

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 6, 2025

Fifth Sunday in Lent

Optional Introduction: The prophet declares that long ago God performed mighty deeds and delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage through the waters of the sea. Now, God is about to do a new thing, bringing the exiles out of Babylon and through the wilderness in a new Exodus.

First Reading: Isaiah 43:16-21

¹⁶ Thus says the LORD,
 who makes a way in the sea,
 a path in the mighty waters,
¹⁷ who brings out chariot and horse,
 army and warrior;
they lie down, they cannot rise,
 they are extinguished, quenched like a wick:
¹⁸ Do not remember the former things,
 or consider the things of old.
¹⁹ I am about to do a new thing;
 now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?
I will make a way in the wilderness
 and rivers in the desert.
²⁰ The wild animals will honor me,
 the jackals and the ostriches;
for I give water in the wilderness,
 rivers in the desert,
to give drink to my chosen people,
 ²¹ the people whom I formed for myself
so that they might declare my praise.

The word of the Lord.

Optional Introduction: Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy. (Ps. 126:5)

Psalm: Psalm 126

¹ When the LORD restored the for- | tunes of Zion,
then were we like | those who dream.

² **Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with | shouts of joy.**

Then they said among the nations, “The LORD has done great | things for them.”

³ The LORD has done great | things for us,
and we are | glad indeed.

⁴ **Restore our for- | tunes, O LORD,
like the watercourses | of the Negeb. R**

⁵ Those who | sowed with tears
will reap with | songs of joy.

⁶ **Those who go out weeping, carry- | ing the seed,
will come again with joy, shoulder- | ing their sheaves. R**

Optional Introduction: Writing to Christians in Philippi, Paul admits that his heritage and reputation could give him more reason than most people to place confidence in his spiritual pedigree. But the overwhelming grace of God in Jesus calls Paul to a new set of values.

Second Reading: Philippians 3:4b-14

Paul writes: ^{4b} If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

⁷ Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in

order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

¹² Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.

Please stand for the reading of the Gospel.

Gospel: John 12:1-8

Judas willfully misinterprets as waste Mary's extravagant act of anointing Jesus' feet with costly perfume. Jesus recognizes that her lavish gift is both an expression of love and an anticipation of his burial.

¹ Six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany, the home of Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. ² There they gave a dinner for him. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those at the table with him. ³ Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard, anointed Jesus' feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴ But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (the one who was about to betray him), said, ⁵ "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and the money given to the poor?" ⁶ (He said this not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief; he kept the common purse and used to steal what was put into it.) ⁷ Jesus said, "Leave her alone. She bought it so that she might keep it for the day of my burial. ⁸ You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 13, 2025

Palm Sunday

Optional Introduction: This text, the third of the four Servant Songs in Isaiah, speaks of the servant's obedience amid persecution. Though the servant has been variously understood as the prophet himself or a remnant of faithful Israel, Christians have often recognized the figure of Christ in these poems.

First Reading: Isaiah 50:4-9a

⁴ The Lord GOD has given me
the tongue of a teacher,
that I may know how to sustain
the weary with a word.
Morning by morning he wakens—
wakens my ear
to listen as those who are taught.
⁵ The Lord GOD has opened my ear,
and I was not rebellious,
I did not turn backward.
⁶ I gave my back to those who struck me,
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;
I did not hide my face
from insult and spitting.
⁷ The Lord GOD helps me;
therefore I have not been disgraced;
therefore I have set my face like flint,
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;
⁸ he who vindicates me is near.
Who will contend with me?
Let us stand up together.
Who are my adversaries?
Let them confront me.
^{9a} It is the Lord GOD who helps me;
who will declare me guilty?

The word of the Lord.

Optional Introduction: Into your hands, O LORD, I commend my spirit. (Ps. 31:5)

Psalm: Psalm 31:9-16

⁹ Have mercy on me, O LORD, for I | am in trouble;
my eye is consumed with sorrow, and also my throat | and my belly.

¹⁰ **For my life is wasted with grief, and my | years with sighing;
my strength fails me because of affliction, and my bones | are
consumed.**

¹¹ I am the scorn of all my enemies, a disgrace to my neighbors, a
dismay to | my acquaintances;

when they see me in the street | they avoid me.

¹² **Like the dead I am forgotten, | out of mind;
I am as useless as a | broken pot. R**

¹³ For I have heard the whispering of the crowd; fear is | all around;
they put their heads together against me; they plot to | take my life.

¹⁴ **But as for me, I have trusted in | you, O LORD.
I have said, “You | are my God.**

¹⁵ My times are | in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who |
persecute me.

¹⁶ **Let your face shine up- | on your servant;
save me in your | steadfast love.” R**

Optional Introduction: Paul quotes from an early Christian hymn that describes Jesus' humble obedience in his incarnation as a human being, even to death, and his exaltation and glory as Lord of all.

