



Sunday, March 15, 2026
Fourth Sunday in Lent

St. Stephen Lutheran Church
Rooted in our Tradition, Open to Yours

Welcome and Prelude

Confession and Forgiveness

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt and blots out all offenses.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For failing to recognize your coming reign, and for hindering the work of the Spirit:

Gracious God, **have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.**

For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition, and for disdain the living water

Christ offers: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For disregarding voices from the margin, and for distrusting signs of your healing and

hope in the world: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent, and for disregarding Christ's call to

come forth to life: Gracious God,

have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound. Through faith, the free gift of God, you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ. In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts, and gives you life and peace.

Amen.

O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate

ELW 722 vs 1,2,4



1 O Christ, your heart, com - pas - sion - ate, bore ev - 'ry hu - man pain.
2 As once you wel - comed those cast down and healed the sick, the blind,
3 O Christ, cre - ate new hearts in us that beat in time with yours,
4 O Love that made the dis - tant stars, yet marks the spar - row's fall,



Its beat - ing was the pulse of God; its breadth, God's vast do - main.
so may all bruised and bro - ken lives through us your help still find.
that, joined by faith with your great heart, be - come love's o - pen doors.
whose arms stretched wide up - on a cross em - brace and bear us all:



The heart of God, the heart of Christ com - bined in per - fect rhyme
Lord, join our hearts with those who weep that none may weep a - lone,
We are your bod - y, ris - en Christ; our hearts, our hands we yield
come, make your church a ser - vant church that walks your ser - vant ways,



to write God's love in hu - man deeds, e - ter - ni - ty in time.
and help us bear an - oth - er's pain as though it were our own.
that through our life and min - is - try your love may be re - vealed.
whose deeds of love rise up to you, a sac - ri - fice of praise!

Greeting

The grace of Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The Reading: Amos 5:18-24

¹⁸Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!

Why do you want the day of the LORD?

It is darkness, not light,

¹⁹as if someone fled from a lion
and was met by a bear

or went into the house and rested a hand against the wall
and was bitten by a snake.

²⁰Is not the day of the LORD darkness, not light,
and gloom with no brightness in it?

²¹I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.

²²Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and grain offerings,
I will not accept them,
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.

²³Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.

²⁴But let justice roll down like water
and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God**

Marty Haugen

Refrain

Re - turn to God with all your heart, the
 Source of grace and mer - cy; come seek the ten - der
 faith - ful - ness of God, _____

The Gospel: **Matthew 6:19-34** **Glory to you, O Lord.**

¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, ²⁰ but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

²² "The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, ²³ but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷ And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? ²⁸ And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹ yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. ³⁰ But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe

you—you of little faith? ³¹ Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' ³² For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³ But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

³⁴ "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own.

Today's trouble is enough for today.

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

Sermon

Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound

ELW 779 vs 1,2,3,5



1 A - maz - ing grace!— how sweet the sound— that
 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and
 3 Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares I
 4 The Lord has prom - ised good to me; his
 5 When we've been there ten thou - sand years, bright



saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved; how pre - cious did that
 have al - read - y come; 'tis grace has brought me
 word my hope se - cures; he will my shield and
 shin - ing as the sun, we've no less days to



now am found; was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!
 safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
 por - tion be as long as life en - dures.
 sing God's praise than when we'd first be - gun.

THE SMALL CATECHISM OF MARTIN LUTHER

In ancient and modern times, Lent has been the time for instruction of candidates preparing for their baptism at the Easter Vigil. At the same time, the whole Church anticipates Easter through acts of repentance and spiritual renewal. It is therefore appropriate that we review the basics of our faith during these Sundays in Lent, so that we all might be renewed by our baptismal covenants and made ready for the celebration of Easter.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is not water only, but it is water used together with God's Word and by his command.

What benefits does God give in Baptism?

In Baptism God forgives sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe what he has promised.

How can water do such great things?

It is not water that does these things, but God's Word with the water and our trust in this Word. Water by itself is only water, but with the Word of God it is a life-giving water which by grace gives the new birth through the Holy Spirit.

What does Baptism mean for daily living?

It means that our sinful self, with all its evil deeds and desires, should be drowned through daily repentance; and that day after day a new self should arise to live with God in righteousness and purity forever.

