



Second Sunday In Lent
Gustaf Adolf Lutheran Church
March 5th, 2023

Seeking: How do we begin again?

Nicodemus comes to Jesus under the veil of night to ask him big faith questions. As a leader of Jewish law, Nicodemus holds beliefs that no longer align with the kingdom of God Jesus embodies. Jesus invites him to begin again, to learn a new way of knowing and living out his faith. In Genesis, God commands Abram and Sarai to leave everything—their home, their family, their land—to seek the land of Canaan and begin again. At 75 years old, Abram is called to start over, but through this new beginning, God creates a new family and a new nation. Like Nicodemus, what are the questions we ask in the dark? Like Abram and Sarai, how do we follow God's calling to begin again?

Call to Worship

What is it like to begin again?

It is like flowers in the spring that push through frozen ground.

It is like babies learning to walk, one clumsy step at a time.

It is like Nicodemus in the night, asking Jesus for guidance.

It is like a Sunday morning, starting our week anew.

May we find God in our seeking. **May we learn as we go.**

May we be brave enough to begin again. **Let us worship the God of new beginnings.**

Call to Confession

One of the things I love about the prayer of confession is it offers us a new beginning. In the prayer of confession, we lay our cards on the table. We speak honestly with God about who we are and who we long to be. And in response, God wraps us in grace and lets us begin again. So together, with God's grace, let us wipe the slate clean. Together, with God's grace, let us pray the prayer of confession:

Prayer of Confession *(Brief Silence)*

God of new life, you call us into unknown places, **and we bury our heads in the sand.**

You promise all the stars in the sky, **and we doubt it can be true.**

You speak of new life in the Spirit, **and we tell ourselves we've missed our chance.**

Over and over and over again, you invite us closer to you.

Show us the way. Forgive our mistakes. Give us the courage to begin again with you. Amen.

Words of Forgiveness

Family of faith, hear and believe this good news: There is a grace to God's love that is bigger than we can imagine. No matter what we did or didn't do yesterday, we have been forgiven. Today, the slate is wiped clean. Today, we are made new. Join me in saying:

We belong to God. We are held in God's love. We are made new. Amen.

Gathering Hymn

Lift High The Cross (Verse 1)

ELW #660

Prayer for Illumination

Holy God, We come to you today with our biggest questions:

Who are we called to be? What do you need from us? Where are you in our midst? How can we follow you more clearly?

As we read your Word today, **we ask that you would weave answers into the text. Speak to us through these ancient stories that we might find what we are seeking in you. With gratitude and open hearts we pray, amen.**

Word

Genesis 12:1-4

The 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.

Psalm 121

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

My help comes from the LORD, the maker of heaven and earth.

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

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

the LORD watches over you; the LORD is your shade at your right hand;

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

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

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

Gospel: John 3:1-17

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. ²He 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 apart from the presence of God." ³Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." ⁴Nicodemus 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?" ⁵Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. ⁶What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' ⁸The 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." ⁹Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" ¹⁰Jesus answered him, "Are you a 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. ¹²If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? ¹³No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. ¹⁴And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵that 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."

Message

Hymn of The Day

Lift High The Cross (Verse 2&3)

ELW #660

Affirmation of Faith

We believe in a God who meets us in the shadows, who welcomes our questions, who invites us to begin again. We believe that Jesus showed us a new way, a deeper faith, a more compassionate existence. We believe that all of our beginnings should return us to this

foundation, and that no matter how many times we lose our way, God always welcomes us home. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession Response: **Receive our prayer.**

Offering

Offering Song *Give Thanks* Gray #170

Offering Prayer

God of good gifts, receive these and all our offerings as we present them in faithful service for the sake of your gospel. Prepare our hearts to receive you in this meal as you pour out your very presence through Christ Jesus, the wellspring of eternal life. Amen.

Holy Communion

Invitation to the Table

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving

Lift Up Your Hearts

We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, our God.

It is right to give God thanks and Praise.

God of the lost and found.....

***Words of Institution**

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***Lord's Prayer**

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Communion Distribution (All Are Welcome to Receive Communion Here at GA Church)

Post Communion Blessing

Post Communion Prayer

God of manna and mustard seeds, we came to this Table hungry and we leave feeling full—full of hope, full of promise, full of what could be. For we not only found glimpses of you at this Table, but we caught a glimpse of the way things could be: in a meal where all are welcomed and all are fed. Is there anything holier than that? So thank you for nourishing our curiosity alongside our spirit and our conviction. May we always seek you the way you seek after us. With grateful hearts we pray, **Amen.**

Sending

Benediction

As you leave this place, may God bless you with seeking. Seek out the hungry. Seek the weary. Seek the good in every person you pass. Seek out the hopeful. Seek the faithful. Seek God in each of us. As you seek and as you wonder, may you find what you are looking for. In the name of our loving God, who is always seeking us, go now in peace. Amen.

Sending Hymn

Lift High The Cross (Verse 4)

ELW #660

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve in Love.

**C: To share the Good News of God’s Word and to serve the community and the world.
Thanks be to God.**

Postlude

Bulletin Donated:

<p><u>Mission Statement of Gustaf Lutheran Church (Adopted in 2022)</u></p> <p>To share the Good News of God’s Word and to serve the community and the world.</p> <p><i>Matthew 22:39</i> ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’</p> <p><i>Matthew 28:19</i> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,</p>
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We celebrate weekly Holy Communion. We welcome all who believe in the Risen Christ and who find in the sacrament our Lord’s real presence for the forgiveness of sins and the renewal of life. If you receive communion in your home congregation, you are invited to receive it here at G.A. Red wine and white grape juice will be offered to you in Christ’s name. You may choose your preference. If you are unable to receive wheat bread, or wine, be sure that in a single element you receive the Presence and all the gifts of the sacrament.

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