



*“A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’”*

*~Luke 13:6-7*

St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Third Sunday in Lent – March 23, 2025  
420 Beaver St., PO Box 411  
Mars, PA 16046-0411  
[www.stjohnchurchmars.org](http://www.stjohnchurchmars.org)  
Phone: 724-625-1830 email: [office@stjohnchurchmars.org](mailto:office@stjohnchurchmars.org)  
Rev. Katie McNeal, Presiding Minister  
Maizy Fisher, Director of Music Ministries

*We are delighted to have you worship with us this morning!  
Know that you are welcome here just as you are.*

*If you are looking for a church to call home, why not consider making this one your own? If this is your first time worshipping at St. John, please fill out the visitor information card stapled to your bulletin.*

*Everything you need to follow worship can be found in this bulletin. As you are comfortable, please rise when there is an \* and join in the congregational responses, noted in **bold**. All songs are marked with numbers. The red book in the pew has all the songs. Look for the large number in the upper corner of the page to find the correct song.*

*During the time of **Peace**, you are invited to turn to those around you and offer a word of peace. We suggest a handshake and saying, "Peace be with you." You are also welcomed to offer another gesture of peace (wave, fist-bump, smile, etc.). Hand sanitizer is available in each pew.*

*At the time of **Offering**, you are invited to share a gift. Envelopes are available in the pews if you prefer. Online gifts may be made using the QR code below:*



*You may also offer updates to our ongoing prayer list using the yellow cards in the pews and placing them in the offering plates. **Visitor information cards** and member attendance cards (attached to the front of the bulletin) may also be placed in the offering plates.*

*As Lutherans, we believe Christ is truly present in the elements of the Lord's Supper. At the time of **Holy Communion**, all baptized individuals are welcome to come forward via the center aisle, receive the elements, and return via the side aisles. We begin at the front of the right side, commune all on the right side, then we will invite the left side forward. When you come forward, you may receive the bread from the pastor (gluten free wafers are available), then pre-filled cups with wine or grape juice from the assisting minister. You may consume the elements after receiving them then place the empty cup in the tray held by the acolyte. Those who do not receive Holy Communion are welcome to come forward for a blessing.*

*If you need a **restroom**, restrooms are located on the bottom floor at the far side of the building from the elevator. Restrooms may be accessed either via the stairs in the rear of the sanctuary, the stairs by the Greeting Area, or the elevator.*

*A **playroom** is available downstairs for children who need a break from the worship service.*

*This room is by the elevator on the lower level. An adult must remain with the child. Children are also welcome to utilize the books and puzzles available in the Greeting Area on the top level by the elevator.*

*As you prepare for worship, you are invited to fill out the blue prayer request forms located in each pew. The cards will be collected during our hymn of the day, and prayers will be offered during the prayers of intercession.*

## **PRELUDE and ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **GATHERING**

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*

#### **\*CALL TO WORSHIP**

Jesus went to the mountaintop to pray.

**Jesus went into the city to heal.**

Jesus walked to Samaria to extend love.

**Jesus went to the water's edge to teach.**

Jesus went to places of peace and connection,

**but Jesus also went to the wilderness.**

There is nowhere we can go that God does not walk with us.

**We are in God's house. Let us worship God.**

#### **\*GATHERING SONG *As the Sun with Longer Journey* (ELW 329)**



1 As the sun with long - er jour - ney melts the win - ter's snow and ice,  
2 Through the days of wait - ing, watch - ing, in the des - ert of our sin,  
3 Praise be giv - en to the mak - er of the sea - sons' year - ly round:



with its slow - ly grow - ing ra - diance warms the seed be - neath the earth,  
search - ing on the far ho - ri - zon for a sign of cloud or wind,  
Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Spir - it—Source, Sus - tain - er, Lord of life,



may the sun of Christ's up - ris - ing gent - ly bring our hearts to life.  
we a - wait the heal - ing wa - ters of our Sav - ior's vic - to - ry.  
as the ev - er turn - ing a - ges roll to their e - ter - nal rest.

## \* CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

**Amen.**

We come to confession not to wallow in our own guilt. God wants a life for us so expansive that faith, joy, and hope flow over the edges. So, we come to confession not because we have to suffer our way through Lent, but because we know that change starts with being honest. There is healing here. There is life to be gained here. Let us speak truth into our lives, asking for God's help where we need it, trusting in God's abundant, overflowing grace.

