

*Welcome to St. Paul's
The Lord Bless You as You Worship!*

Fourth
Sunday
IN **LENT**



*Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 19, 2023*

St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church
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Rev. Lori Nickoloff, Pastor

Enter to Listen, Exit to Serve

WORSHIP NOTES

Thank you for worshipping with us this morning. We're glad you're here! May you experience God's love through the words you hear and sing, the meal you eat, and the fellowship of God's people.

Prayer Requests If you have a prayer request, please give a note to the ushers or send an email to Pastor Lori.

Face Masks Are optional however, just a friendly reminder...please wear a mask in the building if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19/experiencing any kind of respiratory or flu-like symptoms. Masks are available on the table in the narthex in case you forget yours as home. Thank you!

Holy Communion All are welcome to receive our Lord as he comes to us in Holy Communion. The method of reception for Communion today will be "Continuous Communion at the Rail". For those who for whatever reason are unable to drink the wine, glasses of juice are placed in the center of the tray. Please let the pastor know if you would like gluten free bread. Those who prefer not to commune may come forward for a blessing.

Pew Cushions Are available on the pew in front of the organ at the back of the sanctuary.

Hearing Assistance Individual hearing devices are available at the back of the sanctuary. Please do not remove them from the plastic bags. Return the device at the end of worship so they can be sanitized. Take the earpiece home with you to use each time you come to worship.

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Winter Weather Updates

When the weather is questionable or if a weather warning has been issued by the National Weather Service/Sherriff's Department, please check your email to see if in person worship has been cancelled and to access the Zoom link. If you do not have an email address, you will receive a telephone call to inform you of the closure.

We Worship God

Welcome

Prelude

“Bist Du Bei Mir”

by J S Bach

The prelude is a time for people to become quiet, to meditate and pray, and to prepare their hearts and minds to worship God. You are invited to pray this prayer to help you transition from the cares and activities of daily life to worshipping the Living God.

God of grace, you have given us minds to know you, hearts to love you, and voices to sing your praise. Fill us with your Spirit, that we may celebrate your glory and worship you in spirit and truth, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

(Please stand as you are able)

Call to Worship

P: There is so much we do not see.

All: **We judge others for their misfortunes, and fail to see our own complicity.**

P: Today we gather in your light, that you would reveal yourself to us.

All: **Let us see truth, and be healed.**

Confession and Forgiveness

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: God of mystery and grace,

All: **We admit to you, to ourselves, and to this community that we have caused harm to others through our actions and through our failure to act. We have stored up treasures for ourselves on earth, we have given into temptation, we have failed to heed your call to cross boundaries in the name of your love and justice. Give us the humility to accept our failings and make things right where we can. Forgive us and help us to forgive ourselves.**

P: Hear these words: God so loved the world that God came and dwelt among us in the person of Jesus, and through him all people are redeemed. Know that you are more deeply loved than you can imagine, and that through Jesus Christ your sins are forgiven.

All: Amen.

Gathering Hymn: *Awake, My Soul, and With the Sun* #557

Greeting

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

All: And also with you.

Hymn of Praise: *Lord Jesus Think on Me* #599

Prayer of the Day

P: Healing God,

All: You exalt the humble and confound the righteous. Open our eyes to your truth, and wash away all that obscures our vision. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

(Please be seated)

We Hear God's Word

Prayer for Illumination

A: Saving Spirit,

All: as you gathered us in the wilderness and led us to a land flowing with milk and honey, gather us before your Word and lead us into your wisdom that we might be equipped to follow your Son on this Lenten path. Amen.

Psalm 23

A: The Lord is my constant companion, there is no need that He cannot fulfill.

All: Whether His course for me points to the mountaintops of glorious joy or the valleys of human suffering, He is by my side.

A: He is ever present with me.

All: He is close beside me when I tread the dark streets of danger, and even when I flirt with death itself, He will not leave me.

A: When the pain is severe, He is near to comfort.

All: When the burden is heavy, He is there to lean upon.

A: When depression darkens my soul, He touches me with eternal joy.

