# **Ascension Lutheran Church**

# Fourth Sunday of Lent March 14, 2021

# "Again and Again, God Loves First"

#### Welcome, All, In the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord!

The fourth of the Old Testament promises providing a baptismal lens this Lent is the promise God makes to Moses: those who look on the bronze serpent will live. In today's gospel Jesus says he will be lifted up on the cross like the serpent, so that those who look to him in faith will live. When we receive the sign of the cross in baptism, that cross becomes the sign we can look to in faith for healing, for restored relationship to God, for hope when we are dying.

#### PRELUDE

#### **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

We mess up and make mistakes all the time. And God says to us, again and again, , "I still love you. I will always love you."

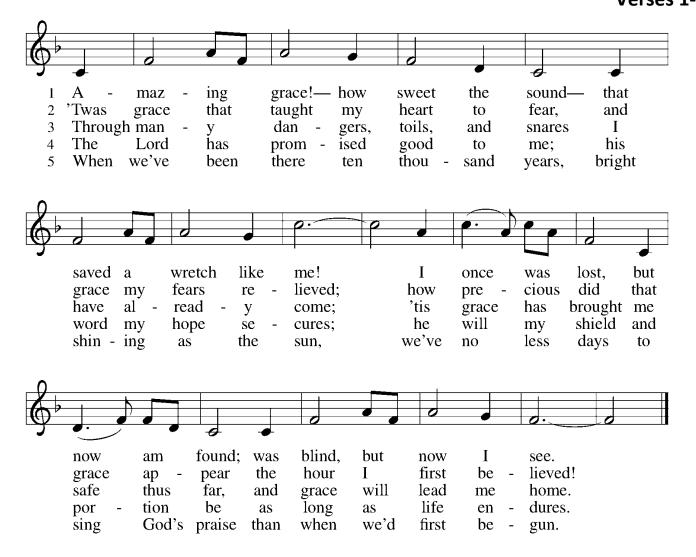
Let us pray to the God of love, trusting that God loved us first....

Silence is kept for reflection.

Fountain of living water, pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.

Beloved, God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are + forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus. **Amen.** 

"Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" Verses 1-2



Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, alt., sts. 1–4; anonymous, st. 5 Music: NEW BRITAIN, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

#### Let us pray.

O God, rich in mercy, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world and rescued us from the hopelessness of death. Lead us into your light, that all our deeds may reflect your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.** 

#### **READING: Numbers 21:4-9**

A reading from Numbers.

<sup>4</sup>From Mount Hor [the Israelites] set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on 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? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." <sup>6</sup>Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup>The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

The Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

#### GOSPEL: John 3:14-21

The holy gospel according to John, the third chapter. **Glory to you, O Lord.** 

[Jesus said:] <sup>14</sup>"Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup>"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

## The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

The Rev. Christina L. Auch SERMON 

#### "O God of Mercy, God of Light" HYMN #714

Verses 1-2



- may we, where help is needed, there give help as though to you.
- till you receive in heav'n above all those who live in you.

Text: Godfrey Thring, 1823-1903, alt. Music: JUST AS I AM, Joseph Barnby, 1838-1896

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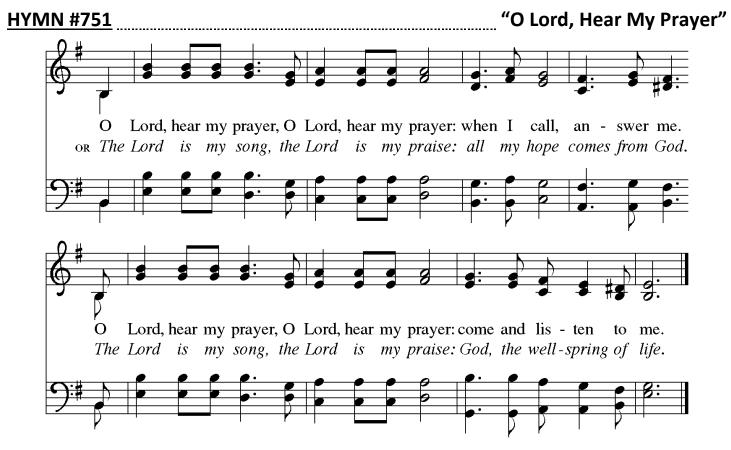
#### **APOSTLES' CREED**

God has made us his people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith...

