



# Our Savior's Lutheran Church

Aurora, MN

***Second Sunday in Lent***

*February 28, 2021*

Pastor Greg Anderson

PRELUDE

HEARING OF JOYS AND CONCERNS

CONFESSION & FORGIVENESS

LBW pg. 77

HYMN

“In the Cross of Christ I Glory”

LBW # 104

In the cross of Christ I glory, towering o'er the wrecks of time; all the light of sacred story gathers round its head sublime.

When the woes of life o'ertake me, hopes deceive, and fears annoy, never shall the cross forsake me. Lo! it glows with peace and joy.

GREETING

LBW pg. 78

KYRIE

LBW pg. 78

HYMN OF PRAISE

“This is the Feast...”

LBW pg. 81

**C: Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.**

**Power and riches and wisdom, and strength, and honor, blessing, and glory are his.**

**This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia. Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation. Blessing and honor and glory, and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen.**

**This is the feast of victory for our God. For the Lamb Who was slain has begun His reign:**

**Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

**O god, by the passion of your blessed son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ our savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

FIRST READING

Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

<sup>1</sup>When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. <sup>2</sup>And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” <sup>3</sup>Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him,

<sup>4</sup>“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>5</sup>No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. <sup>6</sup>I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.

<sup>7</sup>I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.

<sup>15</sup>God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. <sup>16</sup>I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

R: The word of the Lord.    C: *Thanks be to God.*

PSALM 22:23-31(read responsively)

<sup>23</sup>You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him; stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!

<sup>24</sup>**For he did not despise or abhor the affliction of the afflicted; he did not hide his face from me, but heard when I cried to him.**

<sup>25</sup>From you comes my praise in the great congregation; my vows I will pay before those who fear him.

<sup>26</sup>**The poor shall eat and be satisfied; those who seek him shall praise the LORD. May your hearts live forever!**

<sup>27</sup>All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him.

<sup>28</sup>**For dominion belongs to the LORD, and he rules over the nations.**

<sup>29</sup>To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him.

<sup>30</sup>**Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord,**

<sup>31</sup>and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

SECOND READING

Romans 4:13-25

<sup>13</sup>For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup>If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup>For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

<sup>16</sup>For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us,

<sup>17</sup>as 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. <sup>18</sup>Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous

shall your descendants be.” <sup>19</sup>He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. <sup>20</sup>No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, <sup>21</sup>being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. <sup>22</sup>Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.”

<sup>23</sup>Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, <sup>24</sup>but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, <sup>25</sup>who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

R: The word of the Lord. **C: *Thanks be to God.***

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

LBW pg. 83

**C: *Alleluia. Lord to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Alleluia.***

GOSPEL INTRODUCTION

LBW pg. 83

**C: *Glory to you O lord.***

GOSPEL

Mark 8:31-38

<sup>31</sup>Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

<sup>34</sup>He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup>For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

GOSPEL RESPONSE

LBW pg. 83

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

## SERMON

### Sermon Lent 2 Mark 8.31-38 2021

"The higher cause"

Greetings friends of the North!

This Sunday is about taking up your cross and giving your all for Christ! This Sunday is about asking the question what does it mean to give all for Christ. With my sermon outline I have included a commentary from Ira Brent Diggers from the *Working Preacher* web site from Luther Seminary.

Peace,

Pastor Greg

#### **I. I once was in a discussion about the group ISIS**

- "Why are they so inspiring to some people?"

- Why are they so motivated?

- They have a higher cause to fight for

#### **II. The words of Jesus today are about not just fighting but dying for the higher cause**

- To take up one's own cross...what does that mean?...many Americans have fought for great causes such as liberty and justice

- Why would anyone want to do this? Is being a disciple that hard...or just being a Lutheran?

- Well... many don't...the great un-churched era...but the past was no better...

#### **III. The problem Peter had was in the humiliation and the defeat of Jesus: *the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.***

- Peter needed a Kingdom with army's and rule by the sword...*human things*

- What Jesus was saying was insane...The King cannot die!

#### **IV. What did Jesus mean when he says: *deny yourself*?**

- In the Greek to deny yourself means to:

“to forget one's self, lose sight of one's self and one's interests.”

- **Your self** was your family, clan, tribe, work, your nation, your children

- Thus to take up your cross was to take it up for all humanity! As Jesus did...very hard!

#### **V. The higher cause we are called to die for is love...love!**

- It is the way of Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. ...non-violence

- The way of love is the highest calling...to love our enemies...to put all others first...to serve all!

