

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

February 21, 2021 – 9:30 a.m.

PRELUDE “Gethsemane” -David Lasky

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Pastor: In the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Pastor: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

People: Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.

Pastor: Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

SALUTATION AND COLLECT OF THE DAY

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Let us pray. O Lord God, You led Your ancient people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide the people of Your Church that following our Savior we may walk through the wilderness of this world toward the glory of the world to come; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

FIRST READING *Zechariah 1:1-6*

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying, “The Lord was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, Thus declares the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.’ But they did not hear or pay attention to me, declares the Lord. Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they repented and said, As the Lord of hosts purposed to deal with us for our ways and deeds, so has he dealt with us.”

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

EPISTLE *James 1:12-18*

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by God,” for God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one. But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it

is fully grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brothers. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.

Pastor: This is the Word of the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God.

HOLY GOSPEL *Mark 1:9–15*

Pastor: The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark, the first chapter.

People: Glory to You, O Lord.

In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” The Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. And he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him. Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”

Pastor: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: Praise to You, O Christ.

SERMON

Pieter Bruegel, born in perhaps, 1525, was once called “the most perfect painter of his century.” His sketches and works deemed him the title of the most significant painter of Dutch and Flemish Renaissance painting. He also was an important influence on the Dutch Golden Age of painting. In 1563, he made a painting called *The Tower of Babel*. As the name suggests, it depicts the story of Genesis 11, where people say, “**Come, let us build a tower and let us make a name for our ourselves.**” What lies at the heart of *The Tower of Babel*? Pride. People. Recognize. I. Did. Everything. Get it? Pride. “**Let us make a name for ourselves.**”

In his painting, the tower looks unstable. It is crumbling and about to collapse. It is dangerously leaning to one side. When you take a closer look at the tower’s foundation you notice that it is...unfinished. It is just a matter of time before the whole thing comes crashing down into a million pieces. That is Bruegel’s point. Anything with pride and pretense for its foundation will ultimately collapse. Why is that? A building is only as good as it’s foundation.

A building is only as good as it’s foundation. That is what Zechariah says as he opens his book to the people of Judah. Before we jump into the prophet’s message, it is helpful to get a picture of the prophet himself. Zechariah is one of 31 Zechariahs in the Old Testament. His name is appropriate for a prophet: it means “Yahweh Remembers” or “One remembered by Yahweh.” According to Ezra, Zechariah is part of a priestly family, and he spent some of his life in captivity before being part of that group that returned to Judah and Jerusalem to help rebuild it.

As a prophet, it should be no surprise to hear that Zechariah has a passion for God’s Word, and that he is totally immersed in the writings of the prophets who came before him. His book is the longest of the minor prophets, and he contains over 20 allusions to Isaiah, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel. He uses their language, phrases, images, and vocabulary. Some have even said that Zechariah is the earliest commentary on these books!

And if Zechariah was immersed in the prophets who came before him, the Gospel writers were immersed in the prophets who succeeded them. He is the most quoted prophet in the passion narratives, and his influence is heavy on the book of Revelation. St. John loves Zechariah. The pierced Messiah, vision of the seven lampstands, four horsemen, two olive trees, and vision of the New Jerusalem are not just in Revelation, but are in Zechariah, too. The prophet is a contemporary of Haggai, who starts his ministry only two months before Zechariah does. Zechariah starts in October of 520 B. C.

Zechariah longs for God's kingdom to come. It is 520 B. C. and Jerusalem's temple is in ruins. The Babylonians destroyed it in 587 B. C., some 67 years earlier. They completely leveled it, and looted from it anything of value. It was left as a smoldering pile of ash and rubble. It was natural for the people to say, "God's kingdom will come when we rebuild the temple!" After all, God said to Haggai, **"Go up to the hills and bring wood and build the house."** In other words, "It's time to build!"

It is time to build. What needs to be built in your life? We all can know the feeling of looking at broken timbers and busted bricks. What has been destroyed in your life? A relationship? Your health? Your family? Your future? Your finances? Your job? Your emotional and spiritual well-being?

God has called all of us to build something. It might not be News worthy for WCCO, or get the attention of the Pioneer Press- but it is important to raise children who trust in Jesus. It is important to be an honest and hard-working employee. It is important to run a business with biblical integrity, to study God's Word on a regular basis, or to be a loving grandparent, spouse, sibling, or child. These things might seem small and insignificant, but they aren't! In the Kingdom of God, not so. Our labor in the Lord is never in vain. It is time to build!

