

## TODAY'S WORSHIP NOTES

What is the church season or special day? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the color of the altar cloths today? (circle one)

**White** perfection, joy, purity

**Black** absence of color; symbolic of death

**Blue** hope

**Green** life, nourishment

**Purple** royalty, mourning, repentance

**Gold** royalty, riches, victory

**Red** fire, fervor, blood, martyrdom, victory in the blood of Christ

How does the color of the day fit the theme of the day? \_\_\_\_\_

What led our singing today? video organ piano other

Did we have special music today? choir soloist guest musicians

Did we have a sacrament today?

Communion?

Yes

No

Baptism?

Yes

No

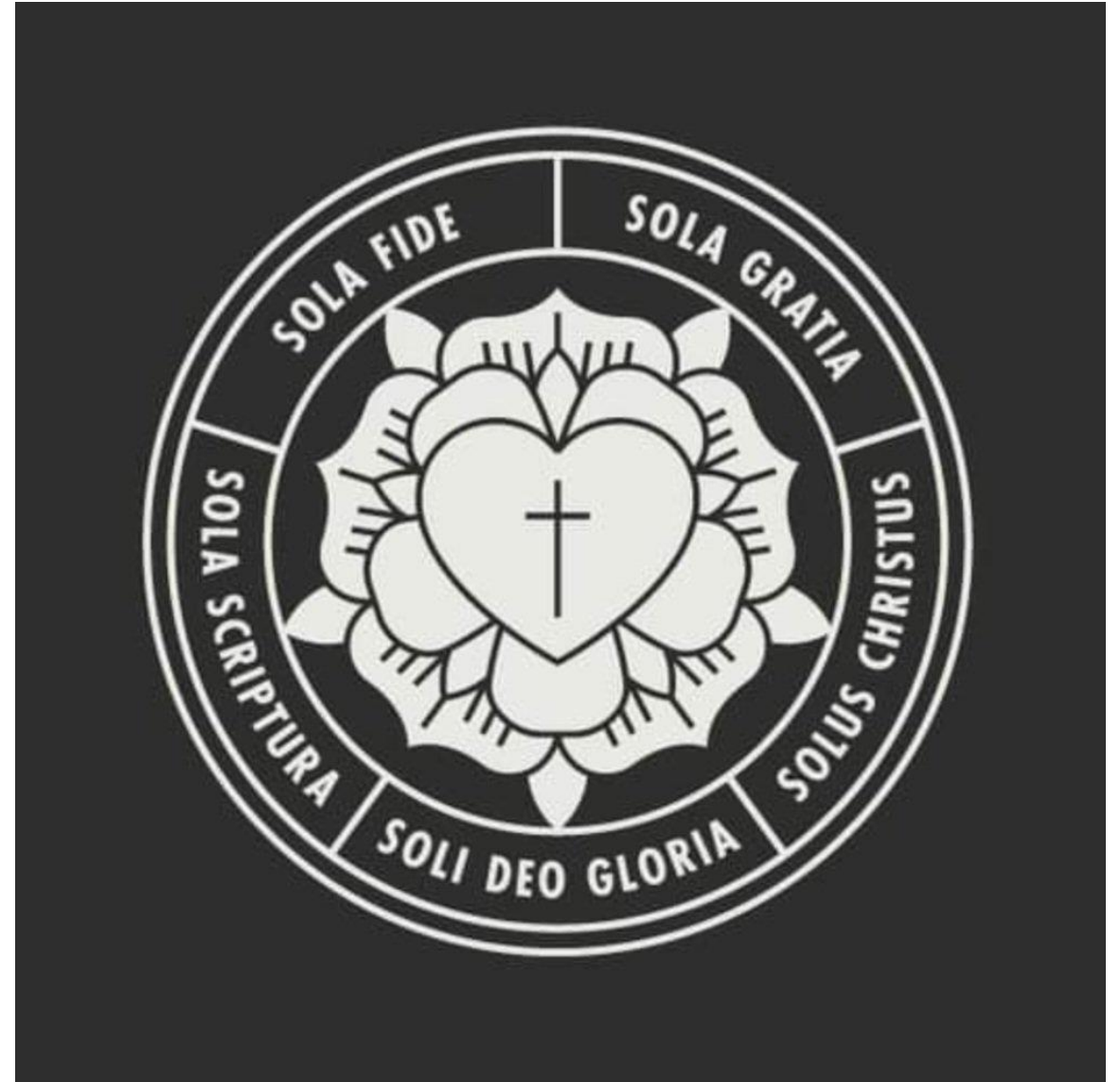
The sermon text is: \_\_\_\_\_, found in Old Testament New Testament

