



***Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Sunday, February 1st, 2026
Esther Lutheran Church, ELCA***

Introduction

Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.

PRELUDE

BELL

WELCOME

GATHERING

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God

Please stand as you are able

***CALL TO WORSHIP**

P: Happy are those who do not take the path of sinners,

C: Or follow the advice of the wicked.

P: Their delight is in the law of the Lord,

C: On God's law they meditate day and night.

P: They are like trees planted by streams of water.

C: Their leaves do not wither, and they yield their fruit in season.

***CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

P: We confess our sins before God and one another.

Pause for silence and reflection.

P: Incarnate God,

C: You have given us the most precious gift of all: yourself. And yet we live as if there is nothing extraordinary about being your children. We forget, ignore, or devalue your blessings of grace and forgiveness. We undermine ourselves and others, and refuse to seek help when it is available. Show us your mercy and forgive our stubborn ways, for the sake of Jesus. Amen.

P: Immanuel is here. Fear has been banished. Hear the words of your redemption in the angels' chorus and see your salvation in the real person of Christ on earth. We are forgiven, and we are never alone. **Amen.**

***GATHERING HYMN: "Gather Us In" (ELW 532)**

**1 Here in this place the new light is streaming,
now is the darkness vanished away;
see in this space our fears and our dreamings
brought here to you in the light of this day.
Gather us in, the lost and forsaken,
gather us in, the blind and the lame;
call to us now, and we shall awaken,
we shall arise at the sound of our name.**

**2 We are the young, our lives are a myst'ry,
we are the old who yearn for your face;
we have been sung throughout all of hist'ry,
called to be light to the whole human race.
Gather us in, the rich and the haughty,
gather us in, the proud and the strong;
give us a heart, so meek and so lowly,
give us the courage to enter the song.**

**3 Here we will take the wine and the water,
here we will take the bread of new birth,
here you shall call your sons and your daughters,
call us anew to be salt for the earth.
Give us to drink the wine of compassion,
give us to eat the bread that is you;
nourish us well, and teach us to fashion
lives that are holy and hearts that are true.**

**4 Not in the dark of buildings confining,
not in some heaven, light years away—
here in this place the new light is shining,
now is the kingdom, and now is the day.
Gather us in and hold us forever,
gather us in and make us your own;
gather us in, all peoples together,
fire of love in our flesh and our bone.**

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950

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***GREETING:**

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

C: And also with you.

***KYRIE : (ELW pg. 203)**

**1 Have mercy on us, Lord, and hear our solemn prayer.
We come to hear your living Word; it saves us from despair.**

**2 Have mercy on us, Christ, and wash away our sin.
Pour out your grace and make us whole, that new life may begin.**

**3 Have mercy on us, Lord; make sin and shame depart.
Renew us with your saving pow'r; create in us new hearts!**

***CANTICLE OF PRAISE: “Glory Be To God In Heaven” (ELW pg. 204)**

- 1 **Glory be to God in heaven;
peace, goodwill to all the earth.
Mighty God of all creation,
Father of surpassing worth:
we exalt you, we adore you,
we lift high our thanks and praise.
Saints and angels bow before you;
here on earth our songs we raise.**

- 2 **Glory be to Christ forever,
Lamb of God and Lord of love.
Son of God and gracious Savior,
you have come from heav'n above;
on the cross you died to save us;
now you reign at God's right hand.
Hear our prayer; restore, forgive us;
in your promise firm we stand.**

- 3 **Holy One we now acclaim you;
Lord alone, to you we call;
Holy One in faith we name you,
throned on high, yet near to all:
Jesus Christ, with God the Spirit,
in the Father's splendor bright.
For the peace that we inherit,
glory be to God on high!**

***PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

P: **Holy God,**

C: **You confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and
the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and
perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world
may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

Please be seated

WORD

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

FIRST READING: MICAH 6:1-8

With the mountains and the foundations of the earth as the jury, God brings a lawsuit against Israel. God has “wearied” Israel with a long history of saving acts. God does not want or expect lavish sacrifices to attempt to earn divine favor. Rather God empowers the people to do justice, to love loyalty to God, and to walk shrewdly in God’s service.

¹ Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. ² Hear, you mountains, the case of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the Lord has a case against his people, and he will contend with Israel. ³ “O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! ⁴ For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. ⁵ O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.” ⁶ “With what shall I come before the Lord and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good, and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God? Here ends the first reading.

