

## Ash Wednesday

February 10, 2027 (Year B)



*“When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent’ (Mt 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”*

– Martin Luther –  
The 95 Theses #1

### PROCLAMATION POINTS

*The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.*

#### Joel 2:12-19

The Almighty had promised and commanded, “I am the Lord your God, you shall have no other gods before me.” Here the prophet echoes that same promise and command, saying: “Return to the Lord your God” (v. 13).

The Lord will not tolerate divided devotion from his people. The consequence for idolatry is ruin. Yet, even in the face of Israel’s false worship and impending doom, God calls them back to him urging them to repent of their sin.

- *What things or idols cause us today to have divided devotion to the Lord? Why is this so hard to recognize?*

The people were called into assembly where a fast was proscribed. All members of the community were summoned, even children and those newly married. God was coming among them in order to show them his love and mercy once more. God did not want them to be disgraced by their neighbors, so he sent them great gifts so that they would be satisfied: wine, oil, and grain. All of these actions by God signified his never-ending devotion to his chosen people.

- *How does God act toward us even though we fail to worship and praise him for his righteousness? Why does he do this?*

#### Psalms 51:1-13 (14-19)

In this psalm, King David makes his appeal based on God’s reputation for being steadfast in love. He makes no excuses for his vile behavior in taking a woman who was not his own wife and impregnating her, and murdering her husband (see 2 Samuel 11). David acknowledges having been born into sin which is the human condition of us all. None of us are exempt from this age-old curse, but God has even greater power. David knows this to be true and so in humility, he asks for God’s forgiveness, mercy and a clean heart.

- *Trusting in God’s mercy, David said, “Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.” In what ways are we all witnesses to God’s grace in our lives? How does that witness encourage others to seek his forgiveness?*

#### 2 Corinthians 5:20b–6:10

St. Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth that they were ambassadors for Christ. An ambassador is one who goes forth in the name of another and is meant to be treated with the same dignity and respect as the one who sent them. They have the same mission, values, and directives of their Lord — which, in this case, is the ministry of reconciliation.

- *In what sense are Ambassadors’ words and deeds both empowered and limited by the one who sends them?*

As ambassadors, we are not the ones who make reconciliation happen, it is Jesus Christ who does this. Paul explained how this worked: God sent Jesus, the one who knew no sin, who was perfect in word and deed, to be sin for the world. God regarded the sinless one as guilty, for the benefit of those who were truly sinners. In this way he took upon himself their the guilt and shame, and in return he gave what was his own — righteous and life.

Martin Luther called this transfer of situations, “The Happy Exchange.” Christ who was perfect became sin for the imperfect humanity. Humans, plagued by sin, were granted holiness by the sinless Jesus.

- *How does being an ambassador for Christ give us great responsibility but also great joy and privilege?*

#### Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

Jesus explained to his disciples about the proper way to express their personal piety — in secret! Don’t pray in the streets where everyone can see you and hear you and be impressed. Don’t make a show of your almsgiving. Don’t make a spectacle out of caring for the poor. When you do it like that, Jesus said, you have already received your reward. Unfortunately that reward is not the best reward. There is one greater and it comes from the Father who sees in secret and rewards in secret.

- *In what ways have we failed to practice our faith in secret? On the other hand, how do we sometimes keep our faith too secret? Where is the balance?*

Jesus went on to instruct his disciples about not laying up their treasures where they would be moth-eaten, rusted, and destroyed.

- *Why do we get so attached to the things that are fleeting and of this world? Do these things really matter in the grand scheme of God’s kingdom?*

Luther often used the word “treasure” to describe the gifts of God, including the Sacraments and God’s Word. Jesus knew that our choices and actions in our lives were shaped by what we cling to — be it money, material possessions, or faith in him. That’s why he said, “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

- *How do we discern where our hearts truly are as individuals and as a congregation? If we find that to be off-track, what can we do about it (if we have the courage)?*
- *From what you read here, what is the most basic connection Jesus sought to make concerning piety and possessions, actions and faith?*

## First Sunday in Lent

February 14, 2027 (Year B)



*"In times of trial we should learn to judge, not by our feeling but by the Word of God. This Word promises us that every trial is only the eventide upon which the morning of comfort follows."*

– Martin Luther –  
On Isaiah 40

### PROCLAMATION POINTS

*The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.*

#### Genesis 22:1–18

Abraham waited more than 20 years to have a son with his wife Sarah. Isaac was their pride and joy, and the answer to many prayers. In this difficult story we hear how God called for Abraham to take his son, Isaac, from Beer-sheeba to the mountain in Moriah and offer him as a burnt offering. It was a three day journey.

The writer of Genesis gives us no commentary on Abraham's inner response to the command, only what he did — which was to rise early and take Isaac along with two of his servants and head to the designated site. On the third day Abraham took the wood he had cut for the sacrifice, along with his beloved son and approached the place where God sent him. Only he and Isaac went to the site "to worship" (22:5). Isaac questioned his father about a lamb for the burnt offering. Abraham responded, "God will provide for himself the lamb for a burnt offering, my son."

