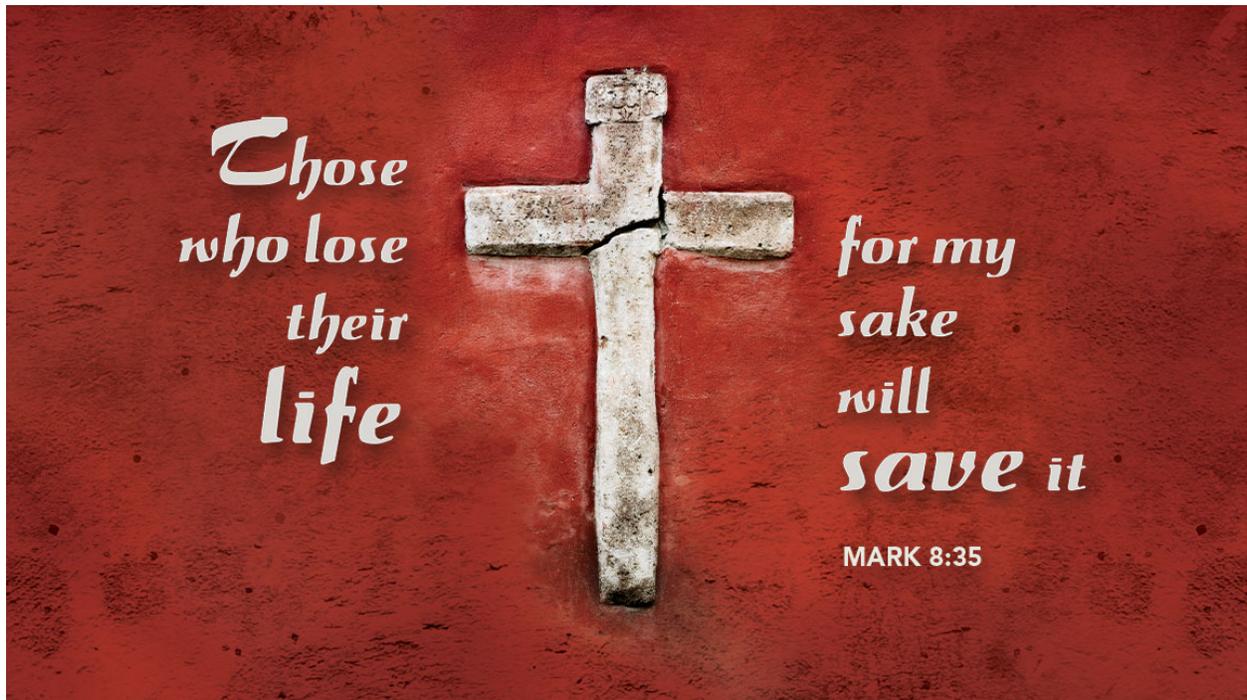


Gifts of the Dark Wood



Sunday, February 28, 2021
Second Sunday in Lent
First Lutheran Church - Sandpoint

“The Gift of Emptiness”

Welcome to the season of Lent. This year, our worship will invite us to examine and explore what God might be offering us in the wilderness places of our lives. Before Jesus begins his ministry, the Holy Spirit drives him out to the desert; a time of emptiness, uncertainty, temptation, feeling lost, and prayer. You are invited to explore what the Holy Spirit wants to help you discover in this time of worship. The cross looms before us as Jesus leads us along this path we might not choose for ourselves. Gifts await you along the way.

WE GATHER

The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Prelude

Welcome/Announcements

Please review page 12 of this bulletin for Covid-19 safety protocols in support of our worship together today.

Threshold to the Dark Woods

[Soloist sings]

*There's a path... though it winds its way through darkness
We would choose... to avoid it if we could
We awake... to an unexpected calling
God says, "come... there are gifts in the Dark Wood"*

Pastor: Our journey through the Dark Wood invites us to the gift of emptiness. Many of us sometime feel empty inside and we fear that there is nothing there of worth. But what if we let go of our obsession with worthiness and released into the idea that if we want to be filled—to find God—getting empty is the best way. In this Lenten journey toward the Cross, we know even Jesus felt empty despair... and it was at this moment that God's possibility of life beyond that pain was revealed.

...

[soloist sings— people whisper the echo]

*There's a path (echo: **there's a path**) ... though it winds its way through darkness
We would choose (**we would choose**) ... to avoid it if we could
We awake (**we awake**) ... to an unexpected calling
God says, "come (**God says, "come**) ... there are gifts in the Dark Wood"*

Prayer

Let us Pray,

Trusted Love, enter our lives

and open us to the gifts residing deep within the Holy Shadows of our lives.

Help us to empty ourselves with every breath.

Make room in us

so that you might take up residence

in the very marrow of our bones.

In your name, we pray. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn/Song: "Come to me, all Pilgrims Thirsty
(quietly hum or whisper)

ELW 777 (odd verses)

- 1 "Come to me, all pilgrims thirsty;
drink the water I will give.
If you knew what gift I offer,
you would come to me and live."

