



**Sunday, January 28, 2024**

Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

ELW SETTING 3

**WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS  
CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever. **Amen.**

God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Gracious God, **have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.**

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of ✚ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith. **Amen.**

**PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always. **And also with you.**

**GATHERING SONG** *Songs of Thankfulness and Praise* **ELW 310**

1 Songs of thankfulness and praise, Jesus, Lord, to thee we raise;  
manifested by the star to the sages from afar,

branch of royal David's stem in thy birth at Bethlehem:  
anthems be to thee addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

2 Manifest at Jordan's stream, prophet, priest, and king supreme;  
and at Cana wedding guest in thy Godhead manifest;  
manifest in pow'r divine, changing water into wine;  
anthems be to thee addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

3 Manifest in making whole weakened body, fainting soul;  
manifest in valiant fight, quelling all the devil's might;  
manifest in gracious will, ever bringing good from ill:  
anthems be to thee addressed, God in flesh made manifest.

4 Grant us grace to see thee, Lord, present in thy holy word;  
grace to imitate thee now and be pure, as pure art thou;  
that we might become like thee at thy great epiphany,  
and may praise thee, ever blest, God in flesh made manifest.

## **GREETING**

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

## **KYRIE**

**ELW p. 138**

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above, and for our salvation,  
let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God,  
and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise,  
let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord. **Amen.**

## CANTICLE OF PRAISE

ELW p. 139

Glory to God in the highest, 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.**

**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.**

**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.**

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Saviour. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

## CHILDREN'S TIME

### CHILDREN'S SONG *Children of the Heavenly Father Vs 1&4* ELW 781

- 1 Children of the heav'nly Father safely in his bosom gather;  
nestling bird nor star in heaven such a refuge e'er was given.
- 4 Though he giveth or he taketh, God his children ne'er forsaketh;  
his the loving purpose solely to preserve them pure and holy.

*Today's reading is part of a longer discourse in Deuteronomy, an updating of the law for the Israelite community as the people wait to enter the promised land. Here Moses assures the people that God will continue to guide them through prophets who will proclaim the divine word.*

## **FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 18:15-20**

[Moses said:] <sup>15</sup>The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you shall heed such a prophet. <sup>16</sup>This is what you requested of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said: "If I hear the voice of the LORD my God any more, or ever again see this great fire, I will die." <sup>17</sup>Then the LORD replied to me: "They are right in what they have said. <sup>18</sup>I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their own people; I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command. <sup>19</sup>Anyone who does not heed the words that the prophet shall speak in my name, I myself will hold accountable. <sup>20</sup>But any prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, or who presumes to speak in my name a word that I have not commanded the prophet to speak - that prophet shall die."  
The word of the Lord.                      **Thanks be to God.**

## **PSALM: Psalm 111**

***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. (Ps. 111:10)***

<sup>1</sup>Hallelujah! I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, in the congregation.

<sup>2</sup>**Great are your works, O LORD, pondered by all who delight in them.**

<sup>3</sup>Majesty and splendor mark your deeds, and your righteousness endures forever.

<sup>4</sup>**You cause your wonders to be remembered; you are gracious and full of compassion.**

***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.***

<sup>5</sup>You give food to those who fear you, remembering forever your covenant.

<sup>6</sup>**You have shown your people the power of your works in giving**

**them the lands of the nations.**

<sup>7</sup>The works of your hands are faithfulness and justice; all of your precepts are sure.

**<sup>8</sup>They stand fast forever and ever, because they are done in truth and equity.**

***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.***

<sup>9</sup>You sent redemption to your people and commanded your covenant forever; holy and awesome is your name.

**<sup>10</sup>The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who practice this have a good understanding. God's praise endures forever.**

***The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.***

*Paul is concerned about the way some Corinthian Christians use their freedom in Christ as licence to engage in non-Christian behaviour that sets a damaging example to other, impressionable believers. Christians have a responsibility to each other that their behaviour does not cause another to sin.*

## **SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13**

<sup>1</sup>Now concerning food sacrificed to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. <sup>2</sup>Anyone who claims to know something does not yet have the necessary knowledge; <sup>3</sup>but anyone who loves God is known by him.

<sup>4</sup>Hence, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "no idol in the world really exists," and that "there is no God but one." <sup>5</sup>Indeed, even though there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth - as in fact there are many gods and many lords - <sup>6</sup>yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

<sup>7</sup>It is not everyone, however, who has this knowledge. Since some

have become so accustomed to idols until now, they still think of the food they eat as food offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. <sup>8</sup>“Food will not bring us close to God.” We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do. <sup>9</sup>But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak. <sup>10</sup>For if others see you, who possess knowledge, eating in the temple of an idol, might they not, since their conscience is weak, be encouraged to the point of eating food sacrificed to idols? <sup>11</sup>So by your knowledge those weak believers for whom Christ died are destroyed. <sup>12</sup>But when you thus sin against members of your family, and wound their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ. <sup>13</sup>Therefore, if food is a cause of their falling, I will never eat meat, so that I may not cause one of them to fall.

