

Welcome to Worship at
Trinity Lutheran Church, Osceola, WI
Lent 5 - March 21, 2021

P: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my Strength and my Redeemer. Amen.

Hymn #170 - "Draw Us to Thee"

**Draw us to thee, for then shall we
Walk in thy steps forever
And hasten on where thou art gone
To be with thee, dear Savior.**

**Draw us to thee, Lord, lovingly;
Let us depart with gladness
That we may be forever free
From sorrow, grief, and sadness.**

**Draw us to thee; oh, grant that we
May walk the road to heaven!
Direct our way lest we should stray
And from thy paths be driven.**

**Draw us to thee that also we
Thy heav'nly bliss inherit
And ever dwell where sin and hell
No more can vex our spirit.**

**Draw us to thee unceasingly;
Into thy kingdom take us.
Let us fore'er thy glory share;
Thy saints and joint heirs make us.**

P: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins to God our Father, asking Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

C: **Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to**

You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You in our thoughts, words, and actions. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace and forgiveness for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. O Lord, have mercy on us!

P: Upon this your confession, I as a called servant of Christ and His Word announce to you the grace of God, and in the place of and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: **Amen.**

First Lesson: Jeremiah 31:31-34

Yes, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers, when I took them by the hand and led them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant of mine, although I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law in their minds, and I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will each one teach his neighbor, or each one teach his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their guilt, and I will remember their sins no more. (EHV)

Psalm 143

Refrain: Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

**O LORD, hear my prayer, listen to my cry for 'mercy;
In your faithfulness and righteousness come to 'my relief.**

**Do not bring your servant into 'judgment,
For no one living is righteous be'fore you.**

**My spirit grows faint with'in me;
My heart within me 'is dismayed.**

Refrain: Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

**Answer me quick'ly, O LORD;
Do not hide your 'face from me.**

**Let the morning bring me word of your un'failing love,
For I have put my 'trust in you.**

**Teach me to do your will, for you 'are my God;
May your good Spirit lead me on 'level ground.**

**Glory be to the Father and 'to the Son
And to the Holy 'Spirit,
As it was in the be'ginning,
Is now, and will be forever. 'Amen.**

Refrain: Lord, let your mercy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

Second Lesson: Hebrews 5:7-9

In the days of his flesh, he offered prayers and pleas with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. After he was brought to his goal, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him. (EHV)

Verse of the Day: The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Gospel: John 12:20-33

Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Festival. They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." Philip went to tell Andrew. Andrew came with Philip and told Jesus. Jesus answered them, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it continues to be one kernel. But if it dies, it produces much grain. Anyone who loves his life destroys it. And the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him. "Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, this is the reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name!" A voice came from heaven: "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again." The crowd standing there heard it and said it thundered. Others said an angel talked to him.

Jesus answered, “This voice was not for my sake but for yours. “Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to indicate what kind of death he was going to die. (EHV)

The Apostles’ Creed:

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Hymn #488 - “*Savior, Thy Dying Love*”

**Savior, thy dying love thou gavest me;
Nor should I aught withhold,
Dear Lord, from thee.
In love my soul would bow,
My heart fulfill its vow,
Some off’ring bring thee now,
Something for thee.**

**O’er the blest mercy seat, pleading for me,
My feeble faith looks up,
Jesus, to thee.
Help me the cross to bear,
Thy wondrous love declare,
Some song to raise or prayer,
Something for thee.**

**Give me a faithful heart, likeness to thee,
That each departing day**

Henceforth may see
Some work of love begun,
Some deed of kindness done,
Some wand'rer sought and won,
Something for thee.

All that I am and have, thy gifts so free,
In joy, in grief, through life,
Dear Lord, for thee!
And when thy face I see,
My ransomed soul shall be
Through all eternity
Something for thee.

The Sermon: Jeremiah 31:31-34
“The Freedom Of The New Covenant”

Freedom is a word that we American's have always held **dear**. And when our freedoms come under **attack**, we cling to them even **tighter**. Thousands upon thousands of our fellow citizens have **fought** for and have even **died**, to **preserve** our freedoms. The concept of freedom is **also** very near to the heart of every **Christian**. It's one of the great themes found on the pages of the Bible. **Jeremiah** had a message of **freedom** for God's people thousands of years ago. The freedom he proclaimed was **The Freedom Of The New Covenant**.

The Freedom Of The New Covenant stands in stark **contrast** to the **bondage** of the **old** covenant. That was the covenant which God had made with the Children of Israel at **Mt. Sinai**. It was a covenant based on **laws** and **regulations** which governed **every aspect** of the Israelites' lives. There were regulations on the kinds of **food** they could eat, on the types of **sacrifices** they needed to make, and on the type of **government** they would have. It didn't take very long before it became **clear** that the Israelites wouldn't be able to **keep** their side of the agreement. The **history** of God's chosen people in the Old Testament is an ongoing story of **broken** promises, and open **rebellion** against God's commands. The **yoke** of the **old** covenant proved to be a **yoke** that the people weren't able to **carry**. Even those who remained **faithful** to the LORD must have been led to the point of **despair** when they looked at how **often** they had **broken** God's commands. The old covenant was a constant reminder of their **sin**, and their inability to **atone** for their sin with their own **works**.

