

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

**March 22, 2020 – 10:45 a.m.
St. Matthew Lutheran Church
4101 Washington Street NE
Columbia Heights, MN 55421**

+ CONNECT +

OPENING HYMN: “Beautiful Savior” – Blue Hymnal #507
Beautiful Savior, King of creation
Son of God and Son of Man!
Truly I’d love thee, Truly I’d serve thee,
Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.

Fair are the meadows, Fair are the woodlands,
Robed in flow’rs of blooming spring;
Jesus is fairer, Jesus is purer,
He makes our sorr’wing spirit sing.

Fair is the sunshine, Fair is the moonlight,
Bright the sparkling stars on high;
Jesus shines brighter, Jesus shines purer
Than all the angels in the sky.

Beautiful Savior, Lord of the nations,
Son of God and Son of Man!
Glory and honor, Praise, adoration
Now and forevermore be thine!

INVOCATION:

L: Our worship begins the way our lives in Christ begin in baptism: In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C: Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE DAY:

L: The Lent season is one of repentance and renewal, and today through God's Word we recognize times of sinful darkness and spiritual blindness and deafness. Isaiah identifies the blindness and deafness that are not of the eyes and ears, but of the heart. Paul reminds us of the light that exposes our sin, but the greater call is to walk in the light of Christ. In the Holy Gospel, a man blind from birth is healed by Jesus but experiences an even greater sight of light away from the darkness of unbelief. In this season of Lent, even in times of darkness, we continue to follow Christ to the cross as we hear His Word and rejoice in His light of truth.

CONFESSION OF OUR SINS:

L: "I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness; I will take you by the hand and keep you; I will give you as a covenant for the people, a light for the nations,

C: To open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness."

L: In the darkness of the world around us and amid our own blindness to His will and ways, God calls us to confess our sins.

C: Return to the LORD, your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. (*Silence for reflection on our sins*)

L: God of God, Light of light,

C: We confess that by nature we are sinful and unclean, born in darkness. We are often blind and deaf to Your Word and Your work in our lives, sinning against You and against one another in thought, word, and deed. For the sake of Jesus, who is the light of the world, forgive me all my sins, that my eyes may be opened, my ears unstopped, and my heart enlightened to look to You in faith and hope.

FORGIVENESS IS ANNOUNCED

RESPONSE: "Our God, Our Help In Ages Past" – Blue Hymnal #180
Our God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast, And our eternal home:

**Under the shadow of your throne your saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is your arm alone, And our defense is sure.**

**Before the hills in order stood Or earth received its frame
From everlasting you are God, To endless years the same.**

**A thousand ages in your sight Are like an evening gone,
Short as the watch that ends the night Before the rising sun.**

**Time, like an ever-rolling stream, Soon bears us all away;
We fly forgotten, as a dream, dies at the op'ning day.**

**Our God, our help in ages past, Our hope for years to come,
Still be our guard while troubles last And our eternal home!**

PRAYER OF THE DAY:

L: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

L: Let us pray.

**C: O Jesus, Light of the World, God of mercy and love, we come to you
this morning seeking restoration of our sight. Clear away our
blindness and give us a new vision of all that we can accomplish in
your Name. Give us love, strength, and confidence to witness to
your ever present love and faithfulness. In the Name of Jesus, the
Light of the World, Amen.**

+ NURTURE +

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Isaiah 42:14-21

“For a long time I have kept silent, I have been quiet and held myself back. But now, like a woman in childbirth, I cry out, I gasp and pant. I will lay waste the mountains and hills and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn rivers into islands and dry up the pools. I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them. But those who trust in idols, who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’ will be turned back in utter shame. Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the LORD? You have seen many things, but you pay no attention; your ears are open,

P: "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but this happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it is day, we must do the works of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

L: After saying this, he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva, and put it on the man's eyes.

P: "Go, wash in the Pool of Siloam."

L: (This word means "Sent"). So the man went and washed, and came home seeing. His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked,

C: "Isn't this the same man who used to sit and beg?"

L: Some claimed that he was. Others said,

C: "No, he only looks like him."

L: But he himself insisted, "I am the man."

C: "How then were your eyes opened?"

L: He replied, "The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see."

C: "Where is this man?"

L: "I don't know," he said. They brought to the Pharisees the man who had been blind. Now the day on which Jesus had made the mud and opened the man's eyes was a Sabbath. Therefore the Pharisees also asked him how he had received his sight. "He put mud on my eyes," the man replied, "and I washed, and now I see." Some of the Pharisees said,

C: "This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath."

L: But others asked,

C: "How can a sinner perform such signs?"

L: So they were divided. Then they turned again to the blind man,

C: "What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened."

L: The man replied, "He is a prophet." They still did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight until they sent for the man's parents.

C: **"Is this your son? Is this the one you say was born blind? How is it that now he can see?"**

L: "We know he is our son," the parents answered, "and we know he was born blind. But how he can see now, or who opened his eyes, we don't know. Ask him. He is of age; he will speak for himself." His parents said this because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders, who already had decided that anyone who acknowledged that Jesus was the Messiah would be put out of the synagogue. That was why his parents said, "He is of age; ask him." A second time they summoned the man who had been blind.

C: **"Give glory to God by telling the truth. We know this man is a sinner."**

L: He replied, "Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!" Then they asked him,

C: **"What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?"**

L: He answered, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" Then they hurled insults at him and said,

C: **"You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses! We know that God spoke to Moses, but as for this fellow, we don't even know where he comes from."**

L: The man answered, "Now that is remarkable! You don't know where he comes from, yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly person who does his will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing." To this they replied,

C: **"You were steeped in sin at birth; how dare you lecture us!"**

L: And they threw him out. Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when he found him, he said,

P: *"Do you believe in the Son of Man?"*

L: "Who is he, sir?" the man asked. "Tell me so that I may believe in him."
Jesus said,

P: *"You have now seen him; in fact, he is the one speaking with you."*

L: Then the man said, "Lord, I believe," and he worshiped him. Jesus said,

P: *"For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind."*

L: Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked,

C: **"What? Are we blind too?"**

P: *"If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains."*

L: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: **Praise to You, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY: "Amazing Grace" – Blue Hymnal #509

Amazing grace how sweet the sound

That saved a wretch like me!

I once was lost, but now I'm found

Was blind but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear

And grace my fears relieved.

How precious did that grace appear

The hour I first believed.

Thro' many dangers, toils and snares

I have already come.

'Twas grace that bro't me safe thus far

And grace will lead me home.

The Lord has promised good to me,

His Word my hope secures

He will my shield and portion be

As long as life endures.

**When we've been there ten thousand years
Bright shining as the sun
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.**

MESSAGE: "Where Is God in a Pandemic?" – Pastor Bill Hugo

+ EMPOWER +

PRAYERS OF THE CHURCH:

(Prayer response – P: Lord, in your mercy, C: Hear our prayer.)

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

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; 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

CLOSING HYMN: "Now Thank We All Our God" – Blue Hymnal #443

**Now thank we all our God With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things has done, In whom his world rejoices;
Who from our mothers' arms Has blest us on our way
With countless gifts of love And still is ours today.**

**Oh, may this bounteous God Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts And blessed peace to cheer us
And keep us in his grace And guide us when perplexed
And free us from all harm In this world and the next!**

**All praise and thanks to God The Father now be given,
The Son, and him who reigns With them in highest heaven,
The one eternal God, Whom earth and heav'n adore;
For thus it was, is now, And shall be evermore.**

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