

## Order of Service for February 28, 2021 - Lent 2

### GATHERING

#### Confession and Forgiveness

P - Blessed be the holy Trinity †, ever creating, ever transforming, ever enlivening, source of love and liberation, our heart and our home.

C - Amen

P - We are unfinished. Our universe is unfinished. We confess the ways in which we attempt to limit God's creative power working in and through us.

*Silence*

P - Creating God,

C - Shape us into fruitful co-creators and faithful stewards of your design, liberated by your covenant to bless and be a blessing.

P - In Jesus we have met the one who, with his very life, showed us the power of love to transform the lives of all who are vulnerable. We confess the ways in which we steadfastly cling to our rights and entitlements, refusing to be changed, or even touched, by the world's pain.

*Silence*

P - Transforming Christ,

C - Move us from comfort to courage, from empathy to engagement, from prayer to policy change.

P - All things belong together; we are many, and we are one. We confess the ways in which we have allowed separation: from God-within-me, from God-within-you, from God-within-creation, to define us.

*Silence*

P - Enlivening Spirit,

C - Breathe into us the breath of your grace, that we may release our hold on the fear and arrogance that keeps us from knowing wholeness.

P - Beloved, God's forgiveness is fulfilled in Christ. Because we are unfinished, we are ever being recreated. Because we have met Jesus, we are ever being transformed. Because we are both many and one, we are ever being enlivened with the Spirit's power — the grace of God, in whom we live and move and have our being. Forgiveness, grace, and love are yours to have, and yours to share †, now and always.

C - Amen.

#### Gathering Song - 808, Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song

Lord Jesus you shall be my song as I journey  
I'll tell everybody about you wherever I go  
You alone are our life and our peace and our love  
Lord Jesus you shall be my song as I journey

Lord Jesus, I'll praise you as long as I journey  
May all of my joy be a faithful reflection of you  
May the earth and the sea and the sky join my song  
Lord Jesus, I'll praise you as long as I journey

As long as I live, Jesus, make me your servant  
To carry your cross and to share all your burdens and tears

For you saved me by giving your body and blood  
As long as I live, Jesus, make me your servant

I fear in the dark and the doubt of my journey  
But courage will come with the sound of your steps by my side  
And with all of the family you saved by your love  
We'll sing to the dawn at the end of our journey

*(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)*

### **Greeting**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with us all.

### **Kyrie**

P - Merciful Creator, you have made us to be your own, that creation may know your love. Lord, have mercy.

P - Merciful Saviour, you call us to follow you, that *we* may know your love. Christ, have mercy.

P - Merciful Spirit, you send us out as your people, that the *world* may know your love. Lord, have mercy.

### **Prayer of the Day**

P - Let us pray. O God, by the passion of your blessed Son you made an instrument of shameful death to be for us the means of life. Grant us so to glory in the cross of Christ that we may gladly suffer shame and loss for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C - Amen.

## **WORD**

### **Gospel Acclamation**

P - May I never boast of anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,

C - By which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

### **Gospel Reading**

Mark 8:31-38

P - The holy gospel according to Mark

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

The gospel of the Lord.

## Sermon

Take a look at the first page of this service. Go ahead! I'll wait.... 😊

Notice that everyone has a part to play in this service. There are parts for the Presider (those are the "P" parts), for the Assisting Minister (the "A" parts), there are parts for the musician (they aren't labelled "M," but they're there!), and there are important parts for you, the congregation (the "C" parts).

The point of this little exercise? We all have a role to play in this thing we call faith. There is no such thing as an observer in worship. There are no such things as performers in worship. We all worship. We all take part.

Yes, we have different roles, we have different responsibilities. Some of us do certain things, and others of us do other things. But when this group gets together for worship, there's no such thing as an audience. We are **all** participants.

And this doesn't just apply to church, or to Sunday morning worship. Every time a political leader gets up and says, "We need to thank and support our frontline workers in this pandemic: our doctors and nurses, our first responders and nursing home staff," one of those people (a doctor, a nurse, a first responder or a nursing home staff member) will get up and say a loud, "**NO!** We are NOT the 'front line workers.' We are **ALL** 'front line workers' in this struggle."

They are reminding us that we are **all** participants in the fight against Covid. That's why we are all wearing masks when we go out in public, and wash and sanitize our hands so frequently. We all have a part to play. An important part. A crucial part. We're all in it. The word that is used today to describe this is "agency." We have the ability to act.

This is what today's story of Jesus is all about. "*If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*" Taking up our cross means no longer being an observer. Taking up our cross means we are playing a role, taking part in the great drama. It means we are diving in head first, exercising our agency, and no longer holding back, no longer playing it safe.

There is an unfortunate tradition which has grown up in the church around this passage. Taking up your cross has been interpreted as, "You must suffer. You must be miserable in order to be a real Christian." And too often, we have added, "And you must be **seen** to be suffering for it to really count." I can't help but think that this is part of the motivation for those churches which are insisting that they must worship in full church buildings without distancing, without masking, without sanitizing. They literally want to be arrested to they can be seen to suffer in public.