- *Why do you suppose Isaac fails to recognize that he is helping to prepare for his own sacrifice? Would you describe him as naive, trusting, or foolish?*
- *Abraham had an older son, Ishmael, by Hagar the maidservant. So why does God call Isaac, "your son, your only son?" (22:12) How does this highlight the seriousness of God's promise that Isaac would be the true heir?*

It is so difficult to imagine following God's command to sacrifice one's child. Seemingly at the last second, God called out to Abraham praising him for his faith and obedience. God directed him to a ram in a thicket nearby, thus providing for the sacrifice as Abraham said he would.

- *Does God really approve of human sacrifice? Though Abraham and Isaac did not, do you think God knew and planned that he would stop the sacrifice? Or do you take God's action as a last-minute change of mind?*
- *What clues from the story foreshadow the future sacrifice of God's one and only Son? In the atonement of Christ, how does God do what we cannot? In what sense does this story show us something about God's intentions and plans for salvation from the beginning?*

#### Psalms 25:1–10

The psalmist sang praises to the Lord but in the same breath he asked that his faith and trust not be misplaced or "put to shame" (25:2). There are many references in the Scriptures where God declared that Israel would be put to shame for their lack of faith, idolatry, and treachery (e.g. Isaiah 1:29

and 20:5). The psalmist sought to know the ways of the Lord and to learn from him.

- *How does knowing "the ways of the Lord" change the way we approach life? Why do those who do not know the Lord find that hard to believe?*
- *We tend to think of treason (v.2, treachery) as a political crime. What would you consider "treason" against God?*

#### James 1:12–18

Enduring trials and suffering is a way of life for believers. From where does our courage come to face persecutions for the faith, physical trials, and the enemy's temptations? James gives us the answer, "the Father of lights" (1:17). This title is unique to James. It recalls the work God did at creation, creating the heavens and earth, making darkness light, and filling the whole world with his good gifts.

- *How do trials help us as believers to have a deeper faith and stamina? How does darkness make the light even more clear and strong?*

The English words "tempt" and "test" both translate the same biblical word *πειραζω* (*pieradzo*). From the story of Abraham, we know that God does *test* his people. But James makes it very clear that God does not tempt us to sin.

- *What is the key to this distinction between testing and tempting? When in the midst of it, can we always tell the difference? Why must we take James' promise here on faith?*
- *What does James say is the cause of temptation? What happens when this is left to take root and grow?*

#### Mark 1:9–15

St. Mark tells the story of Jesus' Baptism and subsequent temptation in the wilderness with amazing brevity. At his Baptism, Jesus received the audible blessing of God the Father. Immediately, he was thrust into the wilderness by the very Spirit of God, to a place where death was a very real possibility (Exodus 16:3). There, Jesus was tempted by Satan for forty days. He was not alone, however, the angels and animals tended to his needs.

- *How does this story demonstrate the reality of God's Spirit being both affirming and comforting, but also the source of testing? How does this story show the difference between testing and temptation? (Hint: Consider the source.)*
- *Jesus was not alone. Who was with him? In what sense can we be assured that, in temptation, we are never alone?*

## Second Sunday in Lent

February 21, 2027 (Year B)



### PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

*“The Cross is the shame and the great indignity which Christ innocently suffered... The shame and persecution endured for righteousness’ sake is the cross of Christ.*

*This is why true Christians must be dubbed heretics and evildoers. They must be so condemned, despised, and judged by all that everybody wipes his feet on them.”*

–Martin Luther–

Sermon, October 22, 1522

### Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16

Here in Genesis 17, God’s covenant with his created world becomes focused on one man and his offspring. The Lord, the God of all that is, chose Abram as the vehicle through whom he would be known in the world. God would now be Abram’s God. The Lord chose to shower his blessings on this one man, his wife, and his descendants.

- Does it seem arbitrary that the God of all creation would focus his attention on one family? What does God have in mind for everyone else?

In ancient cultures, a change in name was associated with a change in circumstance, rank, or status. With the covenant of God, Abram’s name (“exalted father”) was changed to Abraham (“father of a multitude”). Sarai’s name (“princess”) was changed to Sarah (“noble woman”). God’s promises to them gave them greater importance as well as immeasurable blessings.

- How do these new names demonstrate Abraham and Sarah’s call and responsibility to be a blessing toward others?
- In what ways are our names important and the source of blessing from one generation to another? Why do we want to protect our “good names?”
- In what ways are we changed through the covenant of Holy Baptism? What new “name” are we given? Why is that name so important?

### Psalms 22:23–31

It can be frustrating to try and have a conversation with someone who is distracted and not listening. The psalmist assured Israel that this was not the case with God. The Lord has heard the cries of the afflicted, we can be assured. He has not hidden his face from his children, rather, he has heard and responds. Because of God’s attentiveness towards his people’s needs, the psalmist urged them to praise him. Those who seek him shall be heard and it is good and right to praise the Lord’s name.

- Based on this psalm, what might be your response to a person who is frustrated by life’s challenges and assumes that God does not hear their pleas?