What did I learn today about God, myself, or my Christian faith? \_\_\_\_\_

What was my favorite song today? \_\_\_\_\_

Did we do something special or out of the ordinary in worship today? \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to ask pastor this question (*in person, text or email!*): \_\_\_\_\_



# Ascension Lutheran Church

March 10, 2024

# Welcome to worship today at Ascension!

## Today's central thought for worship:

Throughout the season of Lent, Scripture has shown us that being a sinner in a sinful world has its challenges: temptations, the cross, distractions from the heart of worship. Today we see the solution to our failures in those challenges. While we are tempted to focus on the difficulties of the struggle, God lifts our eyes to see his love shown in the gift of His Son. Here's how God will do that today:

- In our first reading from Numbers, God gives the lesson of the bronze snake. Those who looked in faith at that bronze snake had the benefit of what God promised concerning it: life instead of death.
- In our gospel reading, Jesus has a conversation with a man named Nicodemus. Jesus teaches him and us that just as trusting in God's promise concerning that bronze snake saved Old Testament sinners from death, so also trusting in the crucified Christ saves sinners from eternal death.

**Our order of service today is "Morning Praise."** This order of service is based on the historic Matins service used at the beginning of the day. It is from our new hymnal and is an alternate version of Morning Praise. It has been modified to express the theme of our service today. Joined to Christ, our risen Lord, we glorify God as we rise to the activities of this new day. Scripture readings are from the Evangelical Heritage Version. Liturgy, hymns that are not in the public domain as well as our Psalm of the Day are reprinted here under OneLicense #A-713900. Children's activity pages used by permission (paid subscription).

**Would you like to know more about Ascension Lutheran Church?** Please contact Pastor Dan Simons at [revdsimons@gmail.com](mailto:revdsimons@gmail.com). Phone or text: 586-569-9895. Visit us at [www.ascensionmacomb.com](http://www.ascensionmacomb.com) or you can also like us on Facebook at [facebook.com/ALCmacomb](https://facebook.com/ALCmacomb).

## Need to connect to Wi-Fi here at church?

Our Wi-Fi name is ASCENSION Guest. Password is macombwels. Please be sure your phone is on silent.

# MORNING PRAISE

## OPENING HYMN.....570:1, 3-4, 6 God Loved the World So That He Gave



1 God loved the world so that he gave his on - ly  
3 God would not have the sin - ner die; his Son with  
4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son for - gives the  
6 Glo - ry to God the Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly



Son the lost to save that all who would in  
sav - ing grace is nigh. His Spir - it in the  
sins that you have done. You're jus - ti - fied by  
Spir - it, Three in One! To you, O bless - ed



him be - lieve should ev - er - last - ing life re - ceive.  
Word de - clares that we in Christ are heav - en's heirs.  
Je - sus' blood; bap - tized, you are a child of God.  
Trin - i - ty, be praise now and e - ter - nal - ly!

Text: tr. August Crull, 1845-1923, alt.; Heiliges Lippen- und Hertzens-Opffer, Stettin, c. 1778; Tune: George J. Elvey, 1816-1893; Text and tune: Public domain

## Stand

### OPENING SENTENCES

- M: O Lord, open my lips.  
C: **And my mouth shall declare your praise.**  
M: Hasten to save me, O God.  
C: **O Lord, come quickly to help me.**  
M: Give glory to God, our light and our life.  
C: **Come, O come, let us worship.**

# Come, O Come, Let Us Sing to the Lord

Text: Marty Haugen; Text and tune: © 1995, 1996 GIA Publications, Inc. Used by permission: OneLicense no. A-713900

## Refrain

Come, O come, let us sing to the Lord,  
 let us shout with joy to our sav - ing Rock;  
 come, en - ter in with our songs of praise,  
 come, en - ter in with thanks - giv - ing.

1 You are a great and a won - drous God,  
 2 Come, let us wor - ship and, bow - ing low,  
 cup - ping in your hands all the depths of earth.  
 kneel be - fore the One who has made us all.

