



Perley Lutheran Parish
March 14th, 2021
Fourth Sunday in Lent



Gathering Spoken Hymn: When I Survey the Wondrous Cross
When I survey the wondrous cross on which the prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride.

Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were and tribute far too small;
Love so amazing so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all!

Welcome and Announcements

- Lenten Services at 7 at Nora this week.
- Please continue to support the congregations financially – hard with not being together for so long to keep on top of everything so offering can be brought in person, done on-line or mailed into the office.
- Reach out to Pastor or the church office if you need anything
- Food Shelf open Thursdays from 5-7 at Kirkebo in Perley

Confession and Forgiveness

L Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer. Amen

God hears us when we cry and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion. Fountain of living water,

C **pour out your mercy over us. Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free. Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn. Wash us in your cleansing flood. Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus, as healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.**

L Beloved, God's word never fails. The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, our sins are forgiven, and God remembers them no more. Journey in the way of Jesus. Amen.

Prayer of the Day: **O God, rich in mercy, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world and rescued us from the hopelessness of death. Lead us into your light, that all our deeds may reflect your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, on God, now and forever.**

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22 (read responsively)

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever. **Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, those he redeemed from trouble** and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south. **Some were sick through their sinful ways, and because of their iniquities endured affliction;** they loathed any kind of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. **Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress;** he sent out his word and healed them and delivered them from destruction. **Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind.** And let them offer thanksgiving sacrifices, and tell of his deeds with songs of joy

Old Testament Reading: Numbers 21:4-9

From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Holy Gospel according to John 3:1-21 **Glory to you O Lord**

Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus, a leader of the Jews. He 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." Jesus answered him, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above. Nicodemus 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?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above. The 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.'" Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" Jesus answered him, "Are you a teacher of Israel, and yet you do not understand these things? "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. If I have told you about earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? No one has ascended into heaven except the one who descended from heaven, the Son of Man.

And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. "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. "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. 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. 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. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. 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."

The Gospel of our Lord, **Praise to you, O Christ**

Children's Message –

One of my favorite Bible verses begins, "For God so loved the world." I was thinking about that verse and wondering just how great God's love is and how we could measure it. This morning I brought several things that we often use to measure stuff. I thought they might help us measure God's love.

Sometimes we measure ingredients. If I were making some cookies, which of these would I use to make sure that I put in exactly the right amount of flour, sugar, and milk? (Allow kids to pick between the measuring cup, a tape measure, and a watch.) That's right, we would use a measuring cup for cookies, but I wonder if we might use a measuring cup to measure God's love? The Bible says, "The

Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want....my cup runneth over" (Psalm 23:1,5). Well, if our cup runs over with God's love, I guess we couldn't use a measuring cup to measure it.

If we were building something, which of these would I use to measure the length, width, and height of different things? (Allow kids to pick between the measuring cup, a tape measure, and a watch.) That's right, a tape measure, but I wonder if we might use a tape measure to measure God's love? The Bible tells us that God's love is higher than the heavens (Psalm 108:4). If God's love is higher than the heavens, I don't think we could use a tape measure to measure it, could we?

Which of these would I use to measure time? (Allow kids to pick between the measuring cup, a tape measure, and a watch.) We use a watch to measure time. There will probably be some people here this morning who will use their watches to measure how long the pastor's sermon lasts. I wonder if we could use a watch to measure how long God's love will last. The Bible tells us that God's love is from everlasting to everlasting (Psalm 103:17). Wow! If God's love is from everlasting to everlasting, I guess we couldn't measure it with a watch.

"For God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life." How do you measure a love like that? We can't measure it. We don't need to, but we do need to experience it.

My prayer for you today is, "That you may understand how wide, how long, how high, and how deep His love really is. May you experience it, though it is so great you will never fully understand it" (Ephesians 3:18-19).

Dear God, we thank You for Your love—a love so great that You gave Your one and only Son so that we could have eternal life. In Jesus' name, amen.