### Romans 5:1–11

In a beautiful and beloved passage, Paul laid out what Christ accomplished for us on the cross. Through his death and resurrection, Christ made peace between God and his people. The war declared through humanity’s rebellion

into sin is over. Despite our enemy status, Christ has given his life for us. This reconciliation is pure gift. It has come about through Christ’s initiative, not our own. Its effect is absolute and we can rely on what Christ has done for us.

- Why does Paul emphasize that we were still enemies of God when Christ died for us? Why does that matter?

Paul also spoke in this passage about the effect of suffering. Suffering is a reality for redeemed sinners in a fallen world. But the suffering of Christians is not pointless or without end. Suffering brings us face-to-face with our Savior. It leads us to the hope that does not disappoint.

- Do you know of instances in which suffering has led to despair rather than hope? What is our calling in the face of despair? What is God’s word of hope for those in despair?

The Greek word used by Paul to connote suffering or affliction is θλίψις (*thlip-sis*). It has the connotation of being under pressure; it was a wine-making term for the process of pressing the grapes to remove the juice.

Think about this as a metaphor for the life of faith: situations may crush us but there is a finer product that emerges from the grape than simple juice. Likewise, consider how diamonds are made: coal deep inside the earth is crushed under tremendous pressure over a long period of time to create the most valuable gemstone known.

- In what sense does stress and pressure (with Christ on our side) cause us to become something new? In what ways can our suffering lead to a deeper life in Christ?

### Mark 8:27–38

There are two distinct episodes and a sermon in our Gospel reading for today. In the first, Jesus inquired of his disciples who people think he is. Among the countless possibilities, Peter, alone, offers up the right response. Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus’ only response is to instruct his disciples to tell no one what they know.

- How do you think Peter knew the truth about Jesus? Why do you think Jesus wanted his identity kept secret here?

Immediately after this, Jesus told his disciples that he must suffer rejection and death at the hands of the very people he came to save. Peter, who had just made his great confession, cannot accept what Jesus had to say. In his mind, it simply could not be the case that the Messiah was going to be killed. In that moment, Peter revealed that he didn’t fully understand what his own confession meant.

- What do you think Peter thought the Messiah ought to do?

## Third Sunday in Lent

February 28, 2027 (Year B)



*"If we want to be wise, we must become fools and let God's Word be the eternal truth."*

– Martin Luther –

Sermon on New Year's, 1531

### PROCLAMATION POINTS

*The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.*

#### Exodus 20:1-17

Despite their place in our teachings, we don't often read the Ten Commandments aloud in worship. They shape our understanding of the Law, and, yet, they are more often alluded to than actually addressed.

- *How do the Ten Commandments shape our lives as a society and a church? To what extent is their power and use understood or misunderstood?*
- *Are the commandments in opposition to the Word of the cross? How do the two relate?*

Linked with the other readings for the day, there are additional insights to glean about the Law. Today, the Ten Commandments are placed next to Paul's words about the foolishness of the cross and Jesus' work of cleansing the temple. Somehow both are linked to God's Law.

- *How does God's Law serve to show us our human foolishness, and foil our desire to justify ourselves?*
- *In what sense does God's Law break in and over-turn the status-quo of our lives?*

#### Psalms 19

The psalmist proclaimed the perfection of the Law of the Lord. It revives the soul and turns what the world sees as wisdom upside-down. The commandments of the Lord enlighten those who attend to them, for the ways of the Lord are more valuable than gold and sweeter than honey.

- *What is the function of the Law? Does the Law have any benefits for the people of God? What does the image of "better than gold and honey" suggest to you?*

#### 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

Few of us like to be seen as foolish. We don't like to make mistakes or have our judgment questioned. It is much better to be recognized as wise and thoughtful than foolish and rash. This is no less the case when it comes to our beliefs. We would like it if our beliefs were recognized as obviously true, right, and wise.

But Paul reminded his readers that the message of the cross is foolishness. It makes no sense to the ears of the world. It is not rational or thoughtful by our standards. It is a reversal of the ways of the world. Foolishness replaces wisdom. Weakness replaces strength.

- *What makes the cross foolish? What are some ways we try to gloss over the foolishness, or make the Christian faith seem attractive and desirable to the world?*

- *Is foolish the same as irrational? In what sense is having faith a wise and reasonable approach to life?*

Paul also took on the matter of boasting in this passage. He reminded his hearers that, apart from their being claimed by God as his beloved, they had nothing to boast about. They were not the strong and wise, the elite of their society. But they had become the chosen ones of God, and that, alone, was their grounds for boasting.

- *What challenges does this passage present for those Christians who are the elite and privileged in their society? Is that a sign that something is wrong?*
- *Is it a bad thing to be proud in our lives? How was Paul showing something here about the nature of faith itself?*

#### John 2:13-22 (23-25)

The popular view of Jesus as meek and mild, gracious and kind, is upended a bit by the story of the cleansing of the temple. What he saw happening in his Father's house created a reaction in him that may not be what we expect. The money-changers, who made a business out of making religious observance as easy as possible, were expelled from the temple with no apology and no mercy. In John 2:16 the term "marketplace" ("house of trade") is used to describe what the temple had been turned into. But in Mark's telling, Jesus called it a "den of robbers."

