

# Messiah Lutheran Church

GATHER, EMPOWER, SERVE



✝ Holy Communion ✝

Third Sunday in Lent

March 23, 2025



**THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**

*The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God's invitation to attentiveness: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live." The landowner's ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener's readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!*

**GATHERING**

**PRELUDE**

*Stand*

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

**P:** Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,  
who forgives all our sin,  
whose mercy endures forever.

**C:** Amen

**P:** Let us return to God, confessing our sin in the assurance of God's abiding love.

*Kneel*

**P:** Compassionate One,

**C:** **you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love,  
but our lives do not always reflect you  
and your love for the world.**

**We do not show others the tender compassion  
you have shown to us.**

**We do not welcome others with the radical hospitality  
you grant to all people.**

**We oppress others,  
even though you have set us free again and again.**

**We squander the abundant gifts of the earth.**

**Transform our lives  
and guide us again in the way of the cross.**

**Amen**

**P:** Beloved in Christ,  
God's arms are always stretched open wide  
to welcome the wandering ones home.

In † Christ your sins are forgiven.

You have a place in God's house forever.

**C:** Amen

*Stand*

**GATHERING HYMN**

*Eternal Father, Strong to Save*.....LBW 467

1 E - ter - nal Fa - ther, strong to save, whose arm has bound the  
 2 O Sav - ior, whose al - might - y word the winds and waves sub -  
 3 O Ho - ly Spir - it, who didst brood up - on the cha - os  
 4 O Trin - i - ty of love and pow'r, all trav - 'lers guard in

rest - less wave, who bade the might - y o - cean deep its  
 mis - sive heard, who walked up - on the foam - ing deep, and  
 dark and rude, and bid its an - gry tu - mult cease, and  
 dan - ger's hour from rock and tem - pest, fire and foe, pro -

own ap - point - ed lim - its keep: oh, hear us when we  
 calm a - mid the storm didst sleep: oh, hear us when we  
 give, for wild con - fu - sion, peace: oh, hear us when we  
 tect them where - so - e'er they go; thus ev - er - more shall

cry to thee for those in per - il on the sea.  
 cry to thee for those in per - il on the sea.  
 cry to thee for those in per - il on the sea.  
 rise to thee glad hymns and praise from land and sea.

Text: William Whiting, 1825-1878, alt.  
 Music: MELITA, John B. Dykes, 1823-1876

**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.

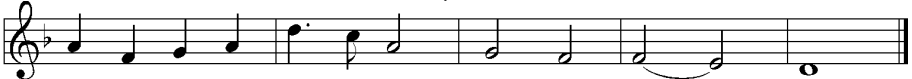
**KYRIE**



**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.

Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, 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: Isaiah 55:1-9**

*To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.*

**A:** A Reading from Isaiah:

<sup>1</sup> Ho, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and you that have no money,  
come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread,  
and your labor for that which does not satisfy?  
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,  
and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me;  
listen, so that you may live.  
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,  
my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples,  
a leader and commander for the peoples.

<sup>5</sup> See, you shall call nations that you do not know,  
and nations that do not know you shall run to you,  
because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,  
for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while he may be found,  
call upon him while he is near;

<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake their way,  
and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
so are my ways higher than your ways  
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

**A:** The word of the Lord.

**C:** Thanks be to God.

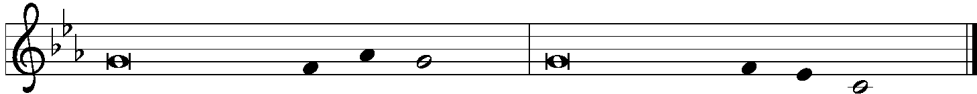
**PSALM: Psalm 63:1-8**

*The cantor sings the refrain; the congregation repeats it.*



O God, ea-ger-ly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you.

*Sung responsively between the cantor and congregation.*



<sup>1</sup> O God, you are my God; eager-ly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary  
land where there is no water.