But now let's move ahead some 3,000 years from giving of the law at Mt. Sinai, to the church of the early 1500's - the church that **Martin Luther** was born into. Just like the people of Judah in Jeremiah's day, it was a church that was under the heavy **burden of laws and regulations**. But they **weren't** the laws which God had established at Mt. Sinai. The church of **Luther's** day had established its **own** laws for the people to follow. They had set up a system of **work righteousness** - a system where you would have to perform **certain acts**, or buy **certain indulgences**, in order to receive **forgiveness** for your sins. It was a system which made the people feel very **guilty**. After all, how could they ever **know** if they had done **all** of the right things? How could they **know** if they had ever done **enough**?

This was the system which led Luther into the harsh life of being a **monk**. He **prayed** for hours - he went to **confession** - he even **beat** himself to try and **drive** sin out of his body. But no matter **how many** good works he did, Luther couldn't **escape** the oppressive **burden** of the **law**. He once said that he felt like he was being **closed in** by four **walls**. The first wall said that God is **holy** and **hates** sin. The second wall said that he was a **sinner**. The third wall said that the **wages** of sin is **death**. And the **last** wall concluded that God must **condemn** him to death because of his sin. This was a time of deep **despair** in Luther's life. There seemed to be **no way out**, because no matter what he **did**, he still remained **trapped** by the shackles of the church's teaching of **work righteousness**.

But that was 500 years ago, and we don't believe in **work righteousness** anymore **today**, do we? Actually, the false idea that we have to **do good** in order to get to heaven is something which is **deeply rooted** in our hearts from the day we're **born**. We see this idea most **often** in people who don't know the truth of what the **Bible** says in regard to **sin** and its **consequences**. When we ask people who don't know about Jesus why they think they are going to **heaven**, they will almost **always** respond, "Because I'm a pretty **good** person. I try to be **nice** to people. I **work hard** at my job." And that's the **same** idea we **all** fall back on when we start to doubt the **truths** that we've learned about **Jesus**. There's always going to be a **part** of us that wants to say, "Of **course** I'm going to heaven - I've been **good**." But that thought will eventually lead us to **despair**, because we know deep down that we **haven't** been good - at least not **every moment** of **every day**. For every day that we've been **kind** and **generous**, we can think of even **more** days when we've been **selfish** and **unloving**. And that can only lead us to feelings of **guilt**.

I think it's pretty safe for me to say that there isn't **anybody** here today who feels like they've done so many good works, that God **has to** take them into heaven. Instead, we **struggle** with feeling **bad** about **ourselves** and our work

righteous **attitudes**. We see how completely **unworthy** we are, and how we keep falling into the same **sins** - and we think to ourselves, “How could God **ever** take **me** into His home in **heaven**?” We end up overwhelmed by feelings of **guilt** and **shame** - **trapped** within those same four walls as Martin Luther, with no **relief** in sight. At times like that, we need to be reminded of the message that **Jeremiah** brings in our text this morning.

Just think about how **wonderful** it was for those Old Testament believers to hear the words, “*I will make a **new** covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.*” This **new** covenant would mean **freedom** for God’s people. It would mean that they would be **free** from the **rules** and **regulations** that came with the **old** covenant. But, more importantly, they would **also** be set free from the **guilt** and power of **sin** in their lives. Jeremiah describes the heart and soul of the new covenant with these words, “*For I will **forgive** their guilt, and I will remember their sins **no more.***” The new covenant would remind the people that all of their **sacrifices** and all of their **laws** were leading up to a **single event** - the once-for-all sacrifice of **Jesus** on the cross. The old covenant would no longer be **necessary**, because all of its **requirements** would be **fulfilled** by the **Messiah** - their **Savior**. Jeremiah’s message brought **hope** to all those Old Testament believers who felt **trapped** and **burdened** by the laws of the **old** covenant. **Freedom** was on the way.

That’s the freedom which **Luther** was longing for during his days as an Augustinian **monk**. And it’s the freedom which Luther **found** in his study of **God’s Word**. It had taken a long time, but Luther finally made a vital **connection**. The righteousness which God **demand**s from us is also the righteousness which God has **given** us, through **faith** in **Jesus**. Luther finally realized that he didn’t need to **beat** his body in order to **earn** God’s **forgiveness**. Rather, God offered His forgiveness **freely** in **Jesus**. Luther no longer looked at God as an all-terrible **judge**, but rather as his all-merciful **Father** in heaven. It was a huge **turning point** in Luther’s life. Here’s how Luther described the experience: “*Night and day I pondered until I saw the **connection** between the **justice of God** and the statement that ‘The **just** shall live by his **faith.**’ Then I **grasped** that the **justice of God** is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy **God justifies us through faith.** Thereupon I felt myself to be **reborn** and to have gone through open doors into **paradise.***”

It has often been said that **freedom** isn’t **free** - and it’s **not**. The spiritual freedom we **have** was **bought** by the suffering and death of our Lord **Jesus**. His work sealed the **new covenant** for us - the covenant which guarantees that God will **forgive** our guilt, and remember our sins **no more**. But you already **know** that.

