

**Sunday, February 22, 2026**

**First Sunday in Lent**

**The Good News is... so good it catches us by surprise**

**PRELUDE**

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**CALL TO WORSHIP**

The good news of the gospel is:

**manna in the desert,  
water turned into wine,  
love after loss,  
forgiveness after pain.**

The good news of the gospel is:

**release for the captive,  
hope for the hopeless,  
mourning turned to dancing,  
and strangers turned to friends.**

So come on in.

There's no time to waste!

This surprising good news is here for you.

**Let us worship this good-news God.**

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

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

You may have heard, "All is fair in love and war," or "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

But God says, "Forgive seventy times seven."

God says, "I am slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love."

God says, "Turn the other cheek."

God's mercy catches us by surprise. So with wonder and gratitude, let us go to God in prayer. Let us be surprised by God's grace all over again.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Friends, let us pray:

Loving God,

**somewhere along the way we picked up the message  
that in order to be faithful,  
we have to be serious.**

**We have to pray on our knees without ceasing.**

**We have to be somber in worship and quiet in our studies.**

**We have to check our wiggles and our questions at the door.**

**But then you say the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed—unruly  
and untamed.**

**You turn water into wine—surprising and extravagant.**

**And all of a sudden, we wonder:**

**Can we be like that mustard seed?**

**Can we be faithful and unruly?**

**Can we be playful and curious?**

**Can we be messy and still be yours?**

**We know the answer already.**

**The Spirit whispers: of course, of course, of course.**

**Forgive our doubt.**

**Pull us closer into your embrace.**

**With faith like a mustard seed, we pray. Amen.**

God's grace is wild and unruly. God's mercy is abundant and surprising.

God's love is expansive and unending. So if you ask, "Holy One, am I forgiven?"  
the answer is and always will be: of course, of course, of course.

This is the good news of the gospel.

**Thanks be to God! Amen.**

**GATHERING HYMN**      ELW 326 Bless Now, O God, the Journey

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray:

**Holy One, it is easy to see the mustard plant and forget to marvel at the seed. It is easy to taste good wine and not appreciate it. It is easy to miss the holy that is in our midst. So as we turn to your text today, we pray, surprise us. Speak to us. Move through us. Draw us closer to your good news. We wait with bated breath. Amen.**

## KIDS SERMON

### HOPE FOUND AROUND US: *If You Seek...* by Thomas Merton

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.**

If you seek a heavenly light  
I, Solitude, am your professor!

I go before you into emptiness,  
Raise strange suns for your new mornings,  
Opening windows  
Of your innermost apartment.

When I, loneliness, give my special signal  
Follow my silence, follow where I beckon!  
Fear not, little beast, little spirit  
(Thou word and animal)  
I, Solitude, am angel  
And have prayed in your name.

Look at the empty, wealthy night  
The Pilgrim moon!  
I am the appointed hour,  
The "now" that cuts  
Time like a blade.

I am the unexpected flash  
Beyond “yes,” beyond “no,”  
The forerunner of the Word of God.

Follow my ways and I will lead you  
To golden-haired suns,  
Logos and music, blameless joys,  
Innocent of questions  
And beyond answers:  
For I, Solitude, am thine own self:  
I, Nothingness, am thy All.  
I, Silence, am thy Amen!

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.**

### **John 2:1-11**

Three days (after calling the first disciples), there was a wedding at Cana in Galilee, and Mary, the mother of Jesus, was there. Jesus and his disciples had likewise been invited to the celebration. At a certain point, the wine ran out, and Jesus’ mother told him, “They have no wine.” Jesus replied, “Mother, what does that have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” She instructed those waiting on tables, “Do whatever he tells you.” As prescribed for Jewish ceremonial washings, there were six stone water jars on hand, each one holding between fifteen and twenty-five gallons. “Fill those jars with water,” Jesus said, and the servers filled them to the brim. “Now,” said Jesus, “draw some out and take it to the caterer.” They did as they were instructed. The caterer tasted the water—which had been turned into wine—without knowing where it had come from; the only

ones who knew were those who were waiting on tables, since they had drawn the water. The caterer called the bride and groom over and remarked, “People usually serve the best wine first; then, when the guests have been drinking a while, a lesser vintage is served. What you’ve done is to keep the best wine until now!” Jesus performed this first of his signs at Cana in Galilee; in this way he revealed his glory, and the disciples believed in him.

### **Matthew 13:31-32**

Jesus presented another parable to the crowds: “The kingdom of heaven is like the mustard seed which a farmer sowed in a field. It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is the biggest shrub of all—it becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come to perch in its branches.”

The word of God for the people of God,  
**Thanks be to God.**

**SERMON**

## **HYMN OF THE DAY** In a Neat and Tidy Garden

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.**

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE**

Joy-spreading God, we love to imagine you at a wedding, your throat hoarse from laughter, feet tired from dancing, brow damp from the warmth of the day. We love to imagine you turning water into wine, people passing glasses, quenching their thirst, delighting in every joy-filled, holy moment. We love to imagine that this is how your ministry began—with celebration and joy, with banquet tables and laughter—because we crave more of those moments ourselves.

We live in a world that seems to run out of joy.  
The news is a rotating blur of heartache.  
Our hearts carry fear and grief, anxiety and loss.

We pray for those who are caught in war-torn areas.  
For those who are spending their Sundays in a hospital room.  
For those who push through waves of depression every day,  
or struggle to manage illness or addiction.

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

Holy God, we live in a world that is overflowing with hard news, and we crave a piece of your joy. So on our lowest days, and in our bleakest moments, remind us that your ministry started with a small miracle.

On the longest nights, remind us that we are never alone.  
When joy wears thin, remind us that you call us by name.  
When hope flickers, remind us that you hear our prayers.  
And when the weight of the world feels too heavy,  
remind us that the heart of the gospel really is good news.

**Amen.**

## **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... 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 479 We Come to the Hungry Feast

### **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 650 In Christ There is No East or West

## **Dismissal**

Go in peace, share the good news!

**Thanks be to God.**