

Trinity will be reopening on Sunday, February 21. Gilbert on March 7.

Home Service for February 21, 2021

Welcome and Announcements

You might notice a few changes. You may also find listening to some of your favorite hymns helpful in worship.

I offer my life to you, God, for I know that you love me dearly and faithfully. I offer my life to you, God. Teach me your paths.

Call to Worship:

Now is the time for us to worship! Now is the time for us to come! So, come, you who in God's sight are perfectly imperfect! Come, you who want more of God! Come, you who heard God remind you that you are special and loved beyond measure! Come, People of God, those unified in the waters of baptism! Come!

Opening Prayer:

The season of Lent is here again and, as with so many times before, we find that we are not really ready for this journey of discipleship. So many things claim our lives and prevent us from being ready to take the steps in faith. As we look at our barrier of readiness, help us to remember that Christ is with us, every step of the way. We are not alone. Christ will help lift our hearts and spirits and direct our paths. Enable us, loving Savior, to take this journey of faith to new life with you. AMEN.

Prayer of Confession:

To you, Sovereign, do we lift up our souls. We often find ourselves struggling with shame, and we are afraid. Often, we do not know what to believe. We shrink from rigorous pursuit of your ways. Forgive us our laziness; and make us to know your ways; teach us your paths. Lead us in truth and be mindful of your mercy toward us. Deliver us from the sins of our youth; may they not haunt us as we seek you, for your goodness' sake, O God. Hear our prayer in the name of Jesus, the One full of grace and truth. Amen.

Words of Assurance

Friends, hear the good news: God through Christ has remembered us with kindness and steadfast love. As far as east is from west, so has God removed our sins. Believe the gospel: in Christ you are forgiven.

Read Psalm 25:1-10

In you, LORD my God,

I put my trust.

²I trust in you;

do not let me be put to shame,

nor let my enemies triumph over me.

³No one who hopes in you

will ever be put to shame,

but shame will come on those

who are treacherous without cause.

⁴Show me your ways, LORD,

teach me your paths.

⁵Guide me in your truth and teach me,

for you are God my Savior,

and my hope is in you all day long.

⁶Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love,

for they are from of old.

⁷Do not remember the sins of my youth

and my rebellious ways;

according to your love remember me,

for you, LORD, are good.

⁸Good and upright is the LORD;

therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.

⁹He guides the humble in what is right

and teaches them his way.

¹⁰All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful

toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.

Prayers of the People:

Loving, Creating God, you are in covenant with your people. You have pledged to be our God and ask us to be your people, trusting in you in all our ways. But we find many excuses to prevent us from really trusting you. We erect barriers before our faith journey even begins. Our time, obligations, energy, all become part of the bricks and mortar which fashion this barrier. We can give lip service to the journey; we can daydream about what it would be like to truly place our hands in yours and follow you. But when it comes to actually making the journey, our time constraints and weak commitments loom largely before us. Help us to tear down this barrier. Make us ready for the journey by replacing the fear in our hearts with a sense of joy and challenge of self-discovery and discipleship. Remind us that in service to you, helping others, we will also find ourselves made more fully whole. As we have spoken the names of our friends, and family members, and others situations in which healing and comfort are needed, let us remember that we, too, stand in need of prayer and healing. Make us ready to receive your good news and then to be witnesses to your love to all your people. AMEN.

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

Read the Lesson: Genesis 9:8-17

Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: ⁹“I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you ¹⁰and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. ¹¹I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.”

¹²And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: ¹³I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. ¹⁴Whenever I bring clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, ¹⁵I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. ¹⁶Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it

and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.”

¹⁷ So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

Read the Epistle Lesson: 1 Peter 3:18-22

¹⁸ For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. ¹⁹ After being made alive,^[a] he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—²⁰ to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God.^[b] It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Read the Gospel Lesson: Mark 1:9-15

⁹ At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰ Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹ And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹² At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³ and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted^[a] by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵ “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Message

We are present here to celebrate the first Sunday of Lent, we remember and study Jesus’ journey to the cross. Lent is a time of soul-searching in the light of God’s Word. It is all about learning, knowing, accepting and claiming whose we are and then allowing that knowledge to be expressed to the world in all that we say and do each and every moment of our lives.