Prayers of the People

Reconciled by God's mercy and sustained by God's presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

God, our shepherd, we pray that you guide the church. **Lead Christians in our community and across the globe in right paths for your name's sake.**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our provider, we cry out for this planet and the life it holds. **Rescue endangered animals and plants, preserve threatened ecosystems, and save creatures from natural disasters.**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our sovereign, we plead for your peace on earth. **Bring an end to war and violence, and raise up leaders who seek goodness and mercy.**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our healer, we call to you in our need. Uplift all who are made to feel unimportant, and transform the hearts of all infected by bigotry and prejudice. Care for all in special need this day, especially Judy Prinz, Donna, Todd, Ted & Jacqui, Bud, Carolyn, Doris, Janet, Dan & Mary, Beth, John Luoma, the Mitchell family and all those we hold in our hearts.

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our friend, we praise you for the diversity of people among us. **Help us to share and receive the gifts we each possess, and stir up a spirit of understanding, celebration, and welcome for all.**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our home, we thank you for all who have died and completed their baptismal journeys. **Grant us faith to live until we too dwell in your house forever.**

Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.

Amen.

The Sharing of the Peace

Special Music

Song of Peace
by H. Dean Wagner

Jubellation Bell Choir

Meal

Great Thanksgiving

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.

Preface

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; who on this day overcomes death and the grave, and by his glorious resurrection opens to us the way of everlasting life. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right
spir-it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres-ence, and take
not your Ho-ly Spir-it from me. Re-store to me the joy of
your sal-va-tion, and up-hold me with your free Spir-it.

The Words of Institution

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. **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

The Lord's Prayer

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.

First Communion

In many congregations, children receive their first communion several years before they are confirmed. Today, John Stultz, who was baptized at St. Stephen on August 12, 2018, will receive his first communion, and we have invited his family, friends, and you.

For everything there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven.

In Luke 22 it is written: 'then [Jesus] took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you' And he did the same with the cup after supper saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'

Let us pray: Thank you, Jesus, for all you give us: love, forgiveness, acceptance, family, a church home, and especially your presence among us. **Amen.**

Communion

All baptized Christians are welcome to participate in Holy Communion. We ask children who have not had First Communion instruction, or adults who do not wish to receive communion, to keep their hands folded and they will receive a blessing.

**Gluten free and apple juice options are available.*



1 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
2 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;
3 O Lamb of God, you bear the sin of all the world a - way;



you suf-fered death our lives to save: have mer-cy now, we pray.
you set us free from guilt and grave: have mer-cy now, we pray.
e - ter-nal peace with God you made: give us your peace, we pray.

Post-Communion Prayer

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. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Awake, O Sleeper, Rise From Death

ELW 452



- 1 A - wake, O sleep-er, rise from death, and Christ shall give you light;
- 2 To us on earth he came to bring from sin and fear re - lease,
- 3 There is one bod - y and one hope, one Spir - it and one call,
- 4 Then walk in love as Christ has loved, who died that he might save;
- 5 For us Christ lived, for us he died, and con - quered in the strife.



so learn his love, its length and breadth, its full - ness, depth, and height.
to give the Spir - it's u - ni - ty, the ver - y bond of peace.
one Lord, one faith, and one bap - tism, one God who made us all.
with kind and gen - tle hearts for - give as God in Christ for - gave.
A - wake, a - rise, go forth in faith, and Christ shall give you life.

In holy baptism, you and I are called to “[bear] God’s creative and redeeming word to all the world” (ELW, p. 231).

In Isaiah it is written: Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, “Here I am.” (Isa. 58:6-9a)

Let us pray:

Blessed are you, O Holy One, for you formed us in love, claimed us in baptism, and set us free for lives of service and witness. Strengthen us to fulfill the promises of baptism— to proclaim Christ through word and deed, to care for others and the world you made, and to work for justice and peace.

Bless those who accompany others with compassion. Let their steadying presence be a shelter in weary places, and their faithful witness be a sign of your solidarity with all who suffer.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord’s face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and ✝ give you peace. **Thanks be to God.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Believe the good news.

Thanks be to God.

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