

**AM: ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The altar flowers were provided by Madeline Puccio, celebrating Ken's birthday.

Our Lent Soup & Suppers are in full swing! This Wednesday and every Wednesday during Lent, join us at 5:00 for Soup and Study...be fed in body and soul! Please sign up in the Narthex, but even if you don't sign up, ALL are welcome to attend!

This Thursday, the 27th we will be celebrating the life of Dee Seel at 10:00. After the service, there will be a graveside service at Riverside National Cemetery, followed by a luncheon in the Fellowship Hall. All are welcome to attend!

Beyond Question, part of the ELCA Book of Faith series, is a transformative journey through Lent. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus uses questions to change the lives and deepen the discipleship of those who follow Him. Every Thursday evening at 7:00 P.M. throughout this Lenten Zoom series, we will open Scripture and encounter Jesus and His transformative questions. Contact Pastor Ken at hopegiver@aol.com for a list of the weekly topics and info on how to join in.

For the month of March, we are collecting canned chili, grocery bags, and empty egg cartons for the Community Cupboard. Please place donations in the wire basket in the foyer.

For more information and a complete monthly calendar, contact the church office.

**P: Silence**

Let us take a moment of silence to quiet our hearts and minds and prepare for worship.

**P: Gathering**

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

**P: Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

This is the day that the Lord has made,

**let us rejoice and be glad in it!**

**AM: Please turn to hymn 773**

Please stand as you are willing and able.

**Gathering Song:*Precious Lord, Take My Hand* (ELW 773)**

**P: Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ☩ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

**Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name.**

**Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

**P: Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

**Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.**

**Amen.**

**Children's Chat**

**P: Word**

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

**Lector: First Reading:** Isaiah 55:1-9

### 1 Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. 2 Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food. 3 Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. 4 See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. 5 See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. 6 Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; 7 let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. 8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord. 9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**AM: Psalmody:** Psalm 63:1-8

1 O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

2 **Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place, that I might behold your power and your glory.**

3 For your steadfast love is better than life itself; my lips shall give you praise.

4 **So will I bless you as long as I live and lift up my hands in your name.**

5 My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods, and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

6 **when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night watches.**

7 For you have been my helper, and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

8 **My whole being clings to you; your right hand holds me fast.**

**Amen.**

**Lector: Second Reading:** 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

1 I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, 3 and all ate the same spiritual food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. 6 Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. 7 Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play.” 8 We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. 9 We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. 10 And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. 13 No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

***Please stand for the gospel***

**Gospel Acclamation (ELW p. 151)**

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

**P: Gospel:** Luke 13:1-9

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

1 At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.2 [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. 4 Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? 5 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.” 6 Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. 7 So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ 8 He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. 9 If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’ ”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**Sermon**

**AM: Please turn to hymn 624**

Please stand as you are willing and able.

**Hymn of the Day:*Jesus, Still Lead On* (ELW 624)**

**AM: Apostle's Creed**

We continue as we confess our faith using the words of the Apostle's Creed.

**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.**

***Please be seated for the Prayers of Intercession***

**Pastor and Assisting Minister: Prayers of Intercession**

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

We pray for the church, called to be a witness to all peoples. Grant humility and wisdom to bishops, pastors, deacons, elders, councils, and congregations, that they may call upon you in making decisions. God, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

We pray for the earth, called to provide abundantly. Teach your people the goodness of your generosity, that in sharing what we have been given, all life may flourish on the planet that is our shared home. God, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

We pray for the nations, called to protect their inhabitants and collaborate in the work of justice and peace. Forge bonds of compassion and mutual care across human borders and boundaries, that all the world may have enough to live. God, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

We pray for those who are ill or in need, called to receive your compassion, especially Lynn Bennett; Arnette Calkins; Sandy Chandler; Vicki Crow; Eleanor Diaz; Doris Hays; Sarge Hunter; Patsy Loughboro; Donna McCain; Jean Miles; Sandra Miller; Thordis Moe; Carol Morris; Michael Myers; Esther Neumen; April Quinn; Marilyn Rieti; the family of Dee Seel; Amy Sinclair; Joyce Stromberg; Diana Ward; the homebound; the emergency responders; and those grieving and anticipating surgery or tests. At this time, we also pray for those we name aloud or silently in our hearts. Comfort those whose lives have been disrupted through natural disasters and human conflict. Aid communities in coming together to mourn, heal, and rebuild. God, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

We pray for this assembly, called to welcome its neighbors to the table of your grace. Bless food pantries, community gardens and kitchens, clean water projects, and all ministries that address human hunger and thirst. God, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for the faithful lives of those who proclaimed your gospel in times of challenge and strife, and for all those whose lives of love and service have ended, especially Rudy Bosinger and Dee Seel. May their witness inspire our own. God, in your mercy,

**receive our prayer.**

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.

**Amen.**

**P: Peace**

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**P: Offering**

Let us remember at this time of Offering, that all we have and all we are given are gifts from God. Our offerings of time, talent and treasures are expressions of gratitude to God for all we have received. May we show abundant gratitude.

**AM: Offering Prayer**

Let us pray.

God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

***Please feel free to either listen to our musical offering or sing along***

**Musical Offering: *Above All* (Michael Smith)**

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**P: Great Thanksgiving**

**Dialogue (ELW p. 152)**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

**P: Preface (ELW p. 153)**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

**Holy, Holy, Holy (all sing) (ELW p. 153)**

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, Lord God of pow’r and might: Heav’n and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

**P: Thanksgiving at the Table**

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all.

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 death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all honor and glory, now and forever.

**Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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.**

**P: INSTRUCTION FOR COMMUNION**

As you are comfortable, you are invited to come forward to receive communion. All of God’s children are welcome to Christ’s table.

Gather at the altar rail to receive the communion elements or if you wish to receive a blessing, please cross your arms over your chest. You may commune yourself once you’ve received the communion elements. Please commune the bread first, turn over the vessel and then carefully open the grape juice. A gluten-free option is available upon request. Please deposit empty cups in the provided baskets on your way back to your seat.

If you would like communion brought to you at your seat, indicate by raising your hand for the Assisting Minister to see and they will bring communion to you.

**P: Invitation to Communion**

Taste and see that the Lord is good.

**During Distribution: *Let Us Break Bread Together* (ELW 471)**

***We Come to the Hungry Feast* (ELW 479)**

***Eat This Bread: Jesus Christ, Bread of Life* (ELW 472)**

**P: Communion**

The body of Christ, given for you.

The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Amen.

**AM: Prayer after Communion**

Let us pray.

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.**

**P: Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ☩ give you peace.

**Amen.**

**P: Please turn to hymn 325**

Please stand as you are willing and able.

**Sending Song:*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me* (ELW 325)**

**AM: Dismissal**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**AM: Invitation**

The Church Council Members invite guests and visitors to come and meet us in the narthex as you exit so that we can meet and welcome you. All are welcome to join us in the Fellowship Hall for cookies, coffee and conversation.

**THIS WEEK AT FAITH**

Wednesday, the 26th: The Finance Team meets at 1:00; Lent Soup & Study begins at 5:00

Thursday, the 27th: Dee Seel's memorial service starts at 10:00; Pr. Ken's Zoom Lenten Bible Study begins at 7:00. Contact hopegiver@aol.com.

Friday, the 28th: Al-Anon meets at 10:30; the Transition Team meets at 1:00; The Women of Lockerbie begins at 7:00

Saturday, the 29th: The Women of Lockerbie begins at 7:00

Sunday, the 30th: Worship begins at 9:30 with Pr. Shane; The Women of Lockerbie begins at 2:00

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