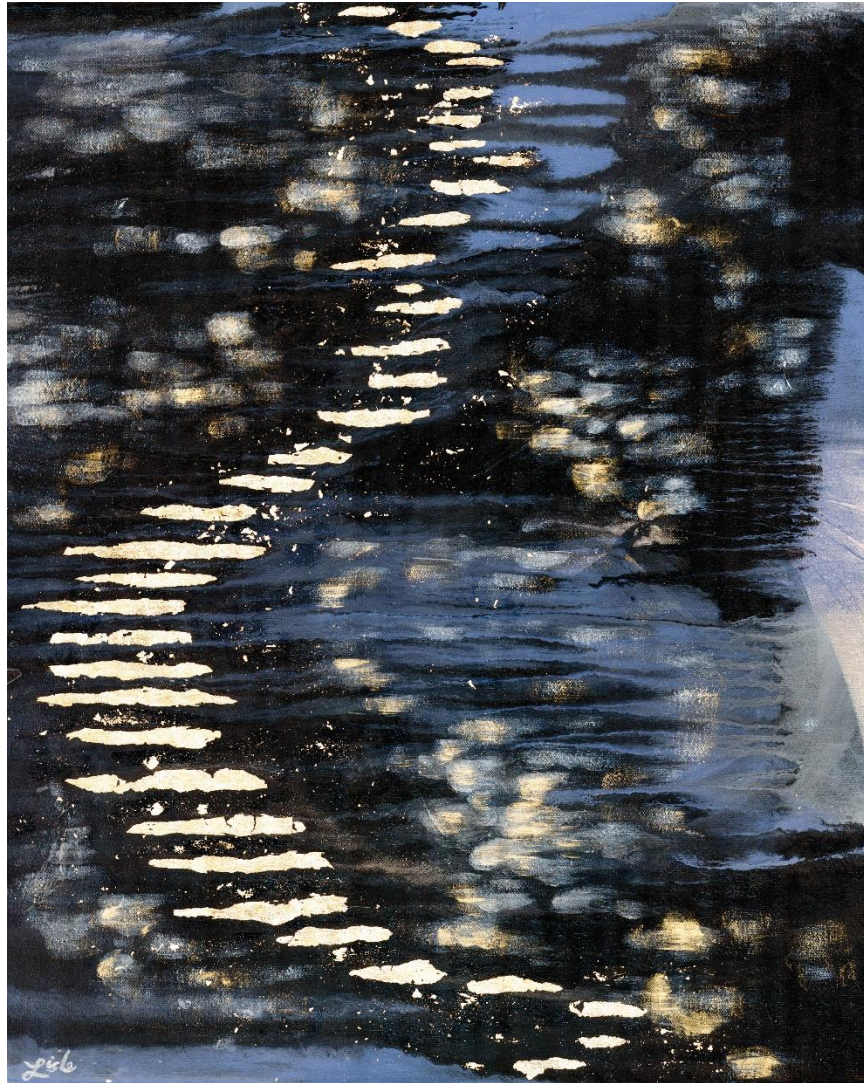


Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church - ELCA

Wednesday, March 17th, 2021



Again & Again, We are Created for Community: A Midweek Lenten Series

The invitation to Lent spoken on Ash Wednesday reminds us that we enter this season together "with the whole church." It goes on to state that "we are created for communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with creation."

Though many common Lenten practices rightly invite us to individual acts of "repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial giving and works of love," Lent is also a time for deepening of community.

During this pandemic, our hearts have yearned for a deeper community that extends beyond the walls of the church and into our homes and hearts. Using readings from Mark's gospel, this series invites the assembly to reflect on what it means to be in community with one another, with the world, with creation, and with God.

Call To Worship

L: Before we were born, **C: Before we took our first breath,**
L: Before the week started, **C: Before the year started,**
L: Before we said, “I love you,” **C: Before we said, “I’m sorry,”**
L: Before we figured out who we really are, **C: Before we figured out who we want to be,**
L: Before it all— **C: God loved us.**
L: Unconditionally and freely, **C: Fully and honestly—**
L: God loved us. **C: Again and again, this is where our story begins.**
L: Let us worship God!

Gathering Hymn

We Come To You For Healing, Lord

Verse 1&2

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.

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

Prayer of illumination

L: God of the here and now— **C: We have heard the words, “For God so loved the world That he gave his only son,” Time and time again. We have read them on billboards, Heard them in worship, And seen them on signs. And yet we know, There is a difference between Hearing those words In passing And truly, deeply listening. We long to listen, God. We long to hear your truth. We long to know your love. Open our hearts and minds. We are listening. Amen.**

Scripture:

Ephesians 2:1-10

You were dead through the trespasses and sins ²in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. ³All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. ⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— ⁹not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Mark 5:1-20

They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. ²And when he had stepped out of the boat, immediately a man out of the tombs with an unclean spirit met him. ³He lived among the tombs; and no one could restrain him any more, even with a chain; ⁴for he had often been restrained with shackles and chains, but the chains he wrenched apart, and the shackles he broke in pieces; and no one had the strength to subdue him. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always howling and bruising himself with stones. ⁶When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and bowed down before him; ⁷and he shouted at the top of his voice, “What have

you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me.”⁸ For he had said to him, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”⁹ Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” He replied, “My name is Legion; for we are many.”¹⁰ He begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country.¹¹ Now there on the hillside a great herd of swine was feeding;¹² and the unclean spirits begged him, “Send us into the swine; let us enter them.”¹³ So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out and entered the swine; and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned in the sea.

¹⁴ The swineherds ran off and told it in the city and in the country. Then people came to see what it was that had happened.¹⁵ They came to Jesus and saw the demoniac sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, the very man who had had the legion; and they were afraid.¹⁶ Those who had seen what had happened to the demoniac and to the swine reported it.¹⁷ Then they began to beg Jesus to leave their neighborhood.¹⁸ As he was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by demons begged him that he might be with him.¹⁹ But Jesus refused, and said to him, “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.”²⁰ And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him; and everyone was amazed.

John 3:14-21

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.¹⁸ Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God.¹⁹ And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.²⁰ For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed.²¹ But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

Message

Hymn of The Day

We Come To You For Healing, Lord

Verse 3&4

You touch us through physicians’ skills, through nurses’ gifts of care, and through the love of faithful friends who lift our lives in prayer.

When nights are long with wakefulness, through days when strength runs low, grant us your gift of patience, Lord, your calming peace to know.

Affirmation of Faith

We believe God is love—Unconditional, constant love. We believe this love exists for all, Choosing each and every one of us, Day after day, Again and again and again. We believe that God’s love is like a river. Rivers cannot help but flow toward the sea; God’s love cannot help but move toward us. We are swimming in it. We believe that God loved first. We believe that God breathed life into dust. We believe that God said, “This is good,” And because we believe that God loved first, We strive to build lives that reflect God’s love. May we begin again here. Amen.

Prayers

Offering

Lord's Prayer

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

Benediction

As you leave this space, May your mouth speak of God's goodness. May your arms hold those in need. May your feet walk toward justice. May your heart trust its worth. May your soul dance in God's grace. And may this be your rhythm— Again and again and again, Until God's promised day. In the name of the Lover, the Beloved, and Love itself, Go with courage, go with heart, go in peace. **Amen**

Sending Hymn

We Come To You For Healing, Lord

Verse 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.

Dismissal

Go in peace, joined together in Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

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