2020 Reflections
Lent and Holy Week

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A Short Form for Daily Reflection
Adapted from Luther's Small Catechism

Make the sign of the holy cross and say

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

Read the Psalm for the Day (A table of daily psalms can be found in Lutheran Service Book, page 304).

Read “Today's Reading” if there is one listed.

Read the Daily Lectionary selections.

Read the Reflection for the Day.

Say the Apostles’ Creed.

Pray the Lord's Prayer.

Pray one of these little prayers:
In the Morning:

I thank Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray Thee to keep me this day also from sin and all evil, that all my doings and life may please Thee. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the Wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.

In the Evening:

I thank Thee, my Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Thy dear Son, that Thou hast graciously kept me this day, and I pray Thee to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into Thy hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Thy holy angel be with me, that the Wicked Foe may have no power over me. Amen.

In the morning go to your work with joy, singing a hymn, as the Ten Commandments, or what your devotion may suggest. If it is evening, then go to sleep promptly and cheerfully.
“And when you fast, don’t become sullen like the hypocrites, for they make their faces unattractive so that their fasting may be seen by others. Amen I say to you, they receive their reward in full.” (Matthew 6:16)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. It’s Lent again. Time for you to put on the grumpy face, fold your hands, and give up something to show others how really committed you are to God. Be serious. Time to virtue signal that you are on God’s team.

Repent. Repent of what you think of Lent. Repent of acting serious to God when you aren’t. Repent of trying to be someone else so God will love you. Just stop. He knows who you are.

Lent is first and foremost about Jesus. He’s going to the Cross to suffer and die for your sins and the sins of the whole world. He’s going to the Cross specifically for you. For you, if you are a serious person. For you, if you are happy person. For you, if you are just you.

Fast from your sins. Give them up and don’t take them up again. Stop doing the evil things you do—the disobeying of your parents, the hating, porn, lust, fornication, stealing, gossiping, lying, and coveting. But chief and foremost, repent about making Lent, faith, and Christianity all about you and your repentance. Repent of you.

Lent is a fast to prepare you for the celebration of Easter. The One who did your Lent rose from the dead on Easter morning. To prepare for His bursting out of the tomb with you, the Lord would have you give up all those things which would chain you to the tomb and keep you from rising with Him. Quit doing your sins! Or, to say it more Gospely: God repents you of your sins to prepare you for His Easter.

This season isn’t about your self-improvement. If you make Lent only about you, your reward before God will only be that feeling that you are super religious.

Today, the Lord shows you the consequence of making religion, faith, and Lent all about you: “Dust you are, dust you shall become.” Your sins separate you from God. Your sins are going to damn you.

But in these next 40 days, the Lord fixes our eyes on Jesus’ going through the wilderness of our sin and death to the Cross. He’s going to die. We are going to live with Him forever

If you are happy, be happy today. If you are grumpy person, be a grumpy person. If you are just you, be you. Let your Lent be between you and God. Your Father who sees what you do in secret will reward you. He will give you Jesus. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

-Rev. George Borghardt
You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not scheme to get our neighbor’s inheritance or house, or get it in a way which only appears right, but help and be of service to him in keeping it. (The Small Catechism, Ninth Commandment)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Luther’s Small Catechism tells us that God has given us everything that we have. He’s given you your body, soul, eyes, ears, and all your members. He’s given you clothing, shoes, food, drink, house, home, land, animals, and all that you have. (Meaning of the First Article of the Creed) What you have, God has given you. What your neighbor has, God has given to him or her.

Taking what isn’t yours is called “stealing.” Everyone knows this! Most of us wouldn’t crassly steal our neighbor’s stuff. Instead, we get it in a way that appears right. We borrow but don’t return, we don’t treat the possessions of others with respect, we steal time by not doing what we are told to do.

God doesn’t stop there! It’s not enough to not take your neighbor’s stuff. God doesn’t want you to even think about how to get their property and possessions! This is called “coveting” and can get you thrown in hell just as fast as stealing other people’s things.

What God has given to your neighbor is their gift from Him. You shouldn’t take it. You shouldn’t think about it. Don’t make comparisons, judging God for who He likes more. He’s given each person what He has given to them. He’s a good God. And you trust Him.

That makes this a great commandment to learn the day after Ash Wednesday! Your Lord Jesus shows you why you don’t have to want anything that is not given to you: God has given His Son for you. He didn’t hold anything back. He didn’t slight you. He didn’t give someone else a bigger piece of the God-loves-you cake. No, He gave His Son for you. Believing in Him, you are saved.

You have no need for the things that aren’t given to you. God gives and gives and gives. There are always more of His gifts in Him. If you need, He will provide. You don’t have to covet or want anything else!

If you could just believe this, if you could just keep this commandment, Luther says you could keep them all. Your heart longs for what it isn’t given because it doesn’t believe that God is going to be good to you. But look at what He has given you! He has given you everything you have! Best of all, He gave His Son to save you. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
The One who knew no sin for us became our sin, so that we would become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Jesus knows you. What happy news! He understands you, gets the person you want to be, the you that you want others to see. He also knows the person you actually are, who you don’t want anyone to know is the real you.

Jesus understands that you fight sin. You fight it with all your might. You’d step in front of a bullet for Jesus. Later, you’d sell Jesus out for fewer than 30 pieces of silver. You deny Him by how you live, what you listen to, and what you watch. You want to do good but do evil. You want to be better but feel chained, addicted, and broken by sin. People tell you they are getting better. Why is your Christianity so lacking?

You can deceive yourself into thinking that you are different. Do you think Jesus doesn’t know better? Sooner or later your worst fear is going to be a reality: everyone will know the real you, and you will be abandoned by them and by God, who made you. What shame! You don’t know if you are truly sorry or just afraid you are going to get found out.

You need God to not only know you but still save you despite knowing who you truly are. You need Jesus to be so close to you that He loves you even though you are not the person that you want to be. You need a Savior.

God sent Jesus. He alone can save you. He not only knows your sin and your failures and your deep dark secrets, but He became them on the Cross. Every good and evil thing you’ve ever done, He became. On Good Friday Jesus became your idolatry, your love of money, your despising of His Word, your skipping church, your despising of your parents, your hate, your abortions, your lust, your porn, your homosexuality, your adultery, your stealing, your slandering of others, your lying to protect yourself, and your coveting. He became your sin—all of it.

He took on your sin and gave to you His holiness. That makes Lent not just happy but merry! He is holy, so you are, too. He is without sin, so you are without sin in Him. He is the Son of God, so you are in Him a child of God, too! You are as good as Jesus!

Jesus knows you, and what He did for you trumps what you think of yourself. He became your sins so that you would be righteous by faith in Him. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt
Saturday after Ash Wednesday
February 29, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 3:1-24; Mark 2:1-17

*He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him, and show him My salvation.* (From the Introit for the First Sunday in Lent)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God wants you to call upon Him! He promises to answer you. He’s sitting on the edge of His seat. No prayer is too small, no request beneath Him. He’s pleading with you to pray to Him.

You were an enemy of God. You were at war with Him. You were born on the other team and under the dominion of the devil. You were dead in your trespasses and sins. You couldn’t please God and He refused to hear your prayers.

God sent His Son into your world. He became the enemy of God. He suffered as if He was at war with God. He was punished as if He was on the other team. He died. God died so that you would not ever die.

You are the baptized. You are saved by Jesus. God loves you in the giving up of His Son. Your evil has been washed away. Your iniquity pardoned. He cares about even you. You are no longer His enemy, but His friend. What you were unwilling, unable, and powerless to do, God has done on the Cross and through the resurrection of Jesus: He has made you His child.

If something means a lot to you, it means a lot to your parents and grandparents. I don’t understand most of the things that my children show me, but I pay close attention because I love them. What’s important to a child is important to his parents! The same is true for you and your parents and will be true for you and your children.

Take how much parents care for their children and multiply it by infinity and you will begin to understand how much God cares about you. He gave up His Son. Every little thing that is important to you is important to him. He waits for every one of YOUR prayers. He can’t wait to help you. Nothing is too small for Him. No petition is too insignificant!

This isn’t because you did something, or changed, or made yourself a child of God. That’s the merry news of today! God loves you, He hears your prayers, and He answers because of Jesus. You can be sure that He has not only commanded you to pray but has promised to hear you. He’s going to answer. He’s going to do what’s best for you—even if the answer is out of the box and not expected by you. He wants to help you. He wants to hear your prayers because He wants to save you. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
The First Sunday in Lent
March 1, 2020

Today's Reading: Matthew 4:1-11
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 4:1-26; Mark 2:18-28

And the tempter came to Him and said, “If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread.” (Matthew 4:3)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Every other child of God had failed. Every other creature was fallen. So in the wilderness, in the place of God’s judgment against the children of Israel, Jesus goes God versus Satan, round two.

Observe how Satan works! He begins with a question concerning the faithfulness of God’s Word. Did God really say that? Did He really say you are a son of God in the waters of your Baptism? Are you really going to die if you eat from that tree? Does God really love you in Jesus? Did He really say that Jesus answered for all your sins?

Next the slithery serpent twists Holy Scripture. The verse seems almost right but denies the rest of Scripture. Do you really believe that your faith in Jesus alone will save you? Do you really think God loves you?

But the last temptation in the wilderness teaches you the most important trick of the evil serpent. The Accuser of the saints wants to lead you astray. He longs to get you to eat what isn’t given you and do what God commands you not to do. But most of all, the devil wants you to believe that you can fix your sins apart from the suffering and death of Christ!

Today if Jesus fails like every other child of Adam and Israel, you aren’t saved. Without the Cross you are lost. So Satan is desperate to give Jesus any food, any power, and any authority to keep Him from going to the Cross. Just don’t die for them!

Satan is playing the long game. It doesn’t matter to Satan if you change or get better. The devil doesn’t care if you give up this sin or that sin. What He doesn’t want, what will finish Him off, is for you to trust that the sins you have done, will do, and are repenting of are forgiven because of the Cross of Jesus. The devil doesn’t want you to confess your sins to Jesus and trust that because of Calvary, you will be saved.

Resist the devil. Run from him! Don’t look inside yourself or think you can be saved by going through the temptation. Instead, fix your eyes on Jesus. He will send the devil packing for you. He will save you. He already has on the Cross. That makes today a very merry Lent! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Merry and happy Lent! What comfort! God shows us why there was the Garden, and the Tree in the midst of the Garden. It's all there so that Jesus will save you!

All mankind fell in Adam. Every man and woman sinned when our first father fell. That's called original or inherited sin. Even if we all lived perfect lives, we'd still be condemned in Adam's sin. Yet we all sin. Our lives aren't perfect because we all commit actual sin. Therefore, from the time of the fall, death reigned because all men sinned.

God doesn't fly by the seat of His pants. Satan may pull the wool over the eyes of Adam and his wife, but God knows what is up with the snake. He runs circles around Satan. Nothing is missed. In fact, God takes all the evil Satan does and uses it to save you.

In the Garden, moments after the fall, God promises to send His Son. Jesus is true man born of the Virgin Mary. Jesus is also true God, begotten of His Father from all eternity. Unlike the first Adam, the promised Second Adam doesn't fall.

