



# seeking: *Who sinned?*

## March 22, 2023 + Lenten Midweek Worship

*An asterisk \* invites you to stand in body or in spirit, and you are invited to read aloud responses found in **bold**.  
Please leave your offering in the offering plate on the usher's stand in the Gathering Space.  
We welcome you to First Lutheran Church!*

### **we GATHER here**

Opening Liturgy — p. 1

#### Words of Welcome

Scripture is full of questions...**Where are you?**

Am I my brother's keeper? **Whom shall I send?**

Who do you say that I am? **Who sinned?**

How many times shall I forgive?

**If God is for us, who can be against us?**

Scripture is full of questions,

so just like those in our scriptures, may we bring our full curiosity and wonder into this space.

**Let us ask and seek after our merciful God.**

### **we LISTEN and RESPOND**

Evening Psalm — p. 2

Gospel Acclamation — p. 3 (*use Lenten text*)

Gospel — John 9:1-41

Before the reading: The Gospel of John, the 9th chapter.

**Glory to you, O God.**

After the reading: The Gospel of Jesus.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

Gospel Canticle — p. 4

Sermon

Poem — “Jesus in the Psych Ward”

by Rev. Sarah Speed

He’s in group therapy, plastic chairs in a circle.  
Paper cups with weak coffee. Everyone in the room has  
seeking eyes.

The Pharisees admitted him. They said things like,  
*He’s more than we can handle.* They let the rumors fly.

The other patients like him. They say, *He listens to me.*  
He calls them by name.

And when one of them asks,  
*Is this our fault? Are we here because we sinned?*  
Jesus does not wait for the facilitator to speak.

He crosses the circle. He kneels down.  
He grabs their hands in his and says,

*Child of the covenant,  
God loves you too much to ever wish you pain.  
Bodies and minds crumble sometimes,  
but God’s love for you does not.*

And after that there were happy tears and  
the group was dismissed to lunch,  
where they broke bread  
and no one talked of sin.

**\*Affirmation of Faith**

You are invited to share in this affirmation of our faith:

We believe in a merciful God,

**a God who does not keep score, a God who wants good for us.**

We believe in a creative God,

**a God who would heal with mud, a God capable of seeing what we cannot.**

We believe in a saving God,

**a God who heals, a God who greets our questions with patience,**

**a God who sends us out with hope in our step.**

What wondrous love is this. Amen.

**\*Prayers — p. 3**

## **we DEPART to serve the world**

**\*Blessing & Dismissal**

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.

**\*Sending Song — p. 5**

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

### **Acknowledgements**

Words for Worship (Words of Welcome, Poem, Affirmation of Faith, Blessing and Dismissal) used and/or adapted from “Seeking” by Rev. Sarah (Are) Speed | A Sanctified Art LLC | [www.sanctifiedart.org](http://www.sanctifiedart.org)

\*A note from the author: “This poem was inspired by the famous poem, Jesus at the Gay Bar, by Jay Hulme. In Jay’s poem, Jesus offers words of grace and belonging in a modern-day setting. In a similar fashion, I placed Jesus in a hospital setting to reflect the text’s (John 9:1-41) focus around healing. In particular, I chose a psychiatric setting to continue dismantling unfair stigmas around mental health. Once again, in this modern-day context, Jesus offers words of comfort and belonging. For me, the image of Jesus in therapy with me offers immense comfort and validation. I hope you find the same to be true for you.”