



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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First Sunday in Lent March 6, 2022 ELW Holy Communion, Setting Three

These forty days called Lent are like no other. It is our opportune time to return to the God who rescues, to receive the gifts of God's grace, to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth the wonder of God's love in Jesus, and to resist temptation at every turn. This is no small pilgrimage on which we have just embarked. It is a struggle Jesus knew. It is a struggle Jesus shares. The nearness of the Lord, in bread and wine, water and word, will uphold and sustain us.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping with us in-person and to those on-line! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God's calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP AND INVITATION TO LENT (Paraphrase of Psalm 91:1-2, 9-16)

We gather in the shelter and shadow of the Most High, the Almighty, to worship our Lord, our refuge and stronghold in whom we put our trust. For by God's grace, evil and affliction is deflected by the angels that guard us and watch over us. Their hands shall bear us up and catch us from falling, delivering us into the presence God's honour and salvation, this day and always.

And so I invite you all into the discipline of Lent. A season in which we reflect, repent, and remember God's grace and forgiveness in our lives. May these forty days be a time growth and renewal as our hearts are opened to the leading and calling of the Spirit into new heights of faith and strength, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG: There's a Wideness in God's Mercy (#588) verses 1, 2, 4

GREETING

The resilient grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the calming love of God, and the supportive fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God Most High, we give you thanks for the signs of your power and grace, shown to us even in the wilderness of life. Grant to us courage to stand firm in your Word, that through every trial and testing we might embark into your land of freedom and receive the salvation that you so generously give through Jesus Christ our brother and Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 26:1-11

A reading from Deuteronomy.

The annual harvest festival, called the Feast of Weeks, provides the setting for this reading. This festival celebrates the first fruits of the produce of the land offered back to God in thanks. In this text, worshipers announce God's gracious acts on behalf of Israel.

¹When you have come into the land that the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance to possess, and you possess it, and settle in it, ²you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you harvest from the land that the LORD your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket and go to the place that the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his name. ³You shall go to the priest who is in office at that time, and say to him, "Today I declare to the LORD your God that I have come into the land that the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." ⁴When the priest takes the basket from your hand and sets it down before the altar of the LORD your God, ⁵you shall make this response before the LORD your God: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien, few in number, and there he became a great nation, mighty and populous. ⁶When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, ⁷we cried to the LORD, the God of our ancestors; the LORD heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. ⁸The LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with a terrifying display of power, and with signs and wonders; ⁹and he brought us into this place and gave us

this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. ¹⁰So now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground that you, O LORD, have given me." You shall set it down before the LORD your God and bow down before the LORD your God. ¹¹Then you, together with the Levites and the aliens who reside among you, shall celebrate with all the bounty that the LORD your God has given to you and to your house.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Romans 10:8b-13

A reading from Romans.

Paul reminds the Christians at Rome of the foundation of their creed, the confession of faith in the risen Christ as Lord.

^{8b}"The word is near you,
on your lips and in your heart"
(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); ⁹because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. ¹⁰For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved. ¹¹The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." ¹²For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. ¹³For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)

GOSPEL: Luke 4:1-13

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

After being filled with the Holy Spirit at his baptism, Jesus is led in the wilderness. Through his responses to the temptations of the devil, he defines what it means to be called "the Son of God."

¹Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, ²where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing at all during those days, and when they were over, he was famished. ³The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command this stone to become a loaf of bread." ⁴Jesus answered him, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone.'"

⁵Then the devil led him up and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. ⁶And the devil said to him, "To you I will give their glory and all this authority; for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please. ⁷If you, then, will worship me, it will all be yours."

⁸Jesus answered him, "It is written,
'Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.'"

⁹Then the devil took him to Jerusalem, and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying

to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down from here,¹⁰ for it is written,
'He will command his angels concerning you,
to protect you,'

¹¹and

'On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'

¹²Jesus answered him, "It is said, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ¹³When the devil had finished every test, he departed from him until an opportune time.

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

May your Word, O God, be near to us, on our lips and in our hearts. By the power of your Spirit, help us to respond to your leading and guiding, humbling us into faith and salvation in you, our dwelling place, through Jesus Christ our brother and Lord. **Amen.**

You know it's Lent when we get the Temptation of Jesus story in our readings. Even when it's Mark's one-liner "Jesus was tempted by Satan" that we get in year B of the Lectionary cycle, it is so characteristic of this season to talk about Jesus' 40-day wilderness excursion. Which makes sense, I mean it's because of this story that Lent is 40 days long, between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday, excluding Sundays. This season is set up for us to enter this same kind of journey that Jesus took, in preparation of what is to come with the Easter season just 40 days excluding Sundays away.

