



Sunday, March 8, 2026
Third 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.

Open Now the Gates of Beauty

ELW 533 vs 1,3,5



- 1 O - pen now thy gates of beau - ty, Zi - on, let me en - ter there,
- 2 Gra - cious God, I come be - fore thee; come thou al - so un - to me;
- 3 Here thy praise is glad - ly chant-ed, here thy seed is du - ly sown;
- 4 Thou my faith in - crease and quick-en, let me keep thy gift di - vine;
- 5 Speak, O God, and I will hear thee, let thy will be done in - deed;



where my soul in joy - ful du - ty waits for God who an - swers prayer.
where we find thee and a - dore thee, there a heav'n on earth must be.
let my soul, where it is plant-ed, bring forth pre - cious sheaves a - lone,
how - so - e'er temp - ta - tions thick-en, may thy word still o'er me shine
may I un - dis - turbed draw near thee while thou dost thy peo - ple feed.



Oh, how bless-ed is this place, filled with so - lace, light, and grace!
To my heart, oh, en - ter thou, let it be thy tem - ple now!
so that all I hear may be fruit - ful un - to life in me.
as my guid-ing star through life, as my com-fort in all strife.
Here of life the foun - tain flows; here is balm for all our woes.

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

Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you 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 5:38-48 Glory to you, O Lord.**

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹ But I say to you: Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also, ⁴⁰ and if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, give your coat as well, ⁴¹ and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. ⁴² Give to the one who asks of you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

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

Sermon



1 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "Come un - to me and rest;
2 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "Be - hold, I free - ly give
3 I heard the voice of Je - sus say, "I am this dark world's light;



lay down, O wea - ry one, lay down your head up - on my breast."
the liv - ing wa - ter, thirst - y one; stoop down and drink and live."
look un - to me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be bright."



I came to Je - sus as I was, so wea - ry, worn, and sad;
I came to Je - sus, and I drank of that life - giv - ing stream;
I looked to Je - sus, and I found in him my star, my sun;



I found in him a rest - ing - place, and he has made me glad.
my thirst was quenched, my soul re - vived, and now I live in him.

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.

The Ten Commandments begin by saying: "I am the Lord your God. You shall have no other gods." What does this mean for us?

We are to fear, love, and trust God above anything else.

The Second Commandment says: "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain." What does this mean for us?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not use his name superstitiously, or use it to curse, swear, lie, or deceive, but call on him in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving.

The Third Commandment says: "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy." What does this mean for us?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not neglect his Word and the preaching of it, but regard it as holy and gladly hear and learn it.

The Fourth Commandment says: "Honor your father and your mother." What does this mean for us?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not despise or anger our parents and others in authority, but respect, obey, love, and serve them.

The Fifth Commandment says: "You shall not kill." What does this mean for us?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not hurt our neighbor in any way, but help him in all his physical needs.

The Sixth Commandment says: "You shall not commit adultery." What does this mean for us?

We are to fear and love God so that in matters of sex our words and conduct are pure and honorable, and husband and wife love and respect each other.

The Seventh Commandment says: "You shall not steal." What does this mean for us?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not take our neighbor's money or property, or get them in any dishonest way, but help her to improve and protect her property and means of making a living.

The Eighth Commandment says: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." What does this mean for us?

We are to fear and love God so that we do not betray, slander, or lie about our neighbor, but defend him, speak well of him, and explain his actions in the kindest way.

The Ninth and Tenth Commandments say: "You shall not covet." What does this mean for us? **We are to fear and love God so that we do not desire to get our neighbor's possessions, spouse or workers, by scheming or pretending to have a right to them, but always to help our neighbor keep what is theirs.**

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.

O God, when suffering arises, preserve your church. **Give to pastors, bishops, and all servants of your gospel endurance that produces character and hope.**
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

When the waters run dry, sustain this earth. **Send water to places languishing with drought, and bring relief to places damaged by floods.**
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

When quarrels ensue, soften our hearts. **Calm hostilities between nations and peoples, and reconcile all humans of what divides or oppresses.**
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

When your people thirst, satisfy their needs. Send water and food to all who need nourishment. We especially pray for 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.**

When we gather to worship, send us your Spirit. **Renew our hearts through the joyful noise we make and bless the work of our church musicians and choirs.**
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

O God, when death draws near, we rejoice in the promise of life with you. **We remember all who have entered eternal rest, and we pray that you bring us the hope of sharing in your glory.** 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

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.

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.

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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