Message

Grace and peace to you from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen

I really struggled this week with my message. John 3:16 – who hasn't heard that verse, who hasn't listened to umpteen sermons on it, and who doesn't have something – a bumper sticker, a gift back, a book mark with it listed on??? It's obviously the theme of most of what we know and love as Christians but rather than jump right into all the usual parts for my message I think we should take a broader look at our passage today.

I love road trips. Give me an opportunity to jump in the car and take off and I'm all for it. That's a good thing since we make multiple trips to Michigan and back to gather my granddaughter, Kaylee and bring her to Minnesota. What I have found however, on these trips, is that my idea of a good trip is often times quite different than most of my passengers. It depends of course on who is with me – my mom thinks like I do so I love traveling with her – but my father and my boys are another story.

I like to stop a lot – stop and take silly pictures by landmarks, stop and check out the flea markets or thrift stores, stop and enjoy the local scenery and cuisine – just plain stop, and do it often. My mother's always willing to go with me when we can do these kinds of trips. The men in my life though – they are all about the destination. Get in the car – drive straight through, PERHAPS make a bathroom stop at a rest area so it doesn't take so long, get there and get home in the fastest and most uneventful way. For me it's all about the fun you have getting there – sure it might take us a bit longer (sometimes A LOT longer) but we're going to have fun! For them it's the opposite – time is of the essence – get there and get back. PERIOD.

As much as we may wish our lives as Christians could be the destination driven model like driving on interstates and always taking direct flights – I don't think that's the case. The life of disciples – living in faith of Jesus Christ, is not so much about the destination but rather about the journey one has while living in God's kingdom. Nicodemus is a great example of this.

Nicodemus was a leading Pharisee and well-recognized religious leader of the Jewish people. He was also a member of the Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court in ancient Israel. I have to say that although I'm sure many didn't like Nicodemus I think he's actually pretty special in that even though he had stature and power, he realized that he really didn't have his life in order. He didn't have all the answers and therefore he knew he needed to get them. And from who, well Jesus of course.

It's written that he was concerned about what others might think if they saw him with Jesus – at least in the beginning of their friendship. Who else would sneak around at night to visit with Jesus but someone who is attempting to keep the visit confidential and secret? Our writer of this passage uses the darkness of night to signify also the darkness of the world – the evil that lurks in the darkness. I know I sure don't like wandering around in the dark – after all those places of darkness are also places one can get lost and separated. But Nicodemus he comes in the darkness – comes out of the darkness – to meet with Jesus. He is aware of what Jesus is teaching and senses the reality of God's presence with Jesus. He's not got him labeled as "Messiah" yet, but that's simply because he doesn't have all the information. YET

Sounds familiar to me – we too don't have all the answers about our own lives. The life of a Christian is a life in which we need to ask questions, seek the answers, and explore the many possibilities. We must be searchers. Christians with searching hearts and spirits are ones who grow in this life and in our faith. That growth is what allows us to open up and be accepting to the many surprises God has in store for us in our lives.

Think about a moment when you have had a conversation with someone in which you THOUGHT you were talking about the same thing but you were not. Each of you are adding to the conversation and although it starts out like it's working as more and more things are said things just don't seem to match up. It's at that time that you realize you aren't on the same page – aren't having the same conversation after all. That's what happens initially to Nicodemus and Jesus. Verse 3 reads, *"Jesus answered him, 'Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.'"* Nicodemus, he looks at that statement and understands it to be all about being born again and he wonders how that can happen. Then in verses 6 and 8 Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit, *"What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above. The 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.'"* The Spirit is something Nicodemus thinks he knows about – he's heard the stories in the Old Testament about the Spirit descending upon the prophets. He knows the Spirit is a bit uncontrollable so the idea of the Holy Spirit giving new life, that a person touched by the Spirit can enter the kingdom of God rather than following all the normal rules and rituals of the Pharisees seems a bit of a stretch for Nicodemus. "How can this be?" he asks.