- *What is the difference in impact between "marketplace" and "robber's den"? What inference can we draw from these two terms about what was actually happening in the temple?*

The changing of money from idolatrous Roman coins to temple-approved coins was an important business for the Temple. It allowed the pilgrims who had traveled from all over the known world to make their worship preparations after they had arrived in Jerusalem. They needn't bring an offering from among their own goods because they could purchase one in the temple after their money had been exchanged. For most people this was simply a matter of convenience. The cost to them was the same, whether they hauled their sacrifice from home or purchased it in the temple.

- *Why do you think this practice of changing money and selling animals for sacrifice was so upsetting to Jesus? Do we engage in any comparable practices in our places of worship?*
- *After causing an uproar with his actions, the religious leaders asked Jesus about his authority. What questions did they fail to ask?*

## Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 7, 2027 (Year B)



### PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

*"Christ alone is, and He alone remains, the Bread of Life.  
This Bread gives the world eternal life and abolishes death.  
If He (Christ) gives the world eternal life, it  
follows that He must drive away death;  
for the world is born in sin and death  
and is the devil's own."*

– Martin Luther –  
Sermon from November 26, 1530

### Numbers 21:4-9

The Israelites were grumbling again; this time about the lack of decent food and water in the wilderness. God was upset with their disobedience and lack of contentment so he sent fiery serpents into their midst. The serpents bit the people who died from the poisonous venom. It may be challenging for us to think that God would send punishment on his people if we think of God as only loving and merciful.

- Do you think that God sends misfortune and death upon us because of our lack of faith and disobedience? Or does our disobedience bring with it consequences of its own?

As the Israelites began to experience certain death by the bite of the poisonous snakes, they begged Moses to tell God that they were sorry. God forgave them and instructed Moses to make a physical sign of healing and wholeness: a bronze serpent on a pole. In their affliction, when the Israelites looked upon the bronze serpent they were healed.

- In what ways is the serpent a symbol of our human sinfulness? (Think back to the first humans in the Garden.) Why is looking at and acknowledging our sin essential in the process of forgiveness and healing?
- In what ways does God use physical signs to show us his healing, forgiveness, and mercy?

### Psalms 107:1-9

This psalm of praise takes a look back at all of the wonders of the Lord: from Israel's wandering in the desert, their hunger and thirst and homelessness, to the place where God satisfies all their needs. It is because of his steadfast love that he brought them to safety, security and redemption.

- The psalmist said, "They cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them in their distress" (107:6). When has God delivered you from distress? How do you know it was him?

### Ephesians 2:1-10

Paul reminded the Ephesians that in sin they were dead — children of wrath, lust, and deceit. But now they had been made alive in Christ Jesus. This was all due to God's gracious mercy and love. In the same way, we have been saved by grace through faith and not by our own doing.

- What comes to mind when you think of being "dead in sin"? Can you recall a time in your own life when that was your reality? How did that change?
- Can a living person make itself into a dead body? How? On the

other hand, can a dead body make itself a living person? How is this just like the reality of sin and faith for us?

Paul said that the Christians in Ephesus once walked following the course of the world. He equated that to being under the power of the Evil one.

- In what sense is our physical reality (earthy-stuff) subject to spiritual realities (airy-stuff)? Is this good or bad news?
- How is the "prince of the power of the air" still at work today in our post-modern world? Is this any different than it was in Paul's day?

### John 3:14-21

Today's lesson comes at the end of the story of Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus, the Pharisee, who visited Jesus under the cover of night (John 3:1-15). Citing the Old Testament lesson for today, Jesus told Nicodemus that the Son of Man must be "lifted up" just as the serpent was lifted up by Moses in the wilderness. Gazing upon the bronze serpent, the symbol of their sin, brought healing to Israel. Now our eyes are to be fixed on another image: Jesus on the cross. He brings ultimate forgiveness and healing.

- In what real sense did our sin put Jesus on the cross? How does seeing Jesus on the cross show us how serious our sin really is?
- In what way does God use the cross of Christ to bring about new life in us? How does Christ being "lifted up" by our sin actually serve to heal us of our sin?
- Why is the cross of Christ such a stumbling block for those who do not believe?

There is a play on words in this passage that leads us to the ultimate truth of Jesus' death on the cross and how it affects a new reality for sinners. The Greek word used here for "lifted up" is *hoop-SA-oh*. This word not only means to physically raise up, but in a metaphorical sense, it also means to exalt, or focus attention on. This is one of the great paradoxes of our faith: Jesus being lifted up on the torture instrument of the Roman government is the means by which God accomplished his purpose of salvation.

- When confronted by our guilt and regrets, why is it essential to keep our eyes fixed on Christ? What happens to us if we focus solely on our sin?
- When you think of how God used the cross to give life (the exact opposite), does it make you look any differently at suffering, addiction, pain, and joy in your own life? How might this help us see God's grace and mercy in the most difficult times?

