

**Sunday, March 15, 2026**

**Fourth Sunday in Lent**

**The Good News is... protection and care for the vulnerable**

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

God loves the field mouse.

**God loves the crows that take flight when church bells ring.**

God loves the baby, cooing in the back pew.

**God loves the child who rocks and claps.**

God loves the one with wrinkled hands and soft eyes.

**God loves the bumblebees and the tabby cats.**

God loves those who walk, crawl, and roll.

**God loves the giant oaks and the evergreens,  
standing strong over all of us.**

God loves the young, the impressionable, and the earnest.

**There is no bit of creation that God does not love.**

So let us worship this good-news God!

**Amen.**

**KYRIE (Call Us Home, 3)**

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Family of Faith,

every week we pray the Prayer of Confession,

because every week we need to be reminded of God's abundant grace.

Every week we need to be reminded of God's love.

Every week we need to be reminded that we too can grow and change.

So join me in this moment of honesty as we seek transformation.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Friends, let us pray:

God said, “When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them.”

**Holy God, we confess, we have mistreated the immigrants in our land.**

Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.”

**We confess, we have clung to guns and war more than we have pursued peace.**

God said, “When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not glean what is left; it shall be for the alien, the orphan, and the widow.”

**We confess, we have hoarded our resources and failed to care for our neighbors.**

Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them.”

**We confess, we have gatekept the good news in unfair ways.**

Fortunately for all of us, God also said,  
“Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by name; you are mine.”

**By God’s grace, despite our sin and shortcomings,  
we are redeemed, claimed, forgiven, and loved.**

May this good news change our lives!

**Amen.**

**GATHERING HYMN** ELW 742 What a Friend We Have in Jesus vs 1 & 2

## **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray:

**Holy One, sometimes the simplest of your commands are the hardest for us to hear. You say, “Love your enemy, turn the other cheek, care for the widow and the orphan.” And we want to know: How? When? Where? Today as we turn to your word, open up space in us to simply hear your truth for what it is. Open up space in our hearts to dream new dreams, to imagine new realities, to draw closer to you and closer to love. With hope for a better tomorrow, we listen and we pray. Amen.**

## **KIDS SERMON**

**HOPE FOUND AROUND US: *For Rejecting a Fear of Others* by Meta Herrick Carlson**

Let us listen for God's hope and grace as it comes to us from unexpected sources.

**Our hearts and minds are open to the spirit.**

It is ancient instinct to size up the stranger,  
to worship the safety of sameness,  
to decide everything before there is love.

The distance between is  
so carefully designed  
by fear unveiled as anger and despair.

But it is all fear.

How God must ache to watch us  
scattered and cast out in fear,  
the human body amputating itself,

renouncing the fullness and beauty  
of life together because  
we are frightened.

The antidote is already near-  
a spirit of gentleness and wonder  
for the vulnerable and unknown,

a dangerous proximity  
to those we have cut off and  
called by any name other than

Beloved.

God, be in our understanding.

**Let the Spirit be heard.**

*I invite you to stand in body or spirit as we prepare our hearts for the scriptures:*  
**RETURN TO THE LORD** (Call Us Home, 7)

## **HOPE FOUND IN THE SCRIPTURE**

Let us listen for God's hope and grace as it comes to us in scripture.

**Our hearts and minds are open to the spirit.**

### **Deuteronomy 24:17-22**

Do not deprive the foreigner living among you of justice, or the orphan either; nor take the cloak of the widow or widower as collateral. Do not forget that you were slaves in Egypt, and God redeemed you from that place. So it is that I command you to do these things. When you are harvesting in your field and overlook a sheaf of grain, do not go back for it afterward. Leave it for the foreigner, the orphan, or the widowed, so that God may bless you in all the work that you do. When you beat the olives from your trees, do not go over the branches a second time. Leave what remains to the foreigner, the orphan, or the widowed. When you harvest grapes in your vineyard, do not go over the vines a second time. Leave what remains for the foreigner, the orphan, or the widowed. Remember that once you were slaves in Egypt, and this is why I command you to do this.

### **Matthew 19:13-15**

Then small children were brought to Jesus so he could lay hands on them and pray for them. The disciples began to scold the parents, but Jesus said, "Let the children alone—let them come to me. The kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." And after laying his hands on them, Jesus left that town.

