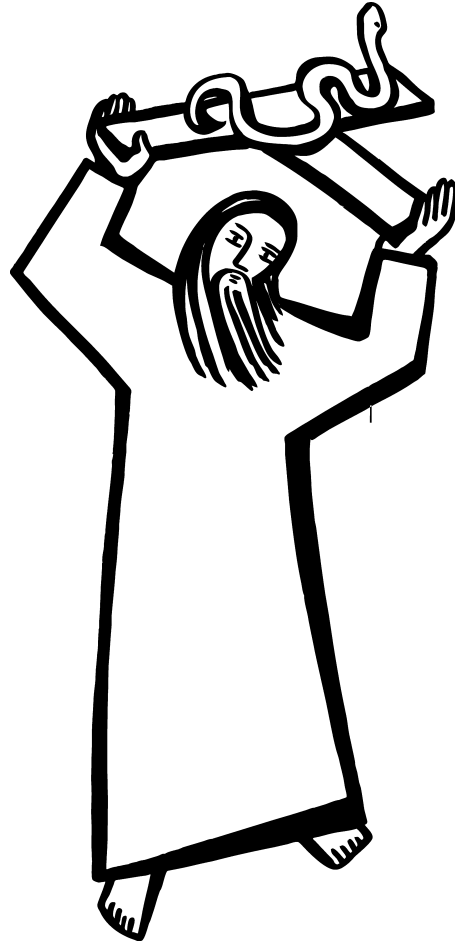


# *4th Sunday in Lent*

*March 14, 2021*



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Ministers: The People of Grace Lutheran Church

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Pastor: Rev. Jefferson Cox

Welcome! 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.

This is a special bulletin for Grace Lutheran Church. We have closed the Sanctuary to the general public amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. This bulletin is designed to be used at home by anyone who is baptized serving as the Worship Leader. If you use this bulletin for worship, either by itself or alongside our service on YouTube, please fill out the Attendance Record Form on our website: [GraceCLW.com](http://GraceCLW.com)

# SERVICE OF THE WORD

## PRELUDE

### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

**Congregation: Amen.**

Worship Leader: God hears us when we cry, and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Worship Leader: Fountain of living water,

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

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

**Congregation: Amen.**

## GATHERING HYMN

## *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*

verses 1 & 2



1 Come, thou Fount of ev - 'ry bless-ing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;  
2 Here I raise my Eb - en - e - zer: "Hith-er by thy help I've come";  
3 Oh, to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I'm con-strained to be;



streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud - est praise.  
and I hope, by thy good plea - sure, safe - ly to ar - rive at home.  
let that grace now like a fet - ter bind my wan-d'ring heart to thee.



While the hope of end-less glo - ry fills my heart with joy and love,  
Je - sus sought me when a strang - er, wan-d'ring from the fold of God;  
Prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love.



teach me ev - er to a - dore thee; may I still thy good-ness prove.  
he, to res - cue me from dan - ger, in - ter - posed his pre - cious blood.  
Here's my heart, oh, take and seal it; seal it for thy courts a - bove.

Text: Robert Robinson, 1735–1790, alt.

Music: NETTLETON, J. Wyeth, *Repository of Sacred Music*, Part II, 1813

## APOSTOLIC GREETING

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

**Congregation: And also with you.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Worship Leader: Let us pray together the Prayer of the Day.

**Congregation: 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. Amen.**

## FIRST READING

## Numbers 21:4-9

Introduction to the Lesson: *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.*

Reader: <sup>4</sup>From 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. <sup>5</sup>The 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.” <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup>The 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. <sup>8</sup>And 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.” <sup>9</sup>So 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.

*After the reading...*

Reader: The word of the Lord.

**Congregation: Thanks be to God.**

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

*The psalm for the day is read responsively with Lenten refrain sung first and then at each R:*



Cre - ate in me a clean heart O God and re-new a right spi-rit with-in \_\_\_ me.

Reader: <sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the LORD, for the LORD is good,  
for God’s mercy endures forever.

**<sup>2</sup>Let the redeemed of the LORD proclaim  
that God redeemed them from the hand of the foe,**

<sup>3</sup>gathering them in from the lands;  
from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

**<sup>17</sup>Some were fools and took rebellious paths;  
through their sins they were afflicted.**

<sup>18</sup>They loathed all manner of food  
and drew near to death’s door.



## GOSPEL LESSON

John 3:14-21

Introduction to the Gospel: *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.*

Worship Leader: The Holy Gospel according to John in the 2nd chapter.

Congregation:



Glo - ry to you, O Lord.

Worship Leader: [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.”

*After the reading...*

Worship Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

Congregation:



Pra-ise to— you—, O— Christ.

## GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons

### Look and Live

The cure for the ancient Israelites, following Moses, is to look directly at what is killing them, rather than avoid or hide from it. Healing occurs in the confrontation.