### I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, 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, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I 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.



Text: Psalm 102:1–2; Taizé Community, adapt.
Music: HEAR MY PRAYER, Jacques Berthier, 1923–1994
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## A LITANY MARKING ONE YEAR OF COVID-19

Remembering a year of grief, a year of sorrow, a year of uncertainty we pray, **That all shall be well.** 

With hope on the horizon and the battle still raging we pray, **That all shall be well.** 

We search for patience, we long for what was, still we know You were never far and we pray,

### That all shall be well.

Marking this year of pandemic, trusting in your faithfulnesss, we pray that all shall be well, and all shall be well,

### And all manner of things shall be well. Amen.

#### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

#### Silence is kept for reflection.

You sent your Son that the world might be saved through him. Inspire the witness of the church throughout the world. Empower missionaries, Bible translators, and ministries of service in your name. Bless our partners in ministry, our ELCA global partner churches, and Young Adults in Global Mission. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

From east to west your steadfast love is shown. Nourish seas and deserts, wilderness areas and cities. Give water to thirsty lands; nurture spring growth that feeds hungry creatures; bless farmers as they prepare for the growing season. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

You sustained your people in the wilderness. Give courage to all who lead in times of crisis and scarce resources. Prosper the work of those who aid victims of famine and drought. Bring peace in places where scares resources cause violence. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

Your mercy endures forever. Deliver all who cry to you, especially those who are hungry or without homes. Give life in places where death seems triumphant; give

healing to those who are sick and comfort to those who mourn. We pray especially for those we name aloud or silently in our hearts...

Grant Adcock (Bob and Vicki Jones' grandson), Kathy Backof (Donna Lilly's friend), Martha Beam (Eleanor Hendrick's friend), Dan Birch (Carol Berger's brother-in-law), Adam Bridges & Brittany Smith (Libby Stone's cousin and his fiancé), Cody Bryant (Bob Bryant's grandson), Kathy Callahan (Ludie Wilkie's friend), Mike Callahan (Ludy Wilkie's friend), Chris Carman (Judy Bridges' friend), Edna Cooper (Bill Bridges' Aunt), The Davenport Family (Dave and Priscilla Williams' friends), Charles and Mary Degree (Karen Long's friends), Saher Degree (Gail Sherman's friend), Charles Duval (Ludy Wilkie's friend), Barbara Duval (Ludy Wilkie's friends), Tim Farmer (Pastor Christina and Jamie's friend), Avan Fields (Carol Berger's friend), Ann Fitzsimmons (Steve and Jenny White's friend), Carol Ann Forgas (Bill Bridges' friend), Chris Galloway (Vicky Galloway's husband), Gypsy Gilliam (Jennie and Dave Lambert's friend), Mike Greene (Gail Sherman's friend), Carl Greenwald (DeBell's friends), Richard Hollifield (Ludy Wilkie's friend), Joe Hutchinson (William Coyne's friend), Debbie Irvin (Bill Bridges' friend), Patti Jenkins (Priscilla Williams' friend), Kay Johnson (Eleanor Hendrick's cousin), Steve Jolly (Ludy Wilkie's friend), Shannon Jones (Jennie Lambert's former coworker), Mark Kent (Majorie Olsen's son), Rachel Kidwell (Dave William's niece), Bryan Legrand (Ludy Wilkie's friend), Jim Lilly (Dick and Donna Lilly's son), Sonya and Gerald Lovelace (Bill Bridges friend), Brenda Lowery (Gail Sherman's friend), Pam Lucas (Ludy Wilkie's friend), Eva McCombs (Sandra Waldrop's mother), Janice McGoven (Eleanor Hendricks' sister), Sheri Dawn Mack (Relative of Karen Hubbard), Maribeth Norris Mies (Carol Berger's cousin), Pat Mullen (Johanna Gillespie's friend), Wanda Mullinax (Edith Kelly's niece), Teresa Olsen (Marjorie Olsen's daughter-in-law), Bob Patzer (Carol Berger's brother-in-law), Linda Patzer (Carol Berger's sister), Gerard Peruzzi (Carol Berger's brother), Margaret Peruzzi (Carol Berger's mother), Liz and Ron Dal Poggetto (Judy Bridges' friends), Beth Rhyne (Ladley and Jane Burn's friend), Shannon Sellers (Libby Stone's cousin), Jean and Jim Tesseneer (Bill Bridges friend), Pam Unger (Willi and Ray Lacy's friend), Edith Walker (Allen and Lisa Philbeck's friend's mother), David Waldrop (Sandra Waldrop's husband), Molly and Darryl Waterstraat (Karen Hubbard's friends), Alfie Welch (Renee Buchanan's brother), Christopher Willever