The word of God for the people of God,

**Thanks be to God.**

## **SERMON**

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

See the Precious Children

We will now take a moment of reflection, to listen to the spirit. This is also a time to prepare our hearts for the offering. We all have so much to share: time, talent, tithe. In the bulletins, there is a piece called Joyful Giving to share what you will give the community this week. Those slips can be placed in the offering basket.

## **TIME OF REFLECTION**

**OFFERING**        The Bread of Life (Call Us Home, 12)

## **OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray.

**O God, maker of heaven and earth, your steadfast love embraces all creation. You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth and bring forth its bounty. Through these gifts we offer today, let us share your hope and grace with all the world. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.**

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.  
It sounds like welcome and feels like home.  
It sounds like laughter and feels like mercy.  
It sounds like love and feels like a seat at the table,  
so I believe in the good news of Jesus Christ.**

**I have seen it alive in the world.  
And even when my heart aches, even when wars rage,  
even when mercy feels out of reach,  
I remember the one who welcomed the children  
and led with nonviolence.  
I remember the one who cared for the vulnerable  
and inspired those around him.  
I remember that the good news really is good news,  
for I have seen it alive in the world.  
Thanks be to God! Amen.**

**PRAYER SONG** ELW 752 Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Jesus of Nazareth, you loved without abandon. You loved your disciples, with their questions and their bumbling mistakes. You loved the children, with their runny noses and their easy joy. You loved the widows and the immigrants, with their heartbreak and their dreams for a better tomorrow. You loved the tax collectors and the outcasts, with their hands open to their neighbors. You loved like it was easy. And my goodness, do we wish that we were more like that.

So today, we lift up the vulnerable in our community—the ones you loved so quickly.

Today we pray for the immigrants in our land—for those running from fear, longing to give their children a better life.

Today we pray for single parents, who stretch themselves thin to be all things for the little ones they love.

Today we pray for those living below the poverty line, for those who are unsure where their next meal will come from.

Today we pray for those who live in fear due to the color of their skin, the way that they dress, or the person that they love.

Today we pray for those who are bent over by the weight of depression, anxiety, or addiction.

We also ask that you be with those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts, especially (PRAYER LIST)...

We could go on and on, God, but we know that you see each of us. So draw near to your children. Wrap your arms around the vulnerable, the weary, the grief-filled. Comfort, O comfort your people. Wrap your arms around us.

And as you do, we ask that we might be transformed.

As you do, we ask that we might bend toward love and move toward compassion.

As you do, we ask that you might soften our hearts.

Until your promised day, when all are cared for and seen, this will be our prayer.

**Amen.**

**PRAYER SONG** ELW 752 Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying

## **PASSING OF THE PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

## **GREAT THANKSGIVING (Call Us Home, 13)**

### **PREFACE**

Truly it is right and joyous to offer thanks and praise to our Gracious God in all places and in all circumstances of life. But especially so on this day as we prepare our hearts for the mystery of salvation in Jesus' great sacrifice. And so with all the saints and angels in heaven and on earth, we raise our voices with this never-ending hymn of praise:

**Holy, Holy, Holy (Call Us Home, 14)**

### **EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER**

**CALL US HOME (Call Us Home, 16)**

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us, in the language or version of our hearts:

**Heavenly God, giver of life, holy is your name. Your realm 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 you reign in power and glory, now and forever. Amen.**

### **Distribution**

**Communion Hymns**      Lamb of God - Call Us Home  
   ELW 490 Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence

### **Prayer after Communion**

Let us pray:

**God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Let us be strengthened to become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Amen.**

**Blessing**

As you leave this place,  
when you meet anger, speak with love.  
When you meet fear, speak with hope.  
When you meet pain, speak with gentleness.  
But no matter what, speak this good news.  
For if you won't, then who will?  
Remember, the good news of the gospel is  
love and justice for all.  
It is joy that surprises,  
and nonviolence that transforms.

The good news of the gospel is alive in the world,  
so go forth speaking, knowing the Creator, + Redeemer  
and Sustainer are with you always.  
Amen.

**Sending Song**      ELW 543 Go, My Children, with My Blessing vs 1 & 3

**Dismissal**

Go in peace, share the good news!

**Thanks be to God.**