

Salem Lutheran Church

115 N. Washington Ave., Albert Lea

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 28, 2024

In Deuteronomy God promises to raise up a prophet like Moses, who will speak for God; in Psalm 111 God shows the people the power of God's works. For the church these are ways of pointing to the unique authority people sensed in Jesus' actions and words. We encounter that authority in God's word, around which we gather, the word that prevails over any lesser spirit that would claim power over us, freeing us to follow Jesus.

**Congregation: please stand. If standing is difficult for you, please feel free to remain seated.*

Gathering

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

Prelude

Announcements

***Confession and Forgiveness**

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign that is marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✠ one God,
creator of darkness and light,
word of truth,
wind sweeping over the waters.

Amen.

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

Silence is kept for reflection.

God, our rock and refuge,
we pour out our hearts before you.
We have known you but have not always loved you.
We have wounded one another
and sinned against you.
We have not always recognized the Holy Spirit
dwelling in each of us.
Remember your covenant.
Renew your creation.
Restore us,

that we might proclaim your good news to all.

Amen.

The voice of the Lord is upon the waters.

God has spoken:

The time of grace is now.

In Jesus, the reign of God has come near.

By the authority of ✠ Jesus Christ,

your sins are forgiven.

You are God's beloved.

Amen.

***HYMN**

Open Your Ears, O Faithful People

#519

***Greeting**

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.

***Canticle of Praise**

Glory Be to God

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***PRAYER OF THE DAY**

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

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.

Psalm: Psalm 111

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

¹Hallelujah! 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 de- ℣ light in them.**

³Majesty and splendor **℣** mark your deeds,
and your righteousness en- ℣ dures forever.

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

⁵You give food to **℣** those who fear you,
remembering forev- ℣ er your covenant.

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

⁷The works of your hands are faithful- ℣ ness and justice;
all of your pre- ℣ cepts are sure.

⁸**They stand fast forev- ℣ er and ever,
because they are done in ℣ truth and equity. R**

⁹You sent redemption to your people and commanded your cove- ℣ nant forever;
holy and awesome ℣ is your name.

¹⁰**The fear of the LORD is the begin- ℣ ning of wisdom;
all who practice this have a good understanding. God’s praise en- ℣ dures
forever. R**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

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.

***GOSPEL READING: 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

Pastor Mark Boorsma

***HYMN**

Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness

#843

***APOSTLE’S CREED**

**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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

As we celebrate Christ embodied in human form, we pray for God's blessing on the church, the world, and all of creation.

A brief silence.

Loving God, we pray that your example of teaching with confidence and authority builds up your church in love. May all church leaders and teachers honor your instruction and model your inclusive ways.

God of grace,

receive our prayer.

Renewing God, we pray for all of creation, that waterways flow clean and clear, natural spaces are protected, and our planet is healed. Let us commit to thoughtful care of the earth.

God of grace,

receive our prayer.

Justice-seeking God, we pray for those in government and community leadership, that they lead with honor and mindfulness. May they remember their covenants and be upright in their ways.

God of grace,

receive our prayer.

Compassionate God, we pray for all in need, especially those who have known rejection, any who struggle with long-term illness or chronic pain, those without access to safe housing or health care, and any who suffer especially Kathy, Mary, Shirley, Marianne, Andrea, Woody, Larry, Dean, Leland, Tom and all others on our hearts and minds this day.

God of grace,

receive our prayer.

Still-speaking God, we pray for our congregation, for its artists and musicians, for its educators and caregivers, that all gifts are used to care for those in need and to live out your example of accompaniment, gospel witness, and love.

God of grace,

receive our prayer.

Eternal God, we remember all who have been teachers, mentors, and companions in the church and in our lives. We trust that all who have died rest in your loving care.

God of grace,

receive our prayer.

Knowing the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we offer these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Amen.

***PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you all.

And also with you.

Thanksgiving

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

OFFERING

We very much appreciate your continued giving and generosity at this time.

Offering can be placed in the offering plate at the door.

OFFERING HYMN

Songs of Thanksgiving and Praise

(vs. 1) #310

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD

O God of justice and love, we give
thanks to you that you illumine
our way through life with the
words of your Son. Give us the
light we need, awaken us to the
needs of others, and at the end
bring all the world to your feast;
through Jesus Christ, our Savior
and Lord, to whom, with you and
the Holy Spirit, be honor and
glory forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

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,
ever and ever. Amen.

Sending

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

***Blessing**

God who names you,
Christ who claims you,
and the Holy Spirit who dwells in you,
✠ bless you and remain with you always.
Amen.

***HYMN**

In Thee is Gladness

#867

***DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. You are God's beloved.
Thanks be to God.

Assisting in Worship

Worship Assistant: Bruce Ness
Ushers: Jim and Mary Gulbrandson
Coffee: Shari Budach

Thank you to Bev Lombardi for the beautiful organ music this morning.

This Week at Salem

Tuesday, January 30th: 9:00 a.m. Staff Meeting
Friday, February 2nd: 6:30 a.m. Men's Bible Study
Sunday, February 4th: 9:00 a.m. Coffee Hour
10:00 a.m. Worship Service

Our annual Congregational Meeting will be held immediately after the worship service today. It is important for all members to attend.