(David Williams' grandson), Mary Ann Woolley (Sandra Waldrop's aunt)

<u>Members:</u> Dean Davis, Lin Washburn, Dot Paul, Bob Bryant, William Coyne, Jim Wilson, Bobbie Johnson, Gerald Washburn, Ray Valentine, Lucinda Wallen, Lisa Upton, Sandy Harman, Kim Lacy and family

In Undergraduate College: Emma Auch, Brooke Buchanan, Samantha Hoffman, Jacob Stone, Catherine Mae Lilly

<u>Ministry Partners</u>: Hospice Cleveland County staff, leaders and those they serve.

Hear us, O God. Your mercy is great.

By grace we have been saved. Fill this congregation to overflowing with that grace, that we show mercy to others. Nourish any in our midst who are hungry, especially children. Give us patience and courage when the way seems long. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

Your Son was lifted up that whoever believes might have eternal life. We praise you for all who have died in Christ. Bring us with all the saints into the fullness of your promises. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.** 

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

### PASSING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

#### And also with you.

The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace on video or say: "Peace be with you" from wherever you are or type it in the chat or comments.

#### **OFFERING**

Make a one time or recurring gift using **the website** or **the GivePlus app** on iPhone or Android. You can give using ACH (bank account), Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express.

Or **text 844-906-2283** and enter the amount you wish to donate. Then click the registration link and enter your payment information. You will receive a verification text as well as an email receipt. For future giving, simply send a text to the same number with the amount you wish to give, and your donation will process automatically.



Or mail your regular tithe or offering to PO Box 266, Shelby, NC 28151.

Music: Richard W. Hillert, b. 1923. Music © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress. Used with permission.

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and up-hold

#### THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

your sal - va - tion,

#### Let us pray...

Gracious God, we have heard your Word of Life today. While our sin is great, your determination to save has proven greater, again and again. Thank you for Jesus who leads us out of the wilderness and into the community declaring, "The kingdom of God has come near." Embolden us with the gift of your Holy Spirit that we may share your love and salvation with all creation, through Jesus Christ in whose name we pray.

#### Amen.

#### LORD'S PRAYER

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.

# **SENDING OF HOME COMMUNION**

When our congregation gathered for Holy Communion with all the saints from every time and place, we heard again the story of God's mighty acts and the love shown us in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. The holy meal of the Lord's supper was shared. Now we share this Word of life, and this bread and cup of blessing, that we may share in these same gifts and be strengthened by the Christian community, even though we gather separately for a time.