Refrain



Je - sus, ev - er - flow - ing foun - tain, give us wa - ter from your well.



In the gra - cious gift you of - fer there is joy no tongue can tell.

- 3 "Come to me, believers burdened;
find refreshment in this place.
Come, receive the gift I offer,
turn to me and seek my face." *Refrain*

- 5 "Come to me, distressed and needy;
I would be your trusted friend.
Come and seek the gift I offer,
come, your open hands extend." *Refrain*

***Litany of Confession and Forgiveness**

Leader: For filling up our lives with little room for You,

People: Forgive and restore us, O God.

Leader: For worry that outlasts trust,

People: Forgive and restore us, O God.

Leader: For choosing being right over being in relationship,

People: Forgive and restore us, O God. S

ilent prayers...

Hear these words of assurance:

God chooses relationship over perfection.

Who you are is “loved by God.”

God is with you, forgiving and restoring you to wholeheartedness

Through the grace of Jesus Christ, who poured out His love for the sake of the world.

Thanks be to God! Amen!

WORD

First Reading: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16;

As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah’s womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God’s promise.

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous.” ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

¹⁵God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

The Word of the Lord, **Thanks be to God!**

Psalm 22:23-31

²³You who fear the LORD, give praise! All you of Jacob's line, give glory.
Stand in awe of the LORD, all you offspring of Israel.

²⁴For the LORD does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither is the LORD's face hidden from them;
but when they cry out, the LORD hears them.

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the LORD.

²⁶The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts live forever! R

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow before God.

²⁸For dominion belongs to the LORD,
who rules over the nations.

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

³⁰Their descendants shall serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying to them, "The LORD has acted!" R

***GOSPEL ACCLAMATION: (spoken)**

**Let your steadfast love come to us, O Lord.
Save us as you promised; we will trust your word.**

***Gospel: Mark 8:31-38**

After Peter confesses his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples for the first time what is to come. Peter's response indicates that he does not yet understand the way of the cross that Jesus will travel.

³¹[Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

SERMON

WE RESPOND

A Time for Reflection

Leader [*from preacher at end of sermon*]: Each week we will take time to reflect, accompanied by music. This week, we focus on how the things that fill us—like ego, fear of being unloved, worry of not measuring up, need to be emptied so that we might live. You are invited to write something on the piece of paper that you need to let go of, that needs to die in order that you can live more fully. As you leave today, take it to the cross and place it through one of the nails.

Song of Reflection - Be Still by Dakota Road.

Verses:

- 1) *Amidst the chaos of the daily, hear the small voice.*
- 2) *Above the raging nations, you weep for peace.*
- 3) *Just as a hen cares for her young ones .. your wings, our home.*

***Apostles' Creed**

**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.**

*Or, "he descended into hell," another translation of this text in widespread use.

***Prayers of the People "Come and Rest"**

[a soloist sings the prayer chant with no echo first time through, with echo second time through, then leads the congregation in the echo]

*Come and rest (echo: **come and rest**)*

*Come and listen (echo: **come and listen**)*

Lay the fullness of your lives before the Maker (echo is a canon)

There are many people who are walking the Dark Woods for various reasons.

Give your church throughout the world a spirit of humility and repentance; teach us to trust always in the good news of your salvation. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

There are many places in this world where fear reigns.

Let us lift up names of places in this world that need our prayers...

[offer places out loud and in your hearts...]

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

All the ends of the earth worship you. From galaxies to microorganisms, preserve your creation. Teach humanity to wonder at your works and to join you in tending to creation's well-being.

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

Let us lift up names of those who need our prayers...

[offer names out loud and in your hearts...]

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

You made Abraham and Sarah the ancestors of a multitude of nations. Bless grandparents, parents, and foster parents, and the children who look to them for care and guidance. Console those who deal with infertility, parents who have entrusted their children to adoption, and children longing to be adopted. Equip ministries and services to families.

God, in your mercy,
hear our prayer.

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord offering the words he taught us, saying:

**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.**

***PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

*The people may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace,
and remaining in your pew.*

*Offerings may be placed in the plates as you go out from this worship to live in service to
God throughout the week.*

Or you can give online <https://firstlutheransandpoint.breezechms.com/give/online>.

SENDING

God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.

***Sending Song - "Be Thou My Vision". (ELW #793 v 1 & 2)**

- 1 Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
thou my best thought both by day and by night,
waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.**

- 2 Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my soul's shelter, and thou my high tow'r,
raise thou me heav'nward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.**

Text: Irish, 8th cent.; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935, alt.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931

Blessing

Please speak the words in bold when we get to them:

May the Spirit of the Living God,
Made known to us most fully within life's Dark Wood:

Go before you to show you the way;

Go above you to watch over you;

Go behind you to push you into places you may not necessarily go yourself;

Go beneath you to uphold and uplift you;

Go beside you to be your strong and constant companion;

And dwell within you to remind you that you are surely not alone,
And may the fire of God's blessing burn brightly Upon you, and within you,
Now and always.