You made the hills and the moun - tains high,  
 You are the God whom we call our own,

*Refrain*

you made the seas and the dry land.  
 we are the flock that you shep - herd.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

**M:** Let us pray.

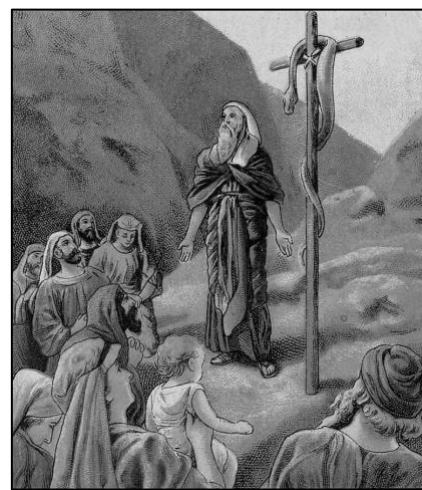
Grant, O merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve you with a quiet mind; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C:** Amen.

Be seated

## FIRST LESSON.....Numbers 21:4-9

*The wages of sin is death. When the people accused God of bringing them out of Egyptian slavery only to let them die of thirst and starvation, it was sin. To discipline his people, God let them experience what life in that hostile desert environment would actually be like if he did withdraw his hand of providence and protection. When they turned back to him in repentance, God rescued his people from death by promising that anyone who trusted in the promise he gave about the bronze snake would have life, not death. They were saved by faith alone in the promise of God!*



They set out from Mount Hor along the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom, but the people became very impatient along the way. <sup>5</sup>The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? Look, there is no food! There is no water! And we are disgusted by this worthless food!”

<sup>6</sup>The Lord sent venomous snakes among the people, and the snakes bit the people. As a result many people from Israel died. <sup>7</sup>The people went to Moses and said, “We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord to take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed on

behalf of the people.

<sup>8</sup>The Lord said to Moses, “Make a venomous snake and put it on a pole. If anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will live.” <sup>9</sup>Moses made a bronze snake and put it on the pole. If a snake had bitten anyone, if that person looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

PSALM OF THE DAY.....Psalm 32B

Text: Michael D. Schultz; Tune: Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second, 1813, ed. John Wyeth; Text: © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. A-713900; Tune: Public domain



**Did you know** that the song above is based on Psalm 32? This is one of the many psalms that King David wrote. Psalm 32 is a grateful testimony of joy for God’s gift of forgiveness toward those who with integrity confess their sins and are receptive to God’s rule in their lives. This is a great psalm for reading and reflection during the season of Lent because it reminds us of the priceless blessing of forgiveness which Jesus purchased for us at the cost of his innocent suffering and death. Why not give it a read this week!

Stand

GOSPEL.....John 3:14-21

*Jesus has a conversation with a man named Nicodemus. Jesus teaches him and us that just as trusting in God’s promise concerning that bronze snake saved Old Testament sinners from death, so also trusting in the crucified Christ saves sinners from eternal death. This is just one example of how God so richly foreshadowed in the Old Testament the work of Christ recorded in the New Testament.*

“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up,<sup>15</sup> so that everyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup>The one who believes in him is not condemned, but the one who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup>This is the basis for the judgment: The light has come into the world, yet people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>In fact, everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, or else his deeds would be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But the one who does what is true comes toward the light, in order that his deeds may be seen as having been done in connection with God.”

Old Testament	New Testament
<p>If a man was bitten, when he looked upon the brass serpent he would live</p> <p>So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived. Numbers 21:9</p>	<p>So also sinners, when they look upon the crucified Christ and believe; they shall live!</p> <p>As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up. John 3:14</p>

Be seated

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE** – After stanza 3, we will pause our hymn and children are invited to the chancel steps for a Children's Message: "How much do you trust me?"

**HYMN..... 575:1-4 By Grace I'm Saved**



1 By grace I'm saved, grace free and bound-less; my soul, be -  
 2 By grace God's Son, our on - ly Sav - ior, came down to  
 3 By grace! O mark this word of prom - ise when you are  
 4 By grace to tim - id hearts that trem - ble, in trib - u -



lieve and doubt it not. Why wa - ver at this word of  
 earth to bear our sin. Was it be - cause of your own  
 by your sins op - pressed, when Sa - tan plagues your trou - bled  
 la - tion's fur - nace tried, by grace, de - spite all fear and



prom - ise? Has Scrip - ture ev - er false - hood taught? So then this  
 mer - it that Je - sus died, your soul to win? No, it was  
 con - science, and when your heart is seek - ing rest. What rea - son  
 trou - ble, the Fa - ther's heart is o - pen wide. Where could I



word must true re - main: by grace you, too, shall heav'n ob - tain.  
 grace, and grace a - lone, that brought him from his heav'n - ly throne.  
 can - not com - pre - hend God by his grace to you did send.  
 help and strength se - cure if grace were not my an - chor sure?