Gathered at the Lord's table, our congregation remembered with thanksgiving that "in the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

This is the supper of our Lord Jesus Christ. This bread and cup, shared in our community of faith, are here given for you.

Share the bread, saying, "The body of Christ, given for you." And share the wine or grape juice, saying, "The blood of Christ, shed for you."

Let us pray.

Gracious God, in this meal you have drawn us to your heart, and nourished us at your table with food and drink, the body and blood of Christ. Now send us forth to

be your people in the world, and to proclaim your truth this day and evermore, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

#### Amen.

# **BLESSING**

As you leave this space,

May your mouth speak of God's goodness.

May your arms hold those in need. May your feet walk toward justice.

May your heart trust its worth. May your soul dance in God's grace.

And may this be your rhythm-

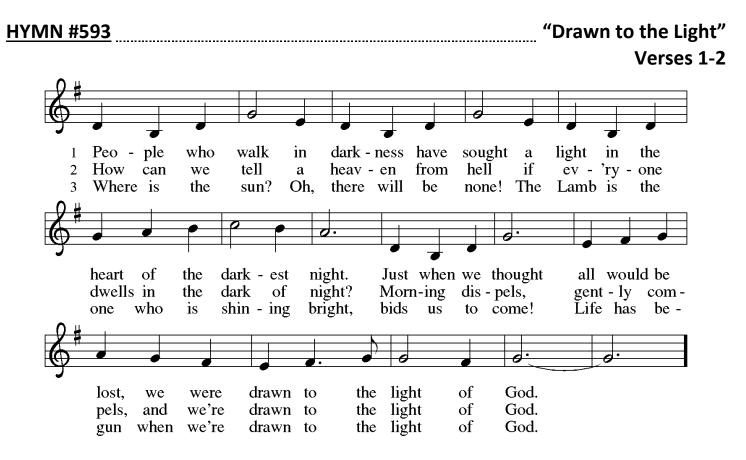
Again and again and again,

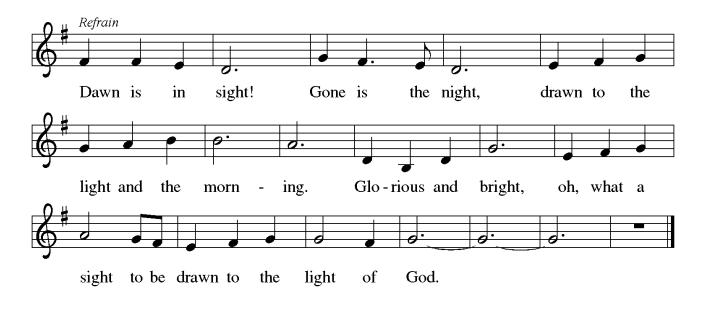
Until God's promised day.

In the name of the holy, loving and life-giving Trinity itself,

Go with courage, go with heart, go in peace.

# Amen.





Text: John C. Ylvisaker, b. 1937 Music: LA CROSSE, John C. Ylvisaker Text and music © 1990 John C. Ylvisaker.

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#### DISMISSAL

Marked with the cross of Christ, go forth to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.** 

#### POSTLUDE

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Coronavirus Response**: Our sanctuary remains closed, but the fellowship hall is available for small groups (less than 10) with social distancing and masks required. Contact Debby in the church office for more information.

**Prayer Concerns:** Please call or email the office or text Pastor Christina at 704-472-7783 to update prayer requests. You may leave a voicemail but please provide the spelling of any names, and your relationship to the person being prayed for.

<u>Please continue your tithes and offerings</u>. Make a one time or recurring gift using **the website** or **the GivePlus app** on iPhone or Android. You can give using ACH (bank account), Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express.

Or **text 844-906-2283** and enter the amount you wish to donate. Then click the registration link and enter your payment information. You will receive a verification text as well as an email receipt. For future giving, simply send a text to the same number with the amount you wish to give, and your donation will process automatically.

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# **Ascension Lutheran Church**

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