

Elim Lutheran Church
Service for the Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 21, 2020

Announcement

Please join our live-streamed Midweek Lenten worship on Wednesday, the 24th at 5:30-6:15. This will be our last drive thru communion since the church is opening up.

Greeting

The grace and peace of the Lord, our God, who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

Gathering Hymn

As the Grains of Wheat

Text: Shirley Erena Murray

Music: Carlton R. Young

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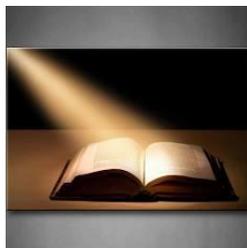
As the grains of wheat
once scattered on the hill
were gathered into one to become our bread;
so may all your people from all the ends of earth
be gathered into one in you.

As this cup of blessing
Is shared within our midst,
may we share the presence of your love.

As the grains of wheat
once scattered on the hill
were gathered into one to become our bread;
so may all your people from all the ends of earth
be gathered into one in you.

Let this be a foretaste
of all that is to come
when all creation shares this feast with you.

As the grains of wheat
 once scattered on the hill
 were gathered into one to become our bread;
 so may all your people from all the ends of earth
 be gathered into one in you.



The Word

The Old Testament reading for today is from the 31st Chapter of Jeremiah.

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34 NRSV)

This ends the Old Testament reading.

Today's Psalm is from the 51st Chapter of Psalms.

¹Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
 in your great compassion blot out my offenses.

²Wash me through and through from my wickedness,
 and cleanse me from my sin.

³For I know my offenses,
 and my sin is ever before me.

⁴Against you only have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight;

so you are justified when you speak and right in your judgment.

⁵Indeed, I was born steeped in wickedness,
a sinner from my mother's womb.

⁶Indeed, you delight in truth deep within me,
and would have me know wisdom deep within.

⁷Remove my sins with hyssop, and I shall be clean;
wash me, and I shall be purer than snow.

⁸Let me hear joy and gladness;
that the body you have broken may rejoice.

⁹Hide your face from my sins,
and blot out all my wickedness.

¹⁰Create in me a clean heart, O God,
and renew a right spirit within me.

¹¹Cast me not away | from your presence,
and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

¹²Restore to me the joy of your salvation
and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit. (Psalm 51:1-12 NRSV)

This is the reading from the Book of Psalms.

Today's reading from the New Testament is from the 5th Chapter of Hebrews.

⁵Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

“You are my Son,
today I have begotten you”;

⁶as he says also in another place,

“You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek.”

⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek. (Hebrews 5:5-10)

Here ends the reading from the New Testament.

The Gospel reading for today is from 3rd Chapter of John.

Glory to You, O Lord.

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷"Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." ³⁰Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

(John 12:20-33)

Word of God. Word of Life.

Praise to you, O Christ.

Message



At the dinner table earlier this week, I surveyed the family with the following question: Are seeds dead or alive? Four of us said they are alive and one said seeds are dead. Being the teacher that I am, I looked up to see what the experts say regarding

seeds. They are considered alive but dormant prior to planting. When I said seeds were dead, I was wrong.

Taking a look at the today's Gospel, we see the author of the Book of John understanding that seeds are dead. It's likely the writer's belief comes from a lack of scientific study way back in time. Seeds truly aren't dead, for each tiny seed contains the embryo of a plant, waiting for the rain, sun, and soil needed for growth. As we delve into the Gospel, let's assume our vantage point is from a place of little or no true scientific knowledge of seeds. The Bible tells us seeds are dead.

Throughout all this season of Lent, we have been discussing our sinful natures and our need for God's mercy and forgiveness. Jesus was lifted up on the cross, he was tortured, and died. He was truly dead. The Crucifixion was not a magical stunt where Jesus really was alive, just looking as if he was dead. Keep in mind, Jesus was really, honest to goodness, no breath, dead – just like the seeds Jesus is referring to.

Jesus plants the image of dead seeds in the minds of his followers. As the story progresses, Jesus then speaks about the dead seeds coming to life and yielding fruit. Here, the metaphor is Jesus being "lifted up" on the horrendous cross of torture and death, only to come to life again. He was lifted up on our behalf, because of our sinful natures. On the cross, he emptied himself for us. He gave us life, because of his death – we are loved and forgiven. What joy that is for us!

As a response to Jesus' love and forgiveness, we are to be like Christ, totally emptying ourselves to live fully as servants for all. As we respond to Christ's mercy given to and for each of us, we are to give to others the ability to feel the same love and joy we feel – the love and grace from God in Christ. We also need to remember, when we serve others, we are serving Christ. Faith is all that is required of us to receive the gift of life through death – just like the seeds that were dead, then grew, and produced fruit. However, the fruit we produce should be in response to Jesus being lifted up. We are the dead seeds but the fruit we produce is sharing the Good News of the Gospel.