## Fifth Sunday in Lent

March 14, 2027 (Year B)



### PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

*“One Christian who has been tried is worth a hundred who have not been tried, for the blessing of God grows in trials. He who has experienced them can teach, comfort, and advise many in bodily and spiritual matters.”*

– Martin Luther –

Exposition on Genesis 27, WA 43

### Jeremiah 31:31-34

As an act of faithfulness to his chosen people, God promised to make a new covenant with Israel and Judah. This covenant was unlike the one he made with them at the time of the Exodus, and it was not based on any merit on their part, but solely on God’s promises.

- *Why does God refer to himself as being a “husband”? What point is God making about his people? What point is he making about his own faithfulness?*

Throughout the history of Israel, God has given external signs of his presence with the people such as the *Shekinah* (the divine dwelling place) that led the way through the wilderness — the tent where God dwelled in the Holy of Holies, and was enthroned upon the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant. God gave the people specific instructions for worship and for living.

- *Why do we need external signs and rituals in our lives of faith? How does that help? What happens when religion becomes purely a matter of externals in our lives, and nothing more?*

As part of the new covenant that God was giving to Israel and Judah, the Lord said that he will write his law upon their hearts. No longer would faith simply be an external matter, but now the sign of God’s presence would be his Spirit within them, marking his children as his own.

- *How does this passage suggest that God’s putting the law on our hearts is different from an external code of conduct? How does this imply a change, not just in what we do, but in who we are?*

### Psalms 119:9-16

The psalmist asked a poignant question, “How can a young man keep his way pure?” The answer is very simple, “By guarding it according to your word.” In a world where confusion abounds about sexuality, gender identity, right vs. wrong, the opioid crisis — you name it — we still seek the answer to this question. And, the answer remains the same, “By guarding our lives with the Word of God.”

- *How can we guard our lives with the Word if we don’t know the Word? Is there even a way?*

### Hebrews 5:1-10

The high priest had an incredibly important job to do for the people and for God. It was his job to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of sinful people, including himself.

- *How does acknowledging our own weakness and struggles help us minister to others?*
- *Why does Scripture emphasize ministry as a “calling” from God rather than a “choice” on our part? How is this true of our Christian ministry — regardless of whether we are lay or ordained?*

To say that Jesus was appointed “a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek” is to confess his uniqueness. The name *Melchizedek* (mel-KIZ-a-deck) in Hebrew means “king of righteousness” and is taken from an obscure story in Genesis 14, where Abraham made an offering of thanks to a mysterious priest-king of the town that would later be known as Jerusalem. Inasmuch as this man, who was both priest and king, served Abraham “bread and wine” (Genesis 14:18), many Christian interpreters have pointed out the foreshadowing of Christ’s new covenant in the Last Supper.

- *In the Old Testament, Melchizedek was portrayed as someone unlike the Hebrew priests, the sons of Aaron. How is Jesus’ priesthood unlike that of the Old Testament Jewish priests? What did Jesus do that they could not?*

On behalf of sinful people like us, the only One who knew no sin made the ultimate sacrifice of atonement for humanity through his death. Jesus is the perfect, blameless, blemish-free Passover Lamb who takes away the sin of the world.

- *In what sense was Jesus the only one who could serve as our high priest forever? Why is this something that only one who is both God and man could accomplish?*

### Mark 10: (32-34) 35-45

This lesson comes in the context of Jesus having said, “the last will be first and the first will be last” (Mark 10:31), and the prediction of his own death (Mark 10:32-34). Ironically, it was at this moment that James and John stepped forward, asking Jesus to allow them a place at his right and left hand in glory. Jesus promised that James and John would share in his “baptism” and in his “cup.” Though the two brothers may not have realized it at the time — both of these are references to his coming death (compare Luke 12:50 and Matthew 26:39). Ironically, on the day of Jesus’ glory in the cross, there would be one “at his right and at his left.”

- *In the Church, and in our lives of faith, why are we so quick to measure success and glory by worldly standards?*
- *In what way, or in what sense, do all Christians “share” in Jesus’ death? How does Jesus illustrate the way in which true power and glory comes through sacrifice, self-denial, and suffering for the sake of others?*

## Palm/Passion Sunday

March 21, 2027 (Year B)



### PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

“‘He [Jesus] humbled himself,’ or debased himself.  
In addition to manifesting his servant form in becoming man  
and faring as an ordinary human being, he went farther  
and made himself lower than any man.

He abased himself to serve all men with  
the supreme service — the gift of his life in our behalf.”

– Martin Luther –

Sermon from Palm Sunday, Lenker, Volume 7

### Zechariah 9:9-12

Have you ever known someone who is *always* happy? There are some people who, no matter what the circumstances, always project peace and happiness. Such people can change the mood of a room of people simply by walking into it. We might say they are “happiness in the flesh.”

In this lesson, the prophet and priest Zechariah told the Jews of the coming Messiah, foreshadowing Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem on a donkey. He told the people to “rejoice” for their king was coming — specifically that he was coming in righteousness and humbleness, bearing salvation.