<sup>2</sup> **Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,  
that I might behold your power and your glory.**

<sup>3</sup> For your steadfast love is better than life itself;  
my lips shall give you praise.

<sup>4</sup> **So will I bless you as long as I live  
and lift up my hands in your name. R**

<sup>5</sup> My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods,  
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

<sup>6</sup> **when I remember you up on my bed,  
and meditate on you in the night watches.**

<sup>7</sup> For you have been my helper,  
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

<sup>8</sup> **My whole being clings to you;  
your right hand holds me fast. R**

**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13**

*Paul uses images from Hebrew Scriptures and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ: He is our rock, our water, our food, and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God's faithfulness.*

**A:** A Reading from first Corinthians:

<sup>1</sup> I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

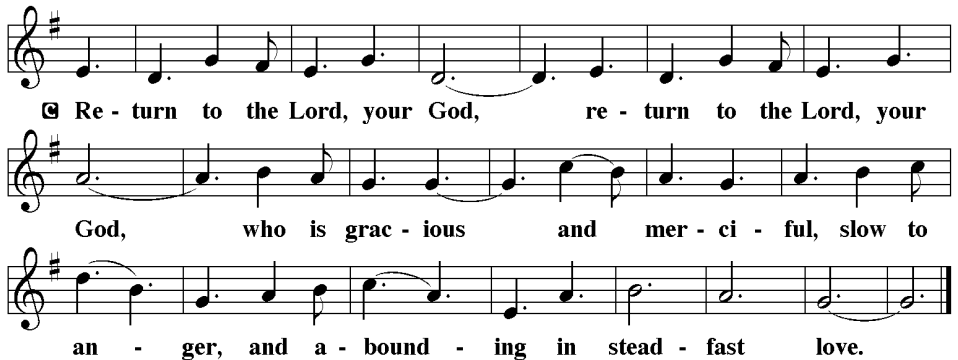
<sup>6</sup> Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. <sup>10</sup> And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. <sup>11</sup> These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. <sup>12</sup> So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. <sup>13</sup> No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

**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: Luke 13:1-9**

*Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.*

**P**: The Holy Gospel according to St Luke, the thirteenth chapter.

**C**: Glory to you, O Lord.

<sup>1</sup> At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?<sup>3</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those

eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

<sup>6</sup> He then told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ <sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

**P:** The Gospel of the Lord.

**C:** Praise to you, O Christ.

Sit

**SERMON** ..... Pastor Amme

Stand

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

**Jesus, Still Lead On** ..... LBW 341



1 Je - sus, still lead on, till our rest be won; and, al - though the  
 2 If the way be drear, if the foe be near, let no faith - less  
 3 When we seek re - lief from a long - felt grief, when temp - ta - tions  
 4 Je - sus, still lead on, till our rest be won; heav'n - ly lead - er,



way be cheer - less, we will fol - low, calm and fear - less;  
 fears o'er - take us, let not faith and hope for - sake us;  
 come al - lur - ing make us pa - tient and en - dur - ing;  
 still di - rect us, still sup - port, con - sole, pro - tect us,



guide us by your hand to our Fa - ther's land.  
 safe - ly past the foe to our home we go.  
 show us that bright shore where we weep no more.  
 till we safe - ly stand in our Fa - ther's land.

Text: Nicolaus L. von Zinzendorf, 1700–1760; tr. Jane L. Borthwick, 1813–1897, alt.  
 Music: SEELENBRÄUTIGAM, Adam Drese, 1620–1701



**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:** Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world,  
and all those in need.

*After each petition:*

**P:** God, in your mercy,

**C: receive our prayer.**

*The prayers conclude:*

**P:** Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your  
love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.

**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**

**Wonder..... Jay Althouse**

*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:** Gracious Provider,  
 you set your immense treasures among us,  
 opening your heart to the world.  
 As we prepare to feast on your bountiful love,  
 deepen our commitment to sharing those  
 treasures with others,  
 through our Savior, Jesus Christ.  
 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:** All who are hungry, come!  
The feast of grace is spread.

