

St. Paul Lutheran Church  
of Stillwater, Minnesota  
March 15, 2026  
Fourth Sunday in Lent

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Your presence at worship is important to God and to us! Whether you are a first-time visitor, frequent participant, neighbor, member, or friend, please take a moment as you prepare for worship to share some information on the "Welcome to Worship" card included with your bulletin. Place it in the offering plate at the time the offering is received.

Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man. In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.

Many of our worship materials are taken from the red Evangelical Lutheran Worship (ELW). Page numbers are located in the front half of the book, and hymn numbers are located in the back half of the book.

The assembly **speaks** or **sings** the bold responses.

## GATHERING

*The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.*



Prelude

Thanksgiving for Baptism

Gathering Song

*“When We Must Bear Persistent Pain”*



1 When we must bear per - sis - tent pain and suf - fer  
 2 Sup - port us as we learn new ways to care for  
 3 We thank you for the bet - ter days when we may  
 4 In ease or pain, in life and death, to you our



with no cure in sight, come, Ho - ly Pres - ence,  
 bod - ies new - ly frail. Help us en - dure, and  
 smile to greet the sun, to do your work with  
 frag - ile lives be - long, and so we trust you



breathe your peace with gifts of warmth and heal - ing light.  
 live and love. Hear our com - plaint when pa - tience fails.  
 clear - ing mind, and bless your name when day is done.  
 in all things. You are our hope, our health, our song.

Greeting

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.**

Prayer of the Day

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among  
 us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into  
 the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit,  
 for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit,  
 one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## WORD

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.*

First Reading

Pew Bible: Old Testament Pages 259-260

1 Samuel 16:1-13

*Samuel anointed David even though he was the eighth-oldest son of Jesse and did not match his brothers in height or other physical characteristics. With the anointing came endowment with the Spirit of the LORD, designating David as the LORD's chosen successor to Saul.*

*At the conclusion:*

Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**



Psalm 23

ELW hymn 780

*"Shepherd Me O God"*

Second Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Page 194

Ephesians 5:8-14

*Because we now live in the divine light which is Jesus Christ, we conduct our lives in ways that reflect the light of Christ, so that our activity is truly pleasing to God.*

*At the conclusion:*

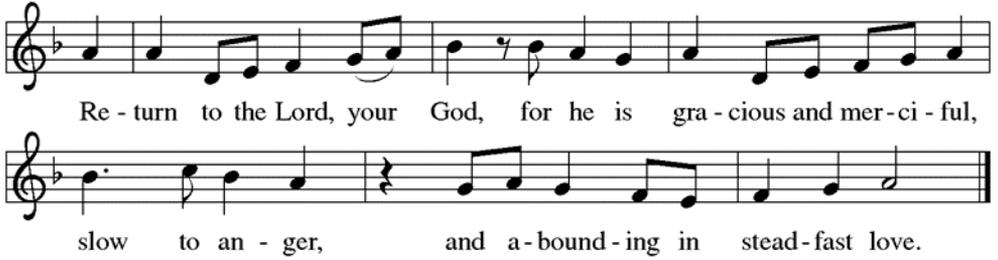
Word of God, word of life.

**Thanks be to God.**

Children's and Outreach Message

Jenny Brelje

Gospel Acclamation



Gospel Reading

Pew Bible: New Testament Pages 102-103

John 9:1-41

*Jesus heals a man born blind, provoking a hostile reaction that he regards as spiritual blindness to the things of God.*

*The gospel is introduced:*

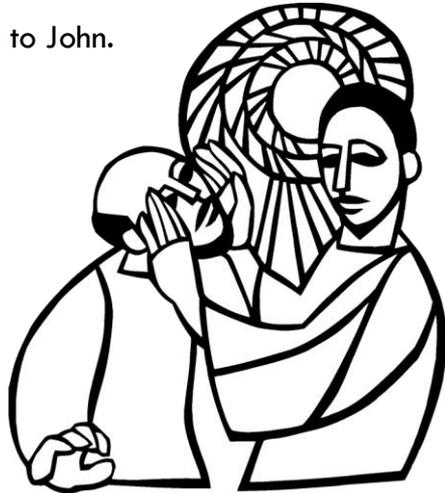
The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*At the conclusion:*

