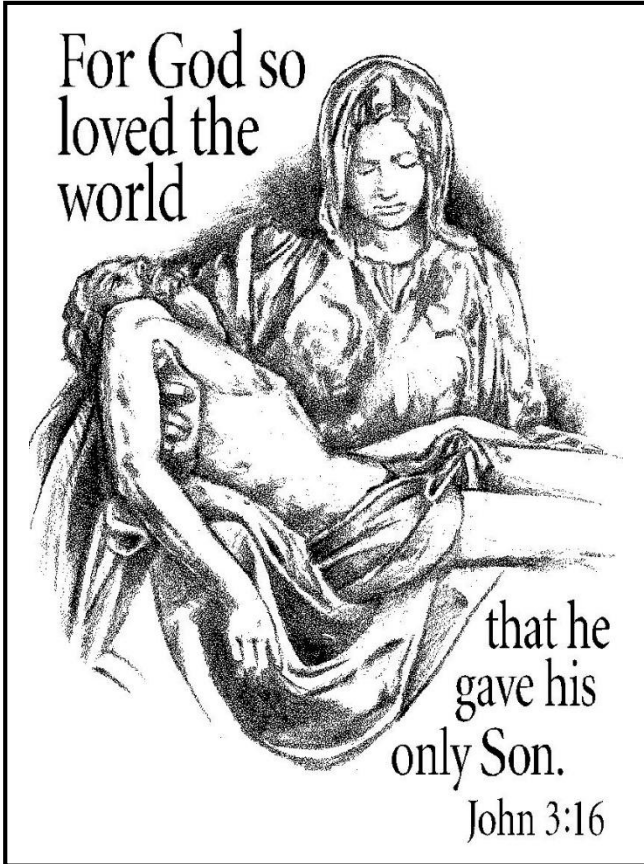


Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✠ Holy Communion ✠

Fourth Sunday in Lent

March 10, 2024

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT



The fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

GATHERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRELUDE

Stand

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who writes the law on our hearts,
who draws all people together through Jesus.

C: Amen.

P: Held in God's mercy, let us confess our sin
in the presence of God and of one another.

Kneel

P: Holy God,

C: we confess that we are caught in snares of sin
and cannot break free.

**We hoard resources while our neighbors
are hungry and cold.**

We speak in ways that silence others.

We are silent when we should speak up.

We let hurts grow into hatred.

**For all these things and for sins only you know,
forgive us, Lord.**

Amen.

P: God's grace is abundant:
Out of love for the whole world,
God draws near to us,
breaks every snare of sin,
washes away our wrongs,
and restores the promise of life through † Jesus Christ.

C: Amen.

Stand

GATHERING HYMN

Give to Our God Immortal Praise!.....LBW 520

APOSTOLIC GREETING

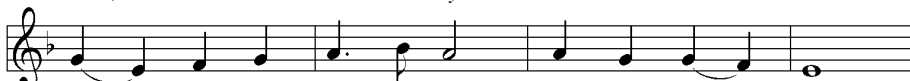
P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

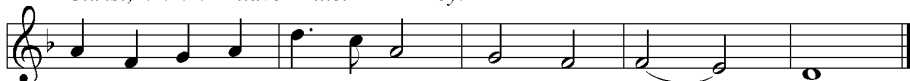
KYRIE



A Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son: **C** Lord, have mer - cy.
Lord, have mer - cy:



A Chri - ste e - le - i - son: **C** Christ, have mer - cy.
Christ, have mer - cy:



A Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son: **C** Lord, have mer - cy.
Lord, have mer - cy:

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

O God, rich in mercy, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world and rescued us from the hopelessness of death. Lead us into your light, that all our deeds may reflect your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

Sit

WORD**FIRST READING: Numbers 21:4-9**

Though God provides food and water for the Israelites in the wilderness, they whine and grumble. They forget about the salvation they experienced in the exodus. God punishes them for their sin, but when they repent God also provides a means of healing: a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole.

A: A Reading from Numbers:

⁴From Mount Hor the Israelites set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." ⁶Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

A: The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

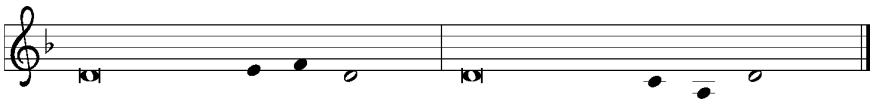
PSALM: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

The cantor sings the refrain; the congregation repeats it.



You de - li - ver your peo - ple from their dis - tress.

Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.



¹Give thanks to the LORD, for the | LORD is good,
for God's mercy en - | dures forever.

²**Let the redeemed of the | LORD proclaim
that God redeemed them from the hand | of the foe,**

³gathering them in | from the lands;
from the east and from the west, from the north and | from the south.

