

WORSHIP AT HOME: Week of 2/21/21 First Sunday in Lent

In the event you are unable to view or hear an MPLC service, here's a brief worship order you can use at home. You might light a candle before you begin to quiet your heart and prepare to worship God. You will need a bible to look up the readings. You may read aloud or in silence to yourself.



BEGIN: *(You may trace a cross on your forehead or make the sign of the cross.)*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

CONFESS: *(You may offer your prayer of confession to God with a repentant heart.)*

Fountain of living water, pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.

(Read these words to yourself and know that the grace of God in Christ is for you.)

God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are † forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus. Amen.

PRAY: Holy God, heavenly Father, in the waters of the flood you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READ: Genesis 9:8-17 and Mark 1:9-15

SERMON: *by Vicar Chip Lutz*

This text has it's opening with Jesus on the scene, he gets baptized and then..."the sky is torn apart, a dove descends, and God's voice says "You are my Son, my beloved, with you I am well pleased."

I have to think that affirmation of Jesus' position...that reinforcement of who Jesus was had to be comforting to Him and important because, IMMEDIATELY AFTER, the Spirit drove him out into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan and be with the wild beasts. Jesus didn't ask why, he didn't hesitate, he went. He stepped into the wilderness...into the unknown. Perhaps there was some fear, perhaps there wasn't. He was, after all, not only

fully divine but also fully human....he knew all of the emotions we know but he went with the affirmation of His Father.

It is the Spirit's leading into the wilderness, itself, that I found intriguing and I thought about a lot when going through this text. What was that about? What happens in the wilderness anyway? Couldn't Jesus have just jumped right into his ministry? He already had the OK from His Father? If I were Jesus, Would I immediately go? Wouldn't I have hemmed, and hawed...asked If I could take a pass or....maybe do it later...a little passive resistance in action?

Then I thought that perhaps part of this Gospel is, yes, about Jesus Baptism, affirmation and testing but also about obedience...about going where the Spirit leads us, without hesitation....and the Spirit is always leading us somewhere to do something....to push us outside of our comfort zone and into the wilderness to encounter God, to grow and spread the Good News....and the temptation isn't so much in the wilderness but the temptation to not follow but go our own way.....and to stay on our side of the fence.

The Spirit is always urging us to throw our backpack over the fence into the wilderness. What happens when we throw our backpack over the fence? We have to go get it. On the other side of the fence, in the wilderness, is scary....there is the unknown....there are the wild beasts....and make no mistake, the wilderness that the spirit is leading us into today is just as scary as the one that Jesus faced. But how and where?

Right now, the Spirit is driving us into the wilderness to serve. There are always things that need to be done in the service of others and in the service of God. That could be right here at Mount Pleasant Lutheran Church on one of our service teams.. the Care, Serve, Learn or Do Justice team or in some other ministry. It could be in the community or in your neighborhood.

Perhaps the Spirit is driving you into the wilderness to give. And, it's easy to look at giving as merely a monetary thing but giving is so much more. I think the spirit drives us into the wilderness to give ourselves to others Following Jesus is giving yourself to others.

Or, maybe as Jesus commands in the text, the spirit is driving us into the wilderness to repent. Asking God to change our hearts, our actions, our minds. And when we can repent in that vein, aren't we more open to understanding others and meeting others where they are at (Like Jesus did?).

I don't know what wilderness the Spirit is driving you into. I can guarantee, that whatever wilderness it is, it can be scary, it can be risky and the temptation can be to just stay where you are at. However, we don't need to be worried, we don't need to be scared because we can take the same assurances into our wilderness that Jesus took with Him into the wilderness relayed in Mark.

First, as siblings in Christ...we are beloved. With us God is well pleased.

Second, the Spirit was with Jesus....the spirit is also with us. The spirit wouldn't drive us to throw our backpack into the wilderness where we have to go get it and then just leave

us high and dry. No, the spirit is there; opening doors, softening hearts, building relationships and comforting us as we enter the unknown.

Lastly, we have angels that tend to us. Maybe not celestial angels (although there might be) but certainly the angels within our family of Christ. We are to build each other up and support each other in the wilderness.

So, how about you? What wilderness is the spirit driving you to throw your backpack into? You've got all we need to jump in. God is with you, the spirit is with you and your angels will attend to you. What's keeping you on this side of the fence? Throw your back back over...enter the wilderness....the time is now, the kingdom is near... believe and spread the good news.

PRAY: For God's sustaining help in times of anxiety, pain, or loneliness; for all those affected by inclement weather; for people who grieve the loss of loved ones; for God's good creation; for the whole church and for our congregation together in spirit; for the Hospitality Center and HALO here in Racine, their guests, and all who minister through them; for all who hunger for food, justice, or peace; and for those we lift before you:

Ben Poulsen, Dick Jonas, Ross Larson, Sharon Polak, Trina Larsen, Linda Petersen, Helen Fones, Sheila Johnson, Barbara and Scott Christiansen, Karen Tyykila, Cathy Spatz, Jennifer Vyeda, Diane Poulsen, Barb Mains, Pastor Kara Baylor, Christian Holguin, Joel Smith, Kristin Brandt, Karen Larsen, Joanne Hoornstra, Laura Luehr, people suffering from Covid-19, and those we name aloud or in our hearts...

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESS: We are what God made us to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve our neighbor. God bless us ✠ that we may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. Amen.

Go in peace. Share the good news. Thanks be to God.





WORSHIP AT HOME: Week of 2/28/21

Second Sunday in Lent

In the event you are unable to view or hear an MPLC service, here's a brief worship order you can use at home. You might light a candle before you begin to quiet your heart and prepare to worship God. You will need a bible to look up the readings. You may read aloud or in silence to yourself.

BEGIN: *(You may trace a cross on your forehead or make the sign of the cross.)*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer. Amen.

CONFESS: *(You may offer your prayer of confession to God with a repentant heart.)*

Fountain of living water, pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.

(Read these words to yourself and know that the grace of God in Christ is for you.)

God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are ✝ forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus. Amen.

PRAY: O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

READ: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16 and Mark 8:31-38

REFLECT: *See the provided "Daily Discipleship" Bible Study handout for Mark 8:31-38.*

PRAY: Your gift of grace is for all people. Give confident faith to all the baptized, that they may follow you wholeheartedly. Give new believers joy in your promises; give hope and courage to those who suffer for their faith.

All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation's well-being.

You rule over the nations. Raise up advocates for peace and justice within and between nations. Give life where hope seems dead; call into existence new realities we cannot even imagine.

In Jesus you joined humanity in suffering and death. Reveal to all the depth of your love shown on the cross. Accompany all who suffer in body, mind, and spirit. Restore all who are sick or grieving. Bring vindication for victims of injustice, exploitation, and oppression.

You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families.

We await the day of Christ's coming in glory. Lead us by the example of all the saints whom you have called to take up their cross and follow you, that together we may find our lives in you. We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

BLESS: We are what God made us to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve our neighbor. God bless us ☩ that we may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. Amen.

Go in peace. Share the good news. Thanks be to God.

