

**Midweek Lenten Services 2021**  
**March 24, 2021**  
**Based on Psalm 51**



**Greeting**

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

**Prayer for Tonight**

God of steadfast love, at Your fount and at Your table you gather your people into one body for the sake of the world. Send us in the power of your Spirit, that our lives bear witness to the love that has made us new, in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen.**

**Lenten Hymn**

*In Christ There Is No East or West*

Text: John Oxenham

Music: African American spiritual

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In Christ there is no east or west,  
in him no south or north,  
but one great fellowship of love  
throughout the whole wide earth.

In Christ shall true hearts everywhere  
 their high communion find;  
 his service is the golden cord  
 close binding humankind.

Join hands, disciples of the faith,  
 whate'er your race may be!  
 All children of the living God  
 are surely kin to me.

In Christ now meet both east and west;  
 in him meet south and north,  
 all Christly souls are one in him  
 throughout the whole wide earth.

### **Psalm 51:13 -17**

The Psalm reading for tonight is verses 13 - 17 of Psalm 51.

<sup>13</sup> Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.

<sup>14</sup> Deliver me from bloodshed, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

<sup>15</sup> O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.

<sup>16</sup> For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased.

<sup>17</sup> The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalm 51:13-17)

### **Gospel**

The Gospel for tonight is from the 26<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Matthew, beginning at the 35<sup>th</sup> verse.

<sup>35</sup> Peter said to him, "Even though I must die with you, I will not deny you." And so said all the disciples.

<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray."

<sup>37</sup> He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated.

<sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here, and stay awake with me."

<sup>39</sup> And going a little farther, he threw himself on the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want."

<sup>40</sup> Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not stay awake with me one hour?"

<sup>41</sup> Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

<sup>42</sup> Again he went away for the second time and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done."

<sup>43</sup> Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

<sup>44</sup> So leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words.

<sup>45</sup> Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See, the hour is at hand. (Matthew 26:35-45a NRSV)

Word of God. Word of Life.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **Homily**

We are in the home stretch for our study of Psalm 51. We've seen King David, rich boy gone bad, commit grievous sins with Bathsheba. He had her husband killed via trickery and deceit. After a time, he couldn't stand it any longer. The burden of his sins weighed upon him deeply and the load was too much to bear.

He confessed all he had done to the God of all and he pled for mercy in the punishment he thought he'd receive. He wanted to be purged from all he'd done, even though he would never be free of the memory of his sins. He asked for cleansing so he could be free, living in joy and gladness.

And as a result, he realized he had a duty to do – share the ways of goodness to sinners. David wanted to declare praises to God by saying these words, “I will teach sinners Your ways and they will return to You.” Then he says, “O Lord, open my lips and my mouth will declare your praise.”

King David, the one who resorted to deceit and trickery now realizes how important it is to teach others the ways of God. So, he does just that. He puts himself into a place where his mind and heart, his whole being, so others may be purged with gentleness from a God who is a God of love.

Roughly 3000 years ago, when King David walked the earth, things weren't much different in regard to our sin and guilt. You see, dear ones, we all sin and we all carry the burden of our sins. God knows our every weakness, just as God knew David's weaknesses. There was no hiding from God, just as there is no hiding our sins from God today. And when the weight of guilt is too much for our hearts to carry around, we confess and ask for forgiveness. And guess who did the same thing? David.

God forgives. There is no question of how much God loves us, even as our sinful selves just can't seem to break the cycle of sinning followed by the joy of forgiveness. In the New Testament book of Matthew, we hear Jesus speaking these words: “You are to forgive others 70 x 7.” Why 70 x 7? In antiquity, this expression is a symbol for infinity. So, we are to forgive others an infinite number of times, just as God forgives us without end. However, there is caveat in this requirement – when we fail to forgive, our lives

and our hearts are contradictory and incompatible with the unending forgiveness of God.

Not only are we called to serve others with our whole selves, we are to forgive over and over and over again – not just once, but infinitely. Therefore, King David wanted to teach others the way of forgiveness as he was forgiven by a merciful and loving God. That is our duty as well.

I'd like to close our Lenten study of Psalm 51, the study of sin and guilt and love and forgiveness, and our duty with these words from Mahatma Gandhi. He stood for peaceful rebellion against the unjust rule of the British government. Gandhi said, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." If we are forgiven, we must set the example of forgiveness also. "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." Amen.

### **Lenten Hymn**

*Here I Am, Lord*

Text: Godfrey Thring

Music: Joseph Barnby

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I, the Lord of sea and sky  
I have heard my people cry  
All who dwell in dark and sin  
My hand will save  
I who made the stars of night  
I will make their darkness bright  
Who will bear my light to them?  
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord  
Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night  
I will go, Lord  
If You lead me  
I will hold Your people in my heart

I, the Lord of snow and rain,  
I have borne my peoples' pain  
I have wept for love of them  
They turn away  
I will break their hearts of stone  
Give them hearts for love alone  
I will speak my word to them  
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord  
Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night  
I will go, Lord  
If You lead me  
I will hold Your people in my heart

I, the Lord of wind and flame  
I will tend the poor and lame  
I will set a feast for them  
My hand will save  
Finest bread I will provide  
'Til their hearts be satisfied  
I will give my life to them  
Whom shall I send?

Here I am, Lord  
Is it I, Lord?  
I have heard You calling in the night  
I will go, Lord  
If You lead me  
I will hold Your people in my heart

## **Lenten Poetry**

*We Are the Hands of Christ*

**Marcia A. Newton**

We are the hands of Christ, embracing the ones in need.

We are the hands of Christ, caring for those who plead.

We are the hands of Christ, sharing our bread to feed.

We are the hands of Christ, serving the ones who need.

We are the hands of compassion, hands that serve, hands that lift up.

We are the hands that feed the poor, hands that comfort, hands that heal.

We are the hands of Christ.

We are the hands that touch the sick, hands that bless, hands that teach.

We are the hands that welcome the lost, hands that support, reach out in peace.

We are the hands of Christ.

We are the hands that offer strength, hands that guide, hands that pray.

We are the hands that wipe the tears, love and protect, prepare the meals.

We are the hands of Christ.

We are the hands that till the Earth, knead the bread, mend the clothes.

We are the hands that plant the seeds, harvest the crops, build the homes.

We are the hands of Christ.

## **Lord's Prayer**

As we have been gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray together the pray we have been taught.

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. Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory. Forever and ever. Amen.

### Blessing

You are what God made you to be:  
created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
chosen as holy and beloved,  
freed from our sins and  
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 knowing we are forgiven.  
Share this Good News and love all.

**Thanks be to God.**



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