This is where Lent gets merry! Jesus on the Cross strikes the serpent’s head but is Himself struck! Jesus conquers the serpent and dies in the battle. Death, the judgment on mankind, the power of sin, is the means by which God undoes death and sin! He saves you by dying!

All that Satan did, all that he tried to do, every evil thing that he did to Jesus in the Gospels, all works out to save you. The temptation, the demons Jesus cast out, Judas' betrayal, the soldiers’ mocking, the beatings, even the crucifixion, are all used by God to bring about salvation for the sons and daughters of Adam! Even the crown they used to mock Him is simply Jesus’ redeeming you from the curse of thorns and thistles (Genesis 3:18).

So why is the Tree in the midst of the Garden? Before you give an answer that sounds right, give the reason that God gives at the fall: so God could save you in Jesus. God promises it! The Tree is there so that God would send His Son to strike the head of the serpent and to die by the serpent’s strike. God does all that He does, He says all that He says, He overcomes Satan in every way, in order to save you in Jesus. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Calvary wasn’t an accident. It wasn’t a knee-jerk reaction to what happened with Adam and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God wasn’t the Joker, making stuff up as He went along.

God planned to send His Son to save you. He always had planned it. It happened before you believed. He set it in motion before you were born. Even before there was a world, God wanted to save you in Jesus on the day of salvation, Good Friday.

“In Christ” is the key. This isn’t a divine lottery where God randomly chooses who goes up and who goes down. God wanted to save you. He had you in mind while He was creating the world. That’s why He sent His Son! He sent His Son so that you would be saved. And He didn’t just want to save you, He want to save the whole world.

Is it God’s fault that people go to hell, since He chooses who goes to heaven? No, God doesn’t force you to believe. God chose you “in Christ.” He chose you in Calvary and Easter. He chose you in water and the Word! He sent His Son to save the world. Some people prefer to stay in their sins. It’s our home base, our happy place, our comfort blanket. He won’t force anyone to believe what He did for all.

You believe because Jesus came and suffered and died for your sins and the sins of the world. Your faith and your life are a gift from Him. What Gospel! You didn’t deserve it. You didn’t earn it! You ask yourself every day, “Why me?” The answer: by grace alone in Jesus Christ.

Predestination isn’t a doctrine that is meant to cause you to ponder whether you are in or out of God’s love. You aren’t ever given to look inside yourself to see whether God loves you or not. The only answer inside you is death. The teaching that God chose us before the creation of the world to be saved in Christ is for the comfort of His people.

Today your Lord has saved you in water, Word, and with His Body and Blood. Your faith is not an accident. He planned it. He gave it to you. God had you in mind when He was making the universe. All of it was in Christ and everything was for your comfort, that you would have a merry Lent! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Wednesday of the First Week of Lent
March 4, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 8:13-9:17; Mark 4:1-20

You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor. What does this mean? We should fear and love God so that we do not entice or force away our neighbor’s wife, workers, or animals, or turn them against him, but urge them to stay and do their duty. (The Small Catechism: Tenth Commandment)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. I am washed in the Lord’s blood. I am sanctified in His Body and Blood. I am absolved of every sin I have ever done in the words of my pastor.

All that I have is gift. Everything is gift. The hair on top of my head is gift. The teeth that I have are gift. My eyes, ears, nose, and throat all come to me as gift. The chubby tummy I have is gift. My legs that can’t seem to walk straight are gift. My mind that I feel is slipping sometimes is as much a gift from the Lord as when I was young and felt like I was as sharp as a tack. The things the Lord has separated me from are gift, too. All of me, all that I have, all that I own comes to me as gift from the God who loved me in the giving up His Son.

I have everything. Seriously! I have everything! I have forgiveness. I have salvation. I am loved. I have a family and friends. I have a great job. I have everything that I could ever dream of having and more blessings than I can even number.

Sure, I could win the lottery and be rich. I could be a billionaire. I could be a lot of things, have a lot more things, be a lot more, but why? If I needed those things, wouldn’t God give them to me? Through my vocations He will give me what I need to support this body and life.

The same is true for you. Right now, in this moment, you are loved and died for by Christ. God is your Father. He has given you all things. What works on you is gift from God. What doesn’t work the way you like is also a gift from God. How much you have in your bank account is gift from God. How much you own is His gift to you, too. If you needed more, wouldn’t He provide it for you?

This is the Gospel that frees you to love others enough to help them improve the things that God has given to them. You don’t need what belongs to others. What’s theirs can remain theirs. God gave it to them just as God gave to you what you have. The Lord will make it all work out for good for them and for you. He gave them their stuff. He gave you your stuff. All gift—from the God who saved you in the Cross of Christ. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
And so let us draw near with boldness to the throne of grace so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God is a God of grace and mercy. He gives His unmerited favor to sinners in Jesus. He doesn’t treat us as our sins deserve, and harbor anger forever. He is merciful, slow to anger, and keeps His promises. (Psalm 103:8, 10)

Jesus is the mercy and grace of God. He lives it. He breathes it when He breathes His last. He saves us from our sins, from death, from the power of the devil. He rescues us from us!

He suffered for our idolatry, love of money, and the taking of His Name in vain. He was beaten for our despising of His Word, skipping church, dishonoring our parents, hatred, abortions, not helping our neighbors. He was mocked for our lust, adultery, fornication, and our internet browser histories. He died for our cutting corners, cheating, gossiping, lying, and coveting everything in sight. He was crucified for our sins and raised for our justification, our forgiveness, before God.

Jesus knows our sins because He was tempted by every sin like we are. We sin: He didn’t. But for sinners, the spotless Lamb went into the holiest place. He is our High Priest. We are those for whom He showed grace and mercy. For us, He died. For us, He rose. For us, He lives. We died with Him in the waters of our Baptism. We rose with Him in the Word connected with the water. We live with Him by faith in His Calvary-sacrifice for us. As surely as He rose from the dead, we will rise, too.

So we boldly approach the throne of God, having been given grace and mercy in Jesus. The One on the throne isn’t some merciless judge. He’s our advocate, our High Priest, our Savior, our brother, our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray to the God who gave up His Son for us, confident that despite our sins, failures, and iniquities, God will hear our prayers and answer. He will save. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt

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. Amen. (Collect for First Sunday in Lent)
Friday of the First Week of Lent  
March 6, 2020

Today’s Reading: 1 Samuel 17:40-51  
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 13:1-18; Mark 5:1-20

And then the Philistine said to David, “Come to me and I will give your flesh to the birds of the air and the beasts of the field.” (1 Samuel 17:44)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Today we learn about how wonderful the Lord’s salvation is. We receive the God who saves us not only from being conquered or beaten by an opposing army or team, but also from the real enemy: death.

Death reigned. With its sting sin and its power, the Law, death ruled from the time Adam ate of the Tree. Death is the curse, the judgment of sin. Try as we may, no one beats death. Everyone dies because everyone sins.

No one could beat the giant Goliath. He was the greatest warrior of his day. He was unstoppable. He would come out and taunt God and the children of Israel. King Saul, who should have saved them, cowered before Goliath. The children of Israel hid behind their shields. No one dared to go out and face him.

God did. God sent His man, David, His future king, out to meet Goliath. Saul tried to load him up with his own armor, but it was too big for little David. He took only his sling and a few smooth stones. Goliath laughed and mocked David. “Are you going to come after me with a twig?” Boom! David knocked out the giant and then used Goliath’s own sword to chop off his head!

Jesus, the son of King David, is born just like every other child of Adam. He doesn’t hide like Saul, but takes on our unbeatable enemy. Good Friday seems like defeat. There Jesus hangs dead on the Cross. There He seems to be defeated. But that’s God hanging there dead on the Cross! God in the flesh. David’s son is God’s Son. Jesus doesn’t overcome death with the force of arms but with the twig, the tree of the Cross. Death is overcome by death. Its sting is undone. It is now toothless. Death is done!

Death no longer reigns! Your heart may stop ticking, but will it die? Not anymore! In Jesus, even though your flesh dies, yet shall you live. And all those who live and believe in Him will never die (John 11:26).

Because of the Cross, death is a nap, a gift, a place where the reality of Jesus’ victory over death is realized by those who believe. In Jesus, death has no dominion over you. In Christ, you will live forever. Eternal life is true to you by faith in Jesus. When you do sleep, it’ll be true to you by sight! Be merry! You are going to live forever! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt

Remember Jesus and His holy life, lived for me. Every breath He took, every good work He did, every Law He kept, was for me and in my place. He believed perfectly in God, never doubted, kept the Lord’s Name holy, didn’t test God, kept the Sabbath, honored His parents and the authorities of His world, fed the poor, was chaste and decent in all that He said and did, helped protect his neighbor’s property, spoke well of others, always told the truth, put the best construction on the behavior of others, and was content in all that the Father gave Him. He then counted all that He did in His life for me so that I would stand before God perfect in every way just as He is perfect before God.

Remember Good Friday where Jesus gave His life for me. He took upon Himself all my evil and suffered the punishment for it. He became my curse—cursed is anyone who dies on a tree (Galatians 3:3). He didn’t just take my sin, He became my sin. He became my idolatry, my misuse of His Name, my despising of His Word, my disobedience to parents and authorities, my murder, grudges, lust, fornication, adultery, stealing, cutting corners, my gossip, my slandering others, my finding fault rather than building others up, and my coveting. He became my sins and died for them. My sin died with Him.

Remember Easter, where my Lord Jesus rose for me. He was crucified for my sins, but He was raised for my justification, my forgiveness before the Father. (Romans 4:25) I suffered, died, and rose with Jesus in Holy Baptism. He lives now and in Him I live, too, before God forever.

Remember, Lord. Don’t forget what Jesus did for me. Don’t look at my sins. Don’t deny my prayers because of my transgressions. No, look at Jesus. See me through His nail-scarred hands. Outside of Jesus, I’m lost. But I’m not outside of Jesus. I can’t be, because of Jesus. He died for me. He rose and washed me in Baptism. He feeds me His Body and Blood. I have eternal life and am saved from what I’ve done. Remember, O Lord, what you have promised and done for me! Remember Jesus! He’s my merry Lent! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
The Second Sunday in Lent  
March 8, 2020

Today's Reading: Matthew 15:21-28  

And He answered, “It’s not good to take the children’s bread and throw it to their dogs.” (Matthew 15:26)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Abandoned. Rejected. Lonely. How can God not hear her prayers? How can Jesus not show mercy to this lady who is asking for Him to help her demonized daughter. How could He reject her?

He was right about her. This woman had no claim on God. She wasn’t a child of Abraham, she was a Canaanite. He was sent to save the lost sheep of Israel and she was outside the family of God. The Jews had a slang word for what she was: dog. He didn’t have to help her at all.

She just kept begging. He told her no, and she begged. He told her to stay, and she followed. He told her He wasn’t for her. She stared at him with puppy dog eyes, hoping that He’d just give her a crumb, just a little of His mercy and grace. “I’m a dog, yes, Lord, but to the dogs go the crumbs that fall from your table!”

Then, the miracle: Jesus helped her. She didn’t convince Him to heal her daughter. She didn’t earn it. She was a dog. She confessed it. She agreed with Him. All she wanted was a crumb and He gave her a crumb!