PSALM: 15

Lord, who may abide upon your holy hill? (Ps. 15:1)

*Congregation reads the **BOLD***

¹ Lord, who may dwell in your tabernacle? Who may abide upon your holy hill?

² **Those who lead a blameless life and do what is right, who speak the truth from their heart;**

³ they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil to their friends; they do not

cast discredit upon a neighbor.

⁴ In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honor those who fear the Lord. They have sworn upon their health and do not take back their word.

⁵ They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take bribes against the innocent. Those who do these things shall never be overthrown.

SECOND READING: 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

According to the world's standards of power and might, the message of the cross seems stupid and offensive. Yet this word reveals the paradoxical way God has chosen to work power and salvation through weakness, rejection, and suffering. Hence the message of the cross becomes true wisdom and power for believers.

¹⁸ The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scholar? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of the proclamation, to save those who believe. ²² For Jews ask for signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. ²⁶ Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to abolish things that are, ²⁹ so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ In contrast, God is why you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ in order that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." Here ends the second reading.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: “Alleluia” (ELW pg. 205)

**Alleluia! Lord and Savior: open now your saving word.
Let it burn like fire within us; speak until our hearts are stirred.
Alleluia! Lord, we sing for the good news that you bring.**

GOSPEL READING: MATTHEW 5:1-12

*Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount by naming those
who are blessed in the reign of God.*

¹ When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ² And he began to speak and taught them saying: ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. ⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹ “Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” The Gospel of the Lord... **Thanks be to God!**

CHILDREN’S TIME & SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: “When Peace like a River” (ELW 785)

**1 When peace like a river attendeth my way,
 when sorrows like sea billows roll,
 whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
 it is well, it is well with my soul.**

Refrain

**It is well (it is well)
with my soul, (with my soul,)**

it is well, it is well with my soul.

- 2 **Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
let this blest assurance control,
that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
and has shed his own blood for my soul. *Refrain***
- 3 **He lives--oh, the bliss of this glorious thought;
my sin, not in part, but the whole,
is nailed to his cross and I bear it no more.
Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul! *Refrain***
- 4 **Lord, hasten the day when our faith shall be sight,
the clouds be rolled back as a scroll,
the trumpet shall sound and the Lord shall descend;
even so it is well with my soul. *Refrain***

Text: Horatio G. Spafford, 1828-1888

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

Prayer Response: "Hear our Prayer O Lord"

L: We pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

L: You give hope to those who suffer and bless those who risk themselves for your sake. Make us bold to follow your way, even when the world neither recognizes nor rewards us for our actions. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: A tree planted by water will yield its fruit and not wither. But our negligence has threatened the safety of our planet's water and thrown nature out of balance around the globe. Open our eyes to the ways which still remain to preserve life as we know it and to care responsibly for the resources with which you have entrusted us. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You have called us to be light to the world. Forgive us when we hide or stifle our light in order to conform and not appear odd in the eyes of others. Shine through us so that you might be seen in the faces of your servants and all might come to know your goodness. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: You proclaim blessing for the hungry, the persecuted and the mourners. Turn our hearts to those in need, that we ourselves might be an answer to their prayers. We lift up today all who call out to you, especially Jerry, Chris, Bruce, Jaxson, Kristy, Larry, Joan, Dennis, Lois, Brad, Dale, Doug, Gary, Shirley, Muyres, Bev, Reilly, Allison, Cadence, and Becky. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We give thanks for all those who followed in faith, even when they risked their lives to do so. Give us such courage to proclaim you in the world without fear or shame and bring us at length into fellowship with all your saints. God of blessing,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Receive our prayers and hear our cries, assuring us that you will act on behalf of those who call on you. For the sake of Jesus.



Hear our prayer, O Lord, hear our prayer, O Lord; in-



cline thine ear to us, and grant us thy peace. A - men.