Text: tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt.; Christian L. Scheidt, 1709–1761, abr.  
 Tune: Cornelius H. Dretzel, 1697–1775  
 Text and tune: Public domain

**SERMON.....Ephesians 2:1-10**

You were dead in your trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you formerly walked when you followed the ways of this present world. You were following the ruler of the domain of the air, the spirit now at work in the people who disobey. <sup>3</sup> Formerly, we all lived among them in the passions of our sinful flesh, as we carried out the desires of the sinful flesh and its thoughts. Like all the others, we were by nature objects of God's wrath.

<sup>4</sup> But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! <sup>6</sup> He also raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup> He did this so that, in the coming ages, he might demonstrate the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— <sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them.

**What we were and what we are – and God's gift has made all the difference!**

**1-3: What we were.**

- What word in verse 1 both describes our former spiritual state and our inability to change that?
- What does verse 2 and 3 tell us about whose lead we were following? (This is a three-part answer!)
- How does verse 3 describe our former relationship with God?

**4-7: What God did.**

- Verses 4-5 give us 3 descriptions of God's love for us. Circle those 3 words/phrases.
- How does verse 5 show us the undeserved nature of God's love?
- In verse 6 Paul says we are now connected to Easter & Ascension. How so?
- According to verse 7, what was God's ultimate purpose in what he has done for us in Christ

**8-10: How the benefit of what God did came to us and changed us.**

- How does verse 8 explain how the blessings of Christ's work came to us?
- What does verse 9 explicitly exclude as having any part in our salvation?
- How does verse 10 describe our new way of life?

HYMN..... 395 What Grace Is This



1 What grace is this! My Lord and King  
 2 What grace is this— that ver - y God  
 3 What grace is this! Though Lord of all,  
 4 What grace is this! Rude ag - o - nies!



has set his face to suf - fer - ing. My God e -  
 would stoop to lift a cross of wood and walk a  
 he yields to Pon - tius Pi - late's law and lets the  
 With com - mon thieves he hangs and bleeds. The sin - less



ter - nal dies to bring e - ter - nal life to me.  
 road of rock and blood, a sin - ner's road, for me.  
 Ro - man ham - mers draw a rush of blood for me.  
 Son bears each mis - deed; he pays for all, for me.

5 What grace is this! Once wrapped in cloths  
 and gently laid in manger-trough,  
 he's taken, dead, from wretched cross  
 and wrapped again for me.

6 What grace is this? How can it be?  
 He wears this raw humility  
 to lift me to eternity.  
 Such grace—sweet grace—for me.

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OFFERING

We consider it our privilege to honor God with gifts that support the ministry of the Word among us and around the world. Many worshippers prefer to use offering envelopes each week. If you do not have offering envelopes and would like a set, please ask. We will be glad to provide them, whether you are member or not. A growing number of our worshippers choose to give their offerings online using our website. You can do so at [www.ascensionmacomb.com](http://www.ascensionmacomb.com). Click on the WATCH A SERVICE tile, then scroll down to the GIVE NOW button to make an offering or to set up an automatic recurring offering. Whichever way you choose to give your gift to the Lord, it is an important part of worship. That's why each week we take this time in our worship to acknowledge that with an offering hymn.

HYMN.....582:1-2, 4 Not unto Us



1 Not un - to us, not un - to us be glo - ry, Lord;  
 2 A - maz - ing grace— that chose us ere the worlds were made;  
 4 Not un - to us but to your name be glo - ry, Lord,



not un - to us but to your name be praise;  
 a - maz - ing grace— that sent your Son to save;  
 for grace so rich, so wide, so high, so free.



not un - to us but to your name all hon - or be giv'n  
 a - maz - ing grace— that robed us in your right - eous - ness  
 A - bide with us till trav - 'ling days are o - ver and done,



for match - less mer - cy, for - give - ness, and grace.  
 and taught our lips to sing glo - ry and praise.  
 and pil - grim feet lead us home, Lord, to you.

Text: Kurt J. Eggert, 1923-1993, alt.; Tune: Kurt J. Eggert, 1923-1993; Text and tune: © 1975 Kurt J. Eggert, admin. Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. A-713900]

Stand

## LORD, HAVE MERCY

**M:** In the morning, O Lord, I call to you; in your mercy, open your hand and fill our needs this day.



Lord, let your mer-cy be on us, as we place our trust in you.

## LORD'S PRAYER and PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

**C:** 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.

## PRAYER FOR GRACE

**M:** O Lord, our heavenly Father, almighty and everlasting God, you have brought us safely to this new day. Defend us with your mighty power, and grant that this day we neither fall into sin nor run into any kind of danger; and in all we do, direct us to what is right in your sight, through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord.

