



March 18, 2026

The Fifth Wednesday in Lent

Rev. Ken Bersche

Maggie Kent, Secretary

Prelude

Processional Hymn *Please Stand*

“Chief of Sinners Though I Be”

- ♪ Chief of sinners though I be, Jesus shed His blood for me,
Died that I might live on high, Lives that I might never die.
As the branch is to the vine, I am His, and He is mine.
- ♪ Oh, the height of Jesus' love, Higher than the heav'ns above,
Deeper than the depths of sea, Lasting as eternity!
Love that found me, wondrous thought! Found me when I sought Him not.
- ♪ Only Jesus can impart Balm to heal the wounded heart,
Peace that flows from sin forgiv'n, Joy that lifts the soul to heav'n,
Faith and hope to walk with God In the way that Enoch trod.
- ♪ Chief of sinners though I be, Christ is all in all to me;
All my wants to Him are known, All my sorrows are His own.
He sustains the hidden life Safe with Him from earthly strife.
- ♪ O my Savior, help afford By Your Spirit and Your Word!
When my wayward heart would stray, Keep me in the narrow way;
Grace in time of need supply While I live and when I die.

Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 611-Text: William McComb 1793-1873; Public domain

Invocation

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 28:19b

Amen.

Confession and Absolution

We confess our sins before God, our heavenly Father.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your steadfast love; according to Your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You may be justified in Your words and blameless in Your judgment. Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, You delight in truth in the inward being, and You teach me wisdom in the secret heart. Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that You have broken rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from Your presence, and take not Your Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit.

Psalms 51:1-12

In His great mercy, God sent His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, who took all our sins to the cross. In His stead and by His command, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

Prayer

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning, and though we have in no way deserved Your goodness, You still abundantly provide for all our wants of body and soul. Give us, we pray, Your Holy Spirit that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness toward us, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Old Testament Reading *Please Be Seated*

Exodus 14:5–31

⁵When the king of Egypt was told that the people had fled, the mind of Pharaoh and his servants was changed toward the people, and they said, “What is this we have done, that we have let Israel go from serving us?” ⁶So he made ready his chariot and took his army with him, ⁷and took six hundred chosen chariots and all the other chariots of Egypt with officers over all of them. ⁸And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. ⁹The Egyptians pursued them, all Pharaoh's horses and chariots and his horsemen and his army, and overtook them encamped at the sea, by Pi-hahiroth, in front of Baal-zephon.

¹⁰When Pharaoh drew near, the people of Israel lifted up their eyes, and behold, the Egyptians were marching after them, and they feared greatly. And the people of Israel cried out to the Lord. ¹¹They said to Moses, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt that you have taken us away to die in the wilderness? What have you done to us in bringing us out of Egypt? ¹²Is not this what we said to you in Egypt: ‘Leave us alone that we may serve the Egyptians’? For it would have been better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness.” ¹³And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. ¹⁴The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”

¹⁵The Lord said to Moses, “Why do you cry to me? Tell the people of Israel to go forward. ¹⁶Lift up your staff, and stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it, that the people of Israel may go through the sea on dry ground. ¹⁷And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. ¹⁸And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I have gotten glory over Pharaoh, his chariots, and his horsemen.”

¹⁹Then the angel of God who was going before the host of Israel moved and went behind them, and the pillar of cloud moved from before them and stood behind them, ²⁰coming between the host of Egypt and the host of Israel. And there was the cloud and the darkness. And it lit up the night without one coming near the other all night.

²¹Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the Lord drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided. ²²And the people of Israel went into the midst of the sea on dry ground, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. ²³The Egyptians pursued and went in after them into the midst of the sea, all Pharaoh's horses, his

chariots, and his horsemen. ²⁴And in the morning watch the Lord in the pillar of fire and of cloud looked down on the Egyptian forces and threw the Egyptian forces into a panic, ²⁵clogging their chariot wheels so that they drove heavily. And the Egyptians said, “Let us flee from before Israel, for the Lord fights for them against the Egyptians.”

²⁶Then the Lord said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand over the sea, that the water may come back upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen.” ²⁷So Moses stretched out his hand over the sea, and the sea returned to its normal course when the morning appeared. And as the Egyptians fled into it, the Lord threw the Egyptians into the midst of the sea. ²⁸The waters returned and covered the chariots and the horsemen; of all the host of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained. ²⁹But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left.

³⁰Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore. ³¹Israel saw the great power that the Lord used against the Egyptians, so the people feared the Lord, and they believed in the Lord and in his servant Moses.