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**



Sermon

Pastor Nathan Baker-Trinity

*Silence for reflection follows the sermon.*

Hymn of the Day

ELW hymn 520

*"Dearest Jesus, at Your Word"*

Creed

ELW page 105

*After each prayer:  
Hear us, O God.*

**Your mercy is great.**

*At the conclusion:*

*Into your hands, gracious God, 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.**

*All are invited to greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.*

**MEAL**

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

Offering

“Stand By Me”

Mark Zempel, soloist

*Our offering is a collection of money for the church's mission, including the care of those in need, as a sign of the giving of our whole selves in grateful response for all God's gifts. Your offering and "Welcome to Worship" card may be placed in the offering plate. The QR code on the right may be used if you wish to give electronically.*



Offering Prayer

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.**

# Great Thanksgiving



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.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy . . .

. . . we praise your name and join their unending hymn:



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,



heav'n 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.

Blessed are you, O God of the universe . . .

Praise to you . . .

In the night in which he was betrayed . . .

(Continued on the next page.) 6

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks . . .

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.**

○ God of resurrection and new life . . .

. . . Grace our table with your presence.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread . . .

. . . Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

With your holy ones of all times and places . . .

. . . blessed and holy Trinity, now and forever.

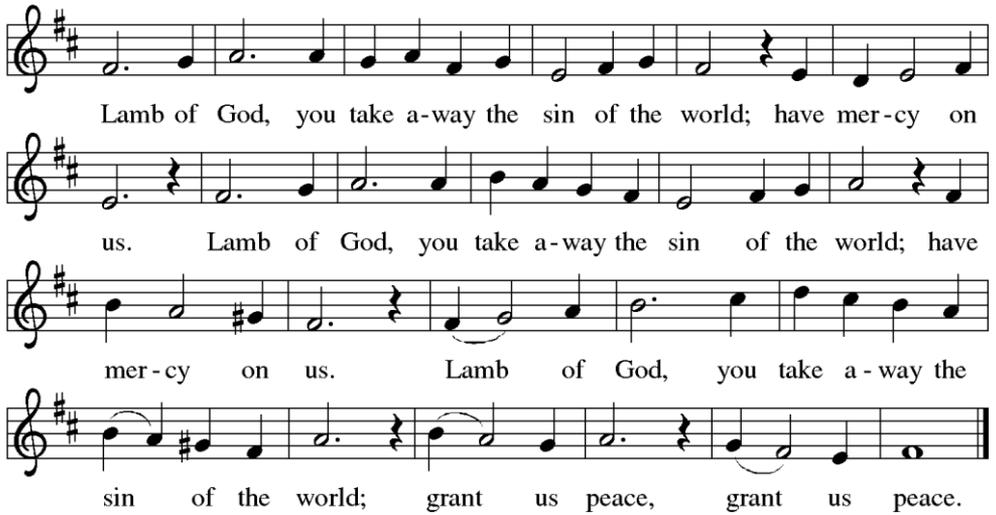
**Amen.**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus  
taught us.

**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.**



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.

### Communion

*We celebrate at an open communion table. All who hear our Lord's invitation are welcome to participate. Receive the bread first with an open hand and eat immediately, followed by the juice (white) or wine (red). Gluten-free bread is available at the front end of the center aisle. Please indicate to an usher if you need to receive communion from your pew. Children who have received age-appropriate instruction are welcome to commune. If you prefer instead to receive a blessing, please indicate by crossing your arms over your shoulders.*

*When giving the bread and cup, the communion ministers say:  
 The body of Christ, given for you.  
 The blood of Christ, shed for you.  
 and each person may respond:*

