



# seeking:

*Who will you  
listen to?*

**February 26, 2023 + First Sunday in Lent**

*An asterisk \* invites you to stand in body or in spirit, and you are invited to read aloud responses found in **bold**.*

*We welcome you to First Lutheran Church!*

## **we GATHER here**

**Prelude** — “Divertimento - Larghetto”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
Carrie Stelter and Erik Lutz, cello

**\*Welcome and Words of Gathering**

A: Listen!

**There is hope to be found here.**

Listen!

**God calls you by name here.**

Listen!

**There is love that abides here.**

This world is full of chatter, so may we do our best to listen.

**God is speaking.**

Let us worship.

**Amen.**

*As we begin this  
Lenten season, we  
ask for Jesus to be  
with us on the  
journey through  
the words of this  
African American  
spiritual.*

**\*Gathering Hymn** — no. 325

“I Want Jesus to Walk with Me”

**\*Confession and Forgiveness**

Friends, if you are seeking grace, this moment is for you.

If you are seeking growth, this moment is for you.

If you are seeking honesty, this moment is for you.

In the prayer of confession, we admit to ourselves and to God that we do not have it all figured out. And in that vulnerability, we are surrounded by God’s grace. Let us pray:

Holy God, **too often we treat your word like a radio station—something we can tune in and out of when it’s convenient. Our minds are full of ads, emails, news updates, and notifications.**

**In the midst of this clutter, we tend to gravitate toward the voices that think like us—easily ignoring the voices being silenced, easily ignoring your voice. Forgive us for failing to listen.**

**Forgive us for getting caught in distractions. Forgive us for forgetting what your voice sounds like. Drain the distractions from our minds and help us turn once again toward you. With earnest hearts we pray, amen.**

Friends, even when we tune God out, even when we prioritize other voices, even when we do all the talking and fail to listen, we are still held by God.

In Jesus' name ✝, our sins are forgiven. Nothing could ever separate us from God's love.

So with joy in our hearts, please repeat after me:

**I am loved! I am loved!**

**I am held in grace! I am held in grace!**

**I belong to God. I belong to God. Amen.**

### **\*Prayer of the Day**

In the Prayer of the Day, we always ask for God to speak to us through scripture.

However, when we do that, we end up doing all the talking. So today, in fitting with the theme of listening, we are simply going to carve out a few moments for silence. I invite you to take a deep breath, to close your eyes, and to listen for what God might be saying to you now. The time of silence will conclude with a bell.

*After the bell tolls three times: Holy God, we want to hear you, really hear you, so speak to us now. With hope we pray, amen.*

### **Stewardship Story Sharing**

Annalise Rivas

## **we LISTEN and RESPOND**

*In the Lutheran tradition, it is common to conclude the scripture readings with a spoken response. As we begin a new season in our church year, you are invited to join in this new response.*

*The psalm will begin with a simple tone being demonstrated, and the leader and congregation are invited to sing responsively by verse.*

### **A Reading from the book of Genesis — Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7**

The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. And the Lord God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?'" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die; for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Hear these words of old **as we seek to know God today.**

### **Psalm 32**

**Happy are they whose transgressions | are forgiven,  
and whose sin is | put away!**

Happy are they to whom the Lord im- | putes no guilt,  
and in whose spirit there | is no guile!

**While I held my tongue, my bones with- | ered away,  
because of my groaning | all day long.**

For your hand was heavy upon me | day and night;  
my moisture was dried up as in the | heat of summer.

**Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not con- | ceal my guilt.**

**I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” Then you forgave me the guilt |  
of my sin.**

Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in | time of trouble;  
when the great waters overflow, they | shall not reach them.

**You are my hiding-place; you preserve | me from trouble;  
you surround me with shouts | of deliverance.**

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way that | you should go;  
I will guide you | with my eye.