Holy God,

**We confess: we do not turn to you fully. Instead of trusting that we are made good, instead of trusting that we are loved simply because we are yours, we stockpile our value in earthly things – in trophies and awards, in likes and follows, in wealth and power. We share with you only the pieces of our lives that are convenient. We forget that we are called, invited, and loved with all that we are – including our mess, our beauty, our faith, and our doubt. Forgive us. Teach us a new way. Teach us your way. Teach us to love as you love. Give us hearts that long to turn fully to you.**

**Amen.**

Family of faith, God sees you. God hears you. God loves you. No matter how many times we mess up, no matter how far we wander, no matter how lost we feel, God's grace is full to the brim. It overflows in desert places. It finds us where we are and it covers us in mercy. For even when we stumble, even when we take the easy way out, even in our fear or shame, even when we sin, we belong to God. Siblings in Christ, know this: in the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, you are freed, forgiven, and claimed with all that you are.

Now say it with me:

**God loves us, chooses us, and wraps us in grace.**

**We are claimed. We are drenched in mercy. We are forgiven.**

**Thanks be to God.**

**Amen.**

# \*KYRIE



In peace, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace from a - bove, and for our sal - va - tion, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For the peace of the whole world, for the well - being of the church of God,



and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



For this ho - ly house, and for all who of - fer here their wor - ship and praise,



let us pray to the Lord.



Lord, have mer - cy.



Help, save, comfort, and de - fend us, gra - cious Lord.



A - men.

**\*CANTICLE OF PRAISE *Glory To God***

Assisting minister



Glo - ry to God in the high - est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.

All



Lord God, heav'n-ly King, al-might-y God and Fa - ther, we wor -



ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo - ry.



Lord Je - sus Christ, on - ly Son of the Fa - ther, O Lord God,



Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world: have



mer-cy on us; you are seat - ed at the right hand of the



Fa - ther: re - ceive our prayer. For you a - lone are the



Ho - ly One, you a - lone are the Lord, you a - lone



are the Most High, Je - sus Christ, with the Ho - ly Spir - it,



in the glo - ry of God the Fa - ther. A - men.

## **\*PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray,

**Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.**

**Amen.**

## **FIRST READING: Isaiah 55:1-9**

A reading from Isaiah.

<sup>1</sup> Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters;  
and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.

<sup>5</sup> See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **PSALM: Psalm 63:1-8**

<sup>1</sup> O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

<sup>2</sup> **Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,  
that I might behold your power and your glory.**

<sup>3</sup> For your steadfast love is better than life itself;  
my lips shall give you praise.

<sup>4</sup> **So will I bless you as long as I live  
and lift up my hands in your name.**

<sup>5</sup> My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods,  
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

<sup>6</sup> **when I remember you upon my bed,  
and meditate on you in the night watches.**

<sup>7</sup> For you have been my helper,  
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

<sup>8</sup> **My whole being clings to you;  
your right hand holds me fast.**

## **SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

<sup>1</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

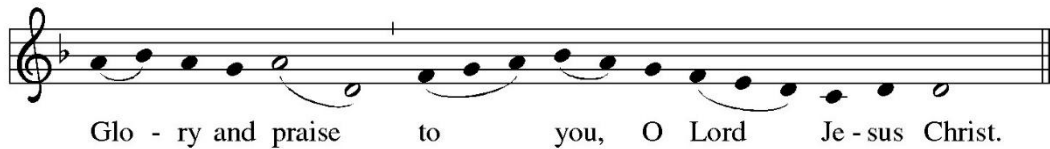
<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. <sup>10</sup> And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. <sup>12</sup> So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. <sup>13</sup> No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**



## \*GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



## \*GOSPEL READING: Luke 13:1-9

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup> At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?<sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did.<sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?<sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none.<sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’<sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it.<sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ**

## CHILDREN’S SERMON

### SERMON

**\*HYMN OF THE DAY *What God Ordains Is Good Indeed* (ELW 776)**

*(Blue prayer cards are collected during the song.)*



1 What God or - dains is good in - deed, for all life well pro - vid - ing.  
2 What God or - dains is good in - deed: my light, my life, my Sav - ior!  
3 What God or - dains is good in - deed. When hope seems like de - lu - sion,  
4 What God or - dains is good in - deed. My Lord will nev - er fail me



The will of God is best for me, the ground of my con - fid - ing.  
No ill can get the best of me; God's care will nev - er wa - ver.  
I taste the bit - ter cup and plead, "Lord, quench my fear, con - fu - sion."  
on dan - ger's path, in deep - est need, when death in grief shall veil me.