Ever feel like this Canaanite dog woman? You pray. You ask God for help. You confess your sins. You know that you also don’t deserve His help. The silence from God is just so deafening. You are so alone. So abandoned. All you want is a crumb: a good result on a test, a favorable doctor’s report, a promotion, a good interview, or some end to the loneliness in your life. You close your eyes and pray, “Just a crumb, God, please! Just a crumb…”

Jesus knows how you feel, too. He was abandoned. He was rejected. He was lonely as He hung on the Cross. God turned His back on Him. Rightly, too, for He who knew no sin became your sins on the Cross. On Good Friday, Jesus was carrying the sins of the world on the Cross. God turned His back on Him.

The Cross is why God hears your prayers. He answers because of Jesus. Faith believes this. Faith trusts that no matter how the Lord answers, it will be for your good. If He is silent, He will save you. If He speaks, He will forgive you. He’s going to rescue you. He’s going to have mercy. Faith knows that we are dogs, but to the dogs go the crumbs! Merry Lent! In the Name of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Monday of the Second Week of Lent
March 9, 2020

Today's Reading: Genesis 32:22-32
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 18:1-15; Mark 6:14-34

Then He said, “Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have struggled with God and men and have endured.” (Genesis 32:28)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. I struggle with God. I get upset with Him. I get disappointed in what He does and how He does or doesn’t seem to answer my prayers. It ruins the joy of my Lent.

The problem is that God doesn’t do what I want Him to or see things the way I do. He doesn’t give to me like I want Him to. Some of His gifts I’d like to return. His definition of being a good God isn’t mine!

But that’s not God’s problem, it’s my problem. If God did what I wanted when I wanted and how I wanted, He wouldn’t be God. He’d be an idol. Idols are molded and shaped by our desires and wants. They like what we like and don’t like what we don’t like. You’ve heard people’s idols before! They sound like this: “I don’t believe in a god who throws someone into hell or doesn’t like this particular lifestyle.”

This is the sin that I need to confess! I don’t worship a golden calf. It’s far worse than that! My issue is that I don’t believe God is good enough to me and so I make plans accordingly. I doubt that His answers will help me. I despair that He isn’t the God that I need. So I make plans accordingly. If you are honest with yourself, you’ll confess this, too!

God is a big God. He can handle my being grumpy with Him. What does God do? He’s such a big God that He lets me win our wrestling matches together! He fights me, disarms my idols, then lets me hold on to Him and not let Him go. He shows me on the Cross just how good of a God He is for us in Jesus. He suffers defeat to save me!

Jesus’ Lent and Holy Week show us exactly how good God is for us. He didn’t spare His Son in saving us! How much then is He going to take care of our daily needs of body and soul? Will cancer do me in? Will poverty? Will my job? Will that person who I love but doesn’t love me be my end? Not in Jesus! He takes all my struggles and turns them into gifts for me! Even death can’t do me in, Jesus! He’s turned death into a toothless servant who opens the door to heaven for me. In Christ, death is but a nap and I will wake up and have eternal life with Jesus.

Yes, I fight with God. Happily, He lets me win in order save me. He sent His Son. He was crucified. He died. I live in Him forever! You do, too! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. -Rev. George Borghardt
Tuesday of the Second Week of Lent
March 10, 2020

Today's Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:1-7
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 21:1-21; Mark 6:35-56

And so, finally, brothers, we ask and beg you in the Lord Jesus that as you have received from us how you are to walk and to please God, just as you have been walking, that you should abound more.
(1 Thessalonians 4:1)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Gospel is always more: more forgiveness, more life, more mercy, and more love from God. There's never a point in your life when you push yourself away from the Lord's table and say, “I think I’ve had enough Jesus and His gifts.” No! The Gospel always produces more. It gives more. It delivers more. More forgiveness in your Baptism, more life in His Word and promises, more salvation in the Lord’s Body and Blood. How can you get more salvation? Keep going to the Sacrament and the Lord will teach you!

The Gospel is an enlivening Word. It’s not a nothing Word. It delivers to you and makes yours Jesus’ holy life. His rejection by His people, the beatings, the mocking, the suffering, and His crucifixion. It washes Jesus on you in Holy Baptism. It fills your ears with Absolution. It gives into your mouth the mercy of God in his Supper. These gifts enliven; they deliver the Holy Spirit who works faith where and when He pleases in those who hear the Gospel (The Book of Concord: Augustana V).

The Spirit sanctifies you. He holies you. All that mercy, grace, and love from God to you spills over in mercy, grace, and love for others. You are made holy—giving up your sins, your lust, your impurity, your coveting, and your adultery. You are enlivened to walk in your Baptism, to live confessing your sins and receiving His forgiveness.

“I don’t feel like I’m getting better or sinning less!” Right! For the more the Spirit deals with you, the more you see what you need to repent of and receive forgiveness for in your life!

Don’t you remember that I said there is never a time when you will look at your life and say, “I have had enough?” There’s always more to repent of, always more improvement, always more need to receive mercy to live this life worthy of the calling you have received in Jesus.

Leave your sins behind today! You know what separates you from God and others. Repent and receive His Calvary-earned forgiveness. For the Gospel is always more! Jesus always gives more life, forgiveness, and salvation. There’s always more to repent of in your life! More to confess and more to give up in Lent. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev, George Borghardt
Wednesday of the Second Week of Lent  
March 11, 2020  

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 22:1-19; Mark 7:1-23  

*What does God say about all of these commandments? He says, "I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep My commandments." (The Small Catechism: The Close of the Commandments)*

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God can deal with you in two ways. He can bless or He can curse. He can condemn or He can forgive. He can punish or He can love. He can Law or He can Gospel.

First, we need to hear the Law: we inherited our sins from our fathers. Father Adam’s sin brought sin into the world and since then all fathers have been passing sins to their children. Our parents sin, we sin, our children sin, our children’s children sin. It’s a never-ending chain of sin!

The worst part of all this sinning is that we think we don’t deserve to be punished by God for it. We take offense at our Lord’s words today! How unfair is it for Him to punish us for someone else’s sin? Are we innocent? Have we never sinned ourselves? Have we always perfectly done what God requires of us? Have we always not done what He commands us not to do? Are we so deluded that we don’t think that someone needs to pay for what we have and haven’t done?

Jesus paid. That’s the Gospel! He did all that God requires of you and didn’t do what God prohibits you from, and He counted all of it as if you had done everything perfectly. He then suffered all the punishment that you, your parents, and your grandparents deserve for their sins. He kept the Law. He then suffered the punishment of the Law on the Cross.

God can deal with you in two ways, but the Law must be answered. Whether you are Lawed or Gospeled depends upon whom the Law falls. It either falls upon you or it falls upon Jesus. If it falls on you, there is only wrath and punishment from God to the third and fourth generations of those who live in their sins. But to those who believe in Jesus, who trust that the Law first fell upon Jesus, they receive grace to a thousand generations!

To save you, God condemns (repents) you in order to absolve (Gospel) you. This is the Christian life! We confess our sins and receive forgiveness. We are condemned so that we can be forgiven. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Not only that but we also rejoice in sufferings, knowing that suffering brings about endurance, and endurance produces proven character, proven character produces hope. (Romans 5:3-4)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. There it is! Right there! Thank God for sufferings! Praise God for failures! Sing praise to God for not being able to pay our bills! Jesus loves me because He gave me cancer!

That’s sounds ridiculous, doesn’t it? Who rejoices in their sufferings? Who gives thanks for being broke? Who calls cancer a “gift”? That’s your unbelief talking! We call it many names. We will say it’s “delusional” or a “crutch” to speak this way. We may even say that we aren’t being real by thinking this way. No matter what you call it, it’s unbelief and it steals your merriment in Lent and leaves you with despair and doubt. Repent!

Faith receives from the Lord’s hands all things as gifts. Faith fixes your eyes on Jesus. Faith sees what Jesus does for you, how He lives for you, how He dies in your place. Faith knows, it trusts, that God didn’t spare His only Son in saving you.

How could the Father give you anything but good things? He can’t! He won’t! His Son went through Lent, Holy Week, Good Friday, and Easter to save you! He’s not going to stop being a good Father just because we have a bad medical test or don’t have money.

Good things come to you not because you are such a good person or believe enough. Faith knows better than that! It’s all Jesus! His holy life and bitter suffering are the reasons God is not only merciful and kind to you, but has to be! It’s not because God has to do anything, but because of Calvary and Easter, because of Jesus, God has promised to be a good God to you. He will keep His promises!

As God carries you through the suffering, you learn how to handle the things in life without even missing a beat. That’s called “endurance." That endurance is going to make you unflappable. That’s called “proven character”! That character is going to grow into hope that will never ever be disappointed because it will depend and rest solely upon the suffering and death of Jesus.

Rejoice in your sufferings! They are going to grow your faith and trust in the God who sent His Son to save you. He will carry you through! You can count on it! He’s taught you to do so. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Friday of the Second Week of Lent
March 13, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 24:32-52, 61-67; Mark 8:1-21

And He said to them, “Do you not yet understand?” (Mark 8:21)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. I totally don’t get it, just like the apostles didn’t get it. I should believe. I should know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God loves me in the giving up of His Son. I should trust without wavering that all things are going to work out for my good. But day after day, when things don’t work out the way I think they should, I have to repent of my doubt and despair.

The apostles should have believed. They saw Jesus feed five thousand men and their families with twelve baskets of leftovers. He then fed four thousand men and their families with seven baskets of leftovers. Yet when they ran out of bread, they started to despair. Would Jesus care for them? Would He feed them?

You should believe, too. God Himself has kept the Law for you. God then did the unthinkable: He suffered and died for your sins and the sins of the whole world. Jesus died to save you! Because He gave up His Son for you, you should believe that God’s going to make everything work out for your good. It’s all part of the plan to save you and others.

Things get tight. They don’t work out. You get sick. People don’t act the way you want them to, or they do evil things to you. You get a little hungry for righteousness or thirsty for forgiveness, and what do you do? Be honest! Don’t deny it! When bad things happen to you, you start to look to God and wonder whether He’s capable of saving you.

Repent. You and I suffer from the same sin: unbelief! We haven’t seen the Lord feed four and five thousand like the apostles did, but we’ve heard in the Scriptures all that God has done for us. For us, God sent His Son. For us, God died. For us, God rose. His love is all around us—in our family, our friends, our church, and our work. His good gifts surround us: our house, our home, our family, our friends, our body, our soul, and all that we have. He’s rescued us countless times but when things get a little rough we ignore all that He has done for us!

What does Jesus do? He’s good to you despite you! He suffers for the clueless disciples. He saves you and me on Good Friday! He comforts us with forgiveness in the Gospel. He raises us with Him on Easter morning in the waters of Holy Baptism. He feeds us eternal life in His Body and Blood. We have new life in Him.

He’s going to make it work out for you. He went through Calvary, to assure you that no matter what happens, you’ll be just fine. It’s as certain for you as His resurrection on Easter morning! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. —Rev. George Borghardt
Saturday of the Second Week of Lent
March 14, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 27:1-29; Mark 8:22-38

My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for He will pluck my feet out of the net. (From the Introit for the Third Sunday in Lent)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Tomorrow is Oculisunday. Oculi is the Latin word for “eyes” as in “my eyes are ever on the Lord.” Eyes on the Lord! Look at what He is doing! See how He is!