Second Reading: Philippians 2:5-11

⁵ Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus,
⁶ who, though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God
as something to be exploited,
⁷ but emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
being born in human likeness.
And being found in human form,
⁸ he humbled himself
and became obedient to the point of death—
even death on a cross.

⁹ Therefore God also highly exalted him
and gave him the name
that is above every name,
¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus
every knee should bend,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
¹¹ and every tongue should confess
that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

The word of the Lord.

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 17, 2025

Maundy Thursday

Optional Introduction: Israel remembered its deliverance from slavery in Egypt by celebrating the festival of Passover. This festival featured the Passover lamb, whose blood was used as a sign to protect God's people from the threat of death. The early church described the Lord's supper using imagery from the Passover, especially in portraying Jesus as the lamb who delivers God's people from sin and death.

First Reading: Exodus 12:1-4 [5-10] 11-14

¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt: ² This month shall mark for you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year for you. ³ Tell the whole congregation of Israel that on the tenth of this month they are to take a lamb for each family, a lamb for each household. ⁴ If a household is too small for a whole lamb, it shall join its closest neighbor in obtaining one; the lamb shall be divided in proportion to the number of people who eat of it. [⁵ Your lamb shall be without blemish, a year-old male; you may take it from the sheep or from the goats. ⁶ You shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; then the whole assembled congregation of Israel shall slaughter it at twilight. ⁷ They shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸ They shall eat the lamb that same night; they shall eat it roasted over the fire with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. ⁹ Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted over the fire, with its head, legs, and inner organs. ¹⁰ You shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.] ¹¹ This is how you shall eat it: your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it hurriedly. It is the passover of the LORD. ¹² For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike down every firstborn in the land of Egypt, both human beings and animals; on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live: when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴ This day shall be a day of remembrance for you. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD; throughout your generations you shall observe it as a perpetual ordinance.

The word of the Lord.

Optional Introduction: I will lift the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD. (Ps. 116:13)

Psalm: Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

¹ I love the LORD, who has | heard my voice,
and listened to my | supplication,

² **for the LORD has given | ear to me
whenev- | er I called.**

¹² How shall I re- | pay the LORD
for all the good things God has | done for me?

¹³ **I will lift the cup | of salvation
and call on the name | of the LORD. R**

¹⁴ I will fulfill my vows | to the LORD
in the presence of | all God's people.

¹⁵ **Precious in your | sight, O LORD,
is the death | of your servants.**

¹⁶ O LORD, truly I | am your servant;
I am your servant, the child of your handmaid; you have freed me |
from my bonds.

¹⁷ **I will offer you the sacrifice | of thanksgiving
and call upon the name | of the LORD.**

¹⁸ I will fulfill my vows | to the LORD
in the presence of | all God's people,

¹⁹ **in the courts of | the LORD's house,
in the midst of you, | O Jerusalem. R**

Optional introduction: In the bread and cup of the Lord's supper, we experience intimate fellowship with Christ and with one another because it involves his body given for us and the new covenant in his blood. Faithful participation in this meal is a living proclamation of Christ's death until he comes in the future.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

The word of the Lord.

Please stand for the reading of the gospel.

Gospel: John 13:1-17, 31b-35

The story of the last supper in John's gospel recalls a remarkable event not mentioned elsewhere: Jesus performs the duty of a slave, washing the feet of his disciples and urging them to do the same for one other.

¹ Now before the festival of the Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart from this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ² The devil had already put it into the heart of Judas son of Simon Iscariot to betray him. And during supper ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going to God,

⁴ got up from the table, took off his outer robe, and tied a towel around himself. ⁵ Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him. ⁶ He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" ⁷ Jesus answered, "You do not know now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ⁸ Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹ Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean. And you are clean, though not all of you." ¹¹ For he knew who was to betray him; for this reason he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹² After he had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call me Teacher and Lord—and you are right, for that is what I am. ¹⁴ So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you. ¹⁶ Very truly, I tell you, servants are not greater than their master, nor are messengers greater than the one who sent them. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them."

^{31b} "Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 20, 2025

Easter Sunday

Optional Introduction: Peter's sermon, delivered at the home of Cornelius, a Roman army officer, is a summary of the essential message of Christianity: Everyone who believes in Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection fulfilled the words of the prophets, receives forgiveness of sins through his name.

First Reading: Acts 10:34-43

³⁴ Peter began to speak to [the people]: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all.

³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.

³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The word of the Lord.

Optional Introduction: This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. (Ps. 118:24)

Psalm: Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24

¹ Give thanks to the LORD, for the | LORD is good;
God's mercy en- | dures forever.

² **Let Israel | now declare,
"God's mercy en- | dures forever."**

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength | and my song,
and has become | my salvation.