Please stand as you are able

***APOSTLES' CREED: (ELW pg. 217)**

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**

***SHARING OF THE PEACE:**

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

Please be seated

OFFERING

*We thank you for your gifts of time, talent, and treasure that help this
congregation, to continue our ministry together, and to make Christ known in our
communities and the world.*

OFFERING HYMN: "This Little Light of Mine" (ELW 677)

**1 This little light of mine, I'm goin'-a let it shine;
this little light of mine, I'm goin'-a let it shine;
this little light of mine, I'm goin'-a let it shine,
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.**

- 2 Ev'rywhere I go, I'm goin'-a let it shine;
 ev'rywhere I go, I'm goin'-a let it shine;
 ev'rywhere I go, I'm goin'-a let it shine,
 let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
- 3 Jesus gave it to me, I'm goin'-a let it shine;
 Jesus gave it to me, I'm goin'-a let it shine;
 Jesus gave it to me, I'm goin'-a let it shine,
 let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Text: African American spiritual

Please stand as you are able

***THE OFFERING PRAYER:**

- P: O God,
- C: You desire not only right action, but pure hearts. Make us cheerful givers
 and joyful participants in the work of your kingdom. Bless these gifts we
 offer here and show us ever deepening ways to serve you and those you
 love. In Jesus' name. Amen.

MEAL

God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.

***GREAT THANKSGIVING: *spoken* (ELW pg. 206)**

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: We lift our hearts to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise!

***THE WORDS OF INSTITUTION: *"Remember Now My Children"* sung**

The night of His betrayal, our Lord took bread.
He broke it and he blessed it, and then he said,

**“My body given for you is what this means,
remember now my children what you have seen.”
And then He took the chalice, and raised it high.
“My body broken for you, a full supply...
a covenant, a promise, a cleansing stream.
Remember now, my children, what you have seen.”
We share this food together, remembering Christ;
we share a common treasure and know the price;
we share it without measure, a gift of love;
we share our life forever, with God above.**

***LORD’S PRAYER: *spoken* (ELW pg. 208)**

**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.**

***INVITATION TO COMMUNION:**

**P: We are blessed; we are God’s people. We were made to proclaim the love
of Jesus in all we do. Let us gather now to be fed on his body and blood,
nurtured by his blessing, and strengthened by his promise. Come to the
feast!**

Please be seated

COMMUNION

*Congregation may be seated The acolytes, ushers, organist and those assisting
with communion should come forward at this time and receive communion.*

Following the assistants, we will celebrate Holy Communion continuous. The ushers will direct you. We welcome all baptized Christians to the Lord's Table where we experience the unity that God intends for all people. Those who do not receive the bread and wine may receive a blessing from the pastor.

Gluten-free wafers and apple juice are available.

COMMUNION HYMN: "Blest Are They" (ELW 728)

- 1 Blest are they, the poor in spirit
 Theirs is the kingdom of God
 Blest are they, full of sorrow
 They shall be consoled**

Refrain

**Rejoice, and be glad!
Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad!
Yours is the kingdom of God!**

- 2 Blest are they, the lowly ones
 They shall inherit the earth
 Blest are they, who hunger and thirst
 They shall have their fill**

Refrain

**Rejoice, and be glad!
Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad!
Yours is the kingdom of God!**

- 3 Blest are they, who show mercy
 Mercy shall be theirs
 Blest are they, the pure of heart
 They shall see God!**

Refrain

**Rejoice, and be glad!
Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad!
Yours is the kingdom of God!**

- 4 Blest are they, who seek peace
 They are the children of God
 Blest are they who suffer in faith
 The glory of God is theirs**

Refrain

**Rejoice, and be glad!
Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad!
Yours is the kingdom of God!**

- 5 Blest are you, who suffer hate
 All because of me
 Rejoice and be glad, yours is the kingdom;
 Shine for all to see**

Refrain

**Rejoice, and be glad!
Blessed are you, holy are you!
Rejoice and be glad!
Yours is the kingdom of God!**

Text: David Haas, b. 1957

Please stand as you are able

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION:**

- P: Radiant God,
C: We have seen your glory in the face of Jesus Christ.
 In the sacrament of his body and blood you have drawn us to your heart.**

Send us from this table with delight, that our lives may reflect the beauty of your love, and bear witness to all we have seen and heard, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to our neighbor in need

***BLESSING**

May the triune God,
who has put a new song in your mouth
and tuned your heart for praise
✠ bless you now and forever.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

***SENDING HYMN: "Go Make Disciples" (ELW 540)**

**"Go, make disciples, baptizing them, teaching them.
Go, make disciples, for I am with you till the end of time.
Go, be the salt of the earth.
Go, be the light for the world.
Go, be a city on a hill, so all can see that you're serving me.
Go, make disciples."**

Text: Handt Hanson, b. 1950

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***DISMISSAL:**

P: Go in peace. Be a light in the world.

