

Sunday, March 20, 2011

Second Sunday in Lent

Holy Communion

INTRODUCTION

During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. In today's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. At the font we are given a new birth as daughters and sons of God. As God made a covenant with Abraham, in baptism God promises to raise us up with Christ to new life. From worship we are sent forth to proclaim God's love for all the world.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CONFSSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, the well of eternal life, the light of the world, the breath giving life to dry bones. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, **have mercy on us.**

For self-centered living, and for failing to walk with humility and gentleness:

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

For longing to have what is not ours, and for hearts that are not at rest with ourselves:

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

For misuse of human relationships, and for unwillingness to see the image of God in others:

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

For jealousies that divide families and nations, and for rivalries that create strife and warfare:

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

For reluctance in sharing the gifts of God, and for carelessness with the fruits of creation:

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

For hurtful words that condemn, and for angry deeds that harm:

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

For idleness in witnessing to Jesus Christ, and for squandering the gifts of love and grace:

Holy God, holy and mighty, holy and immortal, have mercy on us.

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives us all our sins. Through the Holy Spirit God cleanses us and gives us the power to proclaim the mighty acts of the one who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the entire forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

GATHERING HYMN: *If You But Trust in God to Guide You* (ELW 769)

1 If you but trust in God to guide you with gentle hand through all your ways, you'll find that God is there beside you when crosses come, in trying days. Trust then in God's unchanging love; build on the rock that will not move.

2 What gain is there in anxious weeping, in helpless anger and distress? If you are in your Savior's keeping, in sorrow will he love you less? For Christ who took for you a cross will bring you safe through ev'ry loss.

3 The Lord our restless hearts is holding, in peace and quietness content. We rest in God's good will unfolding, what wisdom from on high has sent. God, who has chosen us by grace, knows very well the fears we face.

4 Sing, pray, and keep God's ways unswerving, offer your service faithfully. Trust heaven's word; though undeserving, you'll find this promise true to be. This is our confidence indeed: God never fails in time of need.

GREETING ELW p. 147

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

KYRIE ELW p. 147

In peace, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord. **Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. **Amen.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Almighty God, look upon the hearty desires of your humble servants and stretch forth the right hand of your majesty to be our defense against all our enemies. Grant this, we pray, through your

Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

FIRST READING: Genesis 12:1–9

A reading from _____.

God's call of Abram and Sarai has a clear purpose—that through them all the families of the earth would gain a blessing. As they set out on their journey they are accompanied by promises of land, nation, and a great reputation.

¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

⁴ So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. ⁵ And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, ⁶ Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land.

⁷ Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. ⁸ From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. ⁹ And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 121

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

² **My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth.**

³ He will not let your foot be moved and he who watches over you will not fall asleep.

⁴ **Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep;**

⁵ The LORD himself watches over you; the LORD is your shade at your right hand,

⁶ **So that the sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

⁷ The LORD shall preserve you from all evil; it is he who shall keep you safe.

⁸ **The LORD shall watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth forevermore.**

SECOND READING: Romans 4:1–8, 13–17

A reading from _____.

In the person and example of Abraham we discover that a right relationship with God does not involve earning a reward from God but entails trusting God's promises. Abraham is the forebear and model for both Jews and Gentiles, because we too trust that ours is a God who gives life to the dead.

¹ What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” ⁴ Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. ⁵ And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, ⁶ just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: ⁷ “Blessed are those whose

lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; ⁸blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.”

¹³For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

¹⁶That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

ELW p. 151

Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.

GOSPEL: John 3:1–17

The holy gospel according to _____.

Glory to you, O Lord.

A curious Pharisee visits Jesus by night to learn from the teacher his friends reject. Jesus speaks to him about life in the Spirit and the kingdom of God.

¹Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ²This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” ³Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” ⁴Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

⁹Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. ¹²If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And 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, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: *My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less* (ELW 597)

1 My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness; no merit of my own I claim,
but wholly lean on Jesus' name.

Refrain

On Christ, the solid rock, I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.

2 When darkness veils his lovely face, I rest on his unchanging grace; in ev'ry high and stormy gale
my anchor holds within the veil. Refrain

3 His oath, his covenant, his blood sustain me in the raging flood; when all supports are washed away,
he then is all my hope and stay. Refrain

4 When he shall come with trumpet sound, oh, may I then in him be found, clothed in his righteousness
alone, redeemed to stand before the throne! Refrain

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.**

*Or, He descended to the dead.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

As we return to the waters of baptism during this season of Lent, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

Heavenly Father, we praise you for the fulfillment of your divine Word spoken through the patriarchs and prophets. We glorify your holy and divine name for the gift of salvation that comes through the precious body and blood of your Son, our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith daily, that we may proclaim the deeds of him who has called us out of darkness into the marvelous wonder of your holy light. Lord, in your mercy ... **hear our prayer.**

