

A Lenten Midweek Service
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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

WEDNESDAY IN LENT 4, March 17, 2021 Zion Ev. Lutheran Church

ORDER OF SERVICE

Lent has traditionally been a time of repentance and renewal. In the early church, this was a time of preparation and instruction for those to be baptized at the Great Vigil of Easter on Holy Saturday. Later this idea of preparation and instruction was applied to baptized Christians as well. In our Lenten observance on these Wednesday evenings, we will concentrate on the five great themes of Luther's Small Catechism for our lessons and sermons. Our service order will be centered around the Ten Commandments as our guide and light to a life in loving response to the Gospel of our Lord.

P = Presiding Minister C = Congregation

PRELUDE

INVITATION TO WORSHIP

P: Come and let us walk in the light of the Lord. And he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths.

PRAYER FOR LENT:

A: Show your servants your works, O Lord;

C: And their children your glory.

A: Let your merciful kindness be upon us,

C: As we put our trust in you.

A: Not to us, O Lord, not to us,

C: But to your name be the praise.

A: Lord, hear our prayer,
C: And let our cry come to you.

P: The Lord be with you.
C: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE WEEK

P: Let us pray.

Almighty God, through Jesus Christ you bring salvation to the world.

Give us strength to believe in him that we may share in his victory over the power of death and fulfill the purpose for which you have made us, for he dwells with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, forever and ever.

C: Amen.

EXHORTATION:

P: Brothers and sisters: We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our creator intended. As disciples of the Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from love of God and neighbour. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and works of love -- the discipline of Lent -- help us to wage our spiritual warfare.

Let us therefore turn to the Word of God this night. For the Word of God contains the Law and the Gospel and is the light before our eyes. The Gospel is God's gracious promise to us as his beloved children. It shows us all that He has done for us, in Israel and in Jesus Christ, for the forgiveness of sins and for newness of life. Christ makes us his own and heirs of his kingdom. The Law, on the other hand, represents what God expects of us in the response of our lives

as we live in loving service to his will.

**C: The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart.
The commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to our eyes.**

THE DECALOGUE:

P: God spoke these words and said: I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods,

**C: Lord have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.**

P: You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.

**C: Lord have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.**

P: Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

**C: Lord have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.**

P: Honor your father and mother.

**C: Lord have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.**

P: You shall not kill.

C: Lord have mercy upon us, and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: You shall not commit adultery.

**C: Lord have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.**

P: You shall not steal.

C: Lord have mercy upon us,

and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.

P: You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

**C: Lord have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.**

P: You shall not covet.

**C: Lord have mercy upon us,
and incline our hearts to keep this commandment.**

THE LAW OF LOVE

P: Jesus summarized the Decalogue/ The Ten Commandments into two great commandments: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it; You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets."

**C: The statutes of the Lord are just and rejoice the heart.
The commandment of the Lord is clear and gives light to our eyes.**

PRAYER OF AFFIRMATION

P: Let us pray. Gracious Lord, through water and the Spirit you have made us your own. You forgave us all our sins and brought us to newness of life. Continue to strengthen us with the Holy Spirit, and daily increase in us your gifts of grace: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord,

C: Amen

Sit

THE LESSONS

Romans 7:4-12, ⁴ ^[b] you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. ⁵ While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. ⁶ But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we are slaves not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

⁷ What then should we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet, if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet." ⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. Apart from the law sin lies dead. ⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived ¹⁰ and I died, and the very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me. ¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me. ¹² So the law is holy, and the commandment is holy and just and good.

A: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence follows each reading.

John 15:9-12

⁹ As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. ¹⁰ If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. ¹¹ I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you."

A: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

A period of silence follows each reading.

RESPONSORY:

P: Into Your Hands, O Lord, I Commend My Spirit.

C: Into Your Hands I Commend My Spirit.

P: YOU HAVE REDEEMED ME, O LORD, GOD OF TRUTH.

C: Into Your Hands I Commend My Spirit.

P: **GLORY TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON, AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

C: Into Your Hands I Commend My Spirit.