You and I might be pretty savvy on the physical side of our lives – like what foods we SHOULD be eating, how we can make friends, influence others, ride our bikes and drive our cars, exercise our bodies. When it comes to the spiritual side of our lives though that's another story. Nicodemus asks the question for us – he shares his inquiring mind and he wants to know. He is reminded that the Holy Spirit is present in our lives. The Spirit is here to teach us about things however, we need to want to learn them and thankful the Spirit is patient in waiting for us to want to.

After Jesus spends time talking about being born from above and life in God's kingdom, he goes on to talk about God, the Father. *"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"* – that they can be born from

above. God sent Jesus so that we can be saved from a condemned life. Walking in faith with Jesus is living in God's kingdom. It's experiencing the abundant blessings that God promises. God moves so that the light of God can overcome the darkness. A path that leads away from evil and confusion. The words and the actions of those who walk in the "light" are seen as being with God and a reflection of God's love.

We are going to see and hear more from Nicodemus in the coming lessons. The light doesn't suddenly dawn on Nicodemus after this first visit with Jesus. We can assume that the questions continued for him after this first encounter. Nicodemus will not only defend Jesus against the Pharisees, but will be there to claim Jesus after the Son has died. Clearly something taught Nicodemus the truth.

A life of faith, a walk as a disciple of Jesus Christ, is a journey. Though we are promised an amazing destination, an everlasting life beside the Father, we can't overlook the fun, excitement, power of experience and of course love that we have in relationship with a loving Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And how do we sum this all up? Well it's really pretty simple. Perhaps you can say it with me..... "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life." That one little verse it says it all! All the good news about Jesus Christ wrapped up into one little sentence – so simple that we can write it on our hearts! Amen.

Spoken Hymn of the Day: Praise and Thanks and Adoration

Praise and thanks and adoration, Son of God to you we give;
For you chose to serve creation, died that Adam's heirs might live.
Dear Lord Jesus guide my way; Faithful let me day by day follow where your steps are leading, Find adventure, joys exceeding!

Hold me ever in your keeping, comfort me in pain and strife;
Through my laughter and my weeping, lift me to a nobler life.
Draw my fervent love to you; Constant hope and faith renew in your birth your life and passion, In your death and resurrection.

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 Christian/catholic Church, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen

Prayers of the people: (Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great**)

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world and all in need.
You sent your Son that the world might be saved through him. Inspire the witness of the church throughout the world. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great**

From east to west your steadfast love is shown. Nourish seas and deserts, wilderness areas and cities. Give water to thirsty lands, nurture spring growth that feed hungry creatures, bless farmers as they prepare for the growing season. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great**

You sustained your people in the wilderness. Give courage to all who lead in times of crisis and scarce resources. Your mercy endures forever. Deliver all who cry to you, especially those who are hungry and homeless. By grace we have been saved. Fill this congregation to overflowing with that

grace, that we show mercy to others. Nourish any in our midst who are hungry and bless our ministries in feeding others. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great**

For those who walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve us, deliver us, and fulfill your purpose for us. According to your steadfast love, grant healing and wholeness to those who are mourning as they deal with tremendous loss, we ask that you continue to send healing to those dealing with illness and recovery. We lift up those within our congregation and those that have reached out to us for prayers, Margie and Sonya, Marlis and Terry, Jeff and Evonne, Kirk and Arlis, and all of those that we now name silently in our own hearts..... Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

And gathered as one let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught us,
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. 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

Blessing:

We are what God made us to be: created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved, freed to serve our neighbors. God, bless us that we may be a blessing to others the name of the holy and life-giving Trinity. Amen.

Closing Spoken Hymn: Beneath the Cross of Jesus

Beneath the cross of Jesus, I long to take my stand;
The shadow of a mighty rock within a weary land,
A home within a wilderness, a rest upon the way,
From the burning of the noontide heat and burdens of the day.

Upon the cross of Jesus, my eye at times can see
The very dying form of one Who suffered there for me.
And from my contrite heart, with tears, two wonders I confess;
The wonder of his glorious love and my unworthiness.