- No its not about us! It's about what we protect!...Love is so hard

No its about what we are willing to give up for love!

It is the way of the Cross! Life and salvation given for free!

*Commentary by Ira Brent Driggers*

Associate Dean of Academic Programs and Professor of New Testament  
Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary of Lenoir-Rhyne University  
Columbia, South Carolina

Narrative context is so important.

When this passage is taken out of context, it seems to suggest that the mission of Jesus and his disciples is to suffer and die. However, when we read it within its narrative context, we come to see that the mission of Jesus and his disciples is to give life—knowing that earthly powers will violently oppose them.

The passage picks up in the middle of a private conversation between Jesus and his disciples. Jesus has just acknowledged that he is the Messiah, the anointed king through whom God will deliver God's people (Mark 8:27-30). We can imagine that the disciples associate this title with earthly glory. After all, they will soon argue about which one of them is the greatest (Mark 9:33-34), and some will request from Jesus the most honorable seats in his kingdom (Mark 10:35-37). In the disciples' defense, they have witnessed a great deal of local fanfare, with crowds of mostly peasant villagers swarming to Jesus in order to witness and receive his healing powers (for example, Mark 2:1; 3:7-10; 4:1; 6:53-56). When local leaders oppose Jesus, he always bests them in debate (Mark 2:6-12; 3:22-27; 7:1-13), so we cannot really blame the disciples for seeing their future, as Jesus' closest followers, through rose-colored glasses.

But now, in the middle of Mark's narrative, Jesus lays it out plainly. To this point, he has spoken only cryptically about persecution (Mark 4:17). Now he says clearly that he, the Son of Man, must undergo rejection, suffering, and death (verse 31). It is precisely for this reason that his followers will take up crosses and lose their lives (verses 34-35). Yes, Jesus will rise again, and yes, persecuted and martyred disciples will receive new life. But the hard truth is that the road to messianic glory runs through Golgotha. The disciples are following Jesus to a cross.

Much depends on how we interpret the "must" (*dei*: "it is necessary") of verse 31. Too often the word is taken to mean that Jesus' mission is principally to suffer and die, with interpreters inferring a latent theology of vicarious atonement. In this reading, Jesus "must" go to the cross in order to affect a sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins. But while Mark may hint at some mysterious efficacy to Jesus' death (10:45; 14:22-25), he is far from so specific an atonement theology (contrast Romans 3:21-26; Hebrews 9:23-28). More to the point, when we pan out beyond one or two isolated verses, we find that the overarching narrative offers a simpler, but no less profound, explanation of Jesus' death: Jesus dies because powerful humans oppose both his healing mission and, more specifically, the disruption that mission brings to established law and order. Unbeknownst to Jesus' opponents, they are opposing the in-breaking reign ("kingdom") of God.

This pattern of disruption plays out in Mark's early conflict scenes. Jesus is unflinching in his insistence that the divine mission to welcome and reconcile sinners overrides the stigma of associating with them (2:15-17). He is also unflinching in his insistence that the divine mission to alleviate human suffering overrides any application of religious tradition that might impede it (2:23-28; 3:1-6; 7:1-23). To be clear, this is not a "Christian" correction to supposedly "legalistic" Judaism as much as it is a radical channeling of longstanding Jewish belief in God's compassion for the marginalized. As the messianic emissary of this divine mission, Jesus inevitably elicits antagonism—eventually violent antagonism—from those invested in maintaining the status quo.

So the real epiphany of Mark 8:31 is not that Jesus' *mission* is to die, but that his faithfulness to God's healing mission will inevitably *result* in his death. In Mark, Jesus "must" die because his commitment to human healing will not falter. With two millennia of Holy Weeks under our belts, we can easily underestimate the power of this epiphany. Essentially, Mark is saying that the Son of God will not dial down his ministry to spare his own life, or even to ease his suffering. His commitment to the healing of humanity literally knows no limits. And neither—Easter tells us—does God's life-giving power.

It is not hard to see why Peter so quickly "rebukes" Jesus' prediction (verse 31). As noted above, Mark gives a rather straight-forward presentation of disciples captivated by hopes of earthly glory and therefore preoccupied more with Jesus' messianic *title* than his life-giving *mission*. Of course, the title "Messiah" is

helpful for establishing Jesus' God-given authority. But that same title is dangerously specious when detached from Jesus' own counter-cultural mission on behalf of the broken and outcast. Mark would rather see people following Jesus unpretentiously in this mission, and actually participating in this holy work, than waving signs or posting memes in Jesus' name. So consequential is this point that Jesus calls Peter "Satan" for his self-serving confusion (verse 33)!