Consider this: we know absolutely nothing Gospely about God apart from Jesus. We may know there is a God. We may see from the heavens that He made us. We can begin to understand how powerful He is. But does God love you? Does He want to save you? We have no clue apart from Jesus.

Outside of Christ, God seems distant. Where is He when bad things happen to us? God seems indifferent apart from Christ. God may be everywhere but that doesn’t mean He’s for us! Apart from the Lord Jesus, we don’t even know if God has any mercy whatsoever! All we know that God has Law about how we should be before Him and others and we don’t do that Law perfectly.

But in Jesus and what He does for us, we see how God truly is! God is not indifferent! No, He loves us in the giving up of His Son. Jesus takes on our flesh, lives before God as we should live before God, keeps all of His Laws for us, is betrayed into the hands of sinners, is falsely accused, mocked, whipped, beaten to near death, condemned, and then crucified between two thieves. Jesus is counted amongst sinners, He’s counted with us, and suffers our punishment before God. All that Jesus does, all that He says, shows us how merciful God is toward us!

Would you give up one of your children for a person who is nice to you? Would you do it for a person who hurt you? Would you do it for a world that who wanted to kill you? Would you save people who falsely accused you, beat you, and put you in an electric chair?

God does! God saves sinners in the giving up of His Son! He has mercy on His creation. He should condemn. We deserve it! We don’t do what we should and we do what He tells us not to do. But God, in Christ, takes on our sins and dies to save us.

He rose! You rose with Him in His gifts! He gives new life lived out for others. Jesus loves you. You love others!

Eyes on Jesus! It’s Oculi Sunday! Look at how God is for you in Jesus! Behold Jesus! Watch what He does! He saves you! That’s the joy of Lent! Jesus saves! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
The Third Sunday in Lent
March 15, 2020

Today's Reading: Luke 11:14-28

When a strong man having equipped himself guards his own house, his goods are safe but when someone stronger than him attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his full armor in which he trusted and divides his plunder. (Luke 11:21-22)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. A thief. Jesus describes saving you as if He is a thief. He’s an armed robber who holds the devil up in order to steal the devil’s plunder. He robs the devil of you. We think that we are on God’s team. Some people may be bad, but not us! We are at least trying! We are putting in the work! We aren’t perfect but it’s not like we are on the devil’s team. Wrong! We are so very wrong! We are so twisted by our sins, so blinded by our self-righteousness, so utterly deceived by the extent of our sins, that we have no clue whose house we actually live in. We need Jesus to tell us who we are, what we are, and how He saves us.

He breaks into our world and is born of the Virgin. He preaches, heals the sick, and raises the dead. He bloodies the devil’s nose. He overpowers him. Then, having lived the requirements of God in our place, He suffers on the Cross for all the evil that we do daily and much. We are stolen back from the devil by the Lord’s holy life and death on the Cross for us.

Just pause for a second and contemplate this! This is how utterly alien Jesus is to us. This is what God has to do to save us. He has to break into our world like a criminal in order to wrestle us from the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. He has to die between two thieves, to be treated like a robber Himself, to steal us back.

The devil is done in, but not by force of arms. He’s not beaten in a great battle. Jesus isn’t riding in on a horse or chariot to conquer him. No, Jesus suffers and dies like a thief. Jesus is defeated on the Cross and from His defeat you are saved on Easter morning!

Jesus died and so stole you back from the devil. He rose and you rose with Him to a life no longer lived in chains to your sins. You aren’t under the dominion of your flesh any more. You don’t have to listen to the world any longer. You’ve been baptized! You are free now to live, love, and care for others as you have been loved and cared for by Jesus.

Today Jesus has got a Calvary-heist. He’s going to be crucified for you between two robbers! He’s stolen you back from all your enemies. You are His now! It’s as sure as His promise to you. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Monday of the Third Week of Lent
March 16, 2020

Today's Reading: Exodus 8:16-24  
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 29:1-30; Mark 9:14-32

“But on that day I will treat differently the land of Goshen where my people dwell where no flies shall be so that you may know that I am the Lord in the midst of the earth.” (Exodus 8:22)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Why does God do bad things? Why does He send plagues in the Old Testament? Why does He strike down the firstborn? How can God do such bad things? He is God. We are His creatures. We are going to struggle to figure out what God is doing. His ways aren’t going to make sense to us. He’s God. He doesn’t have to explain what He is doing and why He’s doing it to His creation. Even if we had the whole thing figured out, our sin and selfishness would cloud and skew our take on what He is doing. When He did bad to us, it would seem unfair. When He did good, it would feel deserved. It is a dangerous thing to judge God.

To learn about God and ourselves, we need to let our Creator speak to us. He does the talking, we do the listening. He does the work, we are on the receiving end of His being our God.

He is our God. We are His people. When God describes Himself, He says that He is good. If He is doing something, it is good. All that He does is described as good! This is why Luther thought that good and “God” must be related linguistically. The words even look the same.

When God describes us, He describes our works: not good! We are selfish and self-centered. We don’t do what God wants us to do. We do what He doesn’t want us to do, daily and much. We aren’t deserving of God’s goodness. We deserve nothing but punishment.

When God causes calamity for us, when He brings suffering into our life, when He calls us out of our sin with punishment, it seems like He is indifferent and evil. But He is not! Even when we think He’s hitting us with a plague of bad, God is doing what He needs to do to save us.

Look at the Cross! God truly shows how He is toward us on Good Friday. He is born into our flesh to live as we are to live and to die the death we deserve. On the Cross, which seems like the most evil thing in the world, God is working out salvation for all men. On the Cross, Jesus shows us that all He does and says is done to save you!

Why does God do what He does? He does it all to save me! He punishes me to make me alive. He disciplines me because He cares for me. If I wonder whether He’s good to me, all I need do is look to the Cross. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Patrick, Missionary to Ireland
March 17, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 35:1-29; Mark 9:33-50

*I bind unto myself today, The strong name of the Trinity By invocation of the same, The Three in One and One in Three (I Bind Unto Myself Today, LSB 604:1)*

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. We’ve all heard the myths about St. Patrick. He was a Christian missionary who is known for driving the snakes out of Ireland. His day brings green beer, four-leaf clovers, and leprechauns.

The real history is full of what seem to be myths, too! The Irish annals, written in the Sixth Century, say that Patricius arrived in Ireland in 432 AD. In his own *Confession*, Patrick says he was captured by pirates at age 16 and was a slave for six years. During this time, God was merciful to him, forgave his many youthful sins, and taught him the Christian faith. After his escape, and in the midst of many adventures, he returned home. He was encouraged by a vision of Bishop Victorius to go to Ireland. After his ordination into the priesthood, Patrick took the Gospel back to Ireland.

Hear his Gospel: “I bind this day to me forever, By power of faith, Christ’s incarnation, His Baptism in the Jordan river, His cross of death for my salvation, His bursting from the spiced tomb, His riding up the heavenly way, His coming at the day of doom. I bind unto myself today” (LSB 604:2). Jesus alone saves.

St. Patrick’s Day isn’t about the myths surrounding Patrick. Today is about the Gospel that Patrick preached. We don’t know much about Patrick, but we know his letters always began with the words: “I, Patrick, a sinner.” Shamrocks today have meaning because he used them to explain the Trinity to the pagan Druids. The snake he drove out of Ireland was the devil who enslaved the pagans. We celebrate today because of his confession, his breastplate, which points us to Christ.

Patrick preached that God sent His Son into our flesh to save us from our sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. Jesus was betrayed into the hands of sinners, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. After three days, the same Jesus who died for us also rose for us. He ascended on high and now sits at the right hand of God, working all things out for our good. On the Last Day, He will come in glory to save us.

Happy St. Patrick’s Day! God be praised for the apostle to Ireland. More than that, God be praised for the Gospel that Patrick preached. “Salvation is of Christ, the Lord” (LSB 604:4). Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God alone is the Creator of the universe. He alone is the subject of the Hebrew verb בָּרָא (bara’) which means “to create.” Man makes things from other things. God creates—He baras—out of nothing (ex nihilo).


There is a God in the heavens. He’s not indifferent or against you. He loves you. He cares—not because you are lovable. No, He hates nothing that He created. You are His creature. He is your Creator. Everything about your life, your family, your friends, your home, your location, even your pets, was given to you by your Creator. Your job that you worked so hard to get, your education that you are so proud of, everything that makes you you was all given to you by God. Your grandparents, parents, children, and your children’s children aren’t just random combinations of DNA. They are also a gift to you from God.

God didn’t just make you, He also preserves you. Before Adam fell, before there was a universe, God set in motion His plan to save you. He sent His Son, born of a woman to crush the head of the serpent and to win salvation for you in His death on the Cross. He was crucified for your sins. He was raised from the dead for your forgiveness.

In Jesus’ resurrection on Easter, the God who made the heavens and the earth is your Father. Your Father! You are His child! What good news! Jesus is the reason that you have nothing to fear from God. You don’t have to be afraid that God is going to suddenly stop being good to you. He’s Calvary- and Easter-committed to saving you.

In good times, God is your Father. In bad times and tribulations, God is your Father. When you feel on top of the world and don’t think you could possibly fail, God is your Father. When you fall completely on your face and eat dirt, God is your Father.

Through it all, He’s always working, always creating, always changing evil into good. You don’t deserve it. You didn’t earn it. He’s doing everything for you out of fatherly divine goodness and mercy. He deals with you by gift. He is your Creator. You are His creation.

There are no accidents in this life. Instead, there is your God and Father. He’s going to carry you through this life. In Jesus, He’s going to save you! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
St. Joseph, Guardian of Jesus

March 19, 2020

Today’s Reading: Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 39:1-23; Mark 10:13-31

Now when they had gone away, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “When you have gotten up, take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt.” (Matthew 2:13a)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. The Church celebrates the lives of Her saints with specific days in order to rejoice in what Jesus did through His people. Celebrating the life and witness of the saint is second to celebrating the Lord who saved them and did good through them.

St. Joseph’s Day is no different! Joseph’s life points us to Jesus. Everything that he dreams, everything that God does through him, shows us how God wants to save us from our sins.

God does some crazy things through Joseph! When his fiancée ends up pregnant, Joseph believes the unthinkable preaching of the angel that the Baby is from the Holy Spirit. He doesn’t divorce Mary or do the 1st century equivalent of blowing her up on social media, but takes her as his wife despite every indication that she was unfaithful. After the Babe is born in Bethlehem, Joseph follows a dream and flees to Egypt to escape the evil that King Herod wants to do to Baby Jesus. Then another dream tells Joseph to take the Child and His mother back to Nazareth. Joseph is Jesus’ stepdad. He’s Jesus’ shield, protecting Him from evil.

He takes the Child to Egypt. He takes the Child to Nazareth. He looks after the Boy and His mother. He’s there when the Child Jesus teaches in the temple and gets left “Home Alone” in His Father’s house.

Then, after God did His work through Joseph, he is gone from the Gospels. Joseph isn’t mentioned again. Tradition is that he died before Jesus’ Baptism. I think he probably did but God doesn’t tell us. Joseph just disappears from the Gospels after his work is done.

