



Second Sunday of Lent
Sunday, March 1st, 2026
Esther Lutheran Church, ELCA

Introduction

During Lent we journey with all those around the world who will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. In today's gospel Jesus tells Nicodemus that he must be born of water and Spirit. At the font we are given a new birth as children of God. As God made a covenant with Abraham, in baptism God promises to raise us up with Christ to new life. From worship we are sent forth to proclaim God's love for all the world.

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: How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!

C: **How vast is the sum of them!**

P: I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.

C: **Wonderful are your works; of this we are certain.**

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

C: **Amen.**

***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: "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" (ELW 803)**

- 1** When I survey the wondrous cross
on which the prince of glory died,
my richest gain I count but loss
and pour contempt on all my pride.
- 2** Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
save in the death of Christ, my God;
all the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to his blood.
- 3** See, from his head, his hands, his feet,
sorrow and love flow mingled down.
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
or thorns compose so rich a crown?
- 4** Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were a present far too small;

**love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.**

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748

***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: "Come Let Us Join" (ELW pg. 204)**

1 Come, let us join our cheerful songs with angels round the throne;
ten thousand thousand are their tongues, but all their joys are one.

2 "Worthy the Lamb that died," they cry, "to be exalted thus!"
"Worthy the Lamb," our lips reply, "for he was slain for us!"

3 Jesus is worthy to receive honor and pow'r divine;
and blessings, more than we can give, be, Lord, forever thine.

4 Let all creation join in one to bless the sacred name
of him who sits upon the throne, and to adore the Lamb.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

P: O God, our leader and guide,

C: in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children.
Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your

life to all the world through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Please be seated

WORD

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

FIRST READING: GENESIS 12:1-4a

God's call of Abram and Sarai has a clear purpose—that through them all the families of the earth would gain a blessing. As they set out on their journey, they are accompanied by promises of land, nation, and a great reputation.

¹The Lord said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ²I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” ^{4a} So Abram went, as the Lord had told him, and Lot went with him. Here ends the first reading.

PSALM: 121 ~ Congregation reads the *BOLD*

I lift up my eyes to the hills; my help comes from the Lord. (Ps. 121:1, 2)

¹ I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

² **My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.**

³ The Lord will not let your foot be moved nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.

⁴ **Behold, the keeper of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep;**

⁵ the Lord watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand;

⁶ **the sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

⁷ The Lord will preserve you from all evil and will keep your life.

⁸ **The Lord will watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth forevermore.**

SECOND READING: ROMANS 4:1-5, 13-17

In the person and example of Abraham we discover that a right relationship with God does not involve earning a reward from God but entails trusting God's promises. Abraham is the forebear and model for both Jews and Gentiles, because we too trust that ours is a God who gives life to the dead.

¹ What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? ² For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. ³ For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." ⁴ Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. ⁵ But to one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

¹³ For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴ For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵ For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law, neither is there transgression. ¹⁶ For this reason the promise depends on faith, in order that it may rest on grace, so that it may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (who is the father of all of us, ¹⁷ as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations"), in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. Here ends the second reading.

Please stand as you are able

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: "Return to the Lord" (ELW pg. 205b)

**Return to the Lord, your God, return to the Lord, your God,
who is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love.**

GOSPEL READING: JOHN 3:1-17

A curious Pharisee visits Jesus by night to learn from the teacher his friends reject. Jesus speaks to him about life in the Spirit and the kingdom of God.

¹ Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ² He came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with that person.” ³ Jesus answered him, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” ⁴ Nicodemus said to him, “How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother’s womb and be born?” ⁵ Jesus answered, “Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶ What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Do not be astonished that I said to you, ‘You must be born from above.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it chooses, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.” ⁹ Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” ¹⁰ Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? ¹¹ “Very truly, I tell you, we speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen, yet you do not receive our testimony. ¹² If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ “Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.” The Gospel of the Lord... **Thanks be to God!**

CHILDREN’S TIME & SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: “Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross” (ELW 335)

**1 Jesus, keep me near the cross,
there's a precious fountain;**

free to all, a healing stream
flows from Calv'ry's mountain.