All: When I am empty and alone, He fills the aching vacuum with His power.

A: My security is in His promise to be near me always,

All: And in the knowledge that He will never let me go.

From Psalms Now by Leslie F. Brandt

Ephesians 5:8-14

For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light— for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true. Try to find out what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what such people do secretly; but everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for everything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Sleeper, awake! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

A: Word of God, Word of life.

All: Thanks be to God!

(Please stand as you are able)

Gospel Acclamation



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,
slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

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The Gospel

P: The Gospel according to John.

All: Glory to you, O Lord.

John 9:1-41

Pastor Lori: As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him,

Men: *“Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?”*

Pastor Lori: Jesus answered,

Brian: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Pastor Lori: When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him,

Brian: “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”

Pastor Lori: (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask,

Congregation: *“Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?”*

Pastor Lori: Some were saying,

Congregation: *“It is he.”*

Pastor Lori: Others were saying,

Congregation: “No, but it is someone like him.”

Pastor Lori: He kept saying,

Keith: “I am the man.”

Pastor Lori: But they kept asking him,

Congregation: “Then how were your eyes opened?”

Pastor Lori: He answered,

Keith: “The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ Then I went and washed and received my sight.”

Pastor Lori: They said to him,

Congregation: “Where is he?”

Pastor Lori: He said,

Keith: “I do not know.”

Pastor Lori: They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them,

Keith: “He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see.”

Pastor Lori: Some of the Pharisees said,

Piano Side: “This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath.”

Pastor Lori: But others said,

Pulpit Side: “How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?”

Pastor Lori: And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man,

Piano Side: “What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened.”

Pastor Lori: He said,

Keith: “He is a prophet.”

Pastor Lori: The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them,

Pulpit Side: “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

Pastor Lori: His parents answered,

Women: “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.”

Pastor Lori: His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him,

Piano Side: "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner."

Pastor Lori: He answered,

Keith: "I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see."

Pastor Lori: They said to him,

Pulpit Side: "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"

Pastor Lori: He answered them,

Keith: "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

Pastor Lori: Then they reviled him, saying,

Piano Side: "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

Pastor Lori: The man answered,

Keith: "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Pastor Lori: They answered him,

Pulpit Side: "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?"

Pastor Lori: And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said,

Brian: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Pastor Lori: He answered,

Keith: "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."

Pastor Lori: Jesus said to him,

Brian: "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."

Pastor Lori: He said,

Keith: "Lord, I believe."

Pastor Lori: And he worshiped him. Jesus said,
Brian: "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."
Pastor Lori: Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him,
Piano Side: "Surely we are not blind, are we?"
Pastor Lori: Jesus said to them,
Brian: "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains."

P: The Gospel of the Lord.
All: Praise to you, O Christ.

(Please be seated)

Sermon

Rev. Lori Nickoloff

Hymn of the Day: *Be Thou My Vision* #793

(Please stand as you are able)

The Apostles' Creed

A: With the whole church, let us confess our faith.
All: 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

A: As we walk through this season of contemplation, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

A: When we close our eyes to your possibilities, we willfully remain in a prison of our own certainty. Flood our darkness, O God, with the brilliance of your freedom and mercy. Merciful God,

All: Hear our prayer.

A: With mud and water you restored a blind man's sight. Reveal to us the restorative powers of your created world, all that exists to make us whole and fill us with abundant life. Merciful God,

All: Hear our prayer.

A: Forgive us for all the ways we blind ourselves to the truth: avoidance, willful ignorance, stubbornness, and delusion. Lead us away from harmful habits and perpetual self-absorption. Merciful God,

All: Hear our prayer.

A: As you stirred up the healing waters of Siloam, so stir your spirit in us that we might also be restored. Bestow your healing hand upon all who need it, (especially). Merciful God,

All: Hear our prayer.

Here other petitions may be offered.

A: Like the saints who now walk in light perpetual, we seek a closer communion with you. Shine brightly through our lives as you did through theirs. Merciful God,

All: Hear our prayer.