**Amen.**



Communion Song

*"Lord I Need You"*

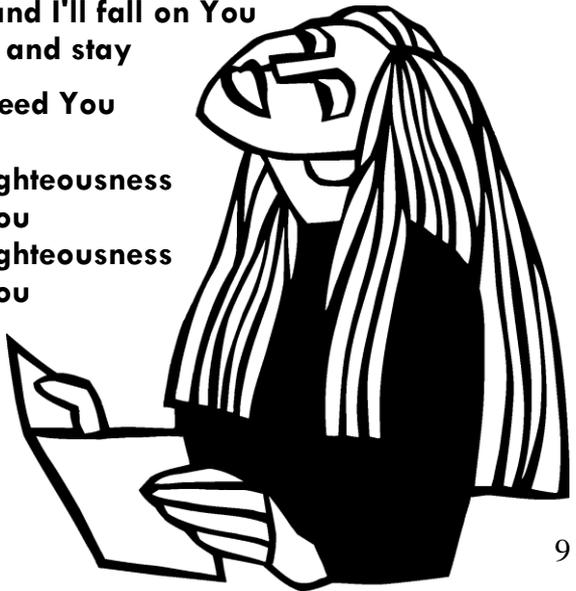
**Lord I come I confess  
Bowing here I find my rest  
And without You I fall apart  
You're the one that guides my heart**

*Lord I need You oh I need You  
Ev'ry hour I need You  
My one defense my righteousness  
Oh God how I need You*

**Where sin runs deep Your grace is more  
Where grace is found is where You are  
And where You are Lord I am free  
Holiness is Christ in me  
Where You are Lord I am free  
Holiness is Christ in me**

**So teach my song to rise to You  
When temptation comes my way  
And when I cannot stand I'll fall on You  
Jesus You're my hope and stay  
And when I cannot stand I'll fall on You  
Jesus You're my hope and stay**

**Lord I need You oh I need You  
Ev'ry hour I need You  
My one defense my righteousness  
Oh God how I need You  
My one defense my righteousness  
Oh God how I need You**



## Prayer After Communion

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.**

## SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*



## Announcements

### Charge and Blessing

Go out into the world in peace;  
have courage;  
hold on to what is good;  
return no one evil for evil;  
strengthen the fainthearted;  
support the weak, and help the suffering;  
honor all people;  
love and serve the Lord,  
rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

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.**

*“Be Thou My Vision”*

Dismissal

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

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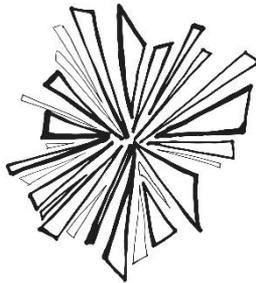
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**DAILY PRAYER**  
**Prayer for Enlightenment (Catherine of Siena)**



Power of the eternal Father, help me. Wisdom of the Son, enlighten the eye of my understanding. Tender mercy of the Holy Spirit, unite my heart to yourself. Eternal God, restore health to the sick and life to the dead. Give us a voice, your own voice, to cry out to you for mercy for the world. You, light, give us light. You, wisdom, give us wisdom. You, supreme strength, strengthen us. Amen.

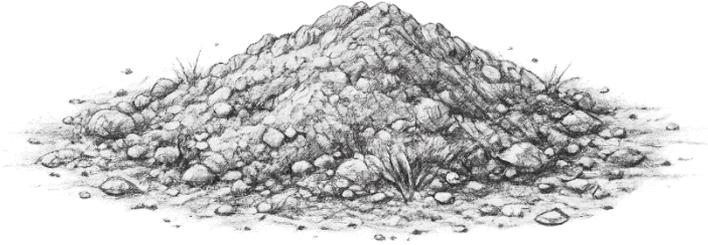
**CONNECTIONS WITH THE LITURGY**  
**The Lord's Shining Face**



The blessing we hear every Sunday is from Numbers 6:24-26, the words the ancient priest Aaron (Moses' brother) spoke to the children of Israel in the desert. For the blessing at the conclusion of the Sunday service, Martin Luther preferred this blessing known as the Aaronic blessing when he reformed the Sunday service in 1526. In the phrase "The Lord's face shines on us with grace and mercy," we hear again the call in Ephesians to rise into Christ's shining light.