Refrain

In the cross, in the cross
be my glory ever;
till my ransomed soul shall find
rest beyond the river.

2 Near the cross, a trembling soul,
love and mercy found me;
there the bright and morning star
sheds its beams around me. *Refrain*

3 Near the cross! O Lamb of God,
bring its scenes before me;
help me walk from day to day
with its shadow o'er me. *Refrain*

4 Near the cross I'll watch and wait,
hoping, trusting ever,
till I reach the golden strand
just beyond the river. *Refrain*

Text: Fanny J. Crosby, 1820-1915

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

Prayer Response: "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" (ELW 752)

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

A brief silence.

L: We bring our doubts, our questions, our confusion before you, O God, knowing that nothing is foolish or unworthy of your time. Give us faith to trust your counsel and to learn from the messengers which you have sent throughout the ages. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We are indeed fearfully and wonderfully made, along with your whole creation. Open our eyes to the wonders of this world, and humble us to be taught by all of nature, that we might learn respect and responsibility. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: So often the darkness suits us better than the light, when we hide in the shame of our memories, our shortcomings, our misdeeds. Bring us into the open where forgiveness is real and redemption is the cleansing our souls desire. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Give us daily chances to be reborn in you. Bless our lives and our loved ones with your healing presence, especially Jerry, Chris, Bruce, Jaxson, Kristy, Larry, Joan, Dennis, Lois, Dale, Doug, Gary, Shirley, Joyce, Bev, Reilly, Allison, Cadence, and Becky. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: We are by no means the first to question, to wonder, to misunderstand. Generations have done so before us, and have found their peace in you. Join us with all the saints of every age, in your eternal communion where light shines perpetually. God of wisdom,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Hear our prayers, O God, and make of us the very answers we seek, light to the world and hope for your people.

C: Lord, listen to your children praying,

Lord, send your Spirit in this place;

Lord, listen to your children praying,

send us love, send us pow'r, send us grace. Amen.

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

***OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

P: All that we have is yours, O God.

C: **Accept and use these gifts in ways we cannot begin to imagine, to reach those whom we will never meet, but to whom we are joined by your love for all humanity. For the sake of Jesus. 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: As we lift this bread and this cup, so has Jesus been lifted up for our sake,
and for the life of the world. Fill us with his wisdom at this holy table,
strengthened anew to serve your people, the world that he so loves. Come
and be fed!

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: “Wash, O God, Our Sons and Daughters” (ELW 445)

- 1 Wash, O God, our sons and daughters,
where your cleansing waters flow.
Number them among your people;
bless as Christ blessed long ago.
Weave them garments bright and sparkling;
compass them with love and light.
Fill, anoint them; send your Spirit,
holy dove and heart’s delight.**

- 2 We who bring them long for nurture;
by your milk may we be fed.
Let us join your feast, partaking
cup of blessing, living bread.
God, renew us, guide our footsteps;
free from sin and all its snares,
one with Christ in living, dying,
by your Spirit, children, heirs.**

- 3 Oh, how deep your holy wisdom!
Unimagined, all your ways!
To your name be glory, honor!
With our lives we worship, praise!
We your people stand before you,
water-washed and Spirit-born.
By your grace, our lives we offer,
Recreate us, God transform!**

Text by Ruth Duck, b. 1947

COMMUNION HYMN: “Just As I Am Without One Plea” (ELW 592)

**1 Just as I am, without one plea,
but that thy blood was shed for me,
and that thou bidd'st me come to thee,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.**

**2 Just as I am, though tossed about
with many a conflict, many a doubt,
fightings and fears within, without,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.**

**3 Just as I am, thou wilt receive,
wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve;
because thy promise I believe,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come,**

**4 Just as I am; thy love unknown
has broken ev'ry barrier down;
now to be thine, yea, thine alone,
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.**

Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1789-1871

Please stand as you are able

***PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION:**

P: God of our salvation,

C: **we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

SENDING

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

***BLESSING:**

Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity:
God, who calls all things into existence,
Jesus Christ, who redeems us,
and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation,

✝ bless you now and always.