HYMN LBW 107 "BENEATH THE CROSS OF JESUS"

THE GREAT LITANY ELW #238 responsively

Please stand as you are able

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

O Christ, hear us.

In mercy hear us.

God, the Father in heaven,

have mercy on us.

God, the Son, redeemer of the world,

have mercy on us.

God, the Holy Spirit,

have mercy on us.

Holy Trinity, one God,

have mercy on us.

Be gracious to us.

Spare us, good Lord.

Be gracious to us.

Spare us, good Lord.

From all sin, from all error, from all evil;
from the cunning assaults of the devil;
from an unprepared and evil death:

Good Lord, deliver us.

From war, bloodshed, and violence;
from corrupt and unjust government;
from sedition and treason:

Good Lord, deliver us.

From epidemic, drought, and famine;
from fire and flood, earthquake, lightning, and storm;
and from everlasting death:

Good Lord, deliver us.

By the mystery of your incarnation;
by your holy birth:

Help us, good Lord.

By your baptism, fasting, and temptation;
by your agony and bloody sweat;
by your cross and suffering;
by your death and burial:

Help us, good Lord.

By your resurrection and ascension;
by the gift of the Holy Spirit:

Help us, good Lord.

In all time of our tribulation;
in all time of our prosperity;
in the hour of death; and in the day of judgment:

Save us, good Lord.

Though unworthy, we implore you
to hear us, Lord our God.

To rule and govern your holy catholic church;
to guide all servants of your church
in the love of your word and in holiness of life;
to put an end to all schisms
and causes of offense to those who would believe;
and to bring into the way of truth all who have gone astray:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To beat down Satan under our feet;
to send faithful workers into your harvest;
to accompany your word with your Spirit and power;
to raise up those who fall and to strengthen those who stand;
and to comfort and help the fainthearted and the distressed:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To give to all nations justice and peace;
to preserve our country from discord and strife;
to direct and guard those who have civil authority;
and to bless and guide all our people:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To behold and help all who are in danger, need, or tribulation;
 to protect and guide all who travel;
 to preserve and provide for all women in childbirth;
 to watch over children and to guide the young;
 to heal the sick and to strengthen their families and friends;
 to bring reconciliation to families in discord;
 to provide for the unemployed and for all in need;
 to be merciful to all who are imprisoned;
 to support, comfort, and guide all orphans, widowers, and widows;
 and to have mercy on all your people:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

To forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers,
 and to reconcile us to them;
 to help us use wisely the fruits and treasures
 of the earth, the sea, and the air;
 and graciously to hear our prayers:

We implore you to hear us, good Lord.

Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,
we implore you to hear us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world;
give us peace. Amen.

O Christ, hear us.

In mercy hear us.

Lord, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Christ, have mercy.

Lord, have mercy.
Lord, have mercy.

PRAYER

P: Let us pray. Heavenly father, you gave your only son to be a life to redeem us, an example to follow, the word for our rule, the grace for our guide, the lamb on the cross for the sins of our souls. Send your spirit to enter into us and take possession of our hearts, and dwell with us forever; through Jesus Christ, our lord.

C: AMEN

P: Lord, Remember Us In Your Kingdom, And Teach Us To Pray:

**C: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your be,
 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.**

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

People of God, let us offer our sacrifice of thanksgiving,
 telling of God's deeds with songs of joy.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING/DEDICATION

Merciful God, we thank you for your
 wonderful works among humankind.
 Accept this offering with the dedication
 of our lives and help us be for the world an emblem
 of your steadfast love, in Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

OFFERING HYMN LBW 94 "My Song is Love Unknown"

REFLECTION: THE DECALOGUE Pastor Leena

There are those amongst our North American culture that have declared the Ten Commandments obsolete and even so far as to say, "we are living with outdated rules".

In general, we do live our lives as guided by the Ten Commandments, but I venture to think we really don't pay much attention to that fact because they are considered too be very old.

We find ourselves living in a society that mocks the truth and living out of lies.

The recent United States elections were a glaring sense of trying to make lies about election results the truth.

In our current society there is a backlash to moral absolutes where Moral relativism reign supreme.