Interestingly, Peter does seem to understand something vital, namely that his own vocational future is wrapped up in, and defined by, the mission of Jesus. On that point he and Jesus agree. The question is whether Peter will embrace Jesus' definition of his own mission—which is the only definition that matters—and the consequences of that definition for his own vocation. This is the question over which the fellowship now begins to deteriorate and ultimately dissolves, as the disciples finally betray and abandon Jesus to his humiliating crucifixion (Mark 14:43-52, 66-72).

At the same time, Mark's audience most likely knows what Mark's narrative itself only promises, that the risen Jesus will re-gather his disciples and empower them for faithful mission in his name (13:9-10; 14:28; 16:7; see also 3:14-15; 6:7-13). In fact, given the standard dating of Mark (circa 70 CE), there is a good chance that both Mark and his early audiences knew about the martyrdom of James (circa 42-44 CE; see Mark 10:39; Acts 12:2) if not also the martyrdom of Peter (circa 64 CE; see John 21:18-19). These apostles were some of the first to epitomize Jesus' teaching on the cost of discipleship: denying themselves and taking up their crosses (verse 34), saving their lives by first losing it for the sake of the gospel (verse 35), seeing past the worldly shame of Jesus' crucifixion to the glory of his final appearance (verse 38).

Notice, however, that this is no longer a private conversation between Jesus and his inner circle. In verse 34, Jesus summons the surrounding crowd, eyeing the possibility of still more disciples. His repeated use of relative pronouns ("anyone," verse 34; "whoever," verse 35; "whoever," verse 38), while somewhat muted in the NRSV, makes it clear that the cost of discipleship is not limited to an apostolic few. Anyone who purports to follow Jesus must understand the sacrifice involved. For Mark, discipleship is not some comfortable affiliation with Jesus but a life-changing—and potentially life-threatening—commitment to him.

It is a difficult message for today's preachers to appropriate. So much of North American Christianity—especially white Christianity—has been reduced to a comfortable affiliation with Jesus. Our tantrums against the specter of "relativism" hardly cloak the fact that there is little cost to our discipleship. Of course, some Christians are persecuted in certain parts of the world. Still, as preachers discern the relevance of this passage for today, they will do well to bear in mind that, for Mark at least, discipleship amounts to participation in Jesus' ministry. What makes the ministry of the Markan Jesus counter-cultural, and therefore the object of earthly hostility, is not that it is "Christian" per se but that it abides no impediment to the immediate restoration of the broken and outcast

**HYMN**

**"In the Hour of Trial"**

**LBW # 106**

In the hour of trial, Jesus, plead for me, lest by base denial I depart from Thee. When Thou seest me waver, with a look recall, Nor for fear or favor suffer me to fall.

With forbidden pleasures would this vain world charm, or its sordid treasures spread to work me harm, Bring to my remembrance sad Gethsemane, Or, in darker semblance, cross-crowned Calvary.

## APOSTLES' CREED

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

P: Hear us, O God.      C: *Your mercy is great.*

## THE PEACE

## OFFERING

## OFFERTORY

## OFFERING PRAYER

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

LBW pg. 91

**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.**

## BENEDICTION

LBW pg. 95

## SENDING HYMN

"Our Father, We Have Wandered"

WOV # 733

Our Father, we have wandered and hidden from your face; In foolishness have squandered your legacy of grace. But now in exile dwelling, we rise in fear and shame, as distant but compelling, we hear you call our name.

And now at length discerning the evil that we do, Behold us, Lord, returning with hope and trust, to you. In haste you come to meet us and home rejoicing bring, In gladness there to greet us, with calf and robe and ring.

## DISMISSAL

LBW pg. 95

### **Prayer Concerns**

Lorna Kallio, Charlotte and Ken Carlson, Marie Anderson, Louise Ellingson, Glorene Clark, Herb Moore, Bill Utley, Bob Kallio, Marilyn Koschak, Susan (Paula Skelton's sister), Tom Lehtinen, Ruby Okstad (218-749-2866)

**The Executive Council** is requesting that members let them know if they have started or completed the covid vaccine. This information will be very helpful in making the decision to return to worship. Please Call Debbie Maki at 218-290-1471 or call the church at 218-229-3214 and leave a message. Thank you.

**\*\*The annual statements of giving are in your mailboxes at the church. \*\***