**C:** Amen.

**M:** Let us praise the Lord.



Thanks be to God.

## BLESSING

**M:** The grace of our Lord (+) Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**C:** Amen

Be seated

## CLOSING HMN.....559 If Your Beloved Son, O God



1 If your be - lov - ed Son, O God, had not to earth de -  
2 But now I find sweet peace and rest; de - spair no more reigns  
3 I trust in him with all my heart; now all my sor - row  
4 All right-eous-ness by works is vain; the law brings con - dem -  
5 My guilt, O Fa - ther, you have laid on Christ, your Son, my



scend - ed and in our mor - tal flesh and blood had not sin's  
o'er me. No more am I by sin op - pressed, for Christ has  
ceas - es. His words a - bid - ing peace im - part; his blood from  
na - tion. True right-eous-ness by faith I gain; Christ's work is  
Sav - ior. Lord Je - sus, you my debt have paid and gained for



pow - er end - ed, then this poor, wretch - ed soul of mine in  
borne sin for me. Up - on the cross for me he died that,  
guilt re - leas - es. Free grace thro' him I now ob - tain; he  
my sal - va - tion. His death, that per - fect sac - ri - fice, has  
me God's fa - vor. O Ho - ly Spir - it, fount of grace, the



hell e - ter - nal - ly would pine be - cause of my trans - gres - sion.  
rec - on - ciled, I might a - bide with you, my God, for - ev - er.  
wash - es me from ev - 'ry stain, and pure I stand be - fore him.  
paid the all - suf - fi - cient price; in him my hope is an - chored.  
good in me to you I trace; in faith and hope pre - serve me.

**THANKS TO THOSE WHO SERVE US TODAY**

Worship accompanist - Gloria Aita; Recording/Streaming Engineers - Sandy Borkowski; Security - Paul Fuller; Worship Leader /Preacher - Pastor Dan Simons.

**COMING UP AT ASCENSION:**

**Today** 9:30 a.m.....Worship w/ Children’s Message  
 10:30 a.m.....Meet, Greet, and Eat  
 10:45 a.m.....Christlight for Kids: “The Palm Sunday Story!”  
 10:45 a.m..... Parable & Word Pictures Bible Class:  
 “Death, Birth,and Life”  
 12:00 p.m.....Confirmation Instruction Class  
**Note: Due to a conflict in Pastor’s schedule, make up sessions will be tonight at 6:30 p.m. and on Tuesday evening at 6:30 p.m.**

**Monday** 7:00 p.m.....Alcoholics Anonymous-Covenant Chapter meets at Ascension  
**Tuesday** 5:00 p.m..... Set up for Mornings with Mommy  
**Wednesday** 5:30 p.m..... Fellowship Supper followed by Lenten Worship at 6:30  
**Thursday & Friday** 10:00 a.m.....Mornings with Mommy: “Fun with Food”  
**Thursday** 6:30 p.m.....Bible Information Class  
**Sunday, March 17th** 9:30 a.m.....Worship w/ Holy Communion  
 10:30 a.m.....Meet, Greet, and Eat  
 10:45 a.m.....Christlight for Kids: “What kind of kingdom does Jesus rule?”  
 10:45 a.m.....Parable & Word Pictures Bible Class:  
 “The Bread of Life and Water of Life”  
 12:00 p.m.....Confirmation Instruction Class  
**Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>** 6:30 p.m.....Make-up session for Sunday’s Confirmation Class  
**Tuesday , March 19<sup>th</sup>** 6:30 p.m.....Ascension Church Council  
 Councilmen- please complete your reports and get them out to each other in plenty of time to read them in advance of the meeting

**HOLY WEEK WORSHIP:**



with Easter Egg Hunt following

**Palm Sunday** 3/24 at 9:30 a.m.  
**Maundy Thursday** 3/28 at 6:30 p.m. (Holy Communion)  
**Good Friday** 3/29 at 6:30 p.m.  
**Easter Sunday** 3/31 at 9:30 a.m.