In verse 9, the Hebrew root verb, *yasha* (meaning “salvation” or “deliverance”) is what is called a *reflexive* verb — indicating that the Messiah has salvation in himself. In other words, his very presence is salvation; he carries deliverance with him because he himself is salvation. It is significant to note that this same Hebrew root is also found in the name *Yeshua* (Jesus). In a clearly prophetic way, these verses from Zechariah point us to “salvation in the flesh” which is Jesus Christ our Lord.

- How is Jesus “salvation incarnate”? What does it mean that by his very nature he is the source of salvation?
- Is this a salvation that benefits the Messiah himself? Or is it for the benefit of others? Why?

### Psalms 118:19-29

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone sang the psalmist. Through him and him alone are the gates of righteousness. Such a wonderful gift God has given to his people deserves worship and praise. Salvation comes riding into town “in the name of the Lord!”

- How do the blessings of God often come to us in unexpected ways? Can you give any examples?
- How did Jesus become the cornerstone by being rejected?

### Philippians 2:5-11

We often talk about “feeling empty” when we get down or lonely. When a vessel is empty, its contents are all gone, there is nothing left. Ordinarily we would not consider this a condition which has merit or is positive in any way.

However, Paul, in describing Jesus Christ, said that he emptied himself of his divinity, taking on the form of a slave. This is a paradox of faith, something that can be

difficult for us to understand: weakness, emptiness, setting aside power for the sake of those one loves? How can this be the way that God acts in the world?

- How do you understand this self-emptying of Jesus in relation to the salvation he offers us? In what ways does God call us to take on this same attitude, as Paul suggests?
- Why does a glass need to be emptied before it can be filled? If we seek to empty our lives of ourselves, what do we pray to be filled with?

### Processional Gospel: John 12:12-19

As Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on the colt of a donkey, the crowds shouted, “Hosanna!” This term comes from two Hebrew words: *yasha* which means to deliver, save, or rescue (the same word used in the Old Testament lesson), and *na* which means “please” (as in, we ask you to do this for us). It was a cry yelled by Jewish people in celebration toward their heroes as a call for deliverance and victory.

- Have you ever made a connection between the word *Hosanna* and the name of Jesus? What does it mean that in shouting *Hosanna*, we are asking God to “Jesus” us?

It is with this cry for deliverance and victory that the people welcomed Jesus into the city. Their hopes of being saved by the Messiah were cause for joy and celebration. But by the end of the week the people would not see Jesus as victorious, but rather as an abject failure.

- In what ways is God victorious even when it looks like a mission has failed miserably? Have you experienced this in your own life? How has God brought about victory for you in the midst of pain and hardship?
- How can our prayer “Hosanna!” be both a request for help and a sign of our hope and faith in Jesus’ salvation?

### Passion Story: Mark 14:26-15:47

For many people, the Gospel reading on this Sunday may be the only time in the year they get to hear the full story of Jesus’ Passion (suffering) in one sitting. Rather than focusing on a few specific verses, listeners are encouraged to hear and feel the impact of the extended narrative.

- What do you get from hearing the long reading of Jesus’ trial and death that you would not get from hearing only smaller snippets of the story?
- Why do you think all the Gospel writers spend so much time on the final hours of Jesus’ life? What is so important about this part of the story?

## Maundy Thursday

March 25, 2027 (Year B)



*"Thy holy body into death was given, life to win for us in heaven.  
No greater love than this to Thee could bind us;  
May this feast thereof remind us!  
O Lord, have mercy!"*

*– Martin Luther –*

*A Hymn for Holy Communion, 1524*

### PROCLAMATION POINTS

*The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.*

#### Footwashing Gospel: John 13:1–35

John informed his readers that it was time for Jesus to depart the world he was sent to save. He knew that his “hour had come.” He loved his people and wanted to show them what that love looked like, so that they might carry on in his ways after he was gone. Jesus took on the role of servant and washed his disciples’ feet. He knew they wouldn’t understand the full meaning of his actions, but it was critical for them to submit to his serving them if they wanted to be a part of what he was ushering in. On the night, Jesus taught his followers about sacrificial, servant-driven love.

- *Why is it so integral to the Christian faith to be a servant to others? Is there any other way to follow Christ?*

At that same meal, Jesus predicted that one of his friends would betray him. None of the disciples seemed to know who it would be and they even questioned themselves. When Jesus gave Judas Iscariot a scrap of bread which was the sign that would indicate who the traitor was, Satan entered into Judas.

- *Was Judas able to resist the sin of betrayal? Why or why not? Does it seem like the other disciples saw what was happening between Judas and Jesus?*

#### Exodus 24:3–11

When Moses came down from the mountain after receiving the tables of the Law he was instructed by God to share with them all of the rules of the Covenant. The people responded affirmatively and in one accord, “We will do this!” The covenant was sealed in an act of worship where Moses collected blood from the sacrifices and tossed it on the altar and on the people. After that, Moses, Aaron and his sons Nadab and Abihu, along with seventy elders went up the mountain and saw God.

- *What was the vision of God that the 74 men saw on the mountain? Why do you suppose God revealed himself to them that day?*
- *Where or when in our faith lives do we get to see the Lord?*

#### Psalms 116:12–19

We often ask the question, “What do you give the person who has everything?” The psalmist questioned what he might be able to give to the Lord for all of the wonderful gifts and benefits the Lord had given to him. The reality is that there is nothing we can give to God — he is the one who

has everything because he made everything. The one thing we can give is not material; we can give our hearts to him and praise his holy name.

