

Stories



3rd Sunday in Lent

March 7, 2021



Ascension Lutheran Church

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All are welcome!

HOLY VESSELS



A LENTEN SEASON OF RECOVERY

Introduction

In this Lenten “season of recovery” for our physical, communal, mental, intellectual, and environmental health, we will explore the healing narratives of Jesus that tell of divine solidarity with human suffering and remind us that we can begin a journey toward making something beautiful from that which is seemingly broken. Beach glass offers us a multifaceted symbol of this transformative process.

GATHER

*People gather around Jesus as his reputation becomes known from town to town.
As we gather virtually or physically, we too are yearning for presence,
for peace, for help.*

Welcome to Worship

P We continue our Lenten “season of recovery” as we focus on health as essential to our spiritual lives.

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

P Those who collect beach glass often become “archeologists”—seeking out any markings or clues as to the story of the original piece. It often takes much time to bring out the truth behind it. This week we acknowledge the power of truth-telling as a healing property. There are stories that have shaped our lives, leaving us without the ability to see who we truly are in the eyes of God and leaving us without the ability to speak the depth of our stories of struggle. We focus on the importance of recovery of mental health, reclaiming our sense of who we are and being able to proclaim new redemptive stories of divine worth.

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APPROACH

People opened their lives to Jesus. We are drawn to the Healer—opening our hearts with honesty about our lives and finding assurance that offers peace.

Prayer of Confession

P Let us acknowledge our need to restore, repair, renew our Holy Vessels, and that the health of our minds deeply affects our physical and spiritual health.

Let us pray:

Centering and Calming Divine Breath of God,

You gifted us with amazing minds, capable of so many things. You gave us the ability to think and feel, imbuing us with discernment of thought and emotion.

Like our physical bodies, sometimes this aspect of our selves is beleaguered.

We struggle under the strain of disappointment, despair, and delusion.

Too often we hide this, afraid of what others might think of our difficulties in managing or moving forward, even in the face of devastating circumstances.

Too often we perpetuate the stigma of a less-than-perfect state of mind by shaming ourselves and others.

Millennia of misunderstanding compounds our fear.

We label and belittle, all the while turning the hatred upon ourselves, for no one is immune from troubles of the mind at some point.

So many are suffering now, God, weary and distraught, grieving and at the end of their rope.

We cannot fathom the proportions of loss and so we look away, sometimes even from the need in our own community.

P Help us, Healer.
Show us our capacity for compassion.
Forgive our inattention.

Move us to move one step at a time toward greater care for one another.

In this silence, we sense and acknowledge our yearning for wholeness.

Silence is kept for reflection

**Vessels, holy and whole
Broken, needing the One
Open, body and soul
Healer, come.**

Assurance

P I invite you to imagine and search for a warmth at the core of your body. It may help to keep your eyes closed. This warm orb of light is deep within you, although sometimes it feels dulled, even cold. If it feels this way now, allow this. Do not judge yourself. Perhaps you DO feel this warmth and all feels right with the world. This just is. You likely will not always feel that way. Whether or not you feel the warmth of peace and assurance right now, this does not make you right or wrong, good or bad. It just makes you human. And you are not alone. Perhaps you can imagine the warmth coming from someone whose presence fills you with comfort. See it radiate from them to you, as it does when you need it most.

Know this: You are accepted.

No. Matter. What.

P Accepting the truth of our difficulties is part of the journey of recovery.
Sharing our stories of difficulty can open the way for healing.
For you, for me, for all.

Take a deep breath in to let this truth fill you...
and breathe out with the relief of assurance.

Peace

P I invite you to imagine the warmth that surrounds you extending to those
who may be next to you in close proximity.
Imagine it extending beyond your walls to the
neighborhood...
the wider community...
the church...
and seeing it spread like the rising sun, let it expand to all the world.
Let this be our peace. Amen.

I invite you to open your eyes.

The peace of Christ is with you.

All And also with you.

Opening Song

Be Still and Know that He is God

Verse 1

Be still and know that He is God. Be still and know that He is holy.
Be still oh restless soul of mine, Bow before the Prince of Peace,
Let the noise and clamor cease. Be still

Verse 2

Be still and know that He is God. Be still and know that He is faithful.
Consider all that He has done, Stand in awe and be amazed,
And know that He will never change. Be still

Verse 3

Be still and know that He is God. Be still and know He is our Father.
Come rest your head upon His breast, Listen to the rhythm of
His unfailing heart of love, Beating for His little ones
Calling each of us to come. Be still. Be still.

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Steven Curtis Chapman
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BELIEVE

People were fortified by Jesus' words and deeds that revealed care for all—especially those marginalized. We strengthen our belief in the possibility for renewed health and vigor for all.

A Contemporary Word

"When you tell your story, you no longer have to carry your burden alone."
— **Desmond Tutu**

An Ancient Word

P The Holy Gospel according to St. Mathew, the 9th chapter.