**Do not be like horse or mule, which have no | understanding;  
who must be fitted with bit and bridle, or else they will | not stay near you.”**

Great are the tribulations | of the wicked;  
but mercy embraces those who trust | in the Lord.

**Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice | in the Lord;  
shout for joy, all who are | true of heart.**

### A Reading from Paul’s letter to the Romans — Romans 5:12-19

Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come.

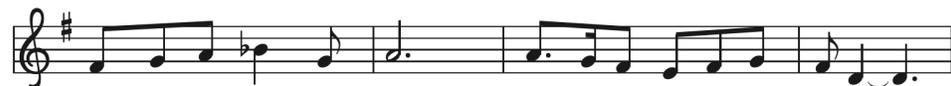
But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. For just as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous.

Hear these words of old **as we seek to know God today.**

*Marty Haugen  
penned this  
refrain, which  
appears in the  
recent All  
Creation Sings  
hymnal and will  
be sung here  
through the  
season of Lent.*

#### \*Gospel Acclamation — no. 918 from *All Creation Sings*



Now is the time of grace, now is the day of sal - va - tion.



Turn now, and seek God’s face, now be-hold God’s in - vi - ta - tion.

#### \*Gospel — Matthew 4:1-11

The Gospel of Matthew, the 4th chapter.

**Glory to you, O God.**

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, “If

you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written,

‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’”

Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written,

‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’”

Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’”

Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

The Gospel of Jesus.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

Pastor Chris Culuris

A Sanctified Art provided a unique hymn text paired with familiar tunes to align with the other components of worship. We will sing these texts, written by Rev. Anna Strickland, throughout this season. Here, we are challenged to drown out the “chaos all around” and listen to our God of grace, equity, and love.

### \*Hymn — from *A Sanctified Art*

“The Voices from the Past”

*Extended Hymn Introduction by George Lachenauer*

The voi - ces from the past That  
So - ci - e - ty de - mands We  
A rush - ing flood of hate In  
ech - o through our minds Like  
al - ways strive for more Ac -  
news we of - ten see Con -  
noi - sy ghosts haunt and har - ass With  
- cum - u - lat - ing wealth and land And  
- ceals God's king - dom in a great Ca -  
words un - kind Who will we lis - ten to? The  
leave the poor Who will we lis - ten to? The  
- co - pho - ny Who will we lis - ten to? The  
lies that bind, a - base? Or God who coun - ters  
temp ter's jea - lou - sy? Or God's pro - vis - ion  
cha - os all a - round? Or God's dream of a  
words un - true With words of grace?  
and pur - suit Of e - qui - ty?  
world made new Where love a - bounds?

### \*Affirmation of Faith

P: You are invited to share in this litany of affirmation:

In a world full of noise, **we believe that God is speaking.**

In a world full of chaos, **we believe that God is singing.**

In a world full of temptation, **we believe that God is healing.**

Church, who will you listen to?

**We will listen to God—our Creator, Friend, and Guide.**

Church, what will you listen for?  
**We will listen for water in the desert,  
for the wind of the Spirit, for the laughter of children, for the sound of open  
doors, and for God's voice, who calls us beloved. Amen.**

**\*Prayers of Intercession**

A: Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

You alone are God. Sustain your church in times of wilderness. Give vision and wisdom to bishops, their staff, and all entrusted with the ministry of administration. Counsel all who faithfully lead your people into the future. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You know our temptations. Sustain those who govern and legislate. Instill in them a sense of your justice and righteousness, that equity and peace would pervade all the regions and nations of the world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You are a hiding place for all in distress. Draw near to exiles, and accompany all refugees and immigrants, especially children who travel alone. In times of trouble, trauma, or illness, surround your people with your steadfast love. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You offer abundance to all. Bless the ministries of hospitality in this place. Care for those who tend to the needs of others, especially worship greeters, fellowship hour hosts, and nursery attendants. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You alone are God. We praise you for the faithful departed in every age. Unite our prayers with theirs, until our wilderness journey is complete, and we rest in you. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

*Jesus was tempted by evil and promises of power. This hymn (no. 564) offers several prayers, including "from the power of evil hide us, in the narrow pathway guide us."*

**Offering**

*Music During Offering*

"God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven"

Setting by Catherine McMichael  
Carrie Stelter and Erik Lutz, cello

**\*Offering Prayer**

A: God of goodness and growth, all creation is yours, and your faithfulness is sure. Receive the gifts we bring, and nourish us to proclaim your abiding love in our communities and in the world, through Jesus Christ, our strength and our song. Amen.