- *Why does God desire our thanks and praise? Why is it important for us to express our thanks and to praise him?*

#### 1 Corinthians 10:16–17

St. Paul was concerned in his day that believers took the Lord’s Supper seriously — as individuals and as the community of faith. He drew on Israel’s history of idolatry connected to holy meals (10:7). Sexual immorality associated with feasts and festivals was a serious issue.

Writing about this in his first letter to the church in Corinth, Paul wanted to make clear that eating the bread and drinking the wine was nothing less than full participation in the blood of Jesus. The one who shed his own blood for the sake of sinners is the one with whom we are a part. We are all one in Christ, we are his body, and care ought to be taken to preserve the sanctity of the Lord’s Supper.

- *In what ways do we as the Body of Christ in the world participate in his life, death, and resurrection?*
- *We are truly happy to receive the forgiveness of sin that comes with partaking of the Holy Supper, but are we as thrilled to participate in bearing the cross of Christ as we participate with him through his body and blood? Why or why not?*

#### Mark 14:12–26

Jesus sent his disciples into Jerusalem in search of a place for them to share the Passover meal. He gave them very specific instructions about who to find and what to ask for. His disciples were obedient to his wishes and prepared the meal for the group. When it was time to eat, Jesus told his friends that one of them would betray him. None of them knew who it would be and even wondered about themselves.

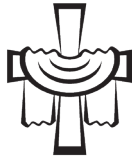
- *Why did Jesus say that the one who would betray him would have been better off if he had never been born? Is that too harsh? Was it true?*

Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper at that last meal they shared together. He told them to take and eat the bread, that it was his body. He instructed them to take and drink from the cup, calling it the blood of the covenant. Then he told them he would not drink again of the fruit of the vine until he was in the kingdom of God.

- *What do you suppose the disciples thought he was talking about? When will Jesus partake of the wine once again?*

## Good Friday

March 26, 2027 (Year B)



### PROCLAMATION POINTS

The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.

*"[Christ] has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, and has freed me from sin, death, and the power of the devil, not with silver and gold, but with his holy and precious blood and his innocent suffering and death.*

*He has done all this in order that I might be his own..."*

– Martin Luther –  
Small Catechism

### Isaiah 52:13–53:12

This classic Good Friday text describes the Suffering Servant of God as one who was acquainted with grief, despised, and crushed for the sins of others. In its original context, this would have been heard as a reference to God's faithful people as a whole — particularly how they had suffered and been abused at the time of their Exile in Babylon.

- How does the suffering of Israel in their calling to be a light to the nations, foreshadow the suffering that Christ himself would experience at the hand of outsiders?

Isaiah described the one who was pierced for human sin as "a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief" who was "despised and rejected by men" (v. 3). He will be the one who will carry the sorrows of God's people and be persecuted for their sins but out of it all will come peace and healing. He will restore the people even though it will cost him his very life.

- How do these verses describe the reality that Jesus faced from his birth to his death?
- As you read these verses, how do they humble you? What thoughts come to mind as you think of what Christ has done for humanity through his innocent suffering?

### Psalms 22

The psalmist lamented being rejected and cast aside by God. His sense of being abandoned is palpable and pitiful. "I cry by day, but you do not answer," he moaned. His suffering goes on and on as he described the many ways in which God had forsaken him and humanity deplored him: scorned, mocked, encircled by predators, wasting away in body and spirit, strength dried up, left to die in the dust.

- Have you ever felt as bad as the psalmist described in this psalm? What happened? How did you come out of it?

Just as the psalmist seems to be near death something changes. His voice shifts from lament to hope, "You have rescued me..." (22:21b). Then he sings about sharing God's beloved name with his family and encouraging all people to praise his holy name.

- How does pain and suffering often turn into joy and relief? Why is it so hard to wait for the Lord even though we have experience with his coming to rescue us in the nick of time?

### Psalms 31 (alternate psalm)

In verse 5, the psalmist prayed, "Into your hand, I commit my spirit." These same words would be spoken centuries

later by Jesus on the cross as the final breath of life was exhaled out of his lungs (Luke 23:46).

- The biblical word "spirit" refers to the breath of life — the power that keeps us alive. Who is the giver of this power in the first place?
- Who holds our death and life in his hands? Why is this an encouraging promise for us as people of faith?

### Hebrews 4:14–16; 5:7–9

The high priests in Israel were ones who made sacrifices for the community but also for themselves. Only they were allowed to pass through the veil to the inner sanctuary of God's temple. Now, Jesus has become our great high priest who made the final sacrifice for our sins, and had passed through that veil. Jesus was the perfect lamb of God. He did not need to make a sacrifice for himself — he made the sacrifice for the sake of sinners just like us!

- Why do we trust that we will "pass through the heavens" like Jesus did? Is this something we have earned or can do on our own?