Moral relativism is reflected in our common daily language in such statements as ,

"What's right for you may not be right for me",

"If it feels good do it"

"Anything goes"

"Nothing is right or wrong, there are simply different opinions."

According to a Canadian Angus Reid poll,

" much of the difference of opinion over morality is likely due to the fluidity of moral definitions in Canada. Asked for their views on personal morality, just 16 per cent (that same number who said this in 2016) say that there are moral absolutes – that things are either right or wrong. Over 80% of Canadians are considerably more likely to say that they believe there are moral guidelines or that right or wrong can change across different circumstances:

Half of those polled say that moral values are getting weaker in society, and just 10 per cent say they're getting stronger. "

(Source <https://angusreid.org/modern-morality-/03/15/2021>)

The Ten Commandments are a corner stone to what guides our morals as Christians and as Lutherans. We make a point of teaching the Ten Commandments and their meanings in our church education for Sunday Schools, Confirmation and Affirmation of Faith candidates. With such a high priority in our Lutheran teachings and the catechism, there is still value in the Ten Commandments in our faith as we continue to follow Jesus.

When we study the Ten Commandments, we study God's Law. In our confirmation teaching, the implications of God's speaking his law to Moses is that we need to hear it, we need to remember it, we need to obey it and we need to teach it.

In Matthew 5:17-18 we read that Jesus did not come to abolish or cancel the Law or Ten Commandments, Jesus came to fulfill them. Jesus summed up the Ten Commandments into two commandments as found in Matthew 22: 35-40:

"You shall love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the greatest and first commandment and the Second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as your self. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

In short, If I love God as I should, I will always keep Commandments 1-4. And If I love my neighbour as I should, I will always keep Commandments 5-10.

Many people mistakenly look at the Ten Commandments as a set of rules, that like the rungs of a ladder we climb for salvation and are guaranteed entrance into heaven after death.

St. Augustine who is considered one of the greatest philosophers ever and who had a huge impact on the Christian faith and doctrine in the early church, put living of the Ten Commandments this way,

"Love God and do as you please"

This works because when you love God you will always live your life and do those things that are pleasing to God.

Paul writes in our Romans reading, the purpose of the Ten Commandments is so that people come to realize that they cannot perfectly obey the Law ([Romans 7:7-11](#))

In verse 8 he was talking about his response to learning of God's commandment not to covet. (Exodus 20:17). The very existence of this command from God created an opportunity that sin could take control. Suddenly, Paul was both aware of his own covetousness, his own greed, and driven by a desire to covet, to act out his sinfulness.

Then he repeats himself in Verse 11, about how sin seized the opportunity created by God's commands in the law. This time, though, he describes sin as deceiving him or leading him astray. To say sin lied to Paul, as it lies to all of us. So, how does sin lead us astray? It convinces us that acting on our own desires is better in some way than obeying God. As the serpent did with Eve in the garden, sin says to us. "God is not good" or "You will not surely die."

The truth, though, is that God is good, and that sin always leads to death. Paul writes here that sin's deception killed him, metaphorically speaking, describing his spiritual death and separation from God. Sin does that same to all of us. And the law makes us aware of our sinfulness. (<https://www.bibleref.com/Romans/7/Romans-7-11.html>)

The Ten Commandments demonstrate that we have all sinned ([Romans 3:23](#)) and fall short of glory of God, yet we are justified by his grace as a gift available only through faith in Jesus Christ.

The brilliance of the Ten Commandments is that they summarize acceptable human behaviour in a handful of Words.

It is up to us where we find ourselves, and according to our Lutheran affirmation of baptism it is likely to be as keepers of the commandments and believers of Christ. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER:

P: Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that you have taught us what you would have us believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to keep your Word in pure hearts, that we may be strengthened in faith, perfected in holiness, and comforted in life and in death.

C: Amen

Please stand as you are able.

BENEDICTION

A: Let us bless the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

P: The almighty and merciful Lord, the Father, + the Son, and the Holy Spirit, bless and preserve you.

C: Amen.

CLOSING HYMN – LBW 492 My Faith Looks Up

P: Go In Peace, Remember The Poor.

C: Thanks Be To God.

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