That is not, however, the way how Zechariah begins his book. He doesn't say, "Let's rebuild the temple!" but, **"Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you."** A building is only as good as it's foundation. Before we build, we need a solid foundation. You know, first things first. Homework, then free time. Plow the ground, then plant your seeds. Shovel, then salt the driveway. Save your money, then buy the car. Exercise first, then have that dessert. Lay the foundation, then build.

And if we don't? We'll end up building a tower of Babel. **"Let us make a name for ourselves."** If our reputations, our honor, our plans are founded on pride, whatever we build will come crashing down. We see it all the time. A building is only as good as it's foundation. A solid foundation has two parts.

First, **"Return to me, says the LORD of hosts."** A return to the work of the temple will be in vain unless the people return to the Lord first. First things first. Not every slope is slippery, but to rebuild the temple without returning to the Lord would be like rebuilding a Tower of Babel. Disaster is around the next corner! It is going to fall! Rebuilding is rooted in the soil of returning to the Lord. The people's fundamental need wasn't a rebuild temple. It was a renewed and right heart.

The word *shuv*, "return" could just as easily be translated "repent." In fact, the word means both! Return/repent isn't a suggestion to "be nicer" or to "try harder." "Return" is a call to take God with utter seriousness. "Return" is a call to take sin with utter seriousness. "Return" is a command to confess, come clean, and be honest.

It can be easy to ignore the call to repent and return. Too often, we don't pray for it. Too often, we don't listen for it. Too often, we don't do it. It can be tempting to avoid the call to repent. However, we cannot build a life of love, faithfulness, and kindness apart from heeding the call to repent. Apart from repenting, we end up building the Tower of Babel. However, make no mistake about it; that tower will come crashing down. That tower will be a great testimony to us, but it will be a great insult to God.

Listen to Zechariah. **"Don't be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets cried out, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Repent from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or pay attention to Me, declares the LORD."** The danger is to be like the ancestors who, in the days of Jeremiah, relied on the temple and refused to repent. Zechariah drills down to our fundamental need. It is not a rebuilt temple, but a renewed heart. The temple needs to be rebuilt- no doubt! **But the work that the Judeans will do on the temple will be a teetering tower of Babel unless it is accompanied by spiritual reconstruction.**

"So they repented." That is what verse six says. The flame of faith is relit! A new day is on the horizon. Zechariah's generation made a clean break with their failed and unrepentant ancestors. How did it happen? Through confession.

Confession. The word can conjure up many images-maybe backroom interrogations, a mother's pointing finger, or a seat outside the principal's office. In the Bible, confession isn't telling God what He doesn't know; God knows everything already! Confession isn't blaming and pointing fingers at other people, or God. These things are what confession *isn't*.

Here is what confession is. David says, **"Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me."** The prodigal son says, **"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you and am no**

longer worthy to be called your son.” The tax collector says, **“God, be merciful to me, a sinner!”** and the thief on the cross: **“Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong....Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”**

It can be easy for us to fast-forward through confession. Say the words. Sound the syllables. Complete the sentences, and then go on with things. We don't want to go through the motions, say the right words, but have our hearts galaxies away from God. Let's all slow down. Confess our sin. Repent. Return. As Jesus says in our Gospel reading, **“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel.”**

Zechariah's foundation has two parts. **“Return to me, says the LORD of hosts** [that's the first part and His work in us], **and I will return to you** [that is the second part, the Gospel part].” How does God return to us? Zechariah's last six chapters answers this question. Remember he is the most quoted prophet for Holy Week! Jesus is our King who comes to us, righteous and humble (9:9). The blood of His covenant sets us free (that is 9:11). He is the church's Cornerstone, Tent Peg and Battle Bow according to 10:4. Then, in a dramatic twist of fate for the ages, Christ is detested (11:8), sold for thirty pieces of silver (11:12), struck so His sheep scatter (13:7), and finally pierced (12:10). God returns to us with steadfast love, cleansing mercy, full and complete pardon for all our sin.

A building is only as good as it's foundation. Edward Mote knows this. In 1834, he composed his most famous hymn. It goes like this: “My hope is build on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness. No merit of my own I claim, but wholly lean on Jesus' name.” Here is the foundation to build on, Jesus' blood and righteousness. All other ground is sinking sand. As Zechariah begins his book, he shows us that foundation to build on not just for Lent, but for our lives as well.

APOSTLES' CREED

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

And 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 sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence 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.