But how is this even preparation? I've always wondered the significance of Jesus being tempted in the wilderness, as to me it seems like it would have been easier if he just stayed at home instead of wandering out there for 40 days. It would have been more comfortable to not have to endure those hunger pangs and rumbling stomach and the possible shaky hands due to low blood sugar. It would have been safer to not have to face the tempter, the adversary, the *satan* in case things go horribly wrong. And in my experience, most people would rather play things safe.

However, we're told that Jesus didn't play it safe and went anyway, and thankfully his excursion was successful. He was able to withstand the temptations and came out of there with a greater grasp on his mission, his call, and the identity that was given to him just 40 days prior at his baptism as God's beloved son with whom God is well pleased. Don't forget that this happens right after Jesus is baptized, so it's like his initiation, inauguration, installation into his ministry during his physical time on Earth. In fact, I have heard that this experience of Jesus could equate to his seminary training, the kind of training that many clergy (such as myself) have to go through, except Jesus' training was somewhat shorter and a whole lot cheaper. I mean he didn't even have to pay for food.

But how is this like seminary training? How is being tempted in these ways like preparing anyone for anything? How is purposely going out of your way to make yourself uncomfortable by fasting for 40 days in the middle of nowhere supposed to help anyone?

Well, to be honest, seminary was uncomfortable. I might not have gone hungry per se as food was included in my room and board, but I was starving for something, some kind of fulfilling

enrichment or something. And as they warned us at the very first day of school, seminary tore us down, smashed all that we already believed, and built us back up with the tools to be stronger and more equipped for the ministry ahead of us.

I know, I'm not really selling the whole seminary thing. I admit it sounds downright awful. And it probably was in more ways than one. But it was and integral part of our growth, of our development, of our journey to answer God's call.

And this is why I think Jesus' time in the wilderness was like his seminary training. He spent his time out there wrestling with his call. The temptations tore apart the common preconceptions of how the world works. And scripture was used to build Jesus back up, built him up to remember who he is, what he's doing, and why he's even here.

Still, not really selling it, I know. And I'm not trying to convince any of you to go to seminary although I don't think it's ever too late to start. In fact, when I started, there was a second year student who was 63 years old, but that neither here nor there. The point is that my seminary training was uncomfortable. Jesus' time in the wilderness was uncomfortable. And this here season of Lent? Well if we were to follow its practices and disciplines, it's pretty uncomfortable as well.

And so, along with a lot of uncomfortable things, we push it aside. We avoid it. We try to make excuses like we don't really need it or we're too busy to pursue it or maybe we just didn't know it was even a thing. We just don't like to be uncomfortable.

But as we see in this temptation story, perhaps the discomfort is a necessary part of growth. I think that in my seminary training, the discomfort that I went through and often continue to go through definitely was important for me in becoming the pastor that I am today. And for the rest of us then, I wonder what discomforts we need to face in order to see, I mean really see God in our midst. I'm not saying that we should go out and look at ways to feel uncomfortable in hopes that we'd grow from it, but perhaps we don't let the possibility of being uncomfortable to get in our way.

And how do we do that? Well, I think the same way that Jesus did onto his way into the wilderness. He was filled, led, called by the Spirit. He was strengthened through his identity-affirming baptism. He was reminded of how loved he is and how he is never abandoned by God.

We too, can draw from this graciously given strength. We too, can face our hardship and discomfort with confidence knowing that God is with us and fills us with God's Spirit. We too, can grow in our ministry and service as we are reminded of how loved we are, along with our siblings around the world.

So what discomforts that we know will lead to good have we been avoiding in our lives? Perhaps it's the actual fasting in Lent, giving up certain things that aren't good for us like chocolate, chips, fried chicken. Those are three things by the way, not chocolate chip fried chicken... which now that I think about it gives me a great idea for a new fast food restaurant...

Perhaps it's confronting someone in our lives whom we've been unhappy or displeased with, or we know has been unhappy or displeased with us, and working on mending that relationship.

Or maybe it's something internal, like we know that our mental health has been suffering because of the ways various things in and around our lives has been affecting us, and we need to reach out and talk to someone about it.