**LUTHERAN WOMEN’S MISSIONARY SOCIETY (LWMS) MARCH UPDATE**



*LWMS is women dedicated to serving Jesus by increasing awareness of, interest in, and support of the mission outreach of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS). As WELS women, we believe that Jesus was speaking to each of us when he directed his disciples to “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” To this end we freely give of the time, talents, and treasures with which God has richly blessed us.*

God’s church isn’t a building. It’s God’s redeemed people built and bound together by the blood of Christ. This year’s **LWMS prayer calendar** highlights and celebrates the variety and uniqueness of the spaces where our synod’s home and world missions worship. Please continue to pray for our missions and missionaries as they work hard to keep **Building the House of God**. “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house.” 1 Peter 2:5

East Asia World Missionary **Matthew Doebler** shares his thoughts in our **March, 2024**, prayer calendar:

*In East Asia, unregistered churches (that is, churches unwilling to let an atheist government dictate their theology) are technically not allowed to own property, and it’s even a challenge for them to rent a facility. Additionally, ongoing COVID lockdowns throughout their country have made gathering for public worship and other events sporadic. As a result, the idea of a “house of worship” is a fading reality for many Christians there. But that’s okay - they’ve never let themselves be deterred because they know the church is not a building but a people, and that the Church is present wherever the Word of God is rightly preached and the sacraments are rightly distributed. So, wherever they can actually meet, they rejoice in the gospel and in doing life together. Plastic bowls become sacred baptismal fonts; juice cups carry the precious blood of Christ; bright red stackable stools serve as pews for the people of God. The “bricks” of the church pack together in cozy living rooms to build each other up on their true foundation: Jesus Christ, the Savior of all.*

The prayer request of this mission is...  
**...to pray regularly for these beautiful churches, your dear brothers and sisters in Christ.**  
**...for the safety and security of all our missionaries serving overseas.**

Finally, the Bible verse upon which we meditate this month is Ephesians 1, verses 22-23:  
**“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”**



**LUTHERAN WOMENS MISSIONARY SOCIETY MITE BOXES** are available in the church lobby.



This is a handy way to gather change (coins or paper) for the next few weeks and dedicate them to mission work. Each Spring, LWMS chooses one home mission and one world mission to be the recipient of the offerings gathered in these boxes. They must be returned by Sunday, March 31st.

**EASTER EGG HUNT - EASTER SUNDAY**

We are starting to collect eggs for the children to hunt and find on Easter Sunday after worship. We are asking for plastic eggs, pre-filled with individually wrapped bandy. There will be a box in the church lobby in which to place these donated eggs. Can you help?



**NEW BEGINNINGS** is a parachurch organization of WELS Christians which offers pregnancy counseling and support for single women. A special opportunity to support this effort will begin after Easter. Plastic baby bottles will be available in the church lobby in which you can gather your gifts of coins or folding money. Watch for this to begin right after Easter.

**LAST SUNDAY AT ASCENSION**

Ascension members in God's house for worship	47
Repeat visitors in God's house for worship	9
First-time visitors in God's house	1
Worshipping with us online	5
Total	62



Teens & adults growing in the Word in Bible class	21 + 1 online
Children growing in the Word in Christlight for Kids	2 (2 teachers)

Confirmation Instruction Class did not meet.

**46% of those who were in God's house for worship stayed to grow in the Word.**

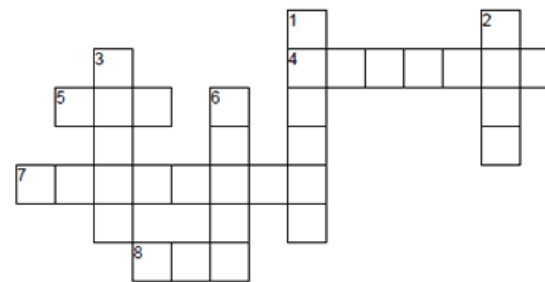
Faith conversations and invitations to worship by Ascension people: 7  
 Ascension people in touch with each (planning, encouraging, etc.): 23

**God So Loved the World**

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)



Complete the activity below.



**ACROSS**

- 4. Lasting forever; without end
- 5. Male offspring
- 7. Accept something as being true, genuine, or real
- 8. The creator of heaven and earth

**DOWN**

- 1. To die or be destroyed
- 2. To rescue from danger or harm
- 3. The earth with its inhabitants and everything on it
- 6. Cared very deeply for someone