*This year, we return to Evangelical Lutheran Worship (the name of our red hymnal) Setting Five for our communion liturgy.*

## **we SHARE the meal**

**\*The Great Thanksgiving** — pg. 161, *front of hymnal*

**\*Sanctus** — pg. 162, *front of hymnal*

## \*Words of Institution and Prayers

P: God of the lost and the found, surely it is right for us to give our thanks and praise; for day after day we look for you, and day after day we find you: in the laughter of children, in the sun rising over the horizon, in the flowers of spring.

Our seeking does not go unanswered, and for that we are grateful. So first and foremost, we come to you in prayer to say thank you, for when we're seeking beauty, you give us mountains and freckles, green eyes and brown eyes. When we're looking for reason to hope, you give us rainbows after the storm, and candles flickering in the window. When we're seeking peace, you give us three part harmony and the sound of the rain. And when we're seeking justice, your life reminds us that everyone is welcome at your Table, and none shall be turned away.

For all these reminders we are deeply grateful. And yet, gracious God, our seeking does not stop. For even though your fingerprints are all over this world, we are not yet at your promised day.

So in addition to our gratitude, we also pray today for conviction. Do not let us get comfortable with half-hearted seeking. Do not let us grow numb to the suffering of this world. Make us relentless in our pursuit of justice—relentless in our consoling of the grieving, in our welcoming of the stranger, and in the feeding of the hungry. Like a dog with a scent, may we walk toward your kingdom, never giving up, never wandering off the path.

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.

And as we see and as we seek, pour out your Spirit on this ordinary bread and cup. May this meal be the nourishment we need to continue seeking you in the world.

Until your promised day, we will pray. Until your promised day, we will seek, saying: **Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.**

## \*Invitation to the Table

P: Friends, if your seeking has led you here, if your weary heart followed breadcrumbs all the way to this sanctuary, then I have good news: you do not have to seek anymore. This table is God's Table. So if you came here looking for justice,

then rest in the comfort that all will be fed here.  
 If you came seeking beauty,  
 then let your spirit marvel at the beauty of a community coming together.  
 If you came seeking a brush with the Divine,  
 then know that God is present in this ordinary meal.  
 So kick off your walking shoes. Let your weary heart stop the search.  
 We are standing on holy ground. This is God's Table. All are invited. Come.

*Communion will take place at the rail this morning. During our distribution, we sing two very different hymns, connected in how they speak to our journey through Lent, faith, and life.*

### Distribution of Communion

**Lamb of God** — pg. 164, *front of hymnal*

**Hymn** — no. 319

“O Lord, throughout These Forty Days”

**Hymn** — no. 808

“Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song”

### Prayer After Communion

P: God of manna and mustard seeds, we came to this Table hungry and we leave feeling full—full of hope, full of promise, full of what could be. For we not only found glimpses of you at this Table, but we caught a glimpse of the way things could be: in a meal where all are welcomed and all are fed. Is there anything holier than that? Thank you for nourishing our curiosity alongside our spirit and our conviction. May we always seek you the way you seek after us. With grateful hearts we pray, amen.