P: In the name of Jesus Christ, we lift all for whom we pray, whether out loud or in the quietness of our hearts, into your loving arms, O God.

All: Amen.

Sharing of Peace

P: The Lord of peace give you peace at all times and in all ways.

All: And also to you.

Please turn to the people near you to offer a gesture of peace and the greeting, "God's peace be with you!" You are also encouraged to turn to the back of the sanctuary and greet the worshippers on Zoom with a wave or gesture of peace.

(Please be seated)

Offering

This month our Local Hunger Offering will be given to Yates County Christmas Program.

Offertory Music

(Please stand as you are able)

Offertory Hymn: *Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God* #188

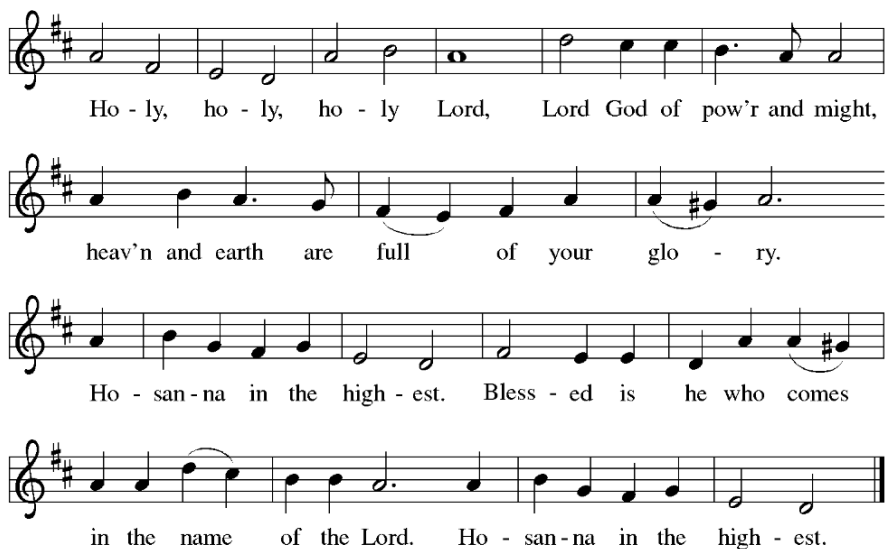
Offertory Prayer

- A: We bring our thanks for all that you have generously given us, without our asking and without our merit.
- All: **Bless now these gifts that your church offers, and use our plenty to supply the need of others. Amen.**

We Share God's Meal

The Great Thanksgiving

- P: The Lord be with you.
- All: **And also with you.**
- P: Lift up your hearts.
- All: **We lift them to the Lord.**
- P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
- All: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**
- P: Praise upon praise belongs to you, God of David, for through the length of days your goodness faileth never... .. with angels and archangels and all the company of heaven as we join the unending hymn.



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
 heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
 Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
 in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

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- P: Anointing God, Samuel poured oil on the head of David, and your Spirit came mightily upon him... .. Great is the mystery of faith.
- All: Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again.**
- P: Searching God, you alone give your followers eyes of faith. Teach your church to see as you see, and set its sights on your kingdom. In the face of evil, lift the burden of fear. In the shadow of death, give comfort. In the company of enemies, spread your welcome table until that day when every cup runneth over and your children look upon one everlasting banquet, and all are made one around your heavenly feast, as faith shall at last be made sight; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in the power of the Holy Spirit, with all honor and glory, one God, now and forever.
- All: Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

- P: Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.
- All: 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.

