



FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
SUNDAY, MARCH 15TH, 2026
ESTHER LUTHERAN CHURCH, ELCA

INTRODUCTION:

Baptism is sometimes called enlightenment. The gospel for this Sunday is the story of the man born blind healed by Christ. "I was blind, now I see," declares the man.

In baptism God opens our eyes to see the truth of who we are: God's beloved children. As David was anointed king of Israel, in baptism God anoints our head with oil, and calls us to bear witness to the light of Christ in our daily lives.

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: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

C: I was blind, but now I see!

P: Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear.

C: I was blind, but now I see!

P: One thing I ask: to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life.

C: I was blind, but now I see!

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: Merciful God,

C: We come before you with heavy hearts. We do not always follow our savior's lead. We insist on our own way, putting worldly things before you. We doubt, we discriminate; we scatter— preferring darkness to the brilliance of your truth. For all this we ask your mercy and forgiveness, that our hearts may be made clean again. Amen.

P: As a loving shepherd gathers his sheep, so God protects and cares for us. As patient as a parent to a wayward child, so is God's mercy for us. Let us rejoice that we have received forgiveness, and that every day God seeks to renew us in the image of our Creator. **Amen.**

***GATHERING HYMN: "We Come to You for Healing, Lord" (ELW 617)**

1 We come to you for healing, Lord,
of body, mind, and soul,
and pray that by your Spirit's touch
we may again be whole.

2 As once you walked through ancient streets
and reached toward those in pain,
come, risen Christ, among us still
with pow'r to heal again.

3 You touch us through physicians' skills,
through nurses' gifts of care,
and through the love of faithful friends

who lift our lives in prayer.

- 4 When nights are long with wakefulness,
through days when strength runs low,
grant us your gift of patience, Lord,
your calming peace to know.
- 5 We come to you, O loving Lord,
in our distress and pain,
in trust that through our nights and days
your grace will heal, sustain.

Text: Herman G. Stuempfle Jr., b. 1923

Text © 2002 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

***GREETING**

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

C: **And also with you.**

KYRIE: *sung* (ELW pg. 213)

Kyrie eleison: **Lord, have mercy.**

Christe eleison: **Christ, have mercy.**

Kyrie eleison: **Lord, have mercy.**

***CANTICLE OF PRAISE: “Glory to God” (ELW pg. 213)**

Glory to God, glory to God,
glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God,
and peace to God’s people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King,
almighty God and Father,
we worship you,
we give you thanks,
we praise you for your glory.

Glory to God, glory to God,
glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God,
and peace to God's people on earth.

Lord Jesus Christ,
only Son of the Father,
Lord God, Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world:
have mercy on us;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
receive our prayer.

Glory to God, glory to God,
glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God,
and peace to God's people on earth.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High,
Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father. Amen.

Glory to God, glory to God,
glory to God in the highest;
glory to God, glory to God,
and peace to God's people on earth,
and peace to God's people on earth.

***PRAYER OF THE DAY:**

P: Healing God,

C: You exalt the humble and confound the righteous. Open our eyes to your truth, and wash away all that obscures our vision. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Please be seated

WORD

FIRST READING: 1 SAMUEL 16:1-13

Samuel anointed David even though he was the eighth-oldest son of Jesse and did not match his brothers in height or other physical characteristics. With the anointing came endowment with the Spirit of the Lord, designating David as the Lord's chosen successor to Saul.

¹ The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul? I have rejected him from being king over Israel. Fill your horn with oil and set out; I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." ² Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears of it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.'" ³ Invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what you shall do, and you shall anoint for me the one whom I name to you." ⁴ Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, "Do you come peaceably?" ⁵ He said, "Peaceably. I have come to sacrifice to the Lord; sanctify yourselves and come with me to the sacrifice." And he sanctified Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice. ⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, "Surely his anointed is now before the Lord." ⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him, for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart." ⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. He said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, "Neither has the Lord chosen this one." ¹⁰ Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel, and Samuel said to Jesse, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." ¹¹ Samuel said to Jesse, "Are all your sons here?" And he said, "There remains yet the youngest, but he is keeping the sheep." And Samuel said to Jesse, "Send and bring him, for we will not sit down until he comes here." ¹² He sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. The Lord said, "Rise and anoint him, for this is the one." ¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and the spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward. Samuel then set out and went to Ramah. Here ends the first reading.

PSALM 23 ~ Congregation reads the bold

You anoint my head with oil. (Ps. 23:5)

¹The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want.

²**The Lord makes me lie down in green pastures and leads me beside still waters.**

³You restore my soul, O Lord, and guide me along right pathways for your name's sake.

⁴**Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I shall fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.**

⁵You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; you anoint my head with oil, and my cup is running over.

⁶**Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: "Return to the Lord" (ELW pg. 216b)

**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 9:1-41

Jesus heals a man born blind, provoking a hostile reaction that he regards as spiritual blindness to the things of God.