Learn from Joseph! Today teaches us that everything that God does in your life, every move you make, everything you think is good, and everything that goes wrong for you can be used by God to save you and others. You aren’t the main character in the story. God would have other people be the hero. He uses you to save them.

God wants to save you. He sent His Son to save you. He wants to save those around you, too! He’s going to use you to do good to others. Then, when He’s done delivering His Cross and resurrection in your life to others, He will call you home. What comfort! It’s not about you. It’s about Jesus for you. More than that, it’s about Jesus for you and others! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Friday of the Third Week of Lent  
March 20, 2020

Today’s Reading: Ephesians 5:1-9  
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 40:1-23; Mark 10:32-52

For once you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Thus, walk as children of the Light. (Ephesians 5:8)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. I look at this reading today and I’m just scared. I try. I really try. I want to be light. But I look at myself and see only darkness. God, save me!

I’m baptized. I bear the Name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I’m born from above. I hear my sins forgiven every week in the Divine Service. I go to Confession. I receive the Lord’s Supper every day it is offered. I’m even ordained!

That sounds like I’m bragging. I’m not! With all that God has done to save me, you’d think that I would somehow get better! Yet I don’t. It’s scary how dark my life is. I want what I shouldn’t want and don’t want what I should want. Am I reveling in how bad I am? Probably! I can add that to the sins I need to confess. Add that to the times I blatantly sin, knowing I’ll get forgiven afterwards! Awful!

Christ is my Light in darkness. His life is the light of all men—even me. His Light was snuffed out for me on Good Friday. His Light dragged me out of the tomb with Him on Easter morning. He lives! I live with Him in water, Word, and in His Body and Blood.

Please don’t take any of this as an invitation to sin. I have enough sins without adding your slavery to sin to them! Turn from your sins. Don’t just put on a big religious show, like ripping your garments. No, rip your heart of your chest and repent!

Don’t get me wrong, I hope you are getting better every day. I hope you see real victory over sins in your life. Really! Thank God!

But when you don’t, when your light feels like darkness, when today’s reading scares you because your best isn’t good enough, when you look at yourself and see yourself as the second most awful person alive today behind me, Christ will be the light in your darkest places. He will drag you to His Cross and then to His resurrection. He is your hope. He is your Savior.

Every day, every hour, every ticking second, there’s a battle in both of us between what we want to be and the people we actually are. That’s our Christian life! He accuses us with His Law, we repent under it, and then He forgives us all our sins. Then, love born of His Gospel spills over to others. Die to your sins. Be raised in your Baptism to new life. Trust Jesus. Love others. Rinse and repeat. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Saturday of the Third Week of Lent
March 21, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 41:1-27; Mark 11:1-19

*Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her;*
*that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast.* (From the
Introit for the Fourth Sunday in Lent)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Rejoice! Be happy! Be Merry! Lose the repentant violet this week and replace it with forgiven, joyful rose. Celebrate the God who not only made you but saved you with His Lent and Good Friday.

God is for sinners. He was born for them, lived for them, was baptized for them, did miracles for them, and raised the dead for them. He was then betrayed into the hands of sinners for sinners, beaten by sinners, falsely accused, mocked, and then crucified. All that He did—in life and in death—He did for sinners. He was even numbered with sinners to save sinners. If that wasn’t enough “for sinners,” He became our sin so that we might become the very righteousness of God!

Lent can be happy! It should be! The wonderful Gospel truth of Jesus’ salvation changes everything. It turns frowns upside down. It makes our hearts grow not just three sizes but to an infinite, eternal life, size!

Repent. Mourn your sins. Be somber when you die to your grumpy religion. Stop doing your sins. Give them up and never take them back up again. Let your unhappiness and soberness end with the sackcloth and ashes of repentance.

Today, smile! Be happy! Be absolved! He was crucified for your sins. He was raised for your forgiveness, your justification, before God.

Let His joy spread to those around you! If you can’t be rejoicing because of what Jesus did for you, at least smile for the sake of those around you. Your family could really use a merry Lent. Your somberness probably doesn’t lift up your somber friends at all. But joy, happiness, contagious rejoicing might just pick up those around you from their somberness, mourning, and pain.

Rejoice! Jesus has raised you up out of your sin and death. He has saved you. He is raising up those around you with some Jesus-saved-me Lenten joy. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

–Rev. George Borghardt

*I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!” Our feet have been standing within your gates, O Jerusalem!” (From the Introit for the Fourth Sunday in Lent)*
And so Jesus, knowing they were about to come and seize Him so that they might make Him king, withdrew again to the mountain by Himself. (John 6:15)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. In a world where we judge our self-worth by the number of people who like our social media posts, Jesus is out of place. He runs from crowds. He flees from being promoted. He rejects hits on His website. Fame isn’t why He came!

Jesus came to feed His people. Five barley loaves and two fish feed five thousand men. What a miracle! He came to feed you, too! He came to take bread, give thanks, break it, and give to you His Body, broken for you. He came to take the cup, give thanks, and give it to you. Take, drink His Blood shed for you for the Cross. He came to die. He came to deliver to you His death in the Sacrament of the Altar.

We want to focus on our things. We put our careers first. We put our own feelings before others. We need “our” time. We push others down in order to push ourselves forward. We may not love being the center of attention, but we sure like the credit for what we do for others.

While you give attention to all the things you want to do for yourself, He is laser-focused on you. He is going to the Cross to save you. He’s got a date that He’s been planning since before the creation of the world. Nothing will keep Him from it! Every miracle that He does, every sermon He preaches, every private moment that He flees to, is so that He might live His life perfectly and count that perfect life as your life and then suffer the punishment you deserve for your self-centered life.

We will seize Him by force to make Him king. We will mock Him as we clothe Him in royal purple and crown Him with thorns. We will drive nails into His hands and feet and lift Him above the earth. There He will hang until He has done what He came to do, with the sign above His head which will say who He is: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. He came to save you. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Laetare Sunday)
Monday of the Fourth Week of Lent
March 23, 2020

Today's Reading: Exodus 16:2-21
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 42:1-34, 38; Mark 12:1-12

“Would that we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by meat pots and ate bread in plenty, for you have brought us into this wilderness to kill this whole congregation with hunger.” (Exodus 16:3b)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. It had been about a month since the Lord brought the children of Israel out of Egypt. Pharaoh had been merciless to them. He forced them to make bricks without straw. Pharaoh’s taskmasters beat them and were cruel to them. They cried out to the Lord for salvation. The Lord heard and sent Moses. The Lord saved them with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm.

Now they are hungry. They want meat. They want bread. They grumble to God and complain. “Life was better in Egypt! We had such great meals there!” That’s some romanticized revisionist history. The grass is greener in slavery? That’s fake news!

That’s the absurdity of our unbelief. God has brought us out of the slavery of our sins through the holy life and Good Friday of Jesus. He has redeemed us from our evil and saved us from death itself. But when He doesn’t give us what we want, when we want it, we grumble and despair. We don’t have enough. We need more. Things were better before. He was a better God before. That’s just more fake news!

The sin is unbelief. The children of Israel in the wilderness didn’t believe that God was good enough to keep them fed. Neither do we believe that God is good enough to take care of us. So we doubt, despair, and grumble against Him. We make plans to compensate for God’s not being good to us.

Repent. Quit being discontent with what God has done for you. Who are you to judge God? Do you really believe that you’d make a better god than God? Stop focusing on what you don’t have and receive what God has done for you in Christ.

God saved the children of Israel. He fed them in the wilderness with manna and quail. He has saved you, too, in the giving up of His Son. He has rescued you from your sins, from your death, and from the power of the devil with His holy life and bitter sufferings and death for you. He didn’t go through Lent and Good Friday to abandon you. He’s going to carry you through whatever struggles you may have in this life. He will do it His way. You can trust Him. He’s going to come through for you. He already has in Jesus. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God judges everything we do and don’t do. His judgments are right and true. It’s not enough to do something for God. You must do things perfectly and for the right reason. He requires complete obedience with all that is in us—heart, body, and soul. That’s life under the Law!

We are inclined to live under the Law. It’s how we think religion works. We want to trust in ourselves—in our believing, in our decision, in our change of life. It’s like a prison cell that we are used to being locked in. It’s a comfortable religion which appeals to the part of us that thinks we can and should do something for God.

But Paul’s question nails it! If you want to be under the Law, you need to hear the whole Law. You need to obey the whole Law of God—every dotted i and crossed t. You need to keep it all—every commandment, every precept, every Word that God gives to you. Do it all. Complete it perfectly. Obey with a happy and positive attitude.

Yet you can’t. You can do some of the Law, some of the time, with some varying degrees of faithfulness. But the full Law of God? You fall short. You miss the mark. You do it daily. You do it much. That’s bad news before God’s holy Law, which requires perfection! The soul that sins shall die—here on earth and eternally in hell!

God did not go through Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter to leave salvation up to your keeping of the Law! There’s another way to deal with God: the way of faith. Believe that He sent His Son to save you. Trust that all Jesus did counts for you. Repent of your keeping of the Law and put your faith in Jesus, who kept the Law perfectly for you. Know that He suffered on the Cross for all the laws you don’t keep before God.

Paul’s goal today is to point you to the simple truth of Holy Scripture. There are two ways for God to deal with you: the Law and faith. Either you do it for God perfectly or trust that Christ has done everything that is required of you. Either you are going to save yourself or God has saved you on Good Friday in Jesus. There’s no mixing or half and half with God on this one. Either you do, or He does.

God has sent His Son to save you. He wants you to worship Him by faith alone. He wants you to trust His keeping of the Law for you. You can trust that Jesus has saved you—even from your failures to keep the Law. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. —Rev. George Borghardt
The Annunciation of Our Lord
March 25, 2020

Today’s Reading: Luke 1:26-38
Daily Lectionary: Genesis 44:1-18, 32-34; Mark 12:28-44

“You will conceive in your womb and bear forth a Son and you shall call His name Jesus.” (Luke 1:30-31)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Merry Christmas!

Well, Merry Conception Day! Today the Church celebrates the angel’s announcement to the Blessed Virgin Mary that she is with Child by the Holy Spirit.

Mary was a virgin. Don’t believe anyone on the internet or on television who says otherwise! She says that she doesn’t “know” a man. She’s not been with anyone. That’s the definition of a virgin. This doesn’t require a science lesson! It’s that simple. She’s a virgin.

That’s the miracle of the angel’s words today. The Virgin will be with Child by the Holy Spirit. The power of the Most High will overshadow her. The Child born will be called “Holy.” He will be the Son of God.

It’ll take the Son of God to do Lent for us. Only God can save us from us. Jesus will do perfectly all that God’s Law requires of us and then He will suffer all the punishment due us for our sins. He will die for all. It takes God to do that. If it’s for all, that means for you and me!

The Greek word for angel (ἄγγελος) means “messenger.” Angels deliver messages from God to sinners. That’s what Gabriel was doing for Mary! His words deliver the impossible. Mary is pregnant by the Holy Spirit. Virgins don’t get pregnant, but this one does by the Holy Spirit delivered in the Word.

God does the impossible for you with His Word, too. He takes all that Jesus won and earned for you with His birth, His faithfulness, His Lent, and Holy Week and delivers it to you in His Word. He sends you His messenger, your pastor, to deliver His Word in the Divine Service.

