

February 28th, 2021 Second Sunday in Lent

Welcome and announcements

Welcome to worship. I must begin with the announcement that Barb Bowen, a member of St. Mark's Lutheran died in Christ last Tuesday. Barb loved her church and served in the Sunday school and in other ways. Services are pending.

Next Sunday March 7th you will have the choice of on-line worship or in-person worship at St. Mark's at 10:30am. March newsletters are out with more details. Masks continue to be mandatory and registration is appreciated.

We share Holy Communion today so you may desire to gather a piece of bread or cracker, wine, juice or water to receive the sacrament. Please join me this week on-line for the Lenten series "Created for Community". This week's theme is "Community with the Saints."

Confession and Forgiveness All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

God hears us when we cry and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion. Silence is kept for reflection. Fountain of living water, pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.

Beloved, God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are ✝ forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus. Amen.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, heavenly Father, in the waters of the flood you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no

power over us, 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: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah's womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God's promise.

1When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless.

2And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous."

3Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him,

4"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

5No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations.

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

7 I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

15God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name.

16 I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

Psalm 22:23-31

23You who fear the Lord, give praise! All you of Jacob's line, give glory. Stand in awe of the Lord, all you off-spring of Israel.

24 For the Lord does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither is the Lord's face hidden from them; but when they cry out, the Lord hears them.

25 From you come my praise in the great assembly; I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the Lord.

26 The poor shall eat and be satisfied, Let those who seek the Lord give praise! May your hearts live forever!

27 All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord; all the families of nations shall bow before God.

28 For dominion belongs to the Lord, who rules over the nations.

29 Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship; all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the Lord.

30 Their descendants shall serve the Lord, whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

31 They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying to them, "The Lord has acted!"

Second Reading: Romans 4:13-25

Paul presents Abraham as the example for how a person comes into a right relationship with God not through works of the law but through faith. Though Abraham and Sarah were far too old for bearing children, Abraham trusted that God would accomplish what God had promised to accomplish.

13 The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith.

14 If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void.

15 For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

16 For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us,

17 as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

18 Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.”

19 He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb.

20 No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God,

21 being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.

22 Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

23 Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone,

24 but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead,

25 who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

The Holy Gospel according to: Mark 8:31-38 Glory to you O Lord

After Peter confesses his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples for the first time what is to come. Peter’s response indicates that he does not yet understand the way of the cross that Jesus will travel.

31 [Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.

32 He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

33 But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

34 He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

35 For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

36 For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?

37 Indeed, what can they give in return for their life?

38 Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” The word of the Lord.....**Praise to you O Christ**

Sermon

Being a follower is not something that American culture encourages, at least in our educational system. No graduation speaker ever congratulates the graduates on becoming the "followers of tomorrow." There are no movie documentaries about followers and recognition not usually given to followers. No parent or grandparent ever brags about their child by saying "You know, your kid is a real follower." The church is not much better in fostering followers. Most of our events have seminars and classes about building leaders, Leadership is important in the church we are told. Following is not taught. I have never been to a program that teaches how to be a follower. I suppose if you are a church leader it is expected that you are already a follower of biblical and seminary teaching.

In the whole of my life, being a follower has been considered to be weak and passive. It is for people who can't think or act for themselves. The bible even depicts followers to be like sheep, like lambs led to slaughter. It is suggested that being a follower is for losers.

In fact, there is only one place that I can see that being a follower is encouraged and that is on social media. Face book, Twitter, Instagram and other platforms all encourage following. All of these social media sites suggest to you who you might want to follow.

If you log on to Twitter today you can follow Jesus Christ. There is a Twitter feed for Jesus Christ with his picture and everything. There are updates from "Jesus Christ," which are sometimes funny, sometimes provocative, and often insightful. Not all that different from the Jesus we encounter in Scripture.