## we DEPART to serve the world

### Announcements

*Our sending hymn connects to key words and phrases from our gospel reading: tested, desert, tempted. As you move through your week, you are invited to listen for God's voice to lift above the struggles and temptations around us.*

\***Sending Hymn** — no. 922, from *All Creation Sings*

“When We Are Tested”



1 When we are test - ed and wres - tle a - lone,  
 2 When in the des - ert we cry for re - lief,  
 3 When we are tempt - ed to bar - ter our souls,  
 4 When we have strug - gled and searched through the night,



fam - ished for bread when the world of - fers stone,  
 plead - ing for paths marked by cer - tain be - lief,  
 trad - ing the truth for the pow'r to con - trol,  
 sort - ing and sift - ing the wrong from the right,



nour - ish us, God, by your word and your way,  
 lift us to love you be - yond sign and test,  
 teach us to wor - ship and praise on - ly you,  
 Sav - ior, sur - round us with cir - cles of care,



food that sus - tains us by night and by day.  
 trust - ing your pres - ence, our on - ly true rest.  
 seek - ing your will in the work that we do.  
 an - gels of heal - ing, of hope, and of prayer.

## \*Blessing & Dismissal

P: As you leave this place, may God bless you with seeking.

Seek out the hungry. Seek the weary. Seek the good in every person you pass.

Seek out the hopeful. Seek the faithful. Seek God in each of us.

As you seek and as you wonder, may you find what you are looking for.

A: In the name of our loving God, who is always seeking us, go now in peace. **Amen.**

## Postlude — “Divertimento - Allegro”

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart  
Carrie Stelter and Erik Lutz, cello

## Acknowledgements

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## Worship Assistants

Pastor: Chris Culuris

Director of Music: Emily Bruflatt

Assisting Minister: Sharon Malm

Audio/Video: Rachel Ribar

Greeter: Finely Olson/Ella Twaddle

Reader: Annalise Rivas

Ushers: John & Cindy Nadeau

Musicians: Carrie Stelter, Erik Lutz

Communion Preparers: Cheryl Kautt, Mary Thompson

Communion Servers: Sharon Domeier, Cindy Nadeau

Acolytes: Maxwell Swenson/Nolan Swenson

Fellowship Servers: Betty Thompson & Carol Solberg

## Announcements

- Please join us in the Dining Hall following worship today for our Bible study, *Making Sense of Luther*.
- This Wednesday we will be beginning our midweek Lenten Soup Suppers. Join us for supper from 5:30-6:30pm in the Dining Hall. Ash Wednesday service will follow at 7:00 pm.
- We will be celebrating a New Member Sunday next week, March 5th! Please join us as we welcome these new siblings in Christ! If you are interested in joining FLC, please contact Pastor Chris.
- Following worship next week we will have a First Forum on “Aging in Place” led by representatives from Habitat for Humanity. Please join us to learn about how to make your homes safer and more universally accessible.
- First Holy Communion classes for 1st & 2nd Graders continue next week, March 5, at 6:30pm in the Dining Hall.
- Myrene Harriet Bunge, the mother of Marcia J. Bunge and the grandmother of Anja and Isaac Bunge Dulin, passed away in Missouri on Sunday, February 19, 2023. The family wishes to thank members of First Lutheran Church for their prayers and concerns over the years. The obituary and funeral information can be found at the website of Park Lawn Funeral Home in Kansas City. (<https://parklawnfunerals.com/>)
- Deadline to order flowers for Easter will be March 12. Special pink forms are available in the gathering space.

## Prayers

- Sandra Brovold died on February 19th. We pray for her family and friends who mourn the loss of Sandra.
- Margie Nelsen, Pr. Bill’s wife died on Feb. 22nd. We lift up Pastor Bill, his family, and all who mourn the loss of Margie.
- We lift up prayers for those on our long-term list: Elgene Lund, Chuck Petry, Bob Cady, Joan Williams, Betty Gustafson, Myrene Bunge, Glenn Stryker, Erika Schuldt, Ursula McRostie, Karen Wendroth, Allen Storkson, Gene Roemhildt, Karen Smithers, Paul Aasen, Shirley Storkson, and Rita Ogren.