THREE-FOLD AMEN

***SENDING HYMN: “*Blessed Assurance*” (ELW 638)**

**1 Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
born of his Spirit, washed in his blood.**

Refrain

**This is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior, all the day long:
this is my story, this is my song,
praising my Savior all the day long.**

**2 Perfect submission, perfect delight,
visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
angels descending bring from above
echoes of mercy, whispers of love. *Refrain***

**3 Perfect submission, all is at rest;
I in my Savior am happy and blest,
watching and waiting, looking above,
filled with his goodness, lost in his love. *Refrain***

Text: Fanny J. Crosby, 1820-1915

***DISMISSAL:**

P: Go now to love and serve the Lord.

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

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

Sunday, March 1st – Second Sunday of Lent

Sunday fellowship before and after worship

8:30 am – VBS Planning Meeting

9 am – Sunday School

10 am – Worship with Holy Communion led by Pr. Preston

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Wednesday, March 4th

6 pm – Lent Soup & Sandwich Supper

7 pm – Worship

Thursday, March 6th

7 am-7 pm – World Day of Prayer

Sunday, March 8th – Third Sunday of Lent

Sunday fellowship before and after worship

8:30 am - WELCA

9 am – Sunday School

10 am – Worship led by SAM Jewel Townsend

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

SERVING IN MARCH

Pastor: March 1- Pr. Dennis Preston, March 8- SAM Jewel Townsend, March 15- Pr. Brigitte, March 22-SAM Jewel Townsend, March 29-Pr. Greg Billberg

Organists: Marcia Guenther & Brad Lambrecht

Altar Care: Bev Arvidson

Usher: Rodney Peterson

Acolyte: Chase & Avery Stueve

Lay Reader: Chris Carter

Communion Assistant: Steph Stueve

Birthday Card Sender: Confirmation Class

NEWS AND NOTES

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

VBS Planning Meeting is Sunday, March 1st at 8:30 am. ALL ARE WELCOME!

First Communion Class will be held on March 15 at 8:30 am. The suggested minimum age for this class is 5th grade. If you, a family member, or friend would be interested in attending this class please contact Karin Wagner or Jewel Townsend.

Easter Garden Flower orders are due March 11th. Order forms are in the Narthex.

Lilles:

1 stem 6-8 blooms	\$15
2 stem 10-12 blooms	\$30
3 stems 15-18 blooms	\$45

Others:

Begonias	\$18
Cyclamen*	\$18
Daffodils*	\$15
Hyacinths*	\$15
Tulips*	\$15



*Potted spring bulbs are not guaranteed to bloom on Easter but are guaranteed to be beautiful.

Note from the Council: Looking for donations of flowers for the graves. Also, if anyone is interested, please make up some wooden cross stakes for the flowers. We need to replace many of the ones we have. Any questions, please ask any member of the Council.

World Day of Prayer will be held on Friday, March 6, 2026, 7 am to 7 pm, in the Esther Lutheran Church Sanctuary.

Join us and fellow Christians around the world for an intentional time set aside to pray for our families, our communities, and our world. Schedule:

- 7 am – Morning Prayer Service
- Noon – Midday Prayer Service
- 6:30 pm – Evening Prayer Service
- We will be holding a Prayer Vigil throughout the entire day, 7 am to 7 pm. You are invited to come and sit and pray for as long as you wish.
- We are collecting prayer petitions in a “Prayer Jar” in the Narthex.

The World Day of Prayer is a global ecumenical movement led by Christian women who welcome all to join in prayer and action for peace and justice. The common day of observance is the first Friday of March.

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

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