It happened just as Gabriel said! The Baby announced today was born of the Virgin on Christmas. He did a Lent and Holy Week for your sins. He was raised on Easter for your forgiveness. Your sins, all of them, are forgiven. It’s impossible! It’s true in Jesus. Believe it for Jesus’ sake. Merry Conception Day! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt

O Lord, as we have known the incarnation of Your Son Jesus Christ by the message of the angel to the Virgin Mary, so by the message of His cross and passion bring us to the glory of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for the Annunciation of our Lord Jesus Christ)
Thursday of the Fourth Week of Lent
March 26, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 45:1-20, 24-28; Mark 13:1-23

He also gives me clothing and shoes, food and drink, house and home, wife and children, land, animals and all I have. He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. (The Small Catechism: Apostles Creed, First Article, Part 2)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God is good. Luther describes Him in the Large Catechism as “an eternal fountain that gushes forth all that is and could be called ‘good’” (Large Catechism I: 24). He’s a good God who gives good gifts.

Gifts are given. They aren’t earned or deserved. A gift, by definition, is given. You didn’t earn your Christmas or birthday gifts when you were a child. Your parents gave you gifts because you were their child despite your earning your way onto the naughty list.

Your being alive is a gift from God. He gave you life and He preserves your life. Everything that you have—every last thing—comes to you as a gift from God. All that you have, all that you will have, all you need is from the good God who made you and sustains you in this life.

We doubt God’s goodness. We despair of it. We covet more than He gives us and make comparisons with what He’s given to others. We have to keep up with the Joneses, and the grass is always greener on their side of the fence! We deceive ourselves into thinking that we deserve more! Our definition of a “good” God is a slot machine spitting out all that we think we need, and more!

That’s idolatry. We need to repent of it, if we would be saved. We don’t judge God’s goodness by the gifts He gives to us. Have we forgotten how good He has been to us in the giving up of His Son? If He didn’t spare His Son for us, how much more will He give us the little things we need to support this life, which in itself is also a gift from Him?

The Father gives what we need, not what we want. He does this because He loves us and wants to keep us from putting our trust in things. Apart from His giving, we’d rely on them rather than on God. So what we need, He gives. What we don’t receive from Him is a gift, too.

Our response to His gift-giving is to offer our lives as living sacrifices to Him. We give to Him what He has given to us. He reminds us in our offerings that it all comes to us from Him. Giving to Him doesn’t earn favor with Him. We give because He has given to us.

God is a good God. He gave us all that we have. He gave us all that we need. He still takes care of what He has given to us. If you doubt, just look at the Cross. He gave up His Son. He will provide everything else for you, too! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Friday of the Fourth Week of Lent
March 27, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Genesis 47:1-31; Mark 13:24-37

“Concerning the day or the hour, no one knows, not the angels in heaven nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Mark 13:32)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. So many people have been certain they knew when the world was going to end during my lifetime. Some preachers were sure that the Lord was going to return in 1988. The world was going to end in 2000 when the computers couldn’t handle the change to the next century. The world was going to end in 2012 when the Mayan calendar ran out of gas.

The Lord is very clear: No one knows the date of the end of the world. They don’t know the year, and they don’t know the hour. The angels don’t know. Jesus doesn’t even know. Only His Father knows.

What comfort! We don’t have to listen to anyone who tells us the world is going to end. When they give us a date, we can pray to God. When they warn us, we can look to Jesus. When they are certain of the day, we can trust in His Word and promise.

The world will end someday. Jesus says that nation will turn against nation. There will be wars and rumors of wars. There will be earthquakes. The Church will be attacked. People will fall away from the faith. Families will be ripped apart by the world’s hate for Jesus’ followers.

He will come in the clouds of heaven. The dead in Christ will rise from their tombs. We who are believers and are alive, will meet Him in the air and so we will always be with the Lord.

The Last Day isn’t supposed to scare you. That’s where the false prophets of the world get it wrong! The Last Day is the Lord’s coming to rescue you from all the evils of this world. He is going to bring you home to a place where there is no sin, no more pain, no more tears, and no more death. That’s why Paul tells us to “comfort one another” with the words about the Last Day! (1 Thessalonians 4:18)

You can be sure that the Father knows when Jesus is coming. You can also be sure that it’ll be for your comfort. For the One who comes in the clouds of heaven is the One who died on the Cross for you. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. —Rev. George Borghardt

Those dear tokens of His passion, Still His dazzling body bears, Cause of endless exultation, To His ransom worshipers. With what rapture, with what rapture, with what rapture Gaze we on those glorious scars! (Lo, He Comes With Clouds Descending, LSB 336:3)
Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people, from the deceitful and unjust man deliver me! For you are the God in whom I take refuge. (From the Introit for the Fifth Sunday in Lent)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. *Judica me, Deus!*

Judge me, O God! That’s the traditional Latin for tomorrow’s Introit. What a prayer. What a request of God! Judge me, O God.

Judge me righteous because of the holy life of Jesus. He kept every Law that is required of me by God. He believed and trusted only in His Father. He never misused the Name of the Lord, but used it in prayer and praise. He remembered the Sabbath Day and truly kept it holy. He honored His mother, Father, and all the authorities God put before Him. He didn’t hurt or harm His neighbor but helped those around Him. He was chaste and decent in everything He said and did. He didn’t cheat or steal. He didn’t lie or deceive others, but defended those who were in need. He received from the Father everything and didn’t desire what wasn’t given to Him. He loved God with His whole heart and His neighbor as Himself. He counts His holy life as our holy life.

Judge me righteous because of the bitter sufferings and death of Jesus! He suffered for all my sins. He was betrayed into the hands of sinners, beaten, mocked, spit upon, falsely accused, whipped, stripped, and then carried away to be crucified. Nails were driven into His hands and feet, and He was lifted up from the earth in shame. He became a curse on the Cross and was abandoned by God. All this He did for you and me to save us from the wrath of Almighty God.

If we are judged by what we have and haven’t done, we will be condemned. We don’t love God with our whole heart and we don’t love others as ourselves. We’d be guilty and have to pay the punishment for all of our sins. That’s hell.

But this psalm is our prayer because it’s Jesus’ prayer! That’s the comfort. He prayed for God to judge Him for us and in our place. He suffered what we deserved and gave to us what He deserves. We stand before God forgiven and righteous in Him.

Judge me, O God. Vindicate me because of my Baptism, where I was buried and raised with Jesus. Declare me righteous in the holy life and bitter sufferings and death of Jesus. *Judica me, Deus!* Judge me, O God! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. “I am.” Jesus says that He is the “I am.” He is the God who was in, with, and under the burning bush. Jesus is the Lord God who told Moses, “I am who I am.” That’s what it means when Jesus says, “Before Abraham was, I am.” It means that He’s the God of the Old Testament!

But the man standing before the Jews was only Jesus. They knew His family. They knew where He was raised. Everyone knew that nothing good came out of Nazareth. There was nothing about Jesus that they found impressive or attractive. He was just Jesus.

Yet here Jesus was, saying that He was the Lord God Himself. That Abraham had longed to see His day. He was before them claiming to be Jehovah, the One who brought the Children of Israel out of Egypt. So they did to Him what we would do to God: they tried to kill Him.

That may seem like hyperbole, but it’s not. Look at what we did to Jesus! If we could get our hands on God, if we had Him in our living room, we wouldn’t ask Him the nature of the universe or the reason the world is arranged the way it is. No, we would take Him, seize Him, and kill Him. If you doubt it, just look at the Cross.

“But they weren’t trying to kill God, they were just trying to kill Jesus.” Wrong! Jesus is God! He says that He is God. He shows us how He is God by what He does. Then, if we need any proof, all we need to do is look at the resurrection. Without the resurrection, Jesus could be considered a madman.

Jesus did what He said He would do: He suffered, was crucified, died, was buried, and on the Third Day rose again from the dead. He said He’d die and rise again and then He did just that! You can be sure of everything else He said because He has shown you His divinity in His suffering and death.

The Jews rejected Him. God can’t be this way. He can’t be this man standing before them. He can’t be stonable and beatable. He has to be more.

You know better! Jesus is the only God you need. He’s saved you with His holy life and His Good Friday sacrifice for you. He’s washed your sins away. He’s fed you eternal life. He’s God and you have no other. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Abraham said, “God Himself will see to the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” And they both went together. (Genesis 22:8)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be more numerous than the stars in the sky. Yet by all external evidence, Abraham and his wife were past the age of having children. How was God going to pull this off? When Sarah, his wife, was finally told by God that she was going to have a son, she laughed because, well, it was funny! That’s why Isaac’s name means “he laughs.” It felt like it was going to take forever, but God kept His promise!

When God told Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, his only son, it wasn’t funny. What was God doing? Did He know how long they had waited for Isaac? How would He keep His promise if their only son was dead?

When Abraham and Isaac got to the mountain, Abraham laid the wood for the burnt offering on his only son. He made him carry his own execution materials! And Isaac doesn’t miss it. He notices the wood, the fire, but sees no lamb! His dad said that God would handle the offering.

Abraham, the man of faith, believed God. He didn’t know how it was going to work out. He didn’t have answers to his own thoughts. The command to sacrifice his son seemed contradictory. All that Abraham knew was that he and Isaac were going up the mountain and they would come down together. How this would all work out was God’s problem!

They get to the top of the mountain and Abraham builds an altar and then shockingly ties his son, his only son, to it. He raises his hand to slaughter the only heir that he had and before he can strike, God stops him! Abraham looks up and sees a ram with his horns caught in the thicket. He takes the ram and offers it instead of his son.

God certainly wouldn’t make Abraham sacrifice Isaac! You are right! He didn’t. He wouldn’t. The Son that is sacrificed to save you, the Lamb that is provided, is God’s only Son. Jesus is the offering that makes you acceptable to God. Jesus carries His own Cross up to Calvary where He dies for Abraham, Isaac, you, and me. God doesn’t stop the sacrifice. Instead, Jesus dies so that you live forever.

Abraham believed God and God counted it to him as righteousness. God counts you righteous by faith in Jesus, too. It may not look like it. It may not feel like it. But He’s going to keep His promises to you in Jesus. He did it for Abraham and Isaac. He will save you, too.

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
But Joseph said to them, “Do not fear for am I in the place of God? As for you, you intended it for evil against me, but God intended it for good to bring about this day for many people.” (Genesis 50:19-20)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Joseph had them! His brothers were in his grasp! They had sinned against him. They had left him for dead in a well. All sorts of evil had come from what they did to him: He was sold into slavery in Egypt, falsely accused of messing around with Potiphar’s wife, and thrown into jail. Now that he had worked his way out of jail by interpreting dreams, the very people who caused the whole thing were standing before him in need. Joseph could finally stick it to the people who had stuck it to him!

Joseph doesn’t. He can’t! How could he? That’s not who God is, and so that’s not who Joseph is to his brothers. God forgives. How could Joseph do to his brothers what God wouldn’t do to them?

Joseph believes that God doesn’t hold evil against His people. He doesn’t do His evil for the sake of evil. He doesn’t pay back people for what they do. No, Joseph put His hope in God’s promise that He would send Adam’s seed to crush the serpent’s head and save His people from the evil they have done.