- ¹⁷Some were fools and took re- | bellious paths;
through their sins they | were afflicted.**
- ¹⁸They loathed all man- | ner of food
and drew near | to death's door.
- ¹⁹Then in their trouble they cried | to the LORD
and you delivered them from | their distress. R**
- ²⁰You sent forth your | word and healed them
and rescued them | from the grave.
- ²¹Let them give thanks to you, LORD, for your | steadfast love
and your wonderful works | for all people.**
- ²²Let them offer sacrifices | of thanksgiving
and tell of your deeds with | shouts of joy. R

SECOND READING: Ephesians 2:1-10

While we were dead in our sinfulness, God acted to make us alive as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus. We are saved not by what we do but by grace through faith. Thus our good works are really a reflection of God's grace at work in our lives.

A: A Reading from Ephesians:

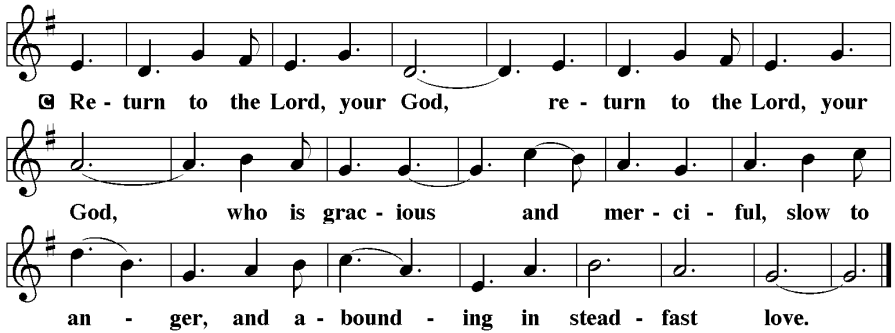
¹You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

A: The word of the Lord.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

Stand

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Re - turn to the Lord, your God, re - turn to the Lord, your
 God, who is grac - ious and mer - ci - ful, slow to
 an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

GOSPEL: John 3:14-21

To explain the salvation of God to the religious leader, Nicodemus, Jesus refers to the scripture passage quoted in today's first reading. Just as those who looked upon the bronze serpent were healed, so people will be saved when they behold Christ lifted up on the cross.

P: The Holy Gospel according to John, the third chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus said: ¹⁴“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

¹⁶“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

¹⁷“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. ¹⁸Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. ¹⁹And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. ²⁰For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. ²¹But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

SERMON **Pastor Amme**

Stand

HYMN OF THE DAY

***Lift High the Cross* LBW 377**

APOSTLES' CREED

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

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

He will come again 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**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

A brief silence is held after the introduction.

P: Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

After each petition:

P: Hear us, O God.

C: **Your mercy is great.**

The prayers conclude:

P: Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

C: **Amen**

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: **And also with you.**

*The pastor and congregation greet one another in the name of the Lord.
Peace be with you. R: Peace be with you.*

Sit

MEAL

OFFERING

The Offering is received as the Lord's table is prepared.

ANTHEM

Into the Woods My Master Went.....Peter Lutkin

Stand

OFFERTORY

As the gifts are presented, the Offertory is sung

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re-new a right spir -
it with-in me. Cast me not a-way from your pres- ence, and take
not your Ho- ly Spir- it from me. Re- store to me the
joy of your sal- va- tion, and up- hold me with your free Spir - it.

OFFERING PRAYER

A: Let us pray:

C: **Jesus, you are the bread of life
and the host of this meal.**

**Bless these gifts that we have gathered
that all people may know your goodness.**

**Feed us not only with this holy food
but with hunger for justice and peace.**

We pray this in your name.

Amen.

GREAT THANKSGIVING**P:** The Lord be with you.**C:** And also with you.**P:** Lift up your hearts.**C:** We lift them to the Lord.**P:** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.**C:** It is right to give our thanks and praise.**PREFACE**

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ; You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and
 might, heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry.
 Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the
 high - est. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

EUCCHARISTIC PRAYER

P: Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

In great love you sent to us Jesus,
your Son, who reached out
to heal the sick and suffering,
who preached good news to the poor,
and who, on the cross,
opened his arms to all.

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread,
and gave thanks; broke it,
and gave it to his disciples,
saying: Take and eat;
this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper,
he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink,
saying: This cup is
the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people
for the forgiveness of sin.

Do this for the remembrance of me.

Remembering, therefore,
his death, resurrection, and ascension,
we await his coming in glory.

Pour out upon us
the Spirit of your love, O Lord,
and unite the wills
of all who share this heavenly food,
the body and blood
of Jesus Christ, our Lord;
to whom, with you
and the Holy Spirit,
be all honor and glory,
now and forever.

C: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P: Bread for the journey.
 A feast for hungry hearts. Come!

C: Thanks be to God.



C Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the



sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Sit

COMMUNION

All baptized believers are invited to this holy meal. Those not communing are invited for a blessing. Please follow the instructions of the ushers to gather at the altar table. As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:

The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.

The communicant may say: Amen

COMMUNION HYMN *Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross*

1 Je - sus, keep me near the cross, there's a pre - cious foun - tain;
 2 Near the cross, a trem - bling soul, love and mer - cy found me;
 3 Near the cross! O Lamb of God, bring its scenes be - fore me;
 4 Near the cross I'll watch and wait, hop - ing, trust - ing ev - er,

free to all, a heal - ing stream flows from Cal - v'ry's moun - tain.
 there the bright and morn - ing star sheds its beams a - round me.
 help me walk from day to day with its shad - ow o'er me.
 till I reach the gold - en strand just be - yond the riv - er.