**THE CONGREGATION IS INVITED TO READ THE BOLD, AT TIMES THE
CONGREGATION WILL BE SPLIT BETWEEN ORGAN AND PULPIT SIDES OF THE
CHURCH.**

Narrator/Chris: As he walked along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him,

Disciples/Congregation: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"

Narrator/Chris: Jesus answered,

Jesus/Birgitte: “Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God’s works might be revealed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Narrator/Chris: When he had said this, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva and spread the mud on the man’s eyes, saying to him,

Jesus/Birgitte: “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam”

Narrator/Chris: (which means Sent). Then he went and washed and came back able to see. The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar began to ask,

Neighbor 1/Congregation: “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?”

Narrator/Chris: Some were saying,

Neighbor 2/Congregation/Pulpit Side: “It is he.”

Narrator/Chris: Others were saying,

Neighbor 3/Congregation/Organ Side: “No, but it is someone like him.”

Narrator/Chris: He kept saying,

Man/Dave: “I am the man.”

Narrator/Chris: But they kept asking him,

Neighbor 1/Congregation/Pulpit Side: “Then how were your eyes opened?”

Narrator/ Chris: He answered,

Man/Dave: "The man called Jesus made mud, spread it on my eyes, and said to me, 'Go to Siloam and wash.' Then I went and washed and received my sight."

Narrator/Chris: They said to him,

Neighbor 2 /Congregation/Organ Side: "Where is he?"

Narrator/Chris: He said,

Man/Dave: "I do not know."

Narrator/Chris: They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. Then the Pharisees also began to ask him how he had received his sight. He said to them,

Man/Dave: "He put mud on my eyes. Then I washed, and now I see."

Narrator/Chris: Some of the Pharisees said,

Pharisee 1/Congregation/Pulpit Side: "This man is not from God, for he does not observe the sabbath."

Narrator/Chris: But others said,

Pharisee 2/Congregation/Organ Side: "How can a man who is a sinner perform such signs?"

Narrator/Chris: And they were divided. So they said again to the blind man,

Pharisee 1/Congregation/Pulpit Side: "What do you say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

Narrator/Chris: He said,

Man/Dave: "He is a prophet."

Narrator/Chris: The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them,

Pharisee 2 /Congregation/Organ Side: “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?”

Narrator/Chris: His parents answered,

Parents/Emma: “We know that this is our son, and that he was born blind; but we do not know how it is that now he sees, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.”

Narrator/Chris: His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jews; for the Jews had already agreed that anyone who confessed Jesus to be the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said,

Parents/Emma: “He is of age; ask him.”

Narrator/Chris: So for the second time they called the man who had been blind, and they said to him,

Pharisee 1/Congregation/Pulpit Side: “Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner.”

Narrator/Chris: He answered,

Man/Dave: “I do not know whether he is a sinner. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.”

Narrator/Chris: They said to him,

Pharisee 2/Congregation/Organ Side: “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?”

Narrator/ Chris: He answered them,

Man/Dave: "I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?"

Narrator/ Chris: Then they reviled him, saying,

Pharisee 1/Congregation/Pulpit Side: "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

Narrator/Chris: The man answered,

Man/Dave: "Here is an astonishing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but he does listen to one who worships him and obeys his will. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a person born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing."

Narrator/Chris: They answered him,

Pharisee 2/Congregation/Organ Side: "You were born entirely in sins, and are you trying to teach us?"

Narrator/Chris: And they drove him out. Jesus heard that they had driven him out, and when he found him, he said,

Jesus/ Birgitte: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

Narrator/Chris: He answered,

Man/Dave: "And who is he, sir? Tell me, so that I may believe in him."

Narrator/ Chris: Jesus said to him,

Jesus/ Birgitte: "You have seen him, and the one speaking with you is he."

Narrator/Chris: He said,

Man/Dave: "Lord, I believe."

Narrator/Chris: And he worshiped him. Jesus said,

Jesus /Birgitte: "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind."

Narrator/Chris: Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him,

Pharisee 1/Congregation/Pulpit Side: "Surely we are not blind, are we?"

Narrator/Chris: Jesus said to them,

Jesus/Birgitte: "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

The word of the Lord... **Thanks be to God!**

CHILDREN'S TIME & SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY: "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" (ELW 773)

1 Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand,
I am tired, I am weak, I am worn;
Through the storm, through the night,
Lead me on to the light:

Refrain

Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home.

2 When my way grows drear,
Precious Lord, linger near,
When my life is almost gone,
Hear my cry, hear my call,
Hold my hand lest I fall:

Refrain

Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home.

- 3 When the darkness appears
And the night draws near,
And the day is past and gone,
At the river I stand,
Guide my feet, hold my hand:

Refrain

Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home.

Text and music © 1938, 1966 Unichappell Music Inc., admin. Alfred Publishing

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:

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

A brief silence.