In reading today's scriptures, I can feel and hear the waters of grace flow through these scriptures: from God's deliverance of Noah and all animals from the waters of the flood, to the baptism of Jesus in the waters of the Jordan, to our own baptisms that bring us salvation. God made a covenant with all creatures in Genesis. The psalmist reminds us that we are to keep our covenant. And, in Jesus Christ, we find a new covenant of water and spirit. This is the good news: God is faithful, merciful, and full of steadfast love; God remembers creation and the everlasting covenant of forgiveness; God has come in Jesus Christ, Beloved Son and Savior of the world. I can feel and hear the calling to come back to God, for it is only there that we find true hope, true life, and true joy.

God has made several covenants with man over the history of man. God's covenant with Noah was the first of covenants. In the Old Testament Lesson we see God taking the divine initiative to establish a covenant with Noah, his descendants "and with every living creature" (v. 10). God promised Noah that "never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth" (v. 11). God initiates our salvation and covenant relationship with him. We do not find God—he finds, calls, and saves us. We are saved by divine grace, not by our human initiative.

God made the rainbow a symbol of deliverance. The rainbow reminds us of divine mercy: When we see the rainbow in the clouds, we are to remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth" (v. 16).

The early church did not initially use the cross as a symbol of their faith. The humiliation of Jesus public execution was too fresh in their memories. Instead, early Christian art often depicted the ark. It stood for the church and salvation for those within it, by faith. By the ark God gave the human race a second chance, even as the gospel gives us the opportunity for redemption. As Lent begins, let the rainbow and Noah's ark symbolize our gracious God and his covenant promises.

Remember God's other promises and covenants He made with man.

- God made a covenant with Abraham in Genesis 17.
- God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, where he gave them the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20.
- God had his prophet Jeremiah promise a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31).
- God in Christ said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" when he instituted the Lord's Supper in the Upper Room (1 Cor. 11:25).

Our Epistle Lesson reminds us that all are forgiven when they honestly claim their baptism. Some people have trouble forgiving themselves and feel that God could never forgive them for their sins are too great or it is too late to ask for forgiveness. But they are wrong. Bible tells us that there is no ranking of sin for all sin has the same ranking.

Through what Jesus did on the cross; through his sacrifice and death, he has overcome the power of sin: any sin. Nothing stands between us and God except for ourselves, because Jesus has bridged the gap. Whatever you feel holds you captive, know that Jesus Christ is ready to loosen the bonds and free you to experience new life.

Jesus gave us baptism as a sign we can be brought to Him. By faith we desire to turn away from sin and live for God. We desire to see the old sinful self-gone and buried. By faith we desire to see God create in us new hearts and a new spirit, and be raised from the dead to live for him. So by faith we act out this spiritual drama in water, burying the old and being raised anew. The entire process, everything baptism means, repentance, believing, trusting, obeying, and hoping, is the faith that saves us. Jesus suffered that he might bring each of us to God, he preaches to us through the Gospel, he has given us baptism as a sign of rebirth, and he has done all this with authority from God.

The major theme running throughout Mark's Gospel is that Jesus is indeed the son of God. The powerful image of the heavens being torn apart and the descending dove provides proof that Jesus is no less than the son of God. Immediately following his baptism, Jesus was led into the wilderness to be tempted by the spirit of God. Despite the harshness of the surroundings and the seductive nature of the temptations, Jesus withstood the experience. His temptations enabled Jesus to understand what man faces more and knowing about Jesus' temptations gives mankind the hope and strength to face our own temptations.

In announcing the kingdom's arrival, Jesus challenged his listeners to respond with repentance and faith. The kingdom of God is here in the person and identity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Following the time of temptation, Jesus lays out the formula for how one comes to such saving and life-giving knowledge. The kingdom is here, Jesus proclaims; repent, and follow where the kingdom of God is seeking to lead. This proclamation becomes the heart and soul of all that Jesus is and does.

Today is the first Sunday of Lent. May you take the time during this season to do some soul-searching in the light of the truth of the gospel. To learn more about Jesus and may your faith grow each day. Amen.

Benediction:

The first step on the journey, that of readiness, is one of the hardest. We keep thinking that we have forgotten something. God has called you by name, to this journey. You will have all that you need. Go in peace, and know that God is going with you. AMEN.