If there had been Twitter in the first century, Jesus (the real Jesus) probably would have been pretty popular. Lots of people wanted to follow him to see what

he was doing and hear what he had to say. By the time this story in Mark happens, Jesus has been gathering followers. He's been touring the countryside performing healings and exorcisms and other miracles; he's been saying a lot of things that are sometimes funny, sometimes provocative, and often insightful, and the crowds follow everything he says and does. And, of course, he's got a closer group of followers, the disciples.

The word "disciples" simply means "students." But Jesus' students are not doing too well in class. They've been following him all over; they've seen everything he's done and heard everything he's said, but they can't seem to master the course material. This scene is about halfway through the Gospel of Mark, so I guess you could say this is the midterm exam. Jesus wants to know how much of all this they've been getting so far. "*Who do you say that I am?*" he asks. Something clicks for Peter, and he actually comes up with the right answer. "*You are the Messiah,*" he says simply, and he passes the test.

Just a few verses after Peter gave Jesus the right answer, Peter tells Jesus that he gave the wrong answer. Peter begins to scold Jesus for saying that the Messiah must suffer and be rejected and killed. "*What kind of Messiah is that?*" Peter demands. Jesus cuts him off: "*Get behind me, Satan,*" he says. Jesus calling him Satan is serious. We remember that Jesus began his ministry with Satan beside him, tempting him to see what kind of Messiah he really would be. It seems that here Jesus, has also taken a midterm exam, facing that temptation again. He also passes the test. Then he calls the crowd and the disciples around them, and he gives them all the answer to the question of what kind of Messiah he really will be, what kind of Messiah they are following: "*If any want to become my followers,*" he says, "*let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and the sake of the gospel, will save it.*"

Following Jesus requires a lot more than clicking a button and keeping up with him, knowing what he says and does. "*Those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake and the sake of the gospel, will save it.*" In other words, following Jesus is for losers; the question is what we are willing to lose. Now, to save or to lose our lives as followers of Christ isn't always a dramatic kind of decision like American civil rights activists or first-century Christians faced. In fact, that's a pretty rare opportunity for most of us in the American church in the 21st century. A church that is focused on saving its own

life will lose it. A church that spends its energy and resources saving its building rather than empowering its mission is losing its life; a living church makes its building a resource for mission, not an object of it. A church seeking new members to save its budget or its influence is losing its life; a living church receives new members to nurture them as disciples, not so the new members can nurture the church as an institution.

As much as the church needs leadership development--and it does! --we must also develop our followership. Our congregations should be a place where we help each other become losers, losers of anything that keeps us from following Jesus: our fears and anxieties, our pasts or our futures, our status or our schedules, our need to be in control of our lives and our faith, anything that keeps us from losing ourselves in the abundance of the grace that we receive, the love that we share, the ministry that we fulfill. As it turns out, it's good to be a follower. It's good to be a loser and we have a lot to lose especially our pride and self interest in order to help others. All we have to do is follow the leader. 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. Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation's well-being. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine. **Be with those in military service who sacrifice for justice especially Logan, JJ, Bryan, Dustin, Brad and Travis.** Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit.

Restore all who are sick or grieving **especially family and friends of Barb Bowen**. Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression **especially Brad Shippert and those in care faculties that we know Sibyl, Tammy, Trudy, Jessica, Hazel, Jeanne, Linda, Ed and Marian**. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We await the day of Christ's coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you. Hear us, O God.
Your mercy is great.

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

Offering Prayer

Faithful God, you walk beside us in desert places, and you meet us in our hunger with bread from heaven.

Accompany us in this meal, that we may pass over from death to life with Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer *Gathered into one by the power of the Holy Spirit we pray*

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.

Invitation to Communion

Jesus draws the whole world to himself. Come to this meal and be fed.

Holy Communion Together

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.

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Take your bread/cracker The body of Christ given for you

Take you juice/wine/water The blood of Christ shed for you

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in His grace.

Prayer after Communion

God of steadfast love, at this table you gather your people into one body for the sake of the world. Send us in the power of your Spirit, that our lives bear witness to the love that has made us new in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Blessing You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you ✝ that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. Amen.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.