Heavenly Father, your Son Jesus fasted in the desert, depending only upon your Word to sustain him. In those times when we find ourselves in places where our souls are parched, may your gracious mercy sustain us with spiritual food and drink. Feed our hunger and thirst for righteousness with your Word, that your Spirit may bring forth the fruit of conversion. Lord, in your mercy ... **hear our prayer.**

Lord God, grant this congregation the joy of loving as we have first been loved by you. Let that love wash us clean of hatred and envy, of resentment and scorn, that we may see our Lord Jesus in each other. Lift us up into resurrection life in Jesus' name. Lord, in your mercy ... **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, in times of weeping and mourning -- when we are ill or suffering -- we wait upon your mercy, trusting that you never forget us. Give hope to all who wait in patience and faith [especially ...]. Be with them in their time of need, and remind them of your promise, that neither height or depth, death or life, nor anything else in all of creation, will be able to separate us from your love in Christ Jesus. Lord, in your mercy ... **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, God of abundant grace, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through Jesus Christ, our Savior. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

OFFERING

OFFERTORY: *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful* (ELW 184)

Let the vineyards be fruitful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of blessing. Gather a harvest from the seeds that were sown, that we may be fed with the bread of life. Gather the hopes and dreams of all; unite them with the prayers we offer. Grace our table with your presence, and give us a foretaste of the feast to come.

OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

DIALOGUE

ELW p. 152

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

ELW p. 153

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of pow'r and might: Heav'n and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna
in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.**

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age. Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth. Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood. Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea. Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness to the land of milk and honey. Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one. Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ. Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations.

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.

With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's passover from death to life as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

O God of resurrection and new life: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine. Bless this feast. Grace our table with your presence.

Come, Holy Spirit.

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread. Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world. Breathe new life into us. Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.

Come, Holy Spirit.

With your holy ones of all times and places, with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God, blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever. **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

Come to the banquet, for all is now ready.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN *Lamb of God* ELW p. 154

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

HYMN DURING COMMUNION: *My Faith Looks Up to Thee* (ELW 759)

HYMN DURING COMMUNION: *Be Thou My Vision* (ELW 793)

POST COMMUNION CANTICLE: *Now Lord* (ELW 201)

Lord, now, you let your servant go in peace; your word has been fulfilled. My own eyes have seen the salvation which you have prepared in the sight of ev'ry people: a light to reveal you to the nations and the glory of your people Israel. Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

PRAAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy. The Lord look upon you with favor and + give you peace. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN: *Go, My Children, with My Blessing* (ELW 543)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Share the good news.

Thanks be to God.

DOXOLOGY: *Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow* (ELW 884)

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below; praise him above, ye heav'nly host; praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Lessons for Next Week:
Exodus 17:1-7, Psalm 95:1-9, Romans 5:1-8, John 4:5-26 [27-30, 39-42]

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Listening for the Promise

Weekly Devotional

Lent 2 — March 16, 2014

“Truly, truly, I say to you ...” John 3:11a

We have all heard the song “The Hokey Pokey.” We have danced to it at family reunions and wedding receptions. We’ve heard it used in television commercials and in children’s music classes. The dancers stand in a circle and follow the directions in the song, first putting their right hand inside the circle, then outside, and then they put it back in and shake it all about. Then everyone does a silly dance while turning all around. The verse finishes with everyone clapping while saying, “That’s what it’s all about!” They go on to put their left hand, both feet and whole bodies into the circle. By the end of the song, everyone is laughing at the silliness.

Many people have asked the question, “What is the Hokey Pokey really all about?” There are dozens of websites that present theories on the Hokey Pokey and what it means. Even the origin of the song is in dispute, as some think that it was written in 1950, when it was copyrighted, but others point back to older folk songs. Some have suggested that there is a religious origin to the song, as a parody of the Roman Catholic Mass. Others think it has to do with ice cream in New Zealand or Italy. We may never really know, but that doesn’t stop us from asking the question. Even Jimmy Buffett wrote in a song, “Maybe it’s all too simple for our brains to figure it out. What if the Hokey Pokey is all it really is about?”

Jesus says to the curious Nicodemus, “Truly, truly, I say to you ...” and tells Nicodemus about the new life he can have in faith. These words are life changing; they point to a life that comes by the power of the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus thought it was silliness. He wanted to know the way of eternal life; what could this talk of being “born of the Spirit” possibly mean? How can a man be born again? Can he go back into his mother’s womb? What did Jesus mean? Nicodemus could see that Jesus himself is what this was all about. Jesus’ response wasn’t a plan upon which Nicodemus could act; it was the proclamation of the mighty act of God in us, by which the Spirit himself creates faith. Being born of the Spirit is to be pulled into the very grasp of Jesus Christ. And that, truly, is what faith is all about.

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