That faith, that truth, made Joseph invincible. Everything that the devil, the world, even his brothers threw at him would be worked out by God for good for Joseph. But more than that, God worked out good from the evils done to Joseph for others. God used all that happened to Joseph to save his family and the people in Egypt.

God turns evil into good. That’s what He does. He takes the evil the devil does and He turns it and uses it for good. If you doubt this, just look at Calvary. There’s nothing more evil than the suffering of Jesus on the Cross, and God uses that to save all of us from our sins.

God grant us such faith! For if we believed this, if we knew that God is so good that He makes all things work out for our good, we, too, would be invincible. No evil, no bad thing, no sickness, not even death itself would take the wind out of our sails. Nothing would ruin our day. Nothing would disappoint us! We would see everything that happens to us and for us as an opportunity for God to work good in our midst.

God is good! Good is what God does for you. He makes all things new. He takes evil and makes it work out as a blessing for you and those around you. He forgives you and mercies you to teach you to forgive and mercy others. Joseph shows us this! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. —Rev. George Borghardt
He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me. For all this it is my duty to thank and praise, serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true. (The Small Catechism: Apostles Creed, First Article, Part 3)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Grace alone. That’s not an April Fools joke. It seems like a joke, but it’s far from it! It’s the truth of the universe! God saves you by grace alone without any merit or work in you. You didn’t earn it. You don’t deserve it. God deals with you by faith alone, that is, by gift alone.

God created you out of the dust of the ground. He gave you your parents, your grandparents, and your siblings. He used those gifts to make you—for good or bad—who you are.

He gave you the things you have. What makes you you is a gift from Him. Your body, soul, eyes, and ears—all of it comes to you from the hand of the God who treats you solely with grace. Your clothing, your style, your phone, your education, your job, also come from Him.

Your personality, your self-confidence or lack thereof, and your smile that others like or don’t like about you is also from Him. You inherited it. It was a gift from Him to make you who you are, for the sake of others. He wants you to be who you are, He made you who you are, so that you could be who you are for others. He loves you. He wants to love others through you.

He protects you. Nothing happens to you apart from the God who saved you in Jesus’ Cross and resurrection. He keeps you from evil. He keeps evil from you. When the devil and the world attack you, He turns it into good for you. Every sniffle, sneeze, allergy, sickness, and pain are all turned into good for you. He uses even death itself to save you!

Grace alone. It seems ridiculous or like some cosmic April Fools joke. It’s not! It’s the Gospel! God doesn’t treat you as you deserve or harbor anger against you. He created you. He gave you gifts. He preserves those gifts and uses them to bring good to you and others. He even sent His Son to save you. He wants to deal with you by gift alone. That’s who He is. That’s the kind of God He is! That’s no joke! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Thursday of the Fifth Week of Lent

April 2, 2020

Today’s Reading: Hebrews 9:11-15
Daily Lectionary: Exodus 4:19-31; Mark 15:16-32

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tabernacle—not made with hands, that is not of this creation, he entered once for all into the holy places. (Hebrews 9:11-12)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Tabernacle! That’s a familiar word. God commanded the children of Israel to build a tabernacle while they wandered around the wilderness after He brought them out of Egypt. The tabernacle was a tent.

The whole Old Testament system of sacrifices was instituted by God to save His people. He’d be our God. We’d be His people. He wanted to be present with us and to give us life like we had originally in the Garden. But we aren’t in the Garden of Eden anymore. We wrecked that relationship with God through our sins. We wanted to be our own God. We could do better than Him. We ate what He commanded us not to eat so that we would be like God and know good and evil.

Our sin separates us from the God who made us. To save us, God came to His people, veiled in the tabernacle. His presence was in the tent and cloaked from His people for our safety. If He were to be physically before us, His holiness would do us in!

That’s why the Lord God received sacrifices in the tabernacle from behind the veil. The High Priest would go in and make the offering for our sins. Life is the price, the punishment for our sins. The blood of goats was sacrificed to cover our sin in the Tabernacle. The life was in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). The animal’s life for our life. The smell of the sacrifices soothed the wrath of God against us.

Jesus comes into our world. God comes! He lives the life that the Law requires of us and then He Himself enters behind the veil and offers the sacrifice that makes us acceptable to God. The blood of bulls and goats weren’t enough to save us once for all time. Jesus offers Himself—the holy and precious Lamb of God—to take away the sins of the world!

God isn’t cloaked or hidden anymore! We didn’t change, God did. God has tabernacled among us in the flesh of Jesus. The veil was torn when Jesus died. God saves His people by grace alone, received by faith alone.

The Old Testament sacrifice system was set up by God to save you. I said that, remember? The sacrifices, the Law, the veil, all of it, were pointing to Christ’s coming to be the sacrifice that saves us. God has tabernacled with His people. You are saved. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt
Friday of the Fifth Week of Lent  
April 3, 2020  

**Daily Lectionary:** Exodus 5:1-6:1; Mark 15:33-47

*And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, leme sabachthani?” which means, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Mark 15:34)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Last Sunday began the Passiontide of Lent. It’s the final stretch of the season where our eyes are fixed more completely on the Passion, the suffering, of God for His people. Jesus had to suffer. He had to be beaten, bruised, crushed, mocked. He had to die to save us.

It’s not that God “needs” anything. That’s not how God is. Jesus has to die because there was just no other way for Him to save us. To redeem His people, He has to replace our sinful life with His holy life. He has to take upon Himself the punishment for our sins. God has to die for you to live.

God can’t die. That’s impossible! That goes against everything we know about God. He’s immortal. Yet for your sake, because there is no other way to save you, God dies. But God didn’t just die for you, He also went through hell in your place.

Hell is real. Anyone who tells you otherwise is just selling you something. As surely as the sacred Scriptures speak of eternal life for those who believe in Jesus, they also speak of the eternal punishment of hell for those who reject life. The bad part of hell isn’t the unthinkable heat and cold. That’s awful, but that’s just the start of hell. The worst part of hell is that you experience a universe where God isn’t for you.

That’s what sin is! Behind all sin is the false belief that we can do better on our own. We can be a better god and people without His love for us. We don’t need His forgiveness. We can live for ourselves. Hell is God’s giving you the universe you want, without Him in it.

God didn’t design hell for men. He made it for the devil and his angels. It makes Him sad to send men there. So to save us, to keep us from going to this place of torment, Jesus suffered hell in our place. God abandons Him. He turns His back on Jesus. The punishment due every sin from everyone for all time struck Him. He didn’t experience a metaphorical hell. No, God went through actual hell to save you. God abandoned Jesus in order to save you.

That’s the Gospel! For in the suffering and death of Christ, you are saved. The wrath of God hits Jesus instead of you. Hell is endured by Jesus, so it can’t be endured by you. You will never be abandoned by God. He will always save you in Jesus. Fix your eyes on Him this Passiontide. He alone saves. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

-Rev. George Borghardt
Saturday of the Fifth Week of Lent
April 4, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 7:1-25; Mark 16:1-20

Blessed is He who comes in the name of the L\textsc{ord}! We bless you from the house of the L\textsc{ord}. (From the Introit for Palmarum)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. God is indeed everywhere. He’s in the sky. He’s in the good day. He’s in space. He’s even in bad places, too. He’s in the best place you can think of and the most awful place. He’s in the church when you sing your favorite hymn tomorrow. He’s in the tornado that takes out the church. He’s in the dark place you go when you do that awful sin that denies His existence. He’s not just watching, He’s there. He’s everywhere.

God is not everywhere for you. In those good and bad places, God may be there but He’s not delivering His salvation to you. In fact, from the outside, God seems indifferent and His being everywhere doesn’t help you at all. It doesn’t show that He loves or cares.

Jesus earned salvation for you this week. He rides into Jerusalem tomorrow to suffer and die for your sins and the sins of the whole world. He will be beaten, bruised, crushed, mocked, stripped naked, shamed, and cursed in your place. He will accomplish your salvation in His Passion, death, and resurrection.

Holy Week does you no good unless it is delivered to you. Your salvation is earned on the Cross, but it’s not delivered there. You can’t travel back through time in a DeLorean time machine and go back to the foot of the Cross. Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter do you no good unless God makes Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter for you.

Jesus delivers the forgiveness of sins to you in His Supper. God didn’t just achieve your salvation, He delivers it to you! He comes to you, not riding the royal donkey, but in His gifts. He takes all that Jesus did for you this week and makes it yours in the Word, Holy Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. He won salvation for you.

Faith receives what Jesus did for you by grace alone. Faith saves you because it lays hold of all that the Lord did for you, delivered in His gifts. Faith says, “Amen!” Gift received! You are saved. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt

If now I seek the forgiveness of sins, I do not run to the Cross, for I will not find it given there. But I will find in the Sacrament or Gospel, the Word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me that forgiveness which was won on the Cross. (Luther’s Works, American Edition, vol. 40:214)
Say to the daughter of Zion, “Behold your King is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.” (Matthew 21:5)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. “We have no King but Caesar.” We sing Hosannas to our King today and then will scream for His crucifixion on Good Friday. It’s not that we want Caesar to rule us, it’s just that we don’t want Jesus to rule us as our King, either.

Holy Week comes and you fold your hands and think that if anyone would stand up for Jesus this week, it would be you. I know you think this because I do, too. We are so wrong!

Consider how you live. Look at how you act. You put yourself first and others last. You see everything from your selfish perspective. You aren’t perfect. You make mistakes. But you aren’t the worst person, and certainly you’re not as bad as the crowds who turned on Jesus.

Your sins crucified the Lord of glory. Mine did, too! If anyone should know better than to think otherwise, we should. We are the baptized. We have heard the Gospel. We believe. We have eaten the Body and Blood of Jesus. Eternal life is ours in Jesus.

Today, Jesus rides into Jerusalem to conquer all your enemies. He’s going to rescue you from the Law, from your self-righteousness, from your love for yourself, from the consequences of your sins, and from your death. He will endure the curse and punishment of your sins. He will become your sins so that you will become children of God. He will save you on the Cross.

Merry Lent! Thank God for Holy Week! God loves you! He must! He has brought you to another Holy Week to show you your salvation, as He rides to the Cross to die. He has fronted you up again to your sins and repented you. He didn’t stop there! He delivers to you what He earned at His coronation, the Cross, when He feeds you His Body and Blood today. Today you eat and drink forgiveness in His Supper. Jesus rides to save you—even you! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

–Rev. George Borghardt

Almighty and everlasting God, You sent Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, to take upon Himself our flesh and to suffer death upon the cross. Mercifully grant that we may follow the example of His great humility and patience and be made partakers of His resurrection; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Palm Sunday)
Monday of Holy Week  
April 6, 2020

Today's Reading: John 12:1-43  

“Whoever loves His life will lose it and whoever hates his life in this world will guard it unto eternal life.” (John 12:25)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Learn today the truth of the Gospel. It’s upside down! It’s so absurd that only the Holy Spirit can enliven you to believe it. Yet it’s the only thing that saves you.