¹⁵ **Shouts of rejoicing and salvation echo in the tents | of the
righteous:**

"The right hand of the | LORD acts valiantly!

¹⁶ The right hand of the LORD | is exalted!
The right hand of the | LORD acts valiantly!"

¹⁷ **I shall not | die, but live,
and declare the works | of the LORD. R**

¹⁸ The LORD indeed pun- | ished me sorely,
but did not hand me o- | ver to death.

¹⁹ **Open for me the | gates of righteousness;
I will enter them and give thanks | to the LORD.**

²⁰ "This is the gate | of the LORD;
here the righ- | teous may enter."

²¹ **I give thanks to you, for you have | answered me
and you have become | my salvation. R**

²² The stone that the build- | ers rejected
has become the chief | cornerstone.

²³ **By the LORD has | this been done;
it is marvelous | in our eyes.**

²⁴ This is the day that the | LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be | glad in it. **R**

Optional introduction: Paul describes the consequences of the resurrection, including the promise of new life in Christ to a world that has been in bondage to death. He celebrates the destruction of evil and the establishment of God's victorious rule over all.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:19-26

¹⁹ If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰ But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died. ²¹ For since death came through a human being, the resurrection of the dead has also come through a human being; ²² for as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ. ²³ But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴ Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after he has destroyed every ruler and every authority and power. ²⁵ For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶ The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

The word of the Lord.

Please stand for the reading of the gospel.

Gospel: Luke 24:1-12

Evidently expecting to find Jesus' corpse, some of the women among his followers go to the tomb with embalming spices. After a perplexing encounter with the empty tomb and angelic visitors, the women become the first to proclaim the amazing news of resurrection.

¹ On the first day of the week, at early dawn, [the women] came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. ² They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, ³ but when they went in, they did not find the body. ⁴ While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. ⁵ The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. ⁶ Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, ⁷ that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." ⁸ Then they remembered his words, ⁹ and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest. ¹⁰ Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. ¹¹ But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. ¹² But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

St. Matthew Lutheran Church

Sunday, April 27, 2025

Second Sunday of Easter

Optional Introduction: Peter has been arrested for proclaiming the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. His response to the charges of the high priest summarizes the early church's proclamation of forgiveness of sin through repentance.

First Reading: Acts 5:27-32

²⁷ When they had brought [the apostles,] they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring this man's blood on us."

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than any human authority. ³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior that he might give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

The word of the Lord.

Optional Introduction: You are my God, and I will exalt you. (Ps. 118:28)

Psalm: Psalm 118:14-29

¹⁴ The LORD is my strength | and my song,
and has become | my salvation.

¹⁵ **Shouts of rejoicing and salvation echo in the tents | of the righteous:**

“The right hand of the | LORD acts valiantly!

¹⁶ The right hand of the LORD | is exalted!
The right hand of the | LORD acts valiantly!”

¹⁷ **I shall not | die, but live,
and declare the works | of the LORD. R**

¹⁸ The LORD indeed pun- | ished me sorely,
but did not hand me o- | ver to death.

¹⁹ **Open for me the | gates of righteousness;
I will enter them and give thanks | to the LORD.**

²⁰ “This is the gate | of the LORD;
here the righ- | teous may enter.”

²¹ **I give thanks to you, for you have | answered me
and you have become | my salvation. R**

²² The stone that the build- | ers rejected
has become the chief | cornerstone.

²³ **By the LORD has | this been done;
it is marvelous | in our eyes.**

²⁴ This is the day that the | LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be | glad in it.

²⁵ **Hosanna! | O LORD, save us!
We pray to you, LORD, pros- | per our days! R**

²⁶ Blessed is the one who comes in the name | of the LORD;
we bless you from the house | of the LORD.

²⁷ **The LORD is God and has giv- | en us light.
Form a procession with branches up to the corners | of the altar.**

²⁸ You are my God, and | I will thank you;
you are my God, and I | will exalt you.

²⁹ **Give thanks to the LORD, for the | LORD is good;
God’s mercy en- | dures forever. R**

Optional Introduction: The book of Revelation recounts a mystical vision of the risen Christ experienced by a Christian prophet named John. Here he describes Christ as a timeless redeemer, the beginning, present, and end of all time.

Second Reading: Revelation 1:4-8

⁴ John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, ⁵ and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, ⁶ and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

⁷ Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him,

even those who pierced him;

and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

⁸ “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

The word of the Lord.

Please stand for the reading of the gospel.

The unprecedented events of the day of resurrection continue as the risen Jesus appears to his fearful disciples. A week later, after Thomas worships Jesus, Jesus pronounces that the blessings of the resurrection are also for those who “have not seen and yet believe.”

Gospel: John 20:19-31

¹⁹ When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁰ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹ Jesus said to them again, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

²² When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, “Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³ If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

²⁴ But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord.” But he said to them, “Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶ A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷ Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸ Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹ Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

³⁰ Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.