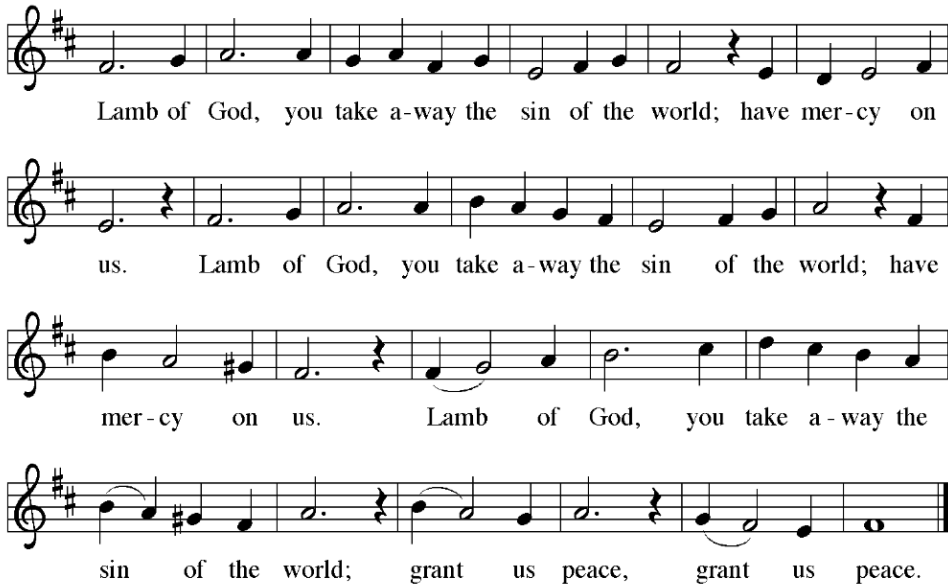
Eucharistic Invitation

P: You prepare a table before us, O God, in the presence of our enemies. Feed us with that which truly gives life: your body and blood. Come now and enjoy the riches bestowed upon every child of God!

All: Amen.

(Please be seated)

Lamb of God



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

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Hymns During Communion:

Amazing Grace

#779

Lamb of God

#336

Morning Has Broken

#556

Table Blessing

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

All: Amen

Prayer After Communion:

A: O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

We Leave to Serve

Announcements

Benediction

P: May God, who comes to us in the things of this world, bless your eyes and be in your seeing. May Christ, who looks upon you with deepest love, bless your eyes and widen your gaze. May the Spirit, who perceives what is and what may yet be, bless your eyes and sharpen your vision. May the Sacred Three bless your eyes and cause you to see.

All: Amen

~ from *In the Sanctuary of Women*, copyright © Jan L. Richardson.

Litany

L: Jesus' love heals in ways beyond our understanding.

All: **Yet we insist on knowing the "how" and the "why."**

L: We want to know because it gives us a feeling of control.

All: **We do not want to be the ones who are blind.**

L: In our need to control, we close ourselves off,

All: **And become actually blinder to reality.**

L: Instead, let us open our minds and accept.

All: Let us accept the words of the healed, and be inspired to follow Jesus.
L: Then we can proclaim in the words of the hymn,
All: I was blind, but now I see.

(Please stand to sing the hymn and turn to face the flame as it exits the church)

Sending Hymn: *Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us* #789

Sending

A: Go in peace. Care for the poor.

All: Thanks be to God!

Postlude *“Sleepers Awake”* *by J S Bach*

“Be Thou My Vision”

The text’s source is an eighth century Irish manuscript translated in 1905 by Mary E Byrne, (1880-1931) later adapted into twelve metrical couplets by Eleanor Hull. (1860-1935) As a “breastplate” hymn, the speaker prayerfully claims power and protection in Jesus Christ. “Be thou my vision” is mirrored and realized in the ending “still be my vision.”

Mary Byrne, specialist in Gaelic, contributed to many publications and Gaelic/English dictionaries. Eleanor Hull, scholar of Irish art and literature and president of the Irish Literary Society in London authored the large “The poem book of Gael” where this poem first appeared.

“Slane” is named for the hill where Patrick defied the king and lit the new fire of Easter Vigil. It has a vocal range of an octave and a fourth, as in the range of “the star spangled banner.” Here the movement up and down is gradual, which engages and inspires singers. Interestingly, except for several half steps in the third phrase, the melody is pentatonic, facilitating melodic flow. “Slane” was first joined to “Be thou my vision” in the Irish “Church hymnal” in Dublin 1919.