

Worship: 4th Sunday in Epiphany

January 31, 2021

GATHERING AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS (ELW p. 116)

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✝ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.
Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God, **we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG *Spread, Oh, Spread, Almighty Word* (ELW 663)

Spread, Oh, Spread, Almighty Word



1 Spread, oh, spread, al - might - y Word, spread the reign of God the Lord.
2 Tell of our Re - deem - er's grace, who, to save our hu - man race
3 Tell of God the Spir - it giv'n now to guide us on to heav'n,
4 Lord of har - vest, great and kind, rouse to ac - tion heart and mind;



Send forth our Cre - a - tor's call, heav - en's gifts ex - tend to all.
and to pay re - bel - lion's price, gave him - self as sac - ri - fice.
strong and ho - ly, just and true, work - ing both to will and do.
let the gath - 'ring na - tions all see your light and heed your call.

Text: Jonathan F. Bahnsmaier, 1774–1841; tr. *Lutheran Book of Worship*, alt.
Music: GOTT SEI DANK, J. A. Freylinghausen, *Geistreiches Gesangbuch*, 1704
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Words

Spread, Oh, Spread, Almighty Word

1 Spread, oh, spread, almighty Word,
spread the reign of God the Lord.
Send forth our Creator's call,
heaven's gifts extend to all.

2 Tell of our Redeemer's grace,
who, to save our human race
and to pay rebellion's price,
gave himself as sacrifice.

3 Tell of God the Spirit giv'n
now to guide us on to heav'n,
strong and holy, just and true,
working both to will and do.

4 Lord of harvest, great and kind,
rouse to action heart and mind;
let the gath'ring nations all

see your light and heed your call.

GREETING (ELW p. 120)

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY (ELW p. 124)

Let us pray. Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

A reading from Deuteronomy.

Today's reading is part of a longer discourse in Deuteronomy, an updating of the law for the Israelite community as the people wait to enter the promised land. Here Moses assures the people that God will continue to guide them through prophets who will proclaim the divine word.

[Moses said:] ¹⁵The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. ¹⁶This is what you requested of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the Lord my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." ¹⁷Then the Lord replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. ¹⁸I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. ¹⁹Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. ²⁰But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak—that prophet shall die."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Word of God, word of life.

PSALM: Psalm 111

The psalm for the day is sung.

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. (*Ps. 111:10*)

1 Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the Lord with my whole heart,
in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

2 **Great are your works, O Lord,
pondered by all who delight in them.**

3 Majesty and splendor mark your deeds,
and your righteousness endures forever.

4 **You cause your wonders to be remembered;
you are gracious and full of compassion.**

5 You give food to those who fear you,
remembering forever your covenant.

**6 You have shown your people the power of your works
in giving them the lands of the nations.**

7 The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice;
all of your precepts are sure.

**8 They stand fast forever and ever,
because they are done in truth and equity.**

9 You sent redemption to your people and commanded your covenant forever;
holy and awesome is your name.

**10 The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom;
all who practice this have a good understanding. God's praise endures forever.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

Paul is concerned about the way some Corinthian Christians use their freedom in Christ as license to engage in non-Christian behavior that sets a damaging example to other, impressionable believers. Christians have a responsibility to each other that their behavior does not cause another to sin.

¹Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. ²Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; ³but anyone who loves God is known by him. ⁴Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “no idol in the world really exists,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as in fact there are many gods and many lords—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. ⁷It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. ⁸“Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. ⁹But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. ¹²But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. ¹³Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (ELW p. 124)

Alleluia. The people who sat in darkness have seen | a great light;* for those who sat in the shadow of death light has dawned. *Alleluia.* (Matt. 4:16)

GOSPEL: Mark 1:21-28

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Forces that would bring death and disease have taken hold of a man, yet they recognize Jesus and know what his power means for them. Jesus commands these forces to leave and people are amazed at his authority.

²¹[Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught. ²²They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. ²³Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, ²⁴and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” ²⁵But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” ²⁶And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. ²⁷They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching—with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” ²⁸At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON (ELW p. 125)

It’s easy for us to write off today’s passage from 1 Corinthians as being irrelevant for us. After all, it’s talking about whether or not a Christian can eat fruit offered to an idol—hardly a relevant concern for most of us today. But, the spirit behind the conversation along with the situation of the early church in Corinth is, in fact, very relevant for us today.