Whatever it might be, I encourage you to follow up with it. I encourage you to follow the leading of the Spirit, as you are filled with God's grace, and taken by the hand to journey into these uncomfortable places. I encourage you to not shy away from the discomfort, but lean into it confident that God is with you and bringing about growth and development. I know it's not easy. In fact, I am sure that it will be quite hard. But I do believe that God is with you through it all, surrounding you with a community of support, and strengthening you with the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

And this is what I believe this season of Lent is for. I've been reflecting on this season for the past 100 years or so (give or take 50 or 60), and I've come to see it as a time for us to come to grips with who we are. Who we are as people in our role in society whatever that might be. Who we are as sinners who can't help but live in our own selfishness and pride. Who we are as God's beloved children, forgiven and saved, healed and made whole, invited and welcomed into God's everlasting kingdom. And I see this season no longer as something to dread because of how uncomfortable it could be, but one that we can look forward to and enter in as led and filled by the Spirit, to care for each other, our sense of calling and identity, and above all, our own mental health, erasing all taboos around "getting help" and knowing that we all have those inner demons to face and we can face them with the support and care of our community, our faith, and our God.

As we begin our journey into this season of Lent, may we be humbled to look within ourselves, face our inner demons, and lean on the strength and support of God in our community, in this congregation, and with our companions on this journey of life, that we can be reminded again and again in spite of discomfort and hardships of our unchanging and everlasting identity as God's beloved children. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less (#596) verses 1, 3, 4

CREED

Together with all joined in this Lenten discipline, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**
**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**
**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,**

**the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Led into the ups and downs of life, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, “by your sovereign mercy, O God,” and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. By your sovereign mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord we dwell in your shelter for you are our refuge and stronghold. Make us aware of the security in your name and the truth in your Word, that we might battle the forces of evil with confidence and strength. By your sovereign mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord you protect us from evil and guard us from affliction, and we operate in your grace as we serve and minister. Increase our faith in our communities and congregations, that the world might learn to see your face more clearly. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our bishop Kathy and national bishop Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular we pray for Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Penticton and their soon to be retired pastor Curtis Aguirre; for Trinity Anglican and Lutheran Church in Port Alberni and their pastor Brenda Nestegaard Paul; and for the ministry of the hospital chaplains in and around our Synod. By your sovereign mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord you bear us up by your hands and you reveal to us your glory through the beauty of creation. May our care for all that you have entrusted to us be pleasing to you, and may this world continue to safely house life for the generations to come. By your sovereign mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord you deliver us who cling to you and uphold us who call upon your name. We pray for all areas of the world that are facing political turmoil and strife, especially for Ukraine as war continues to wage against liberty and democracy. Be with all who face danger and violence, and may the evil of the world be crushed under your love and grace. We also pray for those that we’ve sponsored to come into our country, that their journey might go more smoothly as pandemic restrictions begin to ease: Solyana Amanuel; and Maেকে Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. By your sovereign mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord you answer us when we call and you are with us in times of trouble. Make this apparent among those of us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love can continue being our source of peace and strength. Especially we pray for Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; Chris; Jenny; Mr. Cifuentes; those who have been affected by COVID 19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your sovereign mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord you satisfy us with eternal life in your salvation, and you join us together with the saints of all times and places to live with you as the one body of Christ. Remind us always of their lives of faith, that we might be informed in our own lives of your truth and promises. By your sovereign mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your leading and guidance found in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE (p. 144)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

It is indeed right, our duty, and our joy, to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who set an example for us for reflection and self-discovery, allowing us to see more fully the grace and mercy in your love.

For on the night that he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it with them saying, "Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And after they ate, he took the common cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them to drink from 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 it is through these promises of life and love that we see God's grace and guidance, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So it is to you, O God, that all honour and praise go, for you have raised us up out of the depths and into new life, full of hope and promise and joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Lift up and led into the world by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

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 COMMUNION

Taste and see God present with us all.
Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: Lamb of God (p. 146)
Our Father, We Have Wandered (#606)
Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling (#608)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, again you have fed us with your Word and nourished us with your promises, and you lead and guide us through this journey of life. Be with us throughout this season of Lent and always, that our self-reflections and realisations lead us always back to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May God our Shepherd lead us into freedom,
God the Saviour of the world show us the way of justice and peace,
God the Spirit residing in our hearts bind us to God's love and will, now and always.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: On Eagle's Wings (#787)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, for you are not alone.
Thanks be to God.