**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**

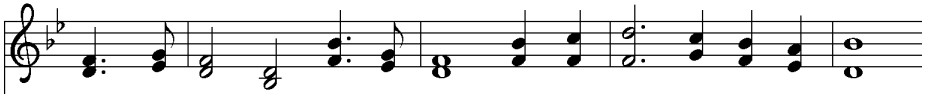
*All baptized believers are invited to this holy meal. Those not communing are invited for a blessing. Please follow the instructions of the ushers to gather at the altar table. As the ministers give the bread and wine, they say these words to each communicant:*

**The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.  
The communicant may say: Amen**

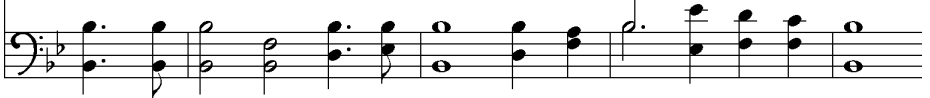
DO THIS IN  
*remembrance*  
OF ME. 1 CORINTHIANS  
11:24

**COMMUNION HYMN**

**Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me.....LBW 327**



1 Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my - self in thee;  
2 Not the la - bors of my hands can ful - fill thy law's de - mands;  
3 Noth - ing in my hand I bring; sim - ply to thy cross I cling,  
4 While I draw this fleet - ing breath, when mine eye - lids close in death,



let the wa - ter and the blood, from thy riv - en side which flowed,  
could my zeal no res - pite know, could my tears for - ev - er flow,  
Na - ked, come to thee for dress; help - less, look to thee for grace;  
when I soar to worlds un - known, see thee on thy judg - ment throne,



be of sin the dou - ble cure; cleanse me from its guilt and pow'r.  
all for sin could not a - tone; thou must save, and thou a - lone.  
foul, I to the foun - tain fly; wash me, Sav - ior, or I die.  
Rock of A - ges, cleft for me, let me hide my - self in thee.



Text: Augustus M. Toplady, 1740–1778  
Music: TOPLADY, Thomas Hastings, 1784–1872

*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.

Generous Host,  
you have shared your feast with us and made us new.  
Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities,  
that your liberating love might nourish the world into freedom,  
in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**C:** Amen

*SENDING*

**BLESSING**

**P:** God our tender parent,  
God the crucified one,  
God the reconciling Spirit,  
✠ bless you now and forever.

**C:** Amen



**SENDING HYMN**

***O Jesus, Joy of Loving Hearts* ..... LBW 356**



1 O Je - sus, joy of lov - ing hearts, the fount of  
 2 Your truth un - changed has ev - er stood; you plead with  
 3 We taste you, ev - er liv - ing bread, and long to  
 4 For you our rest - less spir - its yearn, wher - e'er our  
 5 O Je - sus, ev - er with us stay! Make all our



life, the light of all: from ev - 'ry bliss that earth im -  
 all to call on you; to those who seek you, you are  
 feast up - on you still; we drink of you, the foun - tain -  
 chang - ing lot is cast; glad, when your smile on us you  
 mo - ments fair and bright! Oh, chase the night of sin a -



parts we turn, un - filled, to hear your call.  
 good; to those who find you, life is new.  
 head; our thirst - ing souls from you we fill.  
 turn, blest, when by faith we hold you fast.  
 way! Shed o'er the world your ho - ly light.