ETERNAL	WORLD	PERISH	SAVE
LOVED	GOD	BELIEVES	SON

# God So Loved the World

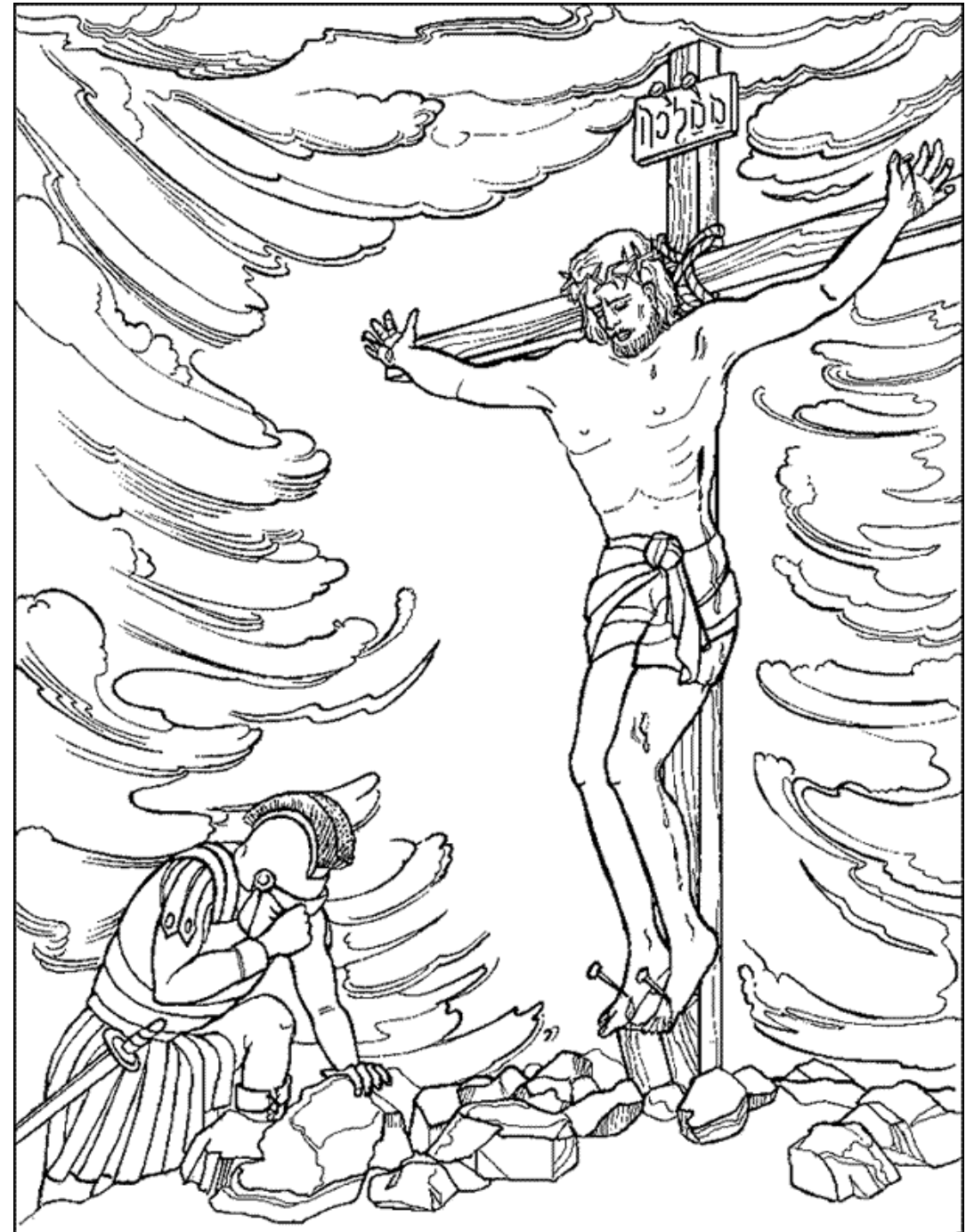
For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

The puzzle is based on John 3:16-17



M L I Z D Q X P T H R O U G H  
 V D J P Q W T W V L R C I D A  
 C Y U L I F E O K D D E D B V  
 I T S H B N R W L Z K O H M V  
 S H Z N D G G J L G B S E N D  
 J G O D B M A M R Y F N I L O  
 S Z E N K D L V M R A W O N  
 R A J M C P K V E F Q H X V O  
 Y I V L G C S P L H E O J E U  
 B W E E B O M E Y I V E O D U  
 P O J S U N R R K M P V R W Z  
 X R C V T D P I P F P E R S H  
 S L S G C E X S Z N I R Z D T  
 V D B Q G M F H E T E R N A L  
 U G Y W P N V B E L I E V E S

LOVED	GOD	SON	CONDEMN	BELIEVES
THROUGH	SEND	WHOEVER	LIFE	SAVE
PERISH	ETERNAL	GAVE	HIM	WORLD





# Parables and Word Pictures

## Introduction

What's the point of the familiar saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words"?

