

First Sunday of Lent, February 21, 2021

Greeting: God is good **all the time**. All the time **God is good**.

Question of the Day: # of weeks in Lent: a) 4 b) 6 c) 8 d) 10

Call to Worship

From water to wilderness:

God's covenant continues; God's kingdom comes near.

On stone and in hearts:

God's covenant continues; God's kingdom comes near.

From the ancestor of nations to the Son lifted up:

God's covenant continues; God's kingdom comes near.

We follow Jesus on the Lenten path,

For where he is, we would be also.

Prayer of Invocation

Gracious God, in rushing waters and in dry wilderness, in every season and circumstance, we need your sustaining word. By the power of your Holy Spirit, proclaim the good news among us today so that we may repent and believe and see anew how the time is fulfilled and the kingdom has come near; in Jesus Christ your Son, our Savior. Amen.

Hymn "Covenant Song"

Genesis 9:8-17 *The Message*

Then God spoke to Noah and his sons: "I'm setting up my covenant with you including your children who will come after you, along with everything alive around you – birds, farm animals, wild animals – that came out of the ship with you. I'm setting up my covenant with you that never again will everything living be destroyed by floodwaters; no, never again will a flood destroy the Earth."

God continued, "This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and everything living around you and everyone living after you. I'm putting my rainbow in the clouds, a sign of the covenant between me and the Earth. From now on, when I form a cloud over the Earth and the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll remember my covenant between me and you and everything living, that never again will floodwaters destroy all life. When the rainbow appears in the cloud, I'll see it and remember the eternal covenant between God and everything living, every last living creature on Earth."

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I've set up between me and everything living on the Earth."

Mark 1:9-15 *The Message*

At this time, Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. The moment he came out of the water, he saw the sky split open and God's Spirit, looking like a dove, come down on him. Along with the Spirit, a voice: "You are my Son, chosen and marked by my love, pride of my life."

At once, this same Spirit pushed Jesus out into the wild. For forty wilderness days and nights he was tested by Satan. Wild animals were his companions, and angels took care of him.

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee preaching the Message of God: "Time's up! God's kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message."

I Peter 3:18-22 *The Message*

That's what Christ did definitively: suffered because of others' sins, the Righteous One for the unrighteous ones. He went through it all – was put to death and then made alive – to bring us to God.

He went and proclaimed God's salvation to earlier generations who ended up in the prison of judgment because they wouldn't listen. You know, even though God waited patiently all the days that Noah built his ship, only a few were saved then, eight to be exact – saved *from* the water *by* the water. The waters of baptism do that for you, not by washing away dirt from your skin but by presenting you through Jesus' resurrection before God with a clear conscience. Jesus has the last word on everything and everyone, from angels to armies. He's standing right alongside God, and what he says goes.

Response: *The Word of God, for the people of God! Thanks be to God!*

Time of Prayer

How Is It With Your Soul?

Call to Confession

God's bow has been hung in the clouds – a unilateral disarmament in spite of our sin. God remains faithful to the covenant of steadfast love, even when we are unfaithful. Without fear, then, we confess our sins.

Prayer of Confession

God of mercy, we begin this Lenten season in confession. We do not live according to your ways, but according to our own. We condone violence, participate in systems of injustice, and use power to our own advantage at the expense of others. Forgive us, we pray, when we are tempted to follow paths other than those you set before us.

(Time of Silent Prayer)

Teach us your commandments; help us to turn from evil in its many guises, and turn us toward your kingdom drawing near. In covenantal love, remember us, we pray, and be for us, once more and always, an ark of safety and new life. With Jesus we pray:

The Lord's Prayer

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. Amen.

Answer to the Question of the Day

Time of Offering *Thank you to everyone for your faithful generosity.*

Offering Prayer

God of steadfast love and faithfulness, we are humbled as we try to do what is right and to walk in your ways. Receive these offerings and use them for your own good purposes in the church and in all creation. We pray in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon "Put a Bow On It" Rev. Joyce Rich

Commission and Blessing

The time is fulfilled; God's reign is now.
Hear and believe the good news Christ offers.

We are children of God, beloved and blessed.

We are a covenant community with a mission.

Be open to all God wants to teach you this week.

Seek God's leading every day through Lent.

This is a season for renewal and recommitment.

We will turn to God in prayer every day.

God will teach us and lead us in truth.

God's mercy and steadfast love will surround us.

We will live as people of the promise.

We will rejoice in our baptism and in Christ.

Amen. **And Amen.**

Hymn "Cornerstone"

Announcements

Readings For Next Week: Genesis 17:1-16; Mark 8:31-38; Romans 4:9-25

*Liturgical resources drawn from: **Led by Love: Worship Resources for Year B**, Lavon Bayler © 1996 United Church Press; and **Feasting on the Word: Liturgies for Year B, Volume 1**, Kimberly Bracken Long, editor © 2014 Westminster John Knox Press.*