

4th Sunday in Lent

March 27, 2022

Mark 2:4 Adaptive Worship Service



1812 North Highland Avenue

Clearwater, Florida 33755

Ministers: The People of Grace Lutheran Church

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Pastor: Rev. Jefferson Cox

Welcome! 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!

There are a few things to know about this service: you are not required to stand at any point though you can move around anytime you want or need, prayer slips are available for your prayers to be included in Prayer Time, and Holy Communion is served with gluten-free bread and grape juice.

GATHERING SONG

All Are Welcome

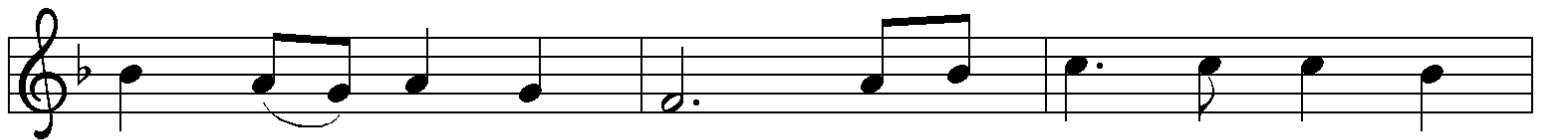
Verses 1 & 5



1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safe - ly



live, a place where saints and chil - dren tell how



hearts learn to for - give. Built of hopes and dreams and



vi - sions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of



Christ shall end di - vi - sions: All are wel - come,



all are wel - come, all are wel - come in this place.

5 Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and loved and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.

Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:
All are welcome, all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

Music: TWO OAKS, Marty Haugen

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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. God of compassion, you welcome the wayward, and you embrace us all with your mercy. By our baptism clothe us with garments of your grace, and feed us at the table of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Congregation: Amen.

FIRST READING

Joshua 5:9-12

Introduction to the Lesson: *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.*

Reader: 9 The Lord said to Joshua, "Today I have removed from you the disgrace of being slaves in Egypt." That is why the place was named Gilgal, the name it still has.

10 While the Israelites were camping at Gilgal on the plain near Jericho, they observed Passover on the evening of the fourteenth day of the month. 11 The next day was the first time they ate food grown in Canaan: roasted grain and bread made without yeast. 12

The manna stopped falling then, and the Israelites no longer had any. From that time on they ate food grown in Canaan.

After the reading...

Reader: The word of the Lord.

Congregation: Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL LESSON

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Introduction to the Gospel: *Jesus tells a parable about a son who ponders his father's love only after he has spurned it. The grace he receives is beyond his hopes. That same grace is a crisis for an older brother who believes it is his obedience that has earned his place in the father's home.*

Worship Leader: The Holy Gospel according to Luke in the 15th chapter.

Congregation: Glory to you, O Lord.

Pastor: At that time some people were there who told Jesus about the Galileans whom Pilate had killed while they were offering sacrifices to God. 2 Jesus answered them, "Because those Galileans were killed in that way, do you think it proves that they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? 3 No indeed! And I tell you that if you do not turn from your sins, you will all die as they did. 4 What about those eighteen people in Siloam who were killed when the tower fell on them? Do you suppose this proves that they were worse than all the other people living in Jerusalem? 5 No indeed! And I tell you that if you do not turn from your sins, you will all die as they did."

6 Then Jesus told them this parable: "There was once a man who had a fig tree growing in his vineyard. He went looking for figs on it but found none. 7 So he said to his gardener, 'Look, for three years I have been coming here looking for figs on this fig tree, and I haven't found any. Cut it down! Why should it go on using up the soil?' 8 But the gardener answered, 'Leave it alone, sir, just one more year; I will dig around it and put in some fertilizer. 9 Then if the tree bears figs next year, so much the better; if not, then you can have it cut down.'"

After the reading...

Worship Leader: The gospel of the Lord.

Congregation: Praise to you, O Christ.

GOSPEL MESSAGE—From Sundays and Seasons When Bad Things Happen

Do you think some people suffer because they are worse sinners than others? It's an uncomfortable question that usually goes unspoken, but Jesus poses it directly. Terrible things happen in this world, and human minds seek and invent patterns to find reasons

for such catastrophes so we can be confident that we might prevent them from happening to us.