L: When we close our eyes to your possibilities, we willfully remain in a prison of our own certainty. Flood our darkness, O God, with the brilliance of your freedom and mercy. Light of the world,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: With mud and water you restored a blind man's sight. Reveal to us the restorative powers of your created world, all that exists to make us whole and fill us with abundant life. Light of the world,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Forgive us for all the ways we blind ourselves to the truth: avoidance, willful ignorance, stubbornness, and delusion. Lead us away from harmful habits and perpetual self-absorption. Light of the world,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: As you stirred up the healing waters of Siloam, so stir your Spirit in us that we might also be restored. Bestow your healing hand upon all who need it, especially Jerry, Cheryl, Chris, Bruce, Jaxson, Kristy, Larry, Joan, Dennis, Lois, Dale, Doug, Gary, Shirley, Joyce, Bev, Reilly, Allison, Becky, and Cadence.
Light of the world,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Like the saints who now walk in light perpetual, we seek a closer communion with you. Shine brightly through our lives as you did through theirs. Light of the world,

C: Hear our prayer.

L: Heal us, teach us, embrace us, and hear the prayers of our hearts, O God. For your mercy is great and given freely to all. In Jesus' name.

C: 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: "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound" (ELW 779)

- 1 Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
 that saved a wretch like me!
 I once was lost, but now am found;
 was blind, but now I see.

- 2 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
 and grace my fears relieved;
 how precious did that grace appear
 the hour I first believed!

- 3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares
 I have already come;
 'tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
 and grace will lead me home.

- 4 The Lord has promised good to me;
 his word my hope secures;
 he will my shield and portion be
 as long as life endures.

- 5 When we've been there ten thousand years,
 bright shining as the sun,
 we've no less days to sing God's praise
 than when we'd first begun.

Please stand as you are able

***OFFERTORY PRAYER:**

P: Dear God,

C: **We bring our thanks for all that you have generously given us, without our asking and without our merit. Bless now these gifts that your church offers, and use our plenty to supply the need of others. Amen.**

***LORD'S PRAYER: *sung* (CLH 632)**

Our Father, which 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 debts,

as we forgive our debtors;

and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. 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: "How Great Thou Art" (ELW 856)**

1 O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder
consider all the works thy hand hath made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
thy pow'r throughout the universe displayed;

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!

- 2 When through the woods and forest glades I wander,
I hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
when I look down from lofty mountain grandeur
and hear the brook and feel the gentle breeze;

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!

- 3 But when I think that God, his Son not sparing,
sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,
that on the cross my burden gladly bearing
he bled and died to take away my sin;

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!

- 4 When Christ shall come, with shout of acclamation,
and take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then I shall bow in humble adoration
and there proclaim, "My God, how great thou art!"

Refrain

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee,
how great thou art! How great thou art!

***DISMISSAL**

P: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

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
Cheryl Farber – mother of Melissa Schlosser
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
Kim Casavan – friend of Mandy Arvidson
Family and Friends of: Sarah Pomeranz, David Anderson, Ron Myren, Katie Jahnke, Dave Bendix, Megan Sheen, Colleen Burquest, and Chad Way

THIS WEEK AT ESTHER

Sunday, March 15th – Fourth Sunday of Lent

Sunday fellowship before and after worship

8:30 am – First Communion Class

9 am – Sunday School

10 am – Worship led by Pr. Birgitte – **Noisy offering to go towards People's Church in Bemidji**

11 am – Council

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Monday, March 16th

6 pm – Worship Committee

Wednesday, March 18th

6 pm – Lent Soup & Sandwich Supper

7 pm – Worship

Sunday, March 22nd – Fifth Sunday of Lent

Sunday fellowship before and after worship

9 am – All People Sunday School

10 am – Worship with Holy First Communion with SAM Jewel Townsend

11 am – VBS Planning Meeting at Rose City Bar & Grill

2 pm – Worship at St. William's

Monday, March 23rd

6:30 pm – Caring Ministry at Luella Thom's home

SERVING IN MARCH

Pastor: 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 or contact the church office.

Thank you Pastor Birgitte Simpson from People's Church for leading worship today! Noisy offering that day will go towards their congregation. People's Church is a multicultural and indigenous ministry of the ELCA in the NWMN Synod. They live out their faith by showing Creator God's love for all people by offering shelter, hot meals, and community. For more information go to: peopleschurch-elca.org.

VBS Planning Meeting will be on Sunday, March 22nd following worship at Rose City Bar & Grill. All are welcome!

Caring Ministry will meet March 23rd at 6:30 pm at Luella Thom's home. All are welcome!

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.

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

Esther Lutheran Church, ELCA

11019 625th Ave, Parkers Prairie, MN 56361 - Telephone:218-338-2171

Website:estherlutheran.com

Email: secretary@estherlutheran.net Facebook: facebook.com/estherlutheran/

Copy Right Permission From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2026

Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved. NL Worship Resources Copyright © 2026 Clergy Stuff™. Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from ONE LICENSE, License # 738226-A

All rights reserved." Permission to reproduce hymns obtained from ONE License 8 26 License # 738226-A Permission to podcast / stream the music in this service obtained from CCLI, License # 2099169 All rights reserved." Permission to reproduce hymns obtained from CCLI License # 20991626