I do not believe that is what Jesus had in mind when he said, "Take up your cross"! There is plenty of suffering in the world without our needing to go invent some more, without our needing to make up an artificial fight so we can get some manufactured publicity for ourselves. Taking up our cross is not a stunt by which we can prove our faithfulness in a headline hungry world.

Taking up our cross goes much, much deeper.

Taking up our cross mean, first off, that there is already suffering going on, very real suffering, very real pain, very real isolation. It means acknowledging the reality of anxiety and fear and death.

Taking up our cross means that we do not run away from suffering when it comes. We don't have to seek it out. It will come, and we need to recognize this truth.

And, taking up our cross means, for followers of the crucified one, that we will, somehow, in some way, discover the presence of the crucified one with us, in the middle of the suffering. We can embrace the pain of life, because that is precisely what Jesus did; we can embrace the misery in life, trusting that it is right there that Jesus will be present. We can exercise our agency in the middle of misery, because of the promise that we do not go alone.

We can participate in the hard parts of life by opening our door to the neighbour whose boyfriend has gotten violent, providing her with a safe space to collect herself, and discover her own “agency.” That would be taking up our cross for our neighbour.

We can engage with the traumatic in life by reading something which will push us beyond our current situation, perhaps making us a bit uncomfortable, but also giving us an opportunity to grow, and to discover a different way of relating to others. We’ve talked all month about February being “Black History Month.” So maybe read the article in the current edition of the Canada Lutheran magazine about “dismantling racism in our communities and congregations.” It might stir some things up in us, but it just might be that those things *need* to be stirred up in us, so that we can take up our cross more faithfully with our racialized sisters and brothers.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, we are not the audience in the show of life. We are actors. We have a life-giving part to play in this grand adventure. We are participants in God’s great mission to love and care for the world, and everyone in it. We have agency, which are called to use make a difference in this hurting world.

Jesus is with us. Take up your cross. Thanks be to God.

Amen.

## **RESPONSE TO THE WORD**

### **Hymn of the Day - 802, Let Us Ever Walk With Jesus**

Let us ever walk with Jesus, Follow His example pure,  
Through a world that would deceive us, and to sin our spirits lure.  
Onward in His footsteps treading, pilgrims here, our home above,  
Full of faith and hope and love, Let us do the Father’s bidding.  
Faithful Lord, with me abide; I shall follow where You guide.

Let us suffer here with Jesus and with patience bear our cross.  
Joy will follow all our sadness; Where He is, there is no loss.  
Though today we sow no laughter, We shall reap celestial joy;  
All discomforts that annoy shall give way to mirth hereafter.  
Jesus, here I share Your woe; Help me there Your joy to know.

Let us gladly die with Jesus, since by death He conquered death,  
He will free us from destruction, give to us immortal breath.  
Let us mortify all passion that would lead us into sin;  
And the grave that shuts us in shall but prove the gate to heaven.  
Jesus, here with You I die, there to live with You on high.

Let us also live with Jesus, he has risen from the dead  
That to life we may awaken, Jesus, you are now our head.  
We are Your own living members; where You live, there we shall be  
In Your presence constantly, living there with You forever.  
Jesus, let me faithful be, life eternal grant to me.

*(Hymn lyrics printed under CCLI Licence # 11411292)*

## **Prayers of the People**

A - Relying on the promise of God, we pray boldly for the world, the church, and all in need.

*[Short pause]*

A - God who calls us to take part, your call opens up a whole universe of possibilities for us.  
Give us faith to respond to your call, that we may indeed take part.

*[Silence]*

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - God who calls us to participate, we are surrounded by un-numbered opportunities to share in the experience of new life. Give us eagerness to reply to your call, that we may indeed participate.

*[Silence]*

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - God who calls us to grow, we confess the fear which holds us back, and hinders our maturing.  
Give us the wisdom to discern your call, that we may indeed grow.

*[Silence]*

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - God who calls us to engage, free your church from thinking only in terms of buildings and membership; release us to think about ministry and service. Give us the willingness to hear your call, that we may indeed engage.

*[Silence]*

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - God who calls us to dive in, open us to the sick, the lonely, the victims of injustice, and all who need a word of encouragement, especially those who we name before you.

*[Silence]*

Give us the courage to recognize your call, that we may indeed dive in. In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

A - God who calls us to be involved, we are not passive observers. We have a part to play, for the sake of the world. Give us the enthusiasm to answer your call, that we may indeed be involved.

*[Silence]*

In your unbounded mercy,

C - Hear our prayer.

P - Into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray,

## **Lord's Prayer**

C - 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. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

## **SENDING**

### **Benediction**

P - You are what you were created to be:  
created in Christ Jesus for good works,  
chosen to be holy and beloved,  
freed to serve your neighbour.  
God so bless you that you may be a blessing,  
in the name of the holy and (†) life-giving Trinity.  
C - Amen.

### **Dismissal**

P - Go in peace. Take up your cross.  
C - Thanks be to God!

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