C: **Thanks be to God!**

IN OUR PRAYERS

Jerry Anderson	Chris & Bruce Carter
Jaxson Bosl	Kristy Fyhrie
Larry Sather	Joan Burquest
Dennis Rosenquist	Lois Rosenquist
Brad Sanvik- nephew of Jewel Townsend	
Rev. Bruce Miller- father of Karin Wagner	
Dale Flemming – father of Laurie Ratajesak	

Doug Tvedt – brother of Joan Burquest
Jerry Pogose – father of Chuck Pogose
Gary Borst – friend of the Andersons
Shirley Nesges – friend of the Thoms
Joyce Muyres – friend of the Thoms
Bev Guse-Ohlrech – friend of the Pedersons
Reilly McCormick – friend of Esther congregation
Allison Dotzler – friend of Kathy Mittag
Cadence Smith – friend of Mandy Arvidson
Becky Yttrie – friend of the Townsends
Family and Friends of: Sarah Pomeranz, David Anderson, Ron Myren, Katie Jahnke, Dave Bendix, Megan Sheen, Colleen Burquest, and Chad Way

SERVING IN FEBRUARY

Pastor: Feb 1-SAM Jewel Townsend, Feb 8-Pr. Dennis Preston, Feb 15-SAM Jewel Townsend, Feb 22-Pr. Greg Billberg

Organists: Marcia Guenther, Brad Lambrecht

Altar Care: NEED VOLUNTEER

Usher: Brady Arvidson & Jeremy Arvidson

Acolyte: Logan Arvidson

Lay Reader: Jim Arvidson

Communion Assistant: Christy Hart

Birthday Card Sender: Mandy Arvidson

PowerPoint: NEED VOLUNTEER

Tech: Mike Lage

THIS WEEK AT ESTHER

Sunday, February 1st –Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

Sunday fellowship before and after worship

9 am – Sunday School

10 am – Worship with Holy Communion led by SAM Jewel Townsend

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Wednesday, February 4th

6 pm – Confirmation: Meal: Martha Circle

Sunday, February 8th – Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Sunday fellowship before and after worship

8:30 am - WELCA

9 am – Sunday School

10 am – Worship led by SAM Jewel Townsend

11 am – Confirmation Pancake Brunch

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

NEWS AND NOTES

Sign-up sheets for 2026 Worship Tasks are on the Narthex table.

The Confirmation Class will be hosting a Pancake Brunch after worship on February 8th . Free will offering will go to the local family who recently lost their home in a house fire.

Check out our new Esther Calendar on our website to keep up to date! Go to estherlutheran.com and click on “Esther Calendar.”

We believe everyone has a unique and valuable place in God's family and we welcome all to share in the community of faith here at Esther. If you would like to become a member please contact Mandy in the church office at 218-338-2171 or secretary@estherlutheran.net or Jewel Townsend at 320-760-2503 or jewellht17@gmail.com

LUTHER CREST CAMP OPPORTUNITIES:

Summer Camp Early Bird Registration goes until February 14th.

The Esther Camp Fund and WELCA cover all but the registration fee!

Register online at luthercrest.org.

Children and Youth Retreats: These weekends are filled with games, worship, Bible study, winter play, cabin time, and new friendships. Dates: January 16-18 and February 6-8 or campers grades 3-9

Youth Leader Jamboree: This FREE retreat offers time for renewal, networking, meaningful conversation, and inspiration with other youth ministry leaders. It's a great way to enter the year refreshed and encouraged. This retreat is free for all

who work with youth in their congregation and communities. Dates: January 11-13.

High School Recharge Retreat: This weekend is designed for high schoolers to slow down, connect with God and peers, and enjoy intentional rest with fun activities and quiet moments alike. Dates: February 20-22.

Adult Creative Retreat: Come to the Adult Creative Retreat at Luther Crest and breathe life into your creative spirit in community with others. Whether you love art, writing, music, crafting, or simply exploring your imagination, this weekend offers time away to slow down, create, reflect, and connect with God and with others in a peaceful camp setting. Enjoy cozy spaces, inspiring conversations, and campfire moments, and creative time that feeds your soul. Dates: March 26-29.

Women's Week: Come for the week or just a day and experience joy, fun, food, and spiritual growth alongside a crew of amazing women. Dates: June 21-26.

Esther Lutheran Church, ELCA

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