Dr. David Frederickson writes the following about the letter: Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthian church about 53-55 CE from Ephesus. In it he responds to a letter that some in the church have written to him... But he is also responding to an oral report from “Chloe’s people”.... Who have brought him disturbing news. The church is divided, and one of the points at issue seems to be Paul’s own authority.... This complete letter gives us our best first-hand information about day-to-day realities in the early church. It is a bewildering mix of issues, involving competing claims to wisdom, wealth, power, and spiritual gifts. Apparently people disagree about specific practices; should Christians break off relationships, including marriages, with nonbelievers? Can they eat meat that has been offered to other gods? Paul brings up still other issues: sexual immorality (chapter 5), Christians taking each other to court (chapter 6), what Paul considers their abuse of the Lord’s Supper (chapter 11) and of the charismatic gift of speaking in tongues (chapter 14)...¹

I know this past year has been hard. Really hard. Collectively, probably one of the hardest years in the history of First Lutheran. But, the truth is, letters like the one we receive today remind us that the church has been through hard years before. The church in Corinth was a mess. And, yet, they helped establish the global church that exists today. We have always done hard things. We always will do hard things. We will get through hard things right now.

¹ Lutheran Study Bible. Dr. David Frederickson. Augsburg Fortress Press; Minneapolis, 2009. (1874-1875).

Like the church of Corinth, we glean from the words of the Apostle Paul and try to look forward to a better future and better days. Right now we are painfully aware that we don't have full control in making this happen, but the Apostle Paul reminds us that we have some control in making that happen.

First, as he reminds us, "Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." Now, I am a firm believer in the Schoolhouse Rock motto, "Knowledge is power!" Basing our actions in thoughtful research, consideration and discernment is part of our calling as citizens of this world. Many of you build up our society by providing knowledge in crucial ways. But, I think what he's getting at is something deeper, and something pretty relevant together. In training to be a pastor, one of the first things we are told is, "They don't care what you know until they know that you care." I think this is something all Christians should remember. Especially these days. Sharing knowledge and information is crucial, but showing our mutual care and concern for each other is more important. Likewise, in a world that is tearing each other apart and down left and right, forming camps and drawing lines, how are we showing love that builds up.

As we enter into the annual meeting together, I am going to invite all of us to take a minute, and reflect on these questions:

- *How am I showing love to build up my neighbor?
- *How am I showing love to build up the staff and church leadership?
- *How am I showing love to build up my church?
- *Am I spending more time and energy building up or tearing down? Are there changes I need to make?

Furthermore, the issue at hand of this text is this. Some Christians know that idols are not able to accept fruit offerings, other gods do not exist, etc. and so, therefore, why would you not eat good food that was offered to a non-existent god? It's good food! Not eating it isn't logical. But for some, the concept of and relationship to idols was worrisome and troublesome. It felt wrong to eat food that was in any way connected to an idol. Watching people eat fruit given to idols felt wrong. And, watching them eat fruit given to idols was a barrier for them feeling okay being in Christina community with others.

So, Paul points out this: Yes, the knowledge was right that there was no issue in eating the fruit given to idols. But, since this reality was a stumbling block for other Christians and formed a barrier between themselves and the other Christians, they shouldn't do it. They shouldn't eat the food offered to idols. They should find something else to eat. They should think about how their actions affect the greater community of believers. They should put their own personal preferences and liberties behind the needs of the more vulnerable members of their community.

Again, as we enter into the Annual Meeting together; I'm going to ask each one of you to take a minute, and reflect on these questions:

- *Are there things that I am doing, that I can change, that are breaking apart the community or serving as a stumbling block for more vulnerable members?

I know all of us hoped, by this point, the pandemic would be starting to be in the rear view mirror a bit more, but, it looks like we have a bit more to go. God will not abandon us. God will

carry us through like God has always carried the church through. To be honest, though, as we think and plan for the future, as Paul points out today, I'm not sure God is so concerned about the specific ways we worship, conduct the business of the church and study Scriptures together. God cares about the way we love one another and how we love the community around us. We will be successful in our Christian mission if we can look at each other, and the world can look at us and say that, despite everything this year, we still managed to love.

May we keep this in our hearts and minds as we vision the future together. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY *My Soul Does Magnify the Lord* (ELW 882)

My Soul Does Magnify the Lord



1 My soul does mag - ni - fy the Lord; my spir - it
 2 From this day all will call me blest, from now through
 3 His mer - cy touch - es those who love, and those who
 4 He cast the might - y from their thrones, and he has
 5 He comes to all who seek his love, for he re -
 6 All glo - ry be to God on high, and to his
 7 Just as it was, it is to - day, and it shall



sings of God my Sav - ior, for he has looked with
 all the com - ing a - ges. The Lord has done great
 serve . . . one an - oth - er. And with great strength he has
 lift - ed up the low - ly. He fills the hun - gry
 mem - bers the prom - ise that he had made to
 Son, . . . God the Sav - ior, and to the Spir - it of
 last through all to - mor - rows, and so my soul mag - ni -



love and fa - vor on his low - ly ser - vant.
 things for me and ho - ly is his name.
 scat - tered all the proud in their con - ceit.
 with good things while oth - ers turn a - way.
 A - bra - ham and to the chil - dren of God.
 life and truth that burns with - in our hearts.
 fies the Lord; praise God for - ev - er. A - men.

Text: Grayson Warren Brown, b. 1948
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Words

My Soul Does Magnify the Lord

1 My soul does magnify the Lord;
 my spirit sings of God, my Savior,
 for he has looked with love and favor

on his lowly servant.