God told His people through the Prophet Jeremiah, *“I will put my law in their **minds**, and I will write it on their **hearts**. I will be their **God**, and they will be my **people**. No longer will each one **teach** his neighbor, or each one **teach** his brother, saying, **“Know the Lord,”** because they will **all** know me, from the **least** of them to the **greatest**, declares the Lord.”* God wrote the beautiful truth of His new covenant in our **hearts** on the day we were **baptized**. And He **continues** to write it on our hearts as we come and hear **His Word**, and receive **Holy Communion**.

As Christians, we **rejoice** in our God-given freedom. We have been set **free** from the demands of the **law** - **free** from the curse of **sin** - and **free** from the power of **death**. But there is **another** side to the coin as well. Not only do we look at what we have been set free **from**, but also need to look at what we have been set free **for**. Christian **freedom** means the freedom to **serve God**, and to **serve others**. That **servicing** isn't **oppressive** service - it's not something that we **have** to do, but rather, it's service that we carry out **willingly**, because we are **thankful** for the freedom which Jesus has **won** for us, and that He has **given** to us.

Many of you have probably seen the movie, Braveheart. One of the more **memorable** scenes in that movie is the **execution** of William Wallace. As the executioner is about to deliver the **final blow** with his ax, Wallace musters all his strength, and shouts out one final word - **freedom!** Freedom is **also** the battle cry of the Christian **Church**. As heirs of that freedom, it's now our **privilege** and **responsibility** to share **The Freedom Of The New Covenant** with all those who are still **enslaved** by sin and guilt. Amen.

Prayers:

Dear Lord Jesus, may the message of the **cross**, and all that You accomplished by it for our salvation, never fail to **inspire** us. Keep the pleasures, treasures, and cares of **this** life from **replacing** the cross in our hearts. Remind us daily to lay down our burdens of **sin** at the cross, and there find **consolation** in the pardon You won for us. Govern our **lives** by the cross, that beholding the suffering You endured for our sins, we will learn more and more to **hate** sin, and to **love** righteousness. Through Your message of **mercy** and **forgiveness** strengthen, cheer, and guide us all our days. Keep the cross **foremost** in our minds and hearts whenever we **pray** to our heavenly Father, so that our prayers may find **acceptance** with Him.

O Savior, may we continue to stand before Your cross, filled with **wonder** at the **love** You showed for us there. And in our **dying** hour, keep us **near** Your cross, where alone **forgiveness**, **life**, and **salvation** can be found. Give us a **blessed** death

that we may enter into Your eternal **presence**, and receive the **joy** and **glory** which You have **prepared** for us. May we never be **offended** by Your cross, but rather, boldly **confess** it as the means by which sinners **triumph** over sin and hell. And when a cross enters our **own** lives, give us **grace** through the Holy **Spirit** to willingly **bear** it - thankful for the **privilege** of suffering for Your name. Finally, exchange our **cross** for a **crown**, bringing us into eternal life in **heaven**. Amen.

The Lord's Prayer (Sung).

**Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name;
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins,
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are Yours
Now and forever.
Amen.**

Hymn #365- "*Love Divine, All Love Excelling*"

**Love divine, all love excelling,
Joy of heav'n, to earth come down,
Fix in us your humble dwelling,
All your faithful mercies crown.
Jesus, you are all compassion,
Boundless mercy from above.
Visit us with benediction;
Comfort us with heav'nly love.**

**Take away our love of sinning;
Alpha and Omega be.
End of faith as its beginning,
Set our hearts at liberty.
We would ever seek your blessing,
Serve you as your hosts above,
Pray and praise you without ceasing,
Glory in your perfect love.**

**Sanctify your new creation;
Pure and spotless let us be.
Let us trust your great salvation,
Won for us on Calvary,
Till we lay our crowns before you,
Till in heav'n we take our place,
Till in glory we adore you,
Lost in wonder, love, and praise.**

P: Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your Word, for my eyes have seen Your salvation, which You have prepared before the face of all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles and the glory of Your people Israel. Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit! As it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

The Blessing:

P: The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.
C: **Amen.**

Hymn #323 - *"Almighty Father, Bless the Word"*

**Almighty Father, bless the word
Which through your grace we now have heard.
Oh, may the precious seed take root,
Spring up, and bear abundant fruit.**

**We praise you for the means of grace
As homeward now our steps we trace.
Grant, Lord, that we who worshiped here
May all at last in heav'n appear.**