While we know from experience that some of our actions cause us to suffer, we cannot reason backwards from that. We cannot assume that if someone is suffering, it's because they did something wrong. The rain falls on the just and the unjust.

While Jesus asserts that no one is a worse sinner for being on the receiving end of suffering, he complicates matters by adding, "But unless you repent, you will all perish as they did" (Luke 13:3). *Repentance*—*metanoia* in Greek—literally means "turning around." A sense of urgency comes into the story, and a sense of personal accountability. Jesus is calling us to quit trying to infer from other people's suffering what they might have done wrong. Instead, Jesus says, *Look at yourself and your own actions and their natural consequences. Are you living the way God calls you to live?*

Lutheran theology teaches that baptism is a lifelong process. It is a daily invitation to repent, to let go of what fails us and let the grace of God refresh us like a cool drink on a hot day.

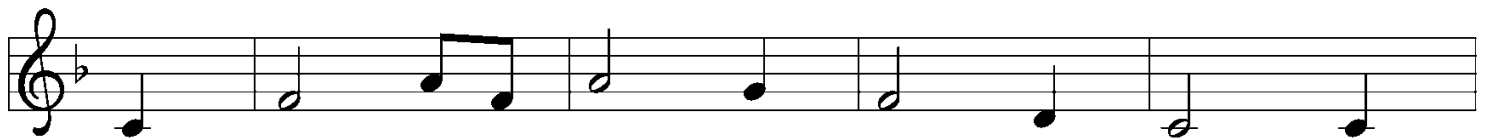
Bad things happen to good people because bad things happen to all of us sooner or later. Every day, however, we are invited into a fresh start, a choice of how we want to live, and the unyielding love of God gives us strength to carry on.

SERMON

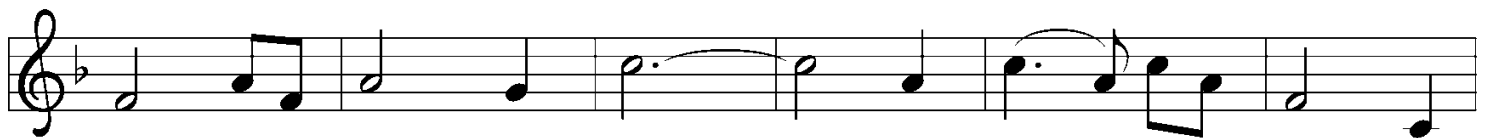
HYMN OF THE DAY

Amazing Grace

vs. 1 & 2



1 A - maz - ing grace!— how sweet the sound— that
2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, and



saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
grace my fears re - lieved; how pre - cious did that



now am found; was blind, but now I see.
grace ap - pear the hour I first be - lieved!

Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, alt., sts. 1–4; anonymous, st. 5
Music: NEW BRITAIN, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Worship Leader: Drawn close to the heart of God, we offer these prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

A brief silence.

Prayer Leader: We pray for the church around the world in all its forms: for pastors, deacons, bishops, chaplains, and mission developers; for church councils, committee chairs, and all lay ministry leaders; for congregations that contemplate difficult decisions about the future of their ministry. Lord, in your mercy, **Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: For those called into positions of civic responsibility: for judges, attorneys, and court administrators tasked with uncovering truth and delivering justice; for activists and community leaders who cast a vision of a more compassionate and equitable society. Lord, in your mercy, **Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Prayer Leader: For those who call upon you for mercy: for all who live in poverty and experience hunger; for any who feel tested beyond their strength; for those who are hospitalized or near death, and for all in need of healing especially those on the prayer list of our congregation, all those suffering from violence, terror, and natural disasters (including all those impacted by COVID-19), and those we name now with our lips or in our hearts..... Lord, in your mercy, **Congregation: hear our prayer.**

Worship Leader: Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Congregation: Amen.

OFFERING

Offerings to the mission and ministry of Grace can be made online at GraceCLW.com (look for the "Donate" button), or (for now) 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 fill out your attendance form on our website as well.

OFFERING PRAYER

Prayer Leader: Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Congregation: Amen.

HOLY COMMUNION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

Congregation: And also with you.

Pastor: Lift up your hearts.

Congregation: We lift them to the Lord.