My faith - ful God, on ev - 'ry road you know the way un -  
Through joy and pain I shall at - tain the dawn dis - clos - ing  
God ends the night, re - stores de - light; by faith I face to -  
My God so dear will draw me near, in lov - ing arms will



fold - ing and my hand you are hold - ing.  
clear - ly that God has loved me dear - ly.  
mor - row and yield to God all sor - row.  
hold me, at last in light en - fold me.

**\*APOSTLES' CREED**

Let us confess our faith in the words of the Apostles' 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 by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.  
*A brief silence*

We pray for the church, called to be a witness to all peoples. Grant humility and wisdom to bishops, pastors, deacons, elders, councils, and congregations, that they may call upon you in making decisions. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for the earth, called to provide abundantly. Teach your people the goodness of your generosity, that in sharing what we have been given, all life may flourish on the planet that is our shared home. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for the nations, called to protect their inhabitants and collaborate in the work of justice and peace. Forge bonds of compassion and mutual care across human borders and boundaries, that all the world may have enough to live. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for those in need, called to receive your compassion especially Bob, Geneva, Cherry, Winnie, Henry, Harry, Ellen, Sally, Katie, Debi, Anne, Karen, Nan, Beverly, those on our prayer list, all whom we remember aloud or in our hearts. Comfort those whose lives have been disrupted through natural disasters and human conflict Aid communities in coming together to mourn, heal, and rebuild. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for this assembly, called to welcome its neighbors to the table of your grace. Bless food pantries, community gardens and kitchens, clean water projects, and all ministries that address human hunger and thirst. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for the faithful lives of those who proclaimed your gospel in times of challenge and strife, and for all those whose lives of love and service have ended. May their witness inspire our own. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

God of the wilderness, we give you thanks for your overflowing, abundant mercy and your steadfast presence. Receive the prayers of your people. (*blue prayer cards are read*) Draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.  
**Amen.**

### **\*SHARING THE PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

Let us share Christ's peace with one another.

## MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ*

### OFFERING

#### OFFERTORY HYMN *Jesus is a Rock in a Weary Land* (ELW 333)

*\*rise on 3<sup>rd</sup> verse*

*Refrain – All*



Je - sus is a rock in a wea - ry land, a wea - ry land, a  
wea - ry land; my Je - sus is a rock in a  
wea - ry land, a shel - ter in the time of storm.

*Leader or All*



1 No one can do like Je - sus, not a  
2 When Je - sus was on earth, . . . . . the . .  
3 Yon - der comes my Sav - ior, him . .



mum-bling word he said; he went walk - ing down to Laz -  
flesh was ver - y weak; . . he took a towel and gird -  
whom I love so well; . . he has the palm of vic -

*Refrain*



- a - rus' grave, and he raised him from the dead.  
ed him - self and he washed his dis - ci - ples' feet.  
- to - ry and the keys of death and hell.

### \*OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

Gracious Provider, you set your immense treasures among us, opening your heart to the world. As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love, deepen our commitment to sharing those treasures with others, through our Savior, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## \*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.**

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.

You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace.

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:

The musical score consists of five staves of music in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notes are: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The lyrics are: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. The second staff continues with: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The lyrics are: Ho - san - na in the high - est. The third staff continues with: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The lyrics are: Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. The fourth staff continues with: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The lyrics are: Ho - san - na in the high - est. The fifth staff continues with: G4 (quarter), A4 (quarter), B4 (quarter), C5 (quarter), B4-A4 (beamed eighth notes), G4 (quarter), F#4 (quarter), E4 (quarter), D4 (quarter), C4 (half). The lyrics are: Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,  
heav - en 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.

Blessed are you, O God of the universe.