Our high priest, Jesus, though he was perfect, knew what it was to be like us. For this reason he can sympathize with what we face in life. Having taken on human form he lived without sin, and yet he knew what it was like to suffer and to be weak.

- How does it make you feel to know that Jesus fully understands our human struggles? Are there any other gods you know of that this can be said about?

### John 18:1–19:42

John told the story of the last moments of Jesus with his disciples as they headed to the garden near the Kidron Valley. He said, "Now Judas, who betrayed him, also knew the place, for Jesus often met there with his disciples." Judas, who was about to turn Jesus over to the Roman soldiers, knew this place well. He had spent much time there with Jesus and the other eleven, learning, praying, and worshiping.

- Why do we have a stronger reaction when something bad happens within a familiar or sacred space, with the good memories associated?

From the cross, Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). The same word can mean "accomplished" or "completed."

- In the cross, what was finished? In what sense does this "finish" still leave more to be accomplished — on the third day, as well as in our lives?

## Vigil of Easter

March 27, 2027 (Year B)



*"The great longing and love of the women for the Lord must also be particularly noted here, so that unadvised and alone they go early to the grave, not thinking of the great stone which was rolled before the tomb."*

– Martin Luther –  
Church Postils

### PROCLAMATION POINTS

*The following are some thoughts and questions to be used for a text study on the weekly lessons, or for jump-starting the imagination of the preacher and hearer in preparing for the proclamation event.*

#### Daniel 6:1–24

King Darius of Babylon appointed numerous leaders to authority over his kingdom. Daniel, though he was an Israelite, was one of the king's closest advisors. The newly appointed officials saw that King Darius favored Daniel and was apt to put him into a distinguished position of leadership. So that it wouldn't happen, the new leaders called "satraps" devised a plan to find fault with Daniel. Since Daniel was blameless they devised a plan that would surely trap Daniel – they created a law that forbade worshipping any god other than the King. The law was signed and went into effect. Daniel went home and prayed three times a day per usual, giving thanks to God. The men watched for just such an action and they reported the infraction to King Darius who was caught by his own law and was therefore forced to punish Daniel.

- *Why did Daniel continue his practice of prayer to the Lord God of Israel even though he knew it was against the law?*
- *How did King Darius react when he heard the bad news about Daniel? Why didn't he just revoke the law and save Daniel?*
- *How did God use this situation to show his power? What was the effect on those in the king's court?*

#### Psalms 16

The words of the Psalmist could conceivably reflect the thoughts of Daniel who was ever-faithful to the Lord. "The Lord is my chosen portion and my cup; you hold my lot. The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; indeed I have a beautiful inheritance." Daniel trusted, as did King David, that the Lord would provide for all his needs and even if something terrible should happen, trusting the Lord was still the only possibility for both men.

- *In what ways has God granted you his goodness in times of plenty and in times of need? Did you recognize it at the time or was it much later that you saw his mercy?*
- *The psalmist said, "I have no good apart from you." Why is this so hard for many to understand? Where do people look for "good" for themselves apart from God? How does that usually turn out?*

#### 1 Peter 4:1–8

Peter spoke to those who would listen about the power of Christian love in the lives of all people. The offering of forgiveness and mercy can and often does change people. In this way Christians can effect change by the power of God's

Holy Spirit – "love covers a multitude of sins."

- *Have you ever experienced the gift of forgiveness for something that weighed you down with guilt and shame? How did it change you? How did it help you to be more graceful toward others?*

Jesus' physical suffering overcame the power of sin in the lives of believers. When we, as his disciples, suffer for the sake of Christ, Peter suggests that sin is overcome in the believer.

- *How is this something we do not do for ourselves but rather something that Christ does for us? Who is the only one that can conquer sin?*

#### Matthew 27:57–66

Joseph of Arimathea went to Pilate at the death of Jesus and asked for his body. His noble intervention meant that Jesus would not be placed in a criminal's grave with others who had been executed. He took great care to prepare his Lord's body by cleaning it and wrapping it in linen as one would do for someone they loved. Then he shut the tomb's entrance by rolling a stone in front of the opening of the grave.

- *Matthew makes it clear that Joseph was a disciple of Jesus. How did his action to care for the Lord's physical body exhibit his commitment to his teacher?*
- *Mary and Mary were there to watch this formal burial of Jesus. What do you suppose they were thinking as they observed the moment? Why does Matthew make sure to tell his audience that there were witnesses to the burial?*

The next day as Pilate met with the chief priests and Pharisees, the religious leaders insisted that the tomb of Jesus would be made secure. (For an interesting article on the shape of the stone – round or corkshaped – see [biblicalarchaeology.org](http://biblicalarchaeology.org) and search "How Was Jesus' Tomb Sealed?") Pilate granted soldiers to stand guard in front of the tomb.

- *What was the main concern of the chief priests and Pharisees concerning Jesus' tomb? How would a missing body be interpreted, according to the detractors, by Jesus' disciples? What was the danger in that?*

There is a common thread that runs between the story of Daniel being placed in the lion's den and Jesus' body being placed in the tomb. The commonality is the "sealing" of the den/tomb.

- *In both cases, what did God do to the men inside the den/tomb?*