## LIFE ON EARTH

### Earth is Holy



When healing the man born blind, Jesus used mud—the soil of the earth and his own saliva—to first cover the man’s eyes. It is an intriguing detail. Jesus’ use of spittle was part of an early tradition that was later glossed over. Yet we might see this narrative episode as a reminder that God uses the stuff of this earth, its very dirt, as a complement to the divine workings of salvation.

## UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

### **Patrick, bishop, missionary to Ireland, died 461**

**Tuesday, March 17, 2026**

At sixteen, Patrick was kidnapped by Irish pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. He himself admitted that up to this point he cared little for God. He escaped after six years, returned to his family in southwest Britain, and began to prepare for ordained ministry. He later returned to Ireland, this time to serve as a bishop and missionary. He made his base in the north of Ireland and from there made many missionary journeys with much success. In his autobiography he denounced the slave trade, perhaps from his own experience of being enslaved. Patrick's famous baptismal hymn to the Trinity, "I bind unto myself today" (ELW 450), can be used as a meditation on Lent's call to return to our baptism.

### **Joseph, Guardian of Jesus**

**Thursday, March 19, 2026**

The gospels are silent about much of Joseph's life. We know that he was a carpenter or builder by trade. The Gospel of Luke shows him acting in accordance with both civil and religious law by returning to Bethlehem for the census and by presenting the child Jesus in the temple on the fortieth day after his birth. The Gospel of Matthew tells of Joseph's trust in God, who led him through visionary dreams. Because Joseph is not mentioned after the story of a young Jesus teaching in the temple, it is assumed that he died before Jesus reached adulthood.

### **Thomas Cranmer, Bishop of Canterbury, martyr, died 1556**

**Saturday, March 21, 2026**

Cranmer was serving as bishop of Taunton in England when he was chosen by King Henry VIII to become archbishop of Canterbury, largely because Cranmer would agree to the king's divorce from Catherine of Aragon. Cranmer's lasting achievement is contributing to and overseeing the creation of the Book of Common Prayer, which in revised form remains the worship book of the Anglican Communion. He was burned at the stake under Queen Mary for his support of the Protestant Reformation.

## **GOSPEL MESSAGE**

### **Unbelievable!**

This story from the Gospel of John captures the religious leadership in Jerusalem in a struggle to understand this Jesus who restores sight to a person born blind. This miraculous healing is so unbelievable, so contrary to the leaders' understanding, that they reject it altogether, even accusing the man of lying. Their quest for a certainty that feels familiar forces them to reject the miracle in front of them and closes them off to a greater truth—that the Messiah has come in Christ Jesus.

Certainty and its pursuit often disrupt our ability to see reality, which is at its core a mystery. Mystery in the Christian tradition refers to that deep truth that surpasses our understanding, as in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity or the efficacy of the sacraments. We know them as true, but not how or why they are so. Mysteries transcend the world of certainty, and our efforts to possess certainty, like those of the religious leaders in John 9, can cut us off from something miraculous happening right in front of us.

How much conflict and division in our church and in our world is amplified by our pursuit of certainty? How many possibilities have we missed in our commitment to the way things are? How often in our pursuit of certainty do we use it to hoard power and keep others on the outside looking in? Certainty is the enemy of community because it rejects the very notion that God may be doing a new thing.

Embracing mystery in our life of faith looks like learning to say “I don't know,” “Maybe,” and “What if . . . ?” It asks us to let go of our need to control and understand, and to trust God's promises more than our evidence. Mystery requires a posture of humility and curiosity, a willingness to look for God in inexplicable and unbelievable places and events. After all, we preach Christ crucified (1 Corinthians 1:23), an unbelievable notion if ever there was one.