The Epistle

Romans 6:1–5

¹What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ²By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? ³Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. ⁵For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.

Gradual Hymn

“Jesus, I Will Ponder Now”

- ♪ Jesus, I will ponder now On Your holy passion;
With Your Spirit me endow For such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith May the image cherish
Of Your suff’ring, pain, and death That I may not perish.
- ♪ Make me see Your great distress, Anguish, and affliction,
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness And Your crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod, Spear and nails did wound You,
How for them You died, O God, Who with thorns had crowned You.
- ♪ Yet, O Lord, not thus alone Make me see Your passion,
But its cause to me make known And its termination.
Ah! I also and my sin Wrought Your deep affliction;
This indeed the cause has been Of Your crucifixion.
- ♪ Grant that I Your passion view With repentant grieving.
Let me not bring shame to You By unholy living.
How could I refuse to shun Ev’ry sinful pleasure
Since for me God’s only Son Suffered without measure?
- ♪ If my sins give me alarm And my conscience grieve me,
Let Your cross my fear disarm; Peace of conscience give me.
Help me see forgiveness won By Your holy passion.
If for me He slays His Son, God must have compassion!

♪ Graciously my faith renew; Help me bear my crosses,
Learning humbleness from You, Peace mid pain and losses.
May I give You love for love! Hear me, O my Savior,
That I may in heav'n above Sing Your praise forever.

Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 440 -Text: Sigismund von Birken 1626-81; tr. August Crull 1845-1923; Public domain.

Passion History of Our Lord *Please Stand*

Matthew 27:27–50

²⁷Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. ²⁸And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, ²⁹and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. ³¹And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him.

³²As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. ³³And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), ³⁴they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. ³⁵And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. ³⁶Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. ³⁷And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." ³⁸Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. ³⁹And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, ⁴²"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. ⁴³He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

⁴⁵Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" ⁴⁷And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, "This man is calling Elijah." ⁴⁸And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. ⁴⁹But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him." ⁵⁰And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

Apostles' Creed

The Hymn *Please Be Seated*

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

♪ When I survey the wondrous cross On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss And pour contempt on all my pride.

♪ Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most, I sacrifice them to His blood.

♪ See, from His head, His hands, His feet Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

♪ Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!

Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 425-Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748; Text: Public domain

Proclamation of the Word

“Trapped to Being Freed”

Exodus 14:5–31

Response Hymn

“Come to Calvary’s Holy Mountain”

- ♪ Come to Calv’ry’s holy mountain, Sinners, ruined by the fall;
Here a pure and healing fountain Flows for you, for me, for all,
In a full, perpetual tide, Opened when our Savior died.
- ♪ Come in poverty and meanness, Come defiled, without, within;
From infection and uncleanness, From the leprosy of sin,
Wash your robes and make them white; Ye shall walk with God in light.
- ♪ Come in sorrow and contrition, Wounded, impotent, and blind;
Here the guilty, free remission, Here the troubled, peace may find.
Health this fountain will restore; They that drink shall thirst no more.
- ♪ They that drink shall live forever; ’Tis a soul-renewing flood.
God is faithful; God will never Break His covenant of blood,
Signed when our Redeemer died, Sealed when He was glorified.

Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 435 -Text: James Montgomery 1771-1854; Public domain

Prayer of the Church *Please Stand Each petition is concluded with the following:*

Lord, in Your mercy,
Hear our prayer.

Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on You with favor and + give You peace.

Numbers 6:24–26

Amen.

Recessional Hymn *Please Be Seated*

“God Loved the World So That He Gave”

- ♪ God loved the world so that He gave His only Son the lost to save,
That all who would in Him believe Should everlasting life receive.
- ♪ Christ Jesus is the ground of faith, Who was made flesh and suffered death;
All then who trust in Him alone Are built on this chief cornerstone.
- ♪ God would not have the sinner die; His Son with saving grace is nigh;
His Spirit in the Word declares How we in Christ are heaven’s heirs.
- ♪ Be of good cheer, for God’s own Son Forgives all sins which you have done;
And, justified by Jesus’ blood, Your Baptism grants the highest good.
- ♪ If you are sick, if death is near, This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death; That is the firmest ground of faith.

Please Stand

♪ Glory to God the Father, Son, And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To You, O blessed Trinity, Be praise now and eternally!

*Lutheran Service Book, Hymn 571—Text: Heiliges Lippen- und Hertzens-Opffer, c. 1778,
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Postlude

Door Offering