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

MUSIC DURING PREPARATION “O Christ, the Healer, We Have Come” -Kevin Sadowski

PREFACE

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

Pastor: It is truly right and proper for us to give You thanks, heavenly Father, for in Your great love You sent Your only-begotten Son into this world of sin and death and made Him to be sin in our place and to die the death we deserve. He offered His life on the cross for our forgiveness and was raised to life again that we may have eternal life. We give You thanks for the victory for all people and nations and for calling us to faith by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

SANCTUS

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord God of pow'r and might:
Heaven and earth are full of Your glory.
Hosanna. Hosanna. Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Pastor: Blessed are You, Lord of heaven and earth, for You have had mercy on those whom You created and sent Your only-begotten Son into our flesh to bear our sin and be our Savior. With repentant joy we receive the salvation accomplished for us by the all-availing sacrifice of His body and His blood on the cross. Gathered in the name and the remembrance of Jesus, we beg You, O Lord, to forgive, renew, and strengthen us with Your Word and Spirit. Grant us faithfully to eat His body and drink His blood as He bids us do in His own testament. Gather us together, we pray, from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers; deliver and preserve us. To You alone, O Father, be all glory, honor, and worship, with the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
People: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor: Lord, remember us in Your kingdom and teach us to pray:

People: 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.

THE WORDS OF OUR LORD

Pastor: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: "Take, eat; this is My body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me."

In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

PAX DOMINI

Pastor: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

People: Amen.

DISTRIBUTION

You are invited to receive the Lord's Supper if you believe and confess that Jesus Christ is your Savior from sin, you are a baptized child of the Triune God, and you believe that He gives you His body and blood in the bread and wine you receive. White grape juice can be found in the center of each tray for those who cannot receive alcohol. Children are welcome to come forward for a blessing.

In dismissing the communicants, the following is said:

Pastor: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting. Depart in peace.

People: Amen.

MUSIC DURING DISTRIBUTION "Savior, When in Dust to You" -David Schack

POST-COMMUNION COLLECT

Pastor: Let us pray. We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

BENEDICTION

Pastor: The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

People: Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

POSTLUDE “O Lord, throughout These Forty Days” *LSB* 418

1. O Lord, throughout these forty days

You prayed and kept the fast;

Inspire repentance for our sin,

And free us from our past.

2. You strove with Satan, and You won;

Your faithfulness endured;

Lend us Your nerve, Your skill and trust

In God’s eternal Word.

3. Though parched and hungry, yet You prayed

And fixed Your mind above;

So teach us to deny ourselves,

Since we have known God’s love.

4. Be with us through this season, Lord,

And all our earthly days,

That when the final Easter dawns,

We join in heaven’s praise.

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Acknowledgments

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

GENEROSITY THOUGHTS: *Mark 1:13 – “And he was with the wild animals, and the angels were ministering to him.”* God the Father cares for Jesus even in the midst of his temptation in the wilds. God cares for us in every situation as well. Jesus realized this and always acted from the basis of trust in God the Father’s provision. This is likewise the basis for our life lived in Christ: God cares for us, so we need not act out of fear or greed.

LENTEN MIDWEEK WORSHIP will be held at Emmaus beginning Ash Wednesday, February 17, at 11:30 a.m. There will be an evening service at Bethel Lutheran Church at 7 p.m.

PRAYER AND BIBLE STUDY: Wednesdays at 2:15 p.m. we will have a prayer and Bible Study group. Each week, we will gather together to pray and study a text. We will be meeting in-person and virtually. For those that attend virtually, we will have you join us via Zoom (contact Pastor Kooi for the link). Please contact Pastor Kooi for more details.

CA OPEN HOUSE ON FEBRUARY 23: Concordia Academy’s in-person open house on Tuesday, February 23, 6:00-8:00 PM, gives parents and students a great chance to see how CA honors God through excellence in academics, arts, athletics, and more! COVID-19 safety protocols will be in place; reservations are required. Get more details and reserve your spot at www.concordiaacademy.com/openhouse.

REGISTER FOR CONCORDIA ACADEMY CAMPS: This summer, Concordia Academy offers over 30 sports, arts, and STEM summer camps for elementary, middle, and high school students. New offerings include Cardboard Creations, Coding, Stop Motion Animation, and Sweet Treats & Healthy Eats! Go to www.concordiaacademy.com/camps to get details and register.

HEAR “THE LUTHERAN HOUR” on Sunday mornings at 6:05 a.m. on WCCO 830 AM radio. Next week’s broadcast: “Where a Kid Can Be a Kid” Speaker: Rev. Dr. Michael Zeigler. An impossible situation need not be a hopeless one. (Mark 10)