Pastor: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

Congregation: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Pastor: 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.

Pastor: 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.

Pastor: 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.

Pastor: 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.

Congregation: Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Pastor: 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.

PRAYERS AFTER COMMUNION

Prayer Leader: Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another.

Congregation: Amen.

Pastor: Gracious God, loving all your family with a mother's tender care: As you sent the angel to feed Elijah with heavenly bread, help those who go to share your word and sacrament with those who are sick, homebound, or imprisoned. In your love and care, nourish and strengthen those who will receive this sacrament, and give us all the comfort of your everlasting presence through the body and blood of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. **Congregation: Amen.**

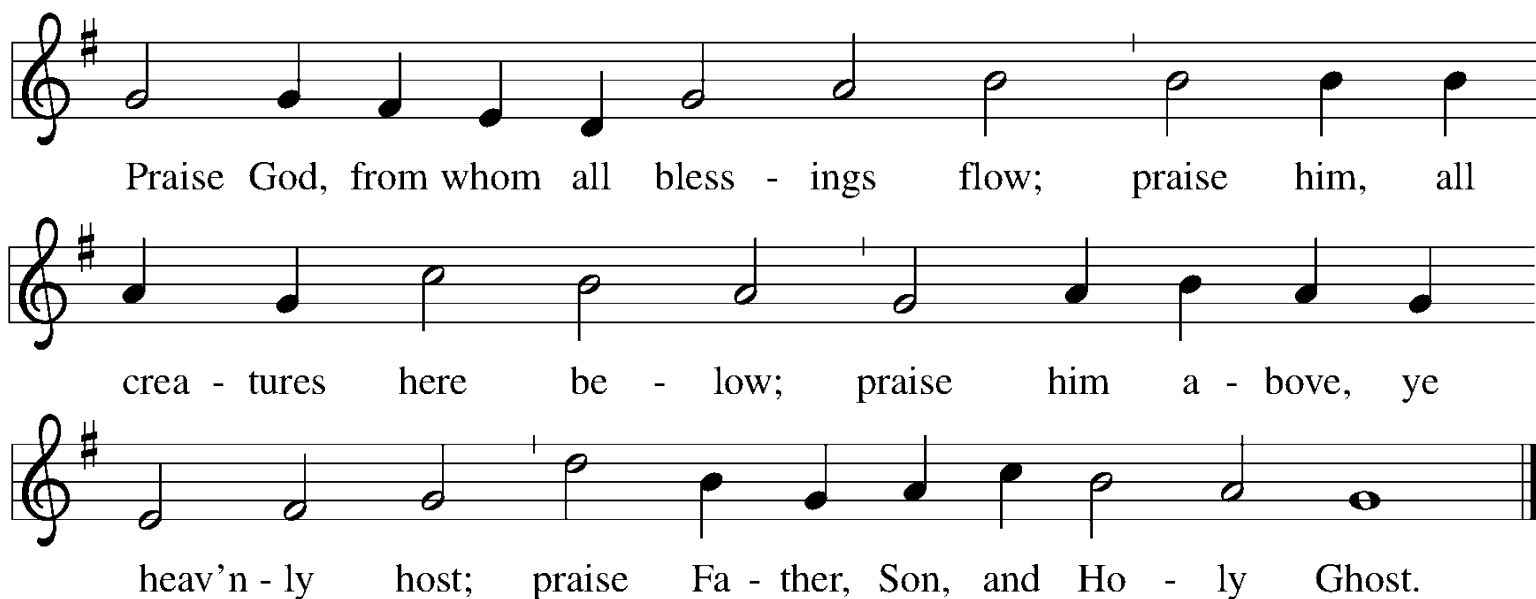
BLESSING

Worship Leader: 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.

Congregation: Amen.

SENDING SONG

The Doxology



Praise God, from whom all bless - ings flow; praise him, all
crea - tures here be - low; praise him a - bove, ye
heav'n - ly host; praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637–1711

Music: OLD HUNDREDDTH, Louis Bourgeois, 1510–1561

DISMISSAL

Pastor: Together we have heard God's Word and joined in prayer, we have given and have been forgiven. Now our service of worship has ended, and our service to the world begins! Go in Peace. Share the Good News.

Congregation: Thanks be to God!

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