2 From this day all will call me blest,
from now through all the coming ages.
The Lord has done great things for me and
holy is his name.

3 His mercy touches those who love,
and those who serve one another.
And with great strength he has scattered all the
proud in their conceit.

4 He cast the mighty from their thrones,
and he has lifted up the lowly.
He fills the hungry with good things while
others turn away.

5 He comes to all who seek his love,
for he remembers the promise
that he had made to Abraham and
to the children of God.

6 All glory be to God on high,
and to his Son, God the Savior,
and to the Spirit of life and truth that
burns within our hearts.

7 Just as it was, it is today,
and it shall last through all tomorrows,
and so my soul magnifies the Lord; praise
God forever. Amen.

CREED (ELW p. 126)

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 to the dead.* 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.

*Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all God's works in creation: plants and animals, water and soil, forests and farms; and for those tasked with protecting our natural resources and all that exists, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For government and leaders: cities and nations, rescue professionals and legal aid attorneys, elected officials and grassroots organizers; for all responsible for the well-being of civil society, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: those who are sick and hospitalized, those living with HIV/AIDS, those struggling with mental illness, those who are hungry or homeless, and all in any need: **Members:** Todd Hallstrom, Ron Almjeld, Linda Towne, Charlene Wachter, Bob Dieter, Mary Kraft, Marilyn Frisch, Julie & Denny Christensen, Dianne Sanderson, Betty Nelson
Members in Nursing Homes: Bobbie Elvin, Gene Wachter, Sandra Marsh

Members in Care Facilities: Joan Doeden, Jean Bender

Family Members & Friends: Lois Gruis, Josh Hansen (Mary Ingenthron's son), Lee Morrison (Terry Morrison's son), Henrietta Lais, Tom Morgan (Sandy Randall's dad), Peggy Konold (Norma Radenbaugh's daughter), Brad Martens (Valerie Veen's son)

Our service men and women and Love INC.

We ask that God shower them with compassion, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Gracious God, we pray for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides. We pray for those administering and receiving the vaccine. Let us pray.

Have mercy, O God.

We continue to pray for our schools, teachers, students, families and administrators as they continue to increase their capacity for in person schooling. Guide their plans. Give them endurance. Let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the covenant God made with us in the waters of baptism, in thanksgiving for the baptized who have died in the Lord, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

OFFERING AND CGC MOMENT

MUSIC

OFFERING PRAYER (ELW p. 129)

Let us pray. Blessed are you, O God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts: our selves, our time, and our possessions. Use us, and what we have gathered, in feeding the world with your love, through the one who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (ELW p. 134)

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.

BLESSING (ELW p. 136)

The God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus. **Amen.**

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

The God of all grace ✠ bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING SONG *God, Whose Almighty Word* (ELW 673)

God, Whose Almighty Word

The musical score is written for a four-part setting (Soprano, Alto, Tenor, Bass) in G major, 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of music. Each system has a vocal line in the upper staff and a bass line in the lower staff. The lyrics are printed below the vocal line. The first system contains the first four lines of the hymn. The second system contains the next four lines. The third system contains the final four lines, ending with a double bar line. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 4/4.

1 God, whose al - might - y word cha - os and dark - ness heard
2 Christ, who once came to bring, on your re - deem - ing wing,
3 Spir - it of truth and love, life - giv - ing, ho - ly dove,
4 Ho - ly and bless - ed three, glo - ri - ous Trin - i - ty,

and took their flight: hear us, we hum - bly pray, and where the
heal - ing and sight; health to the trou - bled mind, sight where il -
speed forth your flight; move on the wa - ter's face bear - ing the
Wis - dom, Love, Might: bound - less as o - cean's tide, roll - ing in

gos - pel day sheds not its glo - rious ray, let there be light.
lu - sions blind; oh, now to hu - man-kind let there be light.
lamp of grace, and in earth's dark - est place let there be light.
full - est pride, through the earth, far and wide, let there be light.

Text: John Marriott, 1780–1825, alt.
Music: ITALIAN HYMN, Felice de Giardini, 1716–1796

God, Whose Almighty Word

1 God, whose almighty word
chaos and darkness heard
and took their flight:
hear us, we humbly pray,
and where the gospel day
sheds not its glorious ray,
let there be light.

2 Christ, who once came to bring,
on your redeeming wing,
healing and sight;
health to the troubled mind,
sight where illusions blind;
oh, now to humankind
let there be light.

3 Spirit of truth and love,
life-giving, holy dove,
speed forth your flight;
move on the water's face
bearing the lamp of grace,
and in earth's darkest place
let there be light.

4 Holy and blessed three,
glorious Trinity,
Wisdom, Love, Might:
boundless as ocean's tide,
rolling in fullest pride,
through the earth, far and wide,
let there be light.

DISMISSAL (ELW p. 137)

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

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