In today's gospel, Jesus likens his crucifixion to Moses lifting up the serpent in the wilderness so the Israelites might be saved from the venom of desert snakes. In doing so,

Jesus communicates that he came so we might look at what is killing us. He came to shine a light on that which poisons our lives so we might live.

In today's gospel, we catch Jesus in the middle of a conversation with a Pharisee named Nicodemus, who is slinking around in the night to get a word in with Jesus, presumably so he is not seen. In this conversation Jesus gives a judgment that shines a light on Nicodemus: you, Nicodemus, seem to prefer the darkness because there is something you are doing that you want to hide, thus making it easier for you to live in the dark. This sounds an awful lot like the experience of shame. Jesus is naming the way shame has dictated Nicodemus's life, relegating him to shadows where he will not be seen for what he really is. Notice the lack of condemnation. Jesus is simply a light, showing Nicodemus to himself.

Jesus is also a light to us, showing us to ourselves. Looking at Jesus lifted up on the cross, we see the poison that is killing us: power used to protect the status quo; our instinct to blame one in order to save the rest. We see the fruit of our defenses against what the light reveals: the death of an innocent man at the hands of those in power.

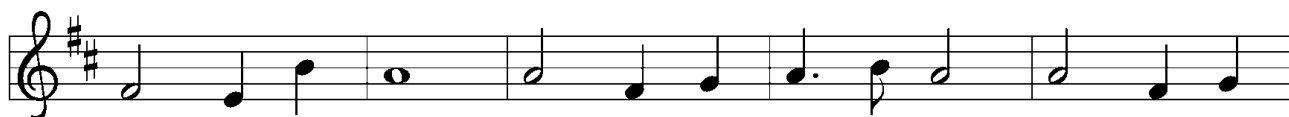
Christ has come so that we will see what is poisoning us and that, in seeing, we might turn and live.

## SERMON

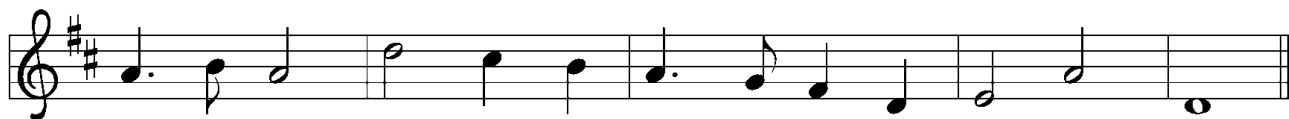
### HYMN OF THE DAY *My Faith Looks Up to Thee* vs. 1 & 2



1 My faith looks up to thee, thou Lamb of Cal - va - ry,  
2 May thy rich grace im - part strength to my faint - ing heart,  
3 While life's dark maze I tread and griefs a - round me spread,  
4 When ends life's tran - sient dream, when death's cold, sul - len stream



Sav - ior di - vine! Now hear me while I pray, take all my  
my zeal in - spire; as thou hast died for me, oh, may my  
be thou my guide; bid dark-ness turn to day, wipe sor-row's  
shall o'er me roll; blest Sav - ior, then, in love fear and dis -



guilt a - way, oh, let me from this day be whol - ly thine!  
love to thee pure, warm, and change-less be, a liv - ing fire!  
tears a - way, nor let me ev - er stray from thee a - side.  
trust re-move; oh, bear me safe a - bove, a ran - somed soul!

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Worship Leader: Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

*A brief silence.*

Prayer Leader: You sent your Son that the world might be saved through him. Inspire the witness of the church throughout the world. Empower missionaries, Bible translators, and ministries of service in your name. Bless our partners in ministry (*specific mission partners may be named*), our ELCA global partner churches, and Young Adults in Global Mission. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: From east to west your steadfast love is shown. Nourish seas and deserts, wilderness areas and cities. Give water to thirsty lands; nurture spring growth that feeds hungry creatures; bless farmers as they prepare for the growing season. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: You sustained your people in the wilderness. Give courage to all who lead in times of crisis and scarce resources. Prosper the work of those who aid victims of famine and drought (*especially*). Bring peace in places where scarce resources cause violence. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: Your mercy endures forever. Deliver all who cry to you, especially those who are hungry or without homes. Give life in places where death seems triumphant; give healing to those who are sick and comfort to those who mourn (*especially* Marc Calhoun, Linda Almond, Barbara Haseley, Duke Tieman, Betty Biddle, Cathi Adams, Michael Morales, Wade Buehler, Gloria Holtzclaw, Betty Daege, Dianne William, Rosemarie & George Smith, Gary Neal, Karen Bates, Rev. Lydia Villanueva and family, Don Eunis, Lorraine Reinhard, Bonnie Redler, Kathy Leotta, Brytt Mathis, Joseph Valentin, Rita Burneik, Bobby Schlegel, Hilda Taylor, George Clark, Jill Grote, Larry Timmons, Carl Stone, Neftali Garcia & family, Kelly Sullivan, Susan Gunn, Roy Pruitt, Iris Valentin, Deacon Connie Puls, Joan Keeton, Steve Davis, Rose Marie Piff, Gary Mostrum, Vicki Kennedy, Gail Elder, Valerie Smutko, Jason Meadows, Lisa & Ty Hauschild, Bishop Pedro Suarez, Pastor Courtney Erzkus and family, Ralph Burson, Ellen Duncan, Luanne Sekel, Lorraine Chavez, Pat Fredell, Skylar Favos, the family and friends of Harry Schipper (Margaret Cox's father), and all those suffering from natural disasters [including all those affected by COVID-19 and severe winter weather], from violence, & terror, and the family & friends of the 490,000+ people in the US & the 2,400,000+ people worldwide who have died from COVID-19). Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**