**Your love never runs out, your hope never runs dry, your joy never gives up.**

Even as your Son gathered with his friends for one more meal,  
as he prepared to give the full measure of his devotion and love to this broken world,  
just before his own friend betrayed him,  
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.

God of Life, in a world that loves scarcity, your abundance is shocking.  
In a world that knows fear, your joy is compelling.  
In a world that knows anxiety, your peace is captivating.  
**We long for these things.**

So today we ask you:  
When compassion fatigue rears her head, **be with us.**  
When stress makes it hard to breathe, **be with us.**  
When self-doubt pushes in close, **be with us.**  
When exhaustion becomes our constant or when loneliness becomes our norm, **be with us.**  
Be with us, and show us the way to the life you long for us.

**Show us a life of expansive faith.**  
**Show us a life of overflowing joy.**  
**Show us a life of absorbing beauty.**  
**Show us a life of engrossing purpose.**  
**Show us a life that is honest, abundant, and meaningful in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.**

Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine.  
Bless this feast. Grace our table with your presence. Breathe new life into us.  
**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With your holy ones of all times and places, with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God, blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever. **Amen.**

## \*THE LORD'S PRAYER

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**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;**

**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**

## \*INVITATION TO COMMUNION

You are invited to this meal of grace. Every one of us – with our doubts, our fears, our scars, our joy, our dreams, our hopes, our questions – we are invited to God's table. For here we will be fed and given a taste of an expansive life that is full to the brim with love, overflowing with joy. Now come. Not because you must, but because you can. Come. You are invited. This meal is for you.

*Through this meal, we know forgiveness, life, and salvation as the blessings of God's sacramental grace. In response to Jesus' invitation, all are welcome to come forward and experience the real presence of Christ in the bread and wine. Those who do not receive the bread and wine are invited to come forward for a blessing.*

*Grape juice and gluten free wafers are available upon request. Communion may also be brought back to the pews for those who are unable to come forward.*

## COMMUNION SONG *Lamb of God*

The image shows a musical score for the Communion Song "Lamb of God". It consists of five staves of music in a single system, written in a treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff begins with "Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the". The second staff continues with "world; have mer - cy on us. Lamb of God, you". The third staff continues with "take a - way the sin of the world; have mer - cy". The fourth staff continues with "on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the". The fifth staff concludes with "sin of the world; grant us peace. A - men." The music features a mix of quarter, eighth, and sixteenth notes, with some phrases marked with slurs.

## DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION

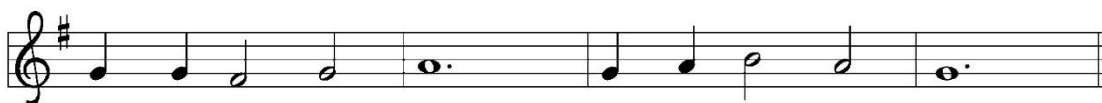
### COMMUNION HYMN *Jesus, Still Lear On* (ELW 624)



1 Je - sus, still lead on, till our rest be won; and, al - though the  
2 If the way be drear, if the foe be near, let no faith - less  
3 When we seek re - lief from a long - felt grief, when temp - ta - tions  
4 Je - sus, still lead on, till our rest be won; heav'n - ly lead - er,

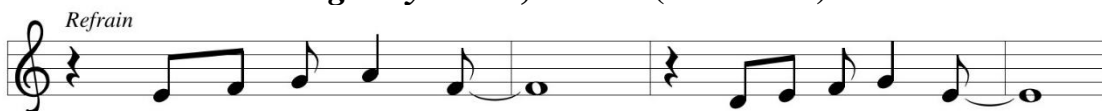


way be cheer - less, we will fol - low, calm and fear - less;  
fears o'er - take us, let not faith and hope for - sake us;  
come al - lur - ing make us pa - tient and en - dur - ing;  
still di - rect us, still sup - port, con - sole, pro - tect us,



guide us by your hand to the prom - ised land.  
safe - ly past the foe to our home we go.  
show us that bright shore where we weep no more.  
till we safe - ly stand in the prom - ised land.

### COMMUNION HYMN *Change My Heart, O God* (ELW 801)



Change my heart, O God; make it ev - er true.



Change my heart, O God; may I be like you.



You are the pot - ter; I am the clay.



Mold me and make me; this is what I pray.