Amen.

Benediction Song

*There's a path (**there's a path**) ... and it leads us out together
To the wood (**to the wood**) ... where the darkness hovers still
We are sent (**we are sent**) ... and the Spirit goes before us
God says, "go (**God says, go**) ... be my presence in the world."*

Postlude

Worship Notes:

Series based on *Gifts of the Dark Wood* by Eric Elnes

All liturgy by Marcia McFee, www.worshipdesignstudio.com

"There's a Path" & "Come and Rest," words by Marcia McFee, music by Chuck Bell.

"Take My Life" Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939

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Blessing from *Gifts of the Dark Wood* by Eric Elnes.

Worship Team: Pastor Lori Morton, Pastor Steve Neuder, Piano Colleen Culwell, AV
Techs: Scott Youngren and Don Farnham

Announcements:**Prayer Requests:**

Michelle Thurston, George Marker, Lynn Franck, Chris Ingham; Randy Petersen; Charles Shobe Sr., Nicky Schripsema; Wendi Lies; Gerda Burke; Debbie Haberlock; Kara Schripsema; Kai Haberlock; Tom Taylor; Hunter Taylor; Eugene Kurwicki; Mike Shobe; Marguerite Suttmeier, Sylvia Greenwood; Janet Merrill, and those on your hearts and minds today.

We include prayers for Luther Park - its staff, residents, and families; the Southern states and all those cleaning up after power outages and frozen pipes due to below freezing temperatures, wisdom as we continue to learn how to live with Covid-19.

Lent:

Wednesdays during Lent - Linda Ingham will facilitate a conversation around prayer. You are invited to explore how your prayer life has been shaped and help each other identify the gifts the Holy Spirit wants us to discover while we spend time in the Dark Wood season of Lent. The conversations will be on Zoom at 7 p.m. The Zoom invitation will be recurring and sent on the Tuesday prior to meeting. There is a booklet called "Exploring Prayer" that was emailed or can be accessed on our webpage under Nurturing Faith.

Giving Opportunities -

Good Samaritan Inn - The leaders of Helping Hands, Helping Hearts are looking to purchase land for a transitional housing unit to meet the large homelessness population in our county. During Lent, we collect a special offering on Wednesdays, to support local community organizations. This will be our main focus this year. One way to contribute would be to get a jar or bag to act as a samaritan purse and collect your change throughout Lent and donate at the end of the season. Contact Pastor Jon Pomeroy if you have more questions.

"Warming Hearts" is an organization founded by Camille Neuder with the support of Sandpoint High School's Interact Club for the purpose of creating 100 cold weather kits for the local homeless population. For more information and ways to donate, follow this [link](#)

Worship Paraments: Thanks to a memorial given in honor of Eddie Drinkard, we have new paraments for the seasons of Epiphany / Ordinary Time, Advent, and Easter / Christmas. Appreciation goes to Trish Thurston and Royce Howell for researching and ordering these visual arts to support our worship.

Please note the following things to support the community in our worship:

- First, thank you for adjusting to and heeding the precautions we have put in place to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus, while we gather.
- In addition to wearing face masks, remaining 6' apart from other family groups or friend cohorts, staying home if you do not feel well, and refraining from shaking hands or hugging:
 - we have placed the offering plates at the entrances and exits of the worship space, so you do not have to touch any surfaces. We also encourage online giving, which you can find on our website: <https://firstlutheransandpoint.breezechms.com/give/online>.
 - Frequently touched surfaces are cleaned before groups gather and after.
 - The bathrooms are located to the right, as you exit the back of the church. We ask that one family unit use the facilities at a time. Hydrogen peroxide is available to disinfect touched surfaces.
 - The Children's Playroom and Nursery is not available for use.
 - Doors and windows are kept open and the fans running for ventilation.
 - We ask that you meditate on or hum the songs as the music plays, rather than singing.
 - During the passing of the peace, we invite you to wave, show a peace sign, extend your arms in a gesture of blessing, etc. as you remain in your pew.
 - At the end of the worship, please remain seated until the ushers dismiss you by rows. The upright piano side of the sanctuary will leave through the door up front. The lectern side will exit the way you came in.
 - Fellowship is encouraged with social distancing, once you are outside of the building.
 - We requested your name and phone number in case we need to notify you of a potential exposure to Covid-19. We will heed HIPAA laws if or when the need arises.
 - On Sundays, the fellowship hall door that leads out to the Ontario St. parking lot will be exit only for anyone who might be seated in the overflow seating. The Main Ontario St. door and the doors nearest the church office will be the only doors unlocked for entry.
- Even with all of this, we cannot eliminate the risk of contracting the Covid-19 virus while gathering indoors. Therefore, we will record each worship and post for those who choose to stay home. Yes, the Holy Spirit connects us all together wherever we are, with the saints today, and all those who have gone before us in the faith.