There is another important piece Jesus shares with his followers - he tells them "the powers and principalities of this world will be driven out." At this time, we can see the effects of racism, devastating illness, divisiveness, and evil in our world – all of which are caused by these worldly powers and principalities - in other words, the powers of sin and evil. There are systems in our churches, in our cities, in our country and world which need driving out. These systems prohibit all from coming to and being part of the community of God.

We must, we absolutely MUST, see and feel Christ being "lifted up." For in that lifting up, we receive the gift of life from death; just as the seeds are dead and then come to life. When we believe and trust in Jesus' resurrection, we can see the gift of life which comes from death. In the book of 1st Corinthians, we hear these words of Paul to

the people of Corinth; *for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ.* (1 Corinthians 15:22 NRSV) Indeed, we all die, but we will live forever in Christ. Amen.



Sermon Hymn

Now the Green Blade Rises

Text: John MacLeod Campbell Crum

Music: French carol

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Now the green blade rises from the buried grain,
Wheat that in the dark earth many years has lain;
Love lives again, that with the dead has been:
Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

In the grave they laid Him, Love by hatred slain,
Thinking that He would never wake again,
Laid in the earth like grain that sleeps unseen:
Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

Forth He came at Easter, like the risen grain,
He that for three days in the grave had lain;
Raised from the dead my living Lord is seen:
Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

When our hearts are wintry, grieving or in pain,

By Your touch You call us back to life again;
Fields of our hearts that dead and bare have been:
Love is come again, like wheat arising green.

Nicene Creed

We believe in one God,
the Father, the almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,

God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of one being with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary
and became truly human.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again in
accordance with the Scriptures;
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again with glory
to judge the living and the dead.
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,

who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified.
 who had spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic church.
 We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.
 We look for the resurrection of the dead,
 And the life of the world to come. Amen.

Prayers of the People

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

A brief silence.

You wash us through and through and remember our sin no more. Make your church a community of forgiveness throughout the world. Give your people courage to forgive; through them show the world new possibilities. Bless ministries of repentance and reconciliation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You fill the earth—from tiny grains of wheat to the mighty thunder—with your presence, and you call us to attend to your will for all creation. Grant weather that prepares the soil for seeds; protect all from violent storms, flooding, and wildfires. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

You promise to write your law on our hearts. Guide citizens throughout the world to shape communities that reflect your mercy, justice, and peace, and give them creativity to work for the welfare of all. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You sustain us with your bountiful Spirit. Restore the joy of all who need to know your presence: those who are lonely or feel unforgivable, those who need healing of mind or body, those who are dying, and all who grieve especially LouAnn Dutt's son, Paul III and her two sons-in-law Mike Block and Cory Weiss, Linda Ness – Karen Lind's sister, Liz Anderson – Ron Anderson's sister-in-law, Clifford Berkhus - LaVonne Black's cousin, Gayle Lee – friend of Connie Rawls, Tom Phillips - family of Scott and Pastor Caroline Strand, Marilyn Dolezal, Jeanne Roen, Edna Mae Lewis, Judy - Curt Meyer's sister, Rose – Lenora Scheer's niece, Greg Turner, Fern Softing, all who are suffering with COVID, and those we name in our hearts before you; Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Jesus calls us to follow him in life and death. Empower this congregation in discipleship. Equip children and teachers in Sunday school, confirmation, and learning ministries. Give us your truth and wisdom and teach us to follow Jesus. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the cross of Christ, your name is glorified. We praise you for those who have given us words to worship you. With all those who have died in Christ, bring us into life everlasting. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

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.

Sending Hymn

The Lord Now Sends Us Forth

Text and music: Anonymous, Central America

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The Lord now sends us forth with hands to serve and give,
 to make of all the earth a better place to live.
 The Lord now sends us forth with hands to serve and give,
 to make of all the earth a better place to live.

The angels are not sent into our world of pain
 to do what we were meant to do in Jesus' name;

that falls to you and me and all who are made free.
 Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today.

The angels are not sent into our world of pain
 to do what we were meant to do in Jesus' name;
 that falls to you and me and all who are made free.
 Help us, O Lord, we pray, to do your will today.

Sending

Blessing

You have been called to live faithfully and act courageously. We are to be steadfast trusting God's covenant of grace. You are what God made you to be:

created in Christ Jesus for good works,
 chosen as holy and beloved,
 freed to serve your neighbor.

God bless you ☩ that you may be a blessing,
 in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Share the Good News. **Thanks be to God.**

