



Sunday, March 22, 2026
Fifth 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.

Oh, for a Thousand Tongues to Sing

ELW 886 vs 1,2,3,6



- 1 Oh, for a thou-sand tongues to sing my great Re-deem-er's praise,
- 2 My gra-cious Mas-ter and my God, as-sist me to pro-claim,
- 3 The name of Je-sus charms our fears and bids our sor-rows cease,
- 4 He speaks, and lis-t'ning to his voice, new life the dead re-ceive;



the glo-ries of my God and king, the tri-umphs of his grace!
to spread through all the earth a-broad the hon-ors of your name.
sings mu-sic in the sin-ner's ears, brings life and health and peace.
the mourn-ful, bro-ken hearts re-joice, the hum-ble poor be-lieve.

- | | |
|---|---|
| 5 Look unto him, your Savior own,
O fallen human race!
Look and be saved through faith alone,
be justified by grace! | 6 To God all glory, praise, and love
be now and ever giv'n
by saints below and saints above,
the church in earth and heav'n. |
|---|---|

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

Almighty God, your Son came into the world to free us all from sin and death. Breathe upon us the power of your Spirit, that we may be raised to new life in Christ and serve you in righteousness all our days, 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 7:1-20 Glory to you, O Lord.

¹“Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. ²For the judgment you give will be the judgment you get, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. ³Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye but do not notice the log in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ while the log is in your own eye? ⁵You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye.

⁶“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you.

⁷“Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. ⁸For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. ⁹Is there anyone among you who, if your child asked for bread, would give a stone? ¹⁰Or if the child asked for a fish, would give a snake? ¹¹If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

¹²“In everything do to others as you would have them do to you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

¹³“Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. ¹⁴For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.

¹⁵ "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will know them by their fruits.
 The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon

What Wondrous Love Is This

ELW 666



1 What won-drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What
 2 When I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when
 3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing; to
 4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and



won - drous love is this, O my soul! What won-drous love is this
 I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when I was sink - ing down
 God and to the Lamb I will sing; to God and to the Lamb,
 when from death I'm free, I'll sing on; and when from death I'm free,



that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dread-ful curse for my
 be - neath God's righ-teous frown, Christ laid a - side his crown for my
 who is the great I AM, while mil - lions join the theme, I will
 I'll sing God's love for me, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing



soul, for my soul, to bear the dread-ful curse for my soul?
 soul, for my soul, Christ laid a - side his crown for my soul.
 sing, I will sing, while mil - lions join the theme, I will sing.
 on, I'll sing on; and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on.

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 Holy Communion?

Holy Communion is the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ given with bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us to eat and drink.

What benefits do we receive from this sacrament?

The benefits of this sacrament are pointed out by the words, "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sin." These words assure us that in the sacrament we receive forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

How can eating and drinking do all this?

It is not eating and drinking that does this, but the words, "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sin." These words, along with eating and drinking, are the main thing in the sacrament. And whoever believes these words has exactly what they say, forgiveness of sins.

When is a person rightly prepared to receive this sacrament?

Fasting and other outward preparations serve a good purpose. However, that person is well prepared and worthy who believes these words, "given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sin." But anyone who does not believe these words, or doubts them, is neither prepared nor worthy, for the words "for you" require simply a believing heart.

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.

We pray for the church. Grant life and peace to all who gather in your name. **Breathe into us so that we may share your message of forgiveness, hope, and love.**

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

We pray for creation. **Renew landscapes that have dried up, prosper the work of those who restore homes and habitats after natural disasters.**

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

We pray for the nations. **Unbind leaders trapped by fear to act boldly for justice and free all who live in places of war and violence.**

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

We pray for all people in need. Take away the stone of poverty that weighs down so many. Console any who weep and heal all who are sick, especially Ed, Jill, Leeann & Bob, Jean, 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.**

We pray for this assembly. Ready the hearts and spirits of all preparing to be baptized. **Deepen our wonder at the mystery of your resurrection and life.**

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

We offer our thanksgiving for all people who have died in faith. **Give us faith to trust in your power to redeem and save, and bring us up from our graves to life in you.**

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

God of Mercy, Hear My Pleading
-Haydn/Larson

St. Stephen 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.

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.



1 You are the way; to you a - lone from sin and death we flee;
2 You are the truth; your word a - lone true wis - dom can im - part;
3 You are the life; the rend - ing tomb pro - claims your con - qu'ring arm;
4 You are the way, the truth, the life; grant us that way to know,



all those who search for God, you find and by your grace set free.
you on - ly can in - form the mind and pu - ri - fy the heart.
and those who put their trust in you not death nor hell shall harm.
that truth to keep, that life to win, whose joys e - ter - nal flow.

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.

From Sundays and Seasons.com. Copyright 2026 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. Reprinted by permission under Augsburg Fortress Liturgies Annual License #35725. New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved. Songs reprinted by permission under CCLI License #1177888