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

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION**

**ELW p. 142**

**Alleluia. Lord, to whom shall we go?**

**You have the words of eternal life.**

**Alleluia. Alleluia.**

*Forces that would bring death and disease have taken hold of a man, yet they recognize Jesus and know what his power means for them. Jesus commands these forces to leave and people are amazed at his authority.*

## **GOSPEL: Mark 1:21-28**

The holy gospel according to Mark. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>21</sup>[Jesus and his disciples] went to Capernaum; and when the sabbath came, he entered the synagogue and taught.<sup>22</sup>They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. <sup>23</sup>Just then there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit, <sup>24</sup>and he cried out, “What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are, the Holy One of God.” <sup>25</sup>But Jesus rebuked him, saying, “Be silent, and come out of

him!” <sup>26</sup>And the unclean spirit, convulsing him and crying with a loud voice, came out of him. <sup>27</sup>They were all amazed, and they kept on asking one another, “What is this? A new teaching - with authority! He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” <sup>28</sup>At once his fame began to spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON - JOHN C. BOYD, BC SYNOD**

Grace and peace to you from God the Creator and Our Lord Jesus Christ,

St Mark tells us that this gathering of people in and around the synagogue sees what Christ does and babbles in amazement, “Look! This one is a prophet, not only a teacher. This power proves it.” More often than not, when issues of power and authority are raised in our world and in our religious institutions, we find ourselves among this crowd. When that happens to us, I wonder if we realize what we are saying and seeing. I wonder if we remember and speak about these words when applied to Jesus Christ.

Christ himself is not an authority - not in our systems of knowing authority, where it is something good or bad depending upon how much of our freedom the authority interferes with. That kind of authority often becomes an object of our scorn, something we must destroy or kill in order to preserve ourselves. Curiously, this is what St Mark describes in the account of Christ’s condemnation to death by a crowd that once declared his power. If we stay in these frameworks of power and authority, how can we truly know Jesus? How do we know the difference between the way of life and the way of death and not be deceived onto confusing the two?

Power and authority are two meanings behind the same word that St Mark and other early Christians used to preach the gospel...to tell the world who Christ is and what experiencing Jesus means.

Yes, at first glance in our dictionaries and translation tools, that word “exousia” means everything we have come to know about figures of power and authority...of political systems and struggles for control...of discipline and law.

But hidden just a little further down the list of possible meanings for this word is an understanding of authority and power we need so that we do not lose Jesus among the world’s powers and authorities. The Psalmist’s voice reminds us that “exousia” is, “an abundance of means and resources.” This is the reason for the Psalmist’s praise and joy.

“Ex - ousia.” “Out of [one’s own] life and being.” In faith, we know God as the Creator because that is what God does. There is no space between God’s power and authority to be the creator of all and what it is to be God. And so when Moses asks for God’s name, God says “I Am Who I Will Be.” No tricks. No games. No puzzles.

And so, because we know Jesus in faith by the cross and his life-giving Passion, we know why Jesus says “I Am.” Jesus is the abundance of means and resources from God and the power and authority to give them freely to us. No tricks. No games. No puzzles.

St Paul gives us a hint, a foretaste of Christ’s abundance and power to do things that heals and fulfills our old, incomplete way of understanding the purpose of life.

Everything God has belongs also to Jesus, and as Paul preaches, now belongs to us by Christ’s gift. Does that give us power and authority in the old ways we have been made to understand?

Yes, Paul affirms, we have license and permission to do many things...but what will we do and why will we do it?

Paul and John who wrote the first letters about our new birth in baptism tell us clearly: Those who squander their new birth in baptism, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and their power to give it to others in need will fall into a lifeless loop of power struggles. When we focus only on the first



simple meanings, the old way, of understanding power and authority, everything is about control, and rights, and who gets to dictate the way life will be for everyone. You can have all the power and authority you want as long as you keep the Law on your side and are a clever lawyer. But, as Paul warns us again and again, forgiven sinners like us can never own righteousness and the ability to keep the law working for us. God's creation of life and the project of making us whole means that this world will always change. Right and wrong in the laws of countries and cultures will always change. Sooner or later, we will be wrong and lose these old kinds of power and authority. When that happens, we will need Jesus. We will need the abundance of means and resources Christ has. We will need that grace and life God gives to us as God's children.

The earliest uses of this word, *exousian*, in the letters the first disciples and apostles have left for us all say the same thing about what Christ does with God's power and authority, and why. Christ knows that his life, all that he is, is the abundance of God's means and resources. Christ uses that power and authority over himself and joins in the work of God's creation; he pours himself out in overflowing abundance and gives it all to us, just as God promised to do from the beginning.