Prayer Leader: By grace we have been saved. Fill this congregation to overflowing with that grace, that we show mercy to others. Nourish any in our midst who are hungry, especially children, and bless our ministries of feeding and shelter (*especially*). Give us patience and courage when the way seems long. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

Prayer Leader: Your Son was lifted up that whoever believes might have eternal life. We praise you for all who have died in Christ, especially those within our Memorial Garden. Bring us with all the saints into the fullness of your promises. Lord, in your mercy,

**Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Worship Leader: Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

**Congregation: Amen.**

## OFFERING

*Offerings to the mission and ministry of Grace can be made online at [GraceCLW.com](http://GraceCLW.com) (look for the "Donate" button), or by mailing a check to Grace Lutheran Church, 1812 N. Highland Ave. Clearwater FL 33755. Thank you for your continued financial support during these uncertain times. **You can also fill out your attendance form on our website.***

## OFFERTORY *God Whose Giving Knows No Ending vs. 1*



1 God, whose giv - ing knows no end - ing, from your rich and end - less store:



na - ture's won - der, Je - sus' wis - dom, cost - ly cross, grave's shat - tered door,



gift - ed by you, we turn to you, of - f'ring up our - selves in praise;



thank - ful song shall rise for - ev - er, gra - cious do - nor of our days.

Text: Robert L. Edwards, 1915–2006

Music: RUSTINGTON, C. Hubert H. Parry, 1848–1918

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## OFFERING PRAYER

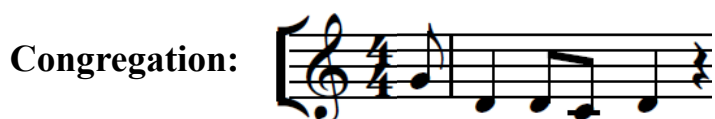
Prayer Leader: Merciful God, receive the sacrifice of our praise and thanksgiving and the offering of our lives, that following in the way of the cross, we may know the joy of the resurrection; through Christ our Lord.

**Congregation: Amen.**

## THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD



The Lord be with you.



And al- so 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.

Worship Leader: O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken us to the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.

**Congregation: Amen.**

## LORD'S PRAYER

Worship Leader: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray in the language closest to our hearts.

**Congregation: 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.**

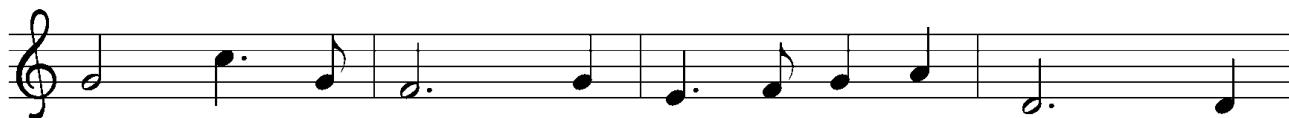
## BLESSING

Worship Leader: You are what God made you to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you † that you may be a blessing, in the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity.

**Congregation: Amen.**

## SENDING HYMN

### *Lift High the Cross* vs. 1 & 3



Lift high the cross, the love of Christ pro - claim till



all the world a - dore his sa - cred name.



1 Come, Chris - tians, fol - low where our cap - tain trod,  
2 All new - born ser - vants of the Cru - ci - fied  
3 O Lord, once lift - ed on the glo - rious tree,  
4 So shall our song of tri - umph ev - er be:

*Refrain*



our king vic - to - rious, Christ, the Son of God.  
bear on their brows the seal of him who died.  
as thou hast prom - ised, draw us all to thee.  
praise to the Cru - ci - fied for vic - to - ry!

Text: George W. Kitchin, 1827–1912; rev. Michael R. Newbolt, 1874–1956

Music: CRUCIFER, Sydney H. Nicholson, 1875–1947

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## **DISMISSAL**

Worship Leader: Together we have heard God's Word and joined in prayer, we have given and have been forgiven. Now as this service of worship is ending, this week's service to the world is beginning! Go in peace. Share the Good News.

**Congregation: Thanks be to God.**

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