The Bible doesn't come with photographs or drawings, but it does often use words as pictures. The word pictures of the Bible have many similarities with the symbols used throughout Scripture. Symbols tend to be understandable only if you've been taught their meanings (sort of like a divine shorthand), while word pictures are much more basic and universal. They take some of the most fundamental concepts we know and use them to illustrate great spiritual truths.

## Studying God's Word

There are two human experiences that all people share: birth and death. In this lesson, we study how God uses those to illustrate the true nature of spiritual life.

### Born dead

**Read Ephesians 2:1** – You were dead in your trespasses and sins...

1. What does God say was our natural spiritual state?
2. What is Paul's point in using this word picture? (Hint: What can dead people do?)
3. We often associate sin with our words and actions. But sin is more than that. It is not just what we do but who we are. Why is it important to remember that?

### Coming to new life

**Read John 3:1-6** - There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. <sup>2</sup> He came to Jesus at night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these miraculous signs you are doing unless God is with him."

<sup>3</sup> Jesus replied, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless someone is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

<sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born, can he?"

<sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, "Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless someone is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God! <sup>6</sup> Whatever is born of the flesh is flesh. Whatever is born of the Spirit is spirit.

4. Why did Nicodemus struggle with Jesus' statement about being *born again*?
5. Explain the illustration of being born again. Think of who is the active partner in a physical birth. What is Jesus' point?
6. How is this birth accomplished according to Jesus?

### Life without end

**Read John 5:24,25** - Amen, Amen, I tell you: Anyone who hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He is not going to come into judgment but has crossed over from death to life. <sup>25</sup> "Amen, Amen, I tell you: A time is coming and is here now when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who listen will live.

7. From your experience, when Christians interpret the word picture of rising from the dead and receiving life, what goes through their minds?
8. But according to this passage, when do we rise from the dead and become alive?
9. What's the most important blessing of our new life?

10. What blessings accompany the new life and lack of condemnation that we have in Christ? List as many as you can.

**Read Ezekiel 37:1-14** - The hand of the Lord was upon me. He brought me out by the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley, which was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He had me pass through them and go all over among them. There were very many on the valley floor, and they were very dry.

<sup>3</sup> He said to me, "Son of man, can these dry bones live?" I answered, "Lord God, you know." <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to these bones and say to them, 'Dry bones, hear the word of the Lord.'"

<sup>5</sup> This is what the Lord God says to these bones.

I am about to make breath enter you so that you will live. <sup>6</sup> I will attach tendons to you. I will put flesh back on you. I will cover you with skin and put breath in you, and you will live. Then you will know that I am the Lord.

<sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I had been commanded, and as I was prophesying there was a noise, a rattling, as the bones came together, one bone connecting to another. <sup>8</sup> As I watched, tendons were attached to them, then flesh grew over them, and skin covered them. But there was no breath in them.

<sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, "Prophesy to the wind. Prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind that this is what the Lord God says. From the four winds, come, O wind, and breathe into these slain so that they may live."

<sup>10</sup> So I prophesied as he commanded me. Breath entered them, and they came back to life. They stood on their feet, a very, very large army.

<sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They are saying, 'Our bones are dried up. Our hope is lost. We have been completely cut off.' <sup>12</sup> Therefore, prophesy and say to them that this is what the Lord God says. My people, I am going to open your graves and raise you up from your graves and bring you back to the soil of Israel. <sup>13</sup> Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves and raise you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> I will put my Spirit in you, and you will live. I will settle you on your own land, and you will know that I, the Lord, have spoken, and I have done it, declares the Lord."

11. The people of Judah were in exile in Babylon. They were feeling very` hopeless about ever returning to their homeland. How does God picture their ebbing faith in his promise?

12. Read verses 8-10: How does this vision recreate the two-step creation of man recorded in Genesis 2:7?

13. In verses 11-14, God uses this vision to picture how he revives his people by restating his promise and reassuring them that he will faithfully keep it.

## Summary

Key Points:

- The picture of death impresses on us that we're unable to do anything to improve our condition before God.
- God gives us a new birth through the gospel. This is completely his doing, by his grace.
- Even now on earth believers have been raised to new life. We can live in peace before God, free from guilt and the fear of physical death.

May God's people live in peace and confidence!

## During the Week

Read Martin Luther's explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed for an excellent reminder and explanation of how you were saved.

I believe that I cannot by my own thinking or choosing believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him.

But the Holy Spirit has called me by the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way he calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In this Christian Church he daily and fully forgives all sins to me and all believers.

On the Last Day he will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ. This is most certainly true.