In this giving, Christ has complete freedom and true joy, and so because of the gift, Christ is our complete freedom and joy. It is the reason to gather and lift up our own voices in song, to bother with going out to tell others the good news, and to serve them in the power we have to give ourselves. In Christ, power and authority find their true fulfillment because they are inseparable with abundant life and the resources to give these holy gifts freely. Grace is meaningless and incomplete unless it is also a verb—a word about God creating someone. “Grace and peace to you,” is a prayer that God *makes* you the life and joy that Christ always is.

Paul and all of us in the Church also know this because the gospel has opened our eyes; and the experience of Christ has become our life:

overflowing, abundant, full of purpose and the resources to give all of this to others in need of life too. So, then, grace and peace to you, from God the Creator and Our Lord Jesus Christ, now and forever. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**     *There Is a Balm in Gilead*     **ELW 614**

Refrain

*There is a balm in Gilead to make the wounded whole;  
there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin-sick soul.*

- 1     Sometimes I feel discouraged and think my work's in vain,  
      but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again. *Refrain*
- 2     If you cannot preach like Peter, if you cannot pray like Paul,  
      you can tell the love of Jesus and say, "He died for all." *Refrain*
- 3     Don't ever be discouraged, for Jesus is your friend;  
      and if you lack for knowledge he'll ne'er refuse to lend. *Refrain*

**CREED**

Gathered with all people on earth, let us confess our faith:

**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.**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

As we celebrate Christ embodied in human form, we pray for God's blessing on the church, the world, and all of creation.

Loving God, we pray that your example of teaching with confidence and authority builds up your church in love. May all church leaders and teachers honour your instruction and model your inclusive ways.

God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Renewing God, we pray for all of creation, that waterways flow clean and clear, natural spaces are protected, and our planet is healed. Let us commit to thoughtful care of the earth.

God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Justice-seeking God, we pray for those in government and community leadership, that they lead with honour and mindfulness. May they remember their covenants and be upright in their ways.

God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Loving God, the Spirit of all the living, bless *Susan and Gerald on their birthdays*. Grant them your grace and care as they rejoice in your faithfulness.

God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Compassionate God, we pray for all in need, especially those who have known rejection, any who struggle with long-term illness or chronic pain, those without access to safe housing or health care, and any who suffer *especially Melanie, Heather, Oscar, Evelyn, Sandy, Kerra, Bill, Doris, Henry, Claire, Jean, David, Jean, Ted, Ray, Irene and those whom we name in silence or aloud. (Pause).*

God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Still-speaking God, we pray for our congregation, for its artists and musicians, for its educators and caregivers, that all gifts are used to care

for those in need and to live out your example of accompaniment, gospel witness, and love.

God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Eternal God, we remember all who have been teachers, mentors, and companions in the church and in our lives *especially Thomas Aquinas whom we commemorate today*. We trust that all who have died rest in your loving care.

God of grace, **receive our prayer.**

Knowing the Holy Spirit intercedes for us, we offer these prayers and the silent prayers of our hearts in the name of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

**Amen.**

## **OFFERING**

### **OFFERTORY HYMN**

**Vs 1,2,6 ELW 886**

#### ***Oh, For a Thousand Tongues to Sing***

- 1 Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise,  
the glories of my God and King, the triumphs of his grace!
- 2 My gracious Master and my God, assist me to proclaim,  
to spread through all the earth abroad the honors of your name.
- 6 To God all glory, praise, and love be now and ever giv'n  
by saints below and saints above, the church in earth and heav'n.

## **OFFERING PRAYER**

Let us pray. Holy God, gracious and merciful, you bring forth food from the earth and nourish your whole creation. Turn our hearts toward those who hunger in any way, that all may know your care, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

## **BENEDICTION**

Almighty God, Father, ✝ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever.  
**Amen.**

## **SENDING SONG**

### *Jesus Shall Reign*

**ELW 434**

- 1 Jesus shall reign where'er the sun  
does its successive journeys run;  
his kingdom stretch from shore to shore,  
till moons shall wax and wane no more.
- 2 To him shall endless prayer be made,  
and praises throng to crown his head;  
his name like sweet perfume shall rise  
with ev'ry morning sacrifice.
- 3 People and realms of ev'ry tongue  
dwell on his love with sweetest song;  
and infant voices shall proclaim  
their early blessings on his name.
- 4 Blessings abound where'er he reigns:  
the pris'ners leap to lose their chains,  
the weary find eternal rest,  
and all who suffer want are blest.
- 5 Let ev'ry creature rise and bring  
peculiar honours to our king;

angels descend with songs again,  
and earth repeat the loud amen.

## **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

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