You were conceived into Adam’s sin. Even if you were to do everything right, you inherited the sin from Adam’s fall. You aren’t going to live perfectly in this life—not even close. You do what you shouldn’t do and don’t do what you should. You miss the mark when it comes to God’s Law. You do it daily. You do it much. You can’t save yourself. You can’t fix your situation with God. You can’t make it better. You can’t balance the scales with the God who made you. Your good can’t outweigh your bad. You are so deceived, so out of whack when it comes to God, that you don’t even know or understand how utterly evil you are. God’s Word, outside of you, has to tell you how you truly are: You are a sinner. That’s the Law truth of today: “Whoever loves his life will lose it.”

Jesus does what you cannot do: He saves you. God shows His love for His creation by sending His Son to go through Lent and Holy Week for you. The spotless Lamb of God is sacrificed for you on the Cross. For the sheep and for you, the Shepherd is stuck on the Cross. He who knew no sin, who never sinned, who couldn’t sin, came to become your sin. He exchanges your sin for His righteousness. He takes on your death and gives to you eternal life. Salvation is freely given and earned solely by the sacrifice of Jesus, for you.

He has taken His life and His Good Friday and delivered them to you in Word and water. Faith, which is born of the gifts of the Spirit, grasps hold of Jesus, crucified for you, and saves you! That’s the Gospel truth of today: “Whoever hates his life in this world will guard it to eternal life.”

Die to your sins. Confess them to God. Receive His Calvary-earned forgiveness through the Word. You didn’t save you, Jesus saved you. As surely as He is raised on Easter morning, you will be, too! Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt

Almighty God, grant that in the midst of our failures and weaknesses we may be restored through the passion and intercession of Your only begotten Son, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Holy Monday)
Tuesday of Holy Week
April 7, 2020

Today's Reading: Mark 14:1-15:47

But he began to curse and swear, “I do not know this Man of whom you speak.” (Mark 14:71)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. “All will fall away, but I will never fall away.” Peter was the most emphatic in telling Jesus that he would stick by Him (Mark 14:27). He wasn’t lying, either! He really meant it. He loved Jesus with his whole heart. He loved Him more than he loved himself. The rest of the disciples would scatter and run, but Peter would fight for Jesus.

When Jesus told Peter point blank that before the rooster crowed twice on Maundy Thursday, he would deny Jesus three times, Peter doubled down on his emphatic support of Jesus. “If I must die for you, I will not deny you” (Mark 14:31). The other disciples all agreed.

Just a few hours later, Jesus asked Peter to stay awake and pray with Him. He couldn’t. He was just so tired. It was so dark and comfortable that he fell asleep. Jesus woke him up three times and begged Peter to pray with Him. Peter just couldn’t stay awake. He wanted to and his spirit was willing, but his flesh was just weak.

They came. Everything went so dreadfully wrong! Judas led them out with swords and clubs. Peter tried to fight for Jesus, but Jesus came to fulfill the Scriptures, to suffer and die. When they grabbed Jesus, all the disciples fled, just as He said they would.

Peter followed Him at a distance to watch what would happen. As he was warming himself, watching in the court of the high priest, a young servant girl recognized him as one of Jesus’ disciples. Peter denied Him, again, and the third time he denied Him with swearing and curses. He was so afraid that he denied knowing Jesus to a little girl!

Learn from Peter and confess how you have denied Him by the way you have lived. He doesn’t need you to promise to be faithful to Him. Other saints, like Peter, have made that promise and failed miserably. Holy Week is about God’s saving you from your denials and sins in Jesus’ death on Good Friday. Be faithful, but trust all the more in Jesus’ faithfulness for you. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. —Rev. George Borghardt

Almighty and everlasting God, grant us by Your grace so to pass through this holy time of our Lord's passion that we may obtain the forgiveness of our sins; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Holy Tuesday)
Wednesday of Holy Week
April 8, 2020

Daily Lectionary: Exodus 10:21-11:10; Hebrews 4:1-16

And He took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My Body given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.” (Luke 22:19)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. He took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it. This had been done by the head of the family during every Passover celebration. The slain lamb, its blood painting the door, God’s judgment passing over His people, God’s saving work in Egypt—all was remembered. Then Jesus said something that no one had ever said before: “This is My Body given for you.” Hear His Word! Take comfort. His Body is given for you on the Cross. This is sacrifice language. He gives Himself for you.

“Do this in remembrance of Me,” Luke records. God remembers His promises. He remembers the Passover of His Son. He beholds the body of the slain Son of God. Our remembrance of the suffering and death of Jesus in His Supper flows from His remembering, so we in His Supper proclaim the death of Jesus until He comes again.

“This cup poured out for you is My Blood of the New Testament.” He took the cup after they had eaten and said more words that had never been said before. “Poured out” is more sacrifice language. Christ’s blood is the Passover offering. He is the Lamb slain.

This is My Body. This is my Blood. He doesn’t say that the bread and wine change into His Body and Blood. Nor does He say that bread and wine symbolize or represent His Body and Blood. Eat His Body. Drink His Blood. That’s His command. That’s His promise.

His Blood is the New Testament. His Blood is the blood of the slain Lamb of God, the true Passover Lamb. His sacrifice is not a completely new thing, but the fulfillment of all the Old Testament.

The best way to understand the Lord’s Supper is to stick to the Lord’s Word. When we say anything other than what Jesus gives us to say, everything goes wrong. Receive His Supper in His Word. Take, eat His Body. Take, drink His Blood. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt

Merciful and everlasting God, You did not spare Your only Son but delivered Him up for us all to bear our sins on the cross. Grant that our hearts may be so fixed with steadfast faith in Him that we fear not the power of sin, death, and the devil; through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Holy Wednesday)
Maundy Thursday
April 9, 2020


“A new command I give to you that you love one another, just as I have loved you, so also love one another.” (John 13:34)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Jesus is a dead man. He’s as good as dead even as He is sitting at the table with His disciples. He’s going to be betrayed into the hands of sinners. He will be beaten, mocked, falsely accused and convicted, shamed, stripped, and crucified. These things will happen to Him. He will die tomorrow.

Jesus gets up from the table after supper. He knows who He is, what’s going to happen, and where He’s going. With the certainty that He is the Son of God, He puts a towel around His waist, and taking the job of a slave, begins to wash His disciples’ feet!

Every religion in the world focuses on how we should love and serve the deity. Not Christianity! Jesus is the God who serves His disciples. He puts you first. He lives His life for you and needs no credit for it. He counts His life and faithfulness as your faithfulness. Then, He gives His life for you on the Cross tomorrow.

We think the big deal is that we love God, commit to Him, and do things for Him. Repent! We’ve got it wrong! God loves in the giving up of His Son. Good Friday and Easter—that’s the love of God for you!

Look at Jesus. Know who you are. Remember Whose you are. You are a child of God! All things are His, so all things are yours. He is the Son of God. You are a child of God in the waters of Holy Baptism. Heaven is yours as sure as Jesus died and rose again for you. He went to prepare a place for you so that where He is you may be also.

This Gospel frees you to love others as you have been loved. You can put them first. You are served to serve others. Their needs come before your needs. Their wants supersede your wants.

This new command doesn’t depend on you! You love because He first loved you (1 John 4:19). His love is seen tonight when He washes His disciples’ feet and then dies on the Cross to save us. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt

O Lord, in this wondrous Sacrament You have left us a remembrance of Your passion. Grant that we may so receive the sacred mystery of Your body and blood that the fruits of Your redemption may continually be manifest in us; for You who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Maundy Thursday)
Good Friday
April 10, 2020

Today’s Reading: John 18:1-19:42

And so, when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and gave up His Spirit. (John 19:30)

Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. Good Friday is Good Friday. It’s Merry Friday. It’s Jesus-died-for-me Friday. It’s not Black Friday—that’s in November! Today is Good Friday!

A sip of sour wine is all Jesus takes to clear His throat. He cries out with a loud voice one word: tetelestai. It is finished. Your sins, your debt, your iniquities are paid in full. He took it all upon Himself.

Today God does the unthinkable: He dies for you. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He’s the beginning and the end, the One who was, and is, and is to come (Revelation 1:8). That God, the only God there is, dies for you on the Cross.

The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. We crowned Him with the curse of sin, with its thorns and thistles. The punishment for sin, the hell that we’ve earned, God put on Him. He’s a Man of sorrows. He’s acquainted with our grief. He suffers it all. He redeems it all so that you would be saved. He doesn’t just hold His breath through the crucifixion, He endures it. He won’t take drugs to make it go easier. He is lucid. This is His choice. You are His choice.

Mourn your sins today. Be horrified by what you have done, by what your sins have cause, by the consequences. Your salvation is freely given and freely received, but it wasn’t free. Jesus alone paid for it.

You can’t have your sins back. You can’t pay for them. You can’t do penance to make up for them. If you could, there’d be no reason for Jesus to hang on the Cross. Your sins died with Jesus. You can’t feel guilty about what you have done anymore. He’s taken your guilt. What is finished by Jesus is finished before God. All the evil and awful things you’ve done to others is tetelestai before God.

Today is Good Friday. It’s good because God has made His creation good again today by crushing the serpent’s head. He has died for all. He has redeemed all. All who believe in Him shall never die. They will rise with Him on Easter morning. Merry Lent! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. –Rev. George Borghardt

Almighty God, graciously behold this Your family for whom our Lord Jesus Christ was willing to be betrayed and delivered into the hands of sinful men to suffer death upon the cross; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Good Friday)
Holy Saturday
April 11, 2020

Today’s Reading: Matthew 27:57-66

“Lord, we remember how that Deceiver said while He was still alive, ‘After three days, I will rise.’” (Matthew 27:63)

In the Name + of Jesus. Amen. We count a day from midnight to midnight. The Hebrews counted time from when the sun went down until it came up again. That’s why God says during Creation, “It was evening and morning.” When the sun goes down, it is a new day!

Jesus was crucified for our sins, died, and was buried before the sun went down on Friday. That’s day one! He spent the evening Friday and Saturday morning in the tomb. That’s day two! When the sun goes down on Saturday and comes up on Sunday morning, that’s day three!

This is important tonight as the Lord gives us one of the most ancient services in the Church: the Easter Vigil. As Jesus rests in the tomb, we keep vigil, or watch, for His resurrection. The service begins outside as the sun goes down on Lent. It continues until the sun fully sets and the Third Day begins, the day Jesus rose again from the dead.

The center of this service is a very tall candle called the Paschal Candle. Be taught by it! The candle has nails to remind you that Christ died on Good Friday. There is an Alpha and Omega, because He is the beginning and the end. The year is also on the candle because all our days and years are in His hands. This is the symbol of the resurrection from the dead in the Church. It will be lit from now on for all Baptisms and funerals—whenever we need to be reminded that we will rise.

The service proceeds through light and darkness, death and life. We hear tonight the Old Testament accounts of how God has worked through the centuries to bring about His salvation in Jesus. We are reminded of our Baptism, where we died and rose again with Him. When the sun is fully down and the day is over, the service changes to Easter. Your pastor will look at you and say, “Alleluia! Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!” You will respond, “He is risen indeed, Alleluia!” Lent is over. Your Lord who died for you has risen from the dead! What better way to celebrate than to receive His Supper! In the Name + of Jesus. Amen.

–Rev. George Borghardt

O God, You made this most holy night to shine with the glory of the Lord’s resurrection. Preserve in us the spirit of adoption which You have given that, made alive in body and soul, we may serve You purely; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen. (Collect for Holy Saturday)