Dismissal: Go in Peace. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

Mark Your Calendars: *(All services are streamed on-line as well as in –person)*

Wednesday, March 17th – Lenten Service at 7pm –Nora (no meal served)

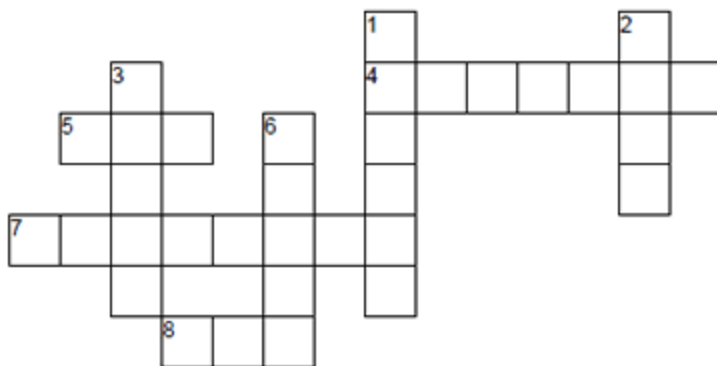
Sunday, March 21st – Service at 9am at Nora

Pastor Michele Jenson: Phone: 701-261-0998 Email: mjenson001@luthersem.edu Web Page: www.perleyparish.org Email: perleyparish@gmail.com

God So Loved the World

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

Complete the activity below.



ACROSS

4. Lasting forever; without end
5. Male offspring
7. Accept something as being true, genuine, or real
8. The creator of heaven and earth

DOWN

1. To die or be destroyed
2. To rescue from danger or harm
3. The earth with its inhabitants and everything on it
6. Cared very deeply for someone

ETERNAL
LOVED

WORLD
GOD

PERISH
BELIEVES

SAVE
SON

Measuring God's Love

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16 (NIV)

Choose the word that best matches the definition.

Answers can be found in John 3:16-17 (NIV)



- ___ 1. To set the punishment of someone who has committed a crime
A. believes B. perish C. condemn D. loved
- ___ 2. To rescue from danger or harm
A. save B. condemn C. perish D. eternal
- ___ 3. To die or be destroyed
A. condemn B. save C. believes D. perish
- ___ 4. Lasting forever; without end
A. save B. eternal C. whoever D. perish
- ___ 5. Male offspring
A. daughter B. sister C. cousin D. Son
- ___ 6. Accepts something as being true, genuine, or real
A. perish B. save C. believes D. world
- ___ 7. The creator of heaven and earth
A. Moses B. whoever C. God D. life
- ___ 8. Cared very deeply for someone
A. believed B. loved C. condemned D. world
- ___ 9. The earth with its inhabitants and everything upon it
A. save B. perish C. world D. whoever
- ___ 10. Anyone; any person
A. world B. whoever C. perish D. eternal

Measuring God's Love

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son,
that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.
John 3:16 (NIV)

Based on John 3:14-17 (NIV)



P T F V E L F M H H M F H B N
O T J E Z O S D C C T O Z I U
U I F I D V N N X O W M M O M
Y I G I Z E H N A R N S A V E
L N F L S D A H N K R D F I Q
T L D E S E R T Y V E O E B Y
H P I I B E L I E V E S V M J
R W D F G Q J C Z X U G K K N
O S O N T A M E P H D A Z P R
U N V R V E B T Y U O V J E W
G X L S L S D E Q U X E V R P
H L J Y E D R R G W E E D I L
G X L S N X S N R B O T H S Y
M O O D L Z G A H H T Z T H R
D M D G U M M L W J H G I P O

SON	ONLY	BELIEVES	MOSES	WHOEVER
PERISH	HIM	WORLD	DESERT	LIFTED
CONDEMN	SNAKE	LOVED	ETERNAL	LIFE
THROUGH	GAVE	SEND	GOD	SAVE