Text: attr. Bernard of Clairvaux, 1091–1153; tr. Ray Palmer, 1808–1887, alt.  
 Music: WALTON, W. Gardiner, *Sacred Melodies*, 1815

**DISMISSAL**

**A:** Go in peace. Care for others as God cares for you.

**C:** Thanks be to God.

**POSTLUDE**



**SERVICE ASSISTANTS**

**Ushers:** Fred Harbaugh, Susan Christ, AnnMarie Hohman, Jean Nolan, Diana Rooker; **Lay Assistant:** Kim Brofee; **Comm. Assistant:** Mary Schultz **Acolyte:** Brennen Hess; **Altar Guild:** Jody Fullmer, Jeannie Bower  
**Greeters/Communion Presenters:** Don and Mary Ellen Rosenbaum  
**Cantor:** Virginia Amme; **Flower Delivery:** Marilyn Winter

**IN BLESSED MEMORY**

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

**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.*

**March 29<sup>th</sup> from 9 – Noon** will be Our annual Lenten Kids in Mission. We are in need of volunteers to teach, assist and walk children from one activity to another. If you know someone you think may be interested, please let me know or contact them directly. It's always a fun morning not only for the kids but for the volunteers, as well! Thanks for your prayerful consideration. Kathryn

**Lutheran World Relief School Kits 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual “Sew-A-Sack” is Tuesday, March 25, 2025 ~ 9:00 a.m.-???** If you can attend, please sign up in the Narthex and let us know if you are staying for lunch and which items you can bring. *Join us for a fun time ... we guarantee “we will keep you in stitches!”*

**For our Home Sew-ers: *Volunteers are needed to do a little sewing on their own in advance of the Sew-A-Sack.*** The task consists of merely turning under the edges of the fabric and doing a zig-zag stitch all the way around – that’s all! **Fabric pieces and instructions may be picked up in the narthex or at the church office.** Remember to add your name to the sign-out sheet as well as the number of pieces you take home (and also be sure to indicate on the sheet that you have returned them when you bring them back!) so that we can keep track of the number of backpacks and where they are.

**Every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m.** during Lent there will be Lenten Vespers held in the Chapel followed by a brief Bible Study.

**Did your child ever attend Messiah Preschool?** This marks the 50<sup>th</sup> year, and a celebration will take place May 18<sup>th</sup> immediately following worship. We would love to have photos, name of your child or children, year they attended Messiah preschool and the teacher at that time. If you recall any interesting stories your child experienced during their years at Messiah preschool and would like to share, drop off the information to the church office by April 30<sup>th</sup>. **Please note,** include names and years on all pictures shared so you are sure to get them back. Thank you, the Preschool Board.

**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](http://www.messiahsouth.org)

## **We Have Choices**

We have choices, right? Obviously. There's little question about that; it's a fact. Many of these choices are piled and piling up in the lockboxes of our upbringing and experiences, of our moral certainties, religious convictions, political opinions, or economic maneuverings. We make choices about our educational endeavors, vocational callings, use of our days and years, relationship commitments, dietary habits, travel destinations, color coordination, hairstyles, sexual behaviors, EV or gas, whole or skim, movie or book. All these choices—be they monumental or minuscule, automatic or sleep-depriving, public or private, frivolous or practical, courageous or cowardly—we shuffle, sort, and seal in one envelope or another: one labeled right and one marked wrong, the good envelope and the bad envelope.

Our choices mostly happen like that until for some reason, hard telling what reason, our certainties are disturbed and our absolutes begin to rattle like loose bolts under the frame of an old truck on a potholed road. It's what happens when, by mistake or under force, good or bad luck, we discover that broccoli isn't disgusting, snakes aren't slimy, the earth isn't flat, men may love men, more might not be better, aliens need not be strangers, and God's justice surely demands mercy.

Jesus started tugging at a snag of choices with a parable about a tree, a vineyard, a gardener, a saw, and manure. The tree was a no-hoper (there could be lots of reasons). With not a fig on a limb, if it had been another variety of fruit tree you'd call it a "bad apple." The choice: saw or donkey dung. Jesus rejects the blade, chooses the excrement.

Martin Luther (liking Latin) said, "*Simul justus et peccator*," meaning we are at the same time both saint and sinner. Or as Jesus put it, love those bum branches down to their roots, put your hands in the dirt, and see what fruit they bear.

From [sundaysandseasons.com](http://sundaysandseasons.com).

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