All **Glory to you, O Lord.**

As Jesus went on from there, two blind men followed him, crying loudly, "Have mercy on us, Son of David!" When he entered the house, the blind men came to him; and Jesus said to them, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" They said to him, "Yes, Lord." Then he touched their eyes and said, "According to your faith let it be done to you." And their eyes were opened. Then Jesus sternly ordered them, "See that no one knows of this." But they went away and spread the news about him throughout that district. After

they had gone away, a demoniac who was mute was brought to him. And when the demon had been cast out, the one who had been mute spoke; and the crowds were amazed and said, "Never has anything like this been seen in Israel."

Matthew 9: 27-33

P The Gospel of our Lord.

All Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

Pr. Debra Jimenez

Apostles' Creed

P Let us join together with one voice confessing our faith with the words of the Apostles' Creed.

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

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,**

**the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

ASK

People who were healed by Jesus were not afraid to ask. And so we come before the Holy One, making our petitions and desires known, trusting the work of the Spirit.

Prayers of Intercession

L Healer of our every ill,
especially our malady of separation and fear,
we come before you to make our petitions known.
Hear our cries for healing of body, mind, and spirit.
We know that already you are at work among us,
showing us the way to recovery from the toxicities and grief of our time.

You have stamped each one of us as “worthy.”
We give you thanks that your mercy is wide
and your faithfulness to us not depend upon
having our feelings sorted out or our sense of well-being secure.
You are not waiting for us to “get our act together” before
offering us your love and grace.

We pray especially for those who have experienced
heightened and acute mental and emotional difficulties as a result
of this past year of isolation and fear.

L We pray for those who feel far from hope and we mourn those who could not find a lifeline to survive this hardship.

We pray for those who find themselves without access to adequate care, someone to talk to, or appropriate resources to steady their hearts and minds.

We give thanks for those who are telling their stories, showing us how to open our hearts to help others and offering ripples of healing in the community.

We pray grateful thanks for progress toward holistic healthcare and the efforts of all who are working to de-stigmatize mental illness, making it easier to ask for, and get, the help so desperately needed.

We ask for courage and encouragement to re-evaluate how we as a church can help now and into the future.

And so we lift our prayers spoken and unspoken to you, O Lord, as you hear the cries of our hearts.

Lord, in your mercy.

All You hear our prayer.



Song of Preparation

Make Us Holy, Make Us Whole

In your love, make us whole.
May we rest in your compassion.
Calm the lost, weary soul
in the warmth of your love.
May your peace fill our hearts.
May we know the love of Jesus.
By your grace, you console.
Make us holy, make us whole.

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Mark Friedman

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KNOW

The parting words Jesus gave to those he healed were often as much balm as the healing act itself. We hear the words of encouragement from the One who makes beauty from brokenness.

Holy Communion

P Our God is with you!

All And also with you!

P Lift up your hearts

All We lift them up to our God.

P Let us give thanks to our Sovereign God

All It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere to give thanks to you,
In the beginning you breathed life into raw materials,
creating and animating containers of beauty and goodness.
We, your Holy Vessels, were fired in the kiln of love
until we shined with your light.
Susceptible to shattering, we find ourselves broken,
unable at times to remember your promise of repair.
You remind us time and again that, though broken,
we are held in your presence
and made whole by your grace.
When Jesus ascended,
he promised to be with us always.
In the power of your Word and Holy Spirit,
we are not alone.

On the night in which he gave himself up for us,
he took bread, gave thanks to you, broke the bread,
gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.”

When the supper was over, he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
“Drink from this, all of you;
this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many
for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it,
in remembrance of me.”

All Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

P Joining with all who are being transformed, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us.

All Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory,

The Invitation and The Meal

P Beloved: here is bread; here is wine. Here is Jesus.
Come and be fed.

Sharing the Meal

Post Communion Blessing

P The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep

All Amen

RESPOND

*Scriptural accounts of healing often end with responses from the “crowd” of witnesses.
How will we proceed into the brokenness of this world and respond as
the Body of Christ?*

Stewardship of Life & Ministry Announcements

Sending Song

I Love to Tell the Story

1 I love to tell the story of unseen things above,
of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story, because I know it's true;
it satisfies my longings as nothing else would do.

Refrain

I love to tell the story; 'twill be my theme in glory
to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.

2 I love to tell the story: how pleasant to repeat
what seems, each time I tell it, more wonderfully sweet!
I love to tell the story, for some have never heard
the message of salvation from God's own holy word. *Refrain*

Blessing

P Now go with confidence that the One Who Is Living Water is already cleansing, renewing, and clarifying our lives, recovering our depth of love for all and our joy of living in this world.

May the words of Jesus ring in your ears:
“Do you believe it is possible?”

And may the Spirit hover, move, and deliver
salve to your soul✝ and a spring in your step.

All Amen.

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