Refrain

In the cross, in the cross be my glo - ry ev - er;

till my ran - somed soul shall find rest be - yond the riv - er.

Stand

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

C: Amen.

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

A: Let us pray:

A: Generous God,
at this table we have tasted your immeasurable grace.
As grains of wheat are gathered into one bread,
now make us one loaf to feed the world;
in the name of Jesus, the Bread of life.

C: Amen

SENDING

BLESSING

P: Beloved,
we are God's own people,
holy, washed, renewed.
God bless you and keep you,
shower you with mercy,
fill you with courage,
and ✠ give you peace.

C: Amen

SENDING HYMN *When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*

1 When I sur - vey the won - drous cross on which the
 2 For - bid it, Lord, that I should boast save in the
 3 See, from his head, his hands, his feet, sor - row and
 4 Were the whole realm of na - ture mine, that were a

prince of glo - ry died, my rich - est gain I
 death of Christ, my God; all the vain things that
 love flow min - gled down. Did e'er such love and
 pres - ent far too small; love so a - maz - ing,

count but loss and pour con - tempt on all my pride.
 charm me most, I sac - ri - fice them to his blood.
 sor - row meet, or thorns com - pose so rich a crown?
 so di - vine, de - mands my soul, my life, my all.

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748

Music: HAMBURG, Lowell Mason, 1792–1872

DISMISSAL**A:** Go in peace. Share your bread.**C:** Thanks be to God.**POSTLUDE**

SERVICE ASSISTANTS

Ushers: Fred Harbaugh, Susan Christ, AnnMarie Hohman, Jean Nolan, Diana Rooker; **Lay Assistant:** Sandy Ream; **Communion Assistant:** Candy Watkins; **Acolyte:** Doriann Morris; **Altar Guild:** Marie Welter, April Gardner; **Greeters/Communion Presenters:** Dave and Rita Strickler; **Cantor** Candy Watkins; **Flower Delivery:** Marilyn Winter

IN BLESSED MEMORY

The Altar Flowers are given to the Glory of God and in loving memory of loved ones.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to Messiah Church! It is our joy to have you worship with us. If you are visiting, please make yourself known and leave your name & information to a congregation member. *We hope to see you again.*

Eucharistic Ministers will be sent out Sunday, March 17th. Please let the office know if you are not available this Sunday. If anyone is homebound, can't get to church and would like to receive Communion please notify the church office at 570-326-9171.

NOW IS THE TIME to put in your orders for memorial Easter Flowers. Several varieties of flowers are available. More information can be found on the order form. **PLEASE RETURN THE ORDER FORM BY SUNDAY, MARCH 17th.**

Please join us on Wednesday at 7:00 p.m. during Lent for Lenten Vespers held in the Chapel followed by a brief Bible Study.

Thank you to all who participated in our Soup Sale. We were able to raise \$1,136. This money will be used for the Christmas food baskets.

Kids in Mission had a fun filled morning, They, decorated and filled 20 bags for Shepherd of the Streets.

MESSIAH LUTHERAN CHURCH
REV. A. BRUCE AMME, PRESIDING AND PREACHING
JARED GIST, ORGANIST

324 South Howard Street | South Williamsport, PA 17702
(570) 326-9171 | www.messiahsouth.org

Lifted Up for Us

“So must the Son of Man be lifted up,” Jesus says. There is a double meaning to this. Just as God told Moses to raise a bronze serpent on a pole to effect healing for the Israelites (Numbers 21:4-9), Jesus will be lifted on the pole of the cross. The image of Jesus crucified reveals how human power tries to dehumanize those who threaten the status quo or violate the norms decreed by those at the top of society’s ladder. It is a horror to consider this happening to anyone, but so much more when the victim is the perfect Holy One, God in the flesh. It confronts us with humanity’s rejection of God, in how we treat other human beings and in how we dehumanize ourselves by following our sinful impulses—what Ephesians calls “the passions of our flesh” (2:3).

This, though, is not the only meaning of Jesus being “lifted up,” for “God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.” The cross is more than the humiliation of Jesus; it is also his glorious exaltation. The crucifixion of Jesus is his coronation as Lord of all, who rules by grace and mercy. By defeating death in the resurrection, he will indeed disrupt the status quo of shame, violence, and greed through the power of love, truth, and peace.

This was prefigured in the story of poisonous serpents. When the people looked on the emblem of their sin, a bronze model of the snakes that poisoned them after they grumbled against the Lord, they were healed. So, too, when we turn to the Crucified One, we do not find condemnation but salvation. Beholding the Savior lifted up on the cross by our sin, we receive mercy and healing. In the death of Jesus, God forgives and embraces us with eternal life. In the proclamation, prayer, song, and sacraments of our assembly, we remember and affirm that the crucified yet exalted Christ extends saving love to us and to the world.

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