**\*POST-COMMUNION BLESSING**

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and preserve you in grace.  
**Amen**

**\*POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Generous Host, you have shared your feast with us and made us new. Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts. Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities that your liberating love might nourish the world into freedom, in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**\*BLESSING**

May God our tender parent, God the crucified one, God the reconciling Spirit, + fill you to the brim with grace and blessing now and forever **Amen.**

**\*SENDING SONG *As the Deer Runs to the River* (ELW 331)**



- 1 As the deer runs to the riv - er, parched and wea - ry from the chase,
- 2 When your Is - rael crossed the des - ert where no stream or spring was seen,
- 3 "Come and drink," I - sa - iah sum-moned, "all who for God's mer - cy plead!
- 4 Christ, we come from des - ert plac - es, deep - est thirst un - sat - is - fied.



we have come from hurt and hur - ry, thirst - ing for your heal - ing grace.  
Mo - ses struck the rock, and wa - ter flowed for them, re - fresh - ing, clean.  
God's for - give - ness, like a foun-tain, flows to sat - is - fy your need."  
Lead us to the wa - ters flow - ing from the cross on which you died.



*Refrain*  
Je - sus, source of liv - ing wa - ter, may we drink of you and live!

**\*DISMISSAL**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; render no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; and love and serve God, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit. Go in peace. Serve in love.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**POSTLUDE**

## Assisting in worship today:

**Assisting Minister: David D**

**Acolyte: Ava N**

**Ushers: Volunteer**

**Offering: Carissa M & Jules K**

**Attendance last week: 46**

## Notes for the day's texts:

God's word for us today is nutritious and wholesome, though hard to digest. The gospel reading seems oddly brutal alongside the abundance and comfort of the texts from Isaiah ("delight yourselves in rich food") and Psalm 63 ("My spirit is content as with the richest of foods"). Even Paul finds himself using physical sustenance as a metaphor ("they drank from the spiritual rock, . . . and the rock was Christ"). Surrounded by this food imagery, we now find Jesus using some horrific events as illustrations. After the mingled blood and fallen towers, it may be hard to hear the fig-tree parable as the grace-full story it really is. But here is Christ himself as gardener: digging, fertilizing, protecting, and nurturing us. We are fragile creatures, living in a world of tragedy and terror, but God does not punish fragility with death. On the contrary, God sent Jesus to us so that we may live.

Living in that nurtured garden of Christ, tended to and cared for as we grow in that love, how can we keep from blossoming? Live, yes, and live fruitfully, our gospel proclaims! Grow, yes, and grow gloriously! Now the good news of Christ's redeeming mercy becomes clear: we are each treated with boundless mercy, not impartial justice. While the world may want to blame the withering tree for its inability to be productive, our Savior and Lord reaches into our lives, reminds us of our roots, nourishes us with grace, and allows us to bloom, to flourish, to freely share our gifts with the world.

## Today's Music

*As the Sun with Longer Journey* Text: John Patrick Earls, OSB, b. 1935, Music: Carl F. Schalk, 1929-2021. Order of Saint Benedict, admin. by Liturgical Press / Augsburg Fortress.

*What God Ordains Is Good Indeed.* Text: Samuel Rodigast, 1649-1708; tr. Martin A. Seltz, b. 1951, Music: Severus Gastorius, 1646-1682. Augsburg Fortress / Public Domain .

*Jesus is a Rock in a Weary Land.* Text: African American spiritual, Music: African American spiritual. Public Domain / Wyatt Tee Walker.

*Jesus, Still Lead On.* Text: Nicolaus L. von Zinzendorf, 1700-1760; tr. Jane L. Borthwick, 1813-1897, alt., Music: Adam Drese, 1620-1701. Public Domain.

*Change My Heart, O God.* Text: Eddie Espinosa, b. 1953, Music: Eddie Espinosa. Music Services, Inc.

*As the Deer Runds to the River.* Text: Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., b. 1923, Music: David Hurd, b. 1950. GIA Publications, Inc.

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## Next Week's Readings:

Joshua 5:9-12 *Israel eats bread and grain, the produce of the land*

Psalm 32 *Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the Lord*

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 *The mystery and ministry of reconciliation*

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32 *The parable of the prodigal father and the repentant son*