

Home Worship January 24th Third Sunday after Epiphany

Welcome to worship. February newsletter will soon be online and in the mail for those who request it. You will see that St. Mark's will open for a small group worship service Sunday February 7th at 10:30am. Please call the church office or email to be on the list of no more than 30 participants. There will be restrictions. This is in response to those who do not have computer or internet access. The church council has approved this as well a working budget for 2021. We are hoping to have an annual meeting in the spring.

Confession and Forgiveness

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 Spirit's reconciling peace. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, by grace alone you call us and accept us in your service. Strengthen us by your Spirit, and make us worthy of your call, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

The book of Jonah is a comedy starring a reluctant prophet who is given a one-sentence message: Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days. Much to Jonah's dismay, the people of Nineveh repent. The point of the story is to get the reader to wrestle with the question "On whom should God have mercy?"

¹The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying,

²“Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you.”

³So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days’ walk across.

⁴Jonah began to go into the city, going a day’s walk. And he cried out, “Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”

⁵And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

¹⁰When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

Psalm 62:5-12

⁵For God alone I wait in silence; truly, my hope is in God.

⁶**God alone is my rock and my salvation, my stronghold, so that I shall never be shaken.**

⁷In God is my deliverance and my honor; God is my strong rock and my refuge.

⁸**Put your trust in God always, O people, pour out your hearts before the one who is our refuge.**

⁹Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath; those of low estate cannot be trusted. Placed on the scales together they weigh even less than a breath.

¹⁰**Put no trust in extortion; in robbery take no empty pride; though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it.**

¹¹God has spoken once, twice have I heard it, that power belongs to God.

¹²**Steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord, for you repay all according to their deeds.**

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

Paul does not disapprove of marriage or other human social institutions. He does, however, want Christians to live in the present in fervent anticipation of God’s future, which even now has dawned through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

²⁹Brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none,

³⁰and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions,

³¹and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

The Holy Gospel according to Mark1:14-20 Glory to you O Lord

Before Jesus calls his first disciples, he proclaims a message that becomes known as “the gospel” or good news from God. God is ready to rule our lives. Those who realize this will respond with repentance and faith.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God,
¹⁵and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

¹⁶As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen.

¹⁷And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.”

¹⁸And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.

²⁰Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

The word of the Lord..... **Praise to you O Christ**

Sermon

This time of year is called the time after Epiphany. Epiphany means to have a sudden understanding or meaning of something. We are not far from the Christmas story and the wise men are not the only ones called to understand the meaning of God walking among us in Jesus. The back story to Mark’s gospel for today is that Jesus has been baptized, John was then beheaded and Jesus was tempted in the wilderness by Satan. Jesus then goes to Galilee proclaiming the good news and saying “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.*” The word “repent” is central to our readings today. Repent in this context and translation means to ‘*be of a new mind or heart.*’ Get yourself into a NEW reality. Today Jesus might just say “enough is enough, we need to make a change.” The previous events set up the call stories we read of today. Jesus begins to call disciples to immediately follow and fish for people. Simon, Andrew, James and John followed as they were called and followed. Jesus called for his followers to assist in making changes to the ways of the world.

In our first reading today God calls a man named Jonah. The man is not as obedient as Jesus’ disciples in Mark. In fact Jonah runs away but God brings Jonah back to the original call to which he finally obeys. The book of Jonah is a Sunday School favorite but it’s much more than about a fish. The story of Jonah is both serious and silly. The story begins when Jonah tries to run from God’s call and while on a ship, the superstitious sailors throw him overboard to

appease their Gods. The Lord provided a large fish to save Jonah by swallowing him. Jonah prays to God the Lord spoke to the fish and Jonah was spit out on dry land. This is more than a fish tale. This is a call story of mercy and change.

The first thing we should know about the Jonah story is that Nineveh was a wicked place where the bloodthirsty power of empire would bring a savage and cruel end to the Kingdom of Israel. As a prophet, Jonah was an unconditional Israelite nationalist. The Assyrians killed Israelites. And so it was Jonah, in God's own sense of humor that was called to prophesy against Nineveh. Jonah knew in advance that God would be much too merciful to Nineveh and did not want to do this. So Jonah he gave a half hearted sermon. The people of Nineveh responded to the sermon with eagerness. The king of Nineveh, upon hearing Jonah's message, unnecessarily called a fast that his people were already observing. But then the fast was extended to animals, who were also dressed up in sackcloth as well. Can you imagine sheep and cows wearing sackcloth clothing? This is supposed to be a comical or sarcastic exaggeration of repentance. The king of Nineveh imagined that if the fast were extreme enough, God may relent from divine anger. And that is exactly what God did.

The message for Israelites and Judeans who may have read this text was clear. National status and closeness to God will not be enough to save a people from the consequences of ongoing injustice and idolatry. The closing verse of our reading for this week is a word of hope, if we listen carefully. When God saw how the people of Nineveh turned from their evil ways, God also turned from the evil that God had planned. Even to those Assyrians who were primarily known throughout history for their horrible cruelty and violence, God sends messengers telling of consequences and inviting them to a better way. The book of Jonah proclaims that even a warlike people, such as the Assyrians, were able to repent. If bloodthirsty folks whose society is built on violence are able to passionately repent and move God's heart, can we?

There is so much talk these days of the bad ways of our enemies. Who are the enemies? People who don't agree with you? The book of Jonah suggests that Hebrews and Assyrians might have more in common than perceived. More than the worldly antagonism, both are created in the image of God, and have a rightful longing of fellowship with the Creator. The book of Jonah reminds us that God's knowledge is beyond us and his acts of love are extensive beyond our imaginations. Hopefully, the church can find a way to copy such acts of love.

Stories of God calling us. Jesus calling us. Calling us to repent, to *'be of a new mind or heart.'* God's love and mercy are always our hope no matter what our struggles are in the world or with one another. Amen.

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.*** For the church throughout the world, for pastors and teachers, for deacons and deaconesses, and for musicians and servers, that all proclaim the good news of God's reconciling love, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For skies and seas, for birds and fish, for favorable weather and clean water, and for the well-being of creation, that God raise up advocates and scientists to guide our care for all the earth, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who provide leadership in our cities and around the world, for nonprofit and nongovernmental organizations, for planning commissions and homeless advocates, that God inspire all people in the just use of wealth, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who are sick, distressed, or grieving; for the outcast and all who await relief and especially for those who need healing including **those recovering from surgery and Brad Shippert. We pray for the families suffering with the coronavirus and we pray for an end to the virus with safe vaccinations and treatments. We pray for those in care facilities: Sibyl, Barb, Tammy, Trudy, Jessica, Hazel, Jeanne, Linda, Ed and Marian. We pray for those in military service: Logan, JJ, Bryan, Dustin, Brad and Travis** that in the midst of suffering, God's peace and mercy surround them, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For our congregation and community, for families big and small, and for the organizations that meet here during the week, that God's steadfast love serve as a model for all relationships, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

In thanksgiving for our ancestors in the faith whose lives serve as an example of gospel living, that they point us to salvation through Christ, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

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.**

Gathered into one by the power of the Holy Spirit we pray as Jesus taught ...

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

Beloved: here is bread; here is wine. Here is Jesus. Come 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. By the leading of a star he was shown forth to all nations; in the waters of the Jordan you proclaimed him your beloved Son; and in the miracle of water turned to wine he revealed your glory.

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

Christ Jesus, at 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 \mp keep you in peace. **Amen.**

Dismissal Go in peace. Be the light of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Thank you to all who continue to support the work of the church.