

RETURN to the LORD



Lent Midweek #4
March 17, 2021
7:00 p.m.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church (LCMS)

Growing Christ in Us and Us in the World

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ST PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Growing...One Friend at a Time!

Our Lenten Midweek Worship Series:

Return to the LORD

Through the words of the prophet Joel, God called to His people and commanded that they turn from their sinful ways and return to Him for His grace and blessings. The images the prophet uses are vivid and disturbing. The situation of God's people is desperate and needs immediate attention. This is a time for listening and responding to the call to return to faithfulness to the God who has ever been faithful to His people. "Return to the Lord, your God" is more than a verse or part of a liturgy. It is a heartfelt directive for our lives as together we follow the pathway of Lent.

Lenten Midweek Worship Schedule

Date	Location	Theme
February 17 <small>(Ash Wed)</small>	St Paul's, Holtville	<i>A Call to Return</i> (Matt. 6:1-6, 16-21)
February 24	Grace, El Centro	<i>Return to Prayer</i> (Matt. 36:36-46)
March 3	St Paul's, Holtville	<i>Return from Betrayal</i> (John 18:1-11)
March 10	Grace, El Centro	<i>Return from False Witness</i> (Matt. 26:57-68)
March 17	St Paul's, Holtville	<i>Return from Denial</i> (Luke 22:54-62)
March 24	Grace, El Centro	<i>Return to the Kingdom of God</i> (John 18:28)
April 1 <small>(Maundy Thursday)</small>	St Paul's, Holtville	<i>Return to the Table</i> (Mark 14:12-26)
April 2 <small>(Good Friday)</small>	St Paul's, Holtville	<i>Return to the Truth</i> (John 19:1-16)

AS WE ARE GATHERED *Return from Denial*

In one of the classic hymns associated with the season of Lent, Scottish-born writer James Montgomery, author of over four hundred hymns, penned this thoughtful prayer: "In the hour of trial, Jesus, plead for me Lest by base denial I depart from Thee" (LW 511:1). Although the language of the hymn reflects the era in which it was written almost two hundred years ago, the central concern is as valid today as it was when the stanza was written. The phrase "base denial" calls to mind the disciple Peter, who disowns his Lord while in the courtyard of the house of the high priest. At times in our lives, we may be tempted to deny our Lord and to act as though our faith is not central to who we are. It is then that we can draw strength from remembering the forgiveness won for us by our suffering Lord, who calls us even from "base denial" to return to Him.

Lent Midweek #4

RETURN FROM DENIAL

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.

Isaiah 55:7

+ PREPARATION +

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the (+) Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

OPENING SENTENCES

Joel 2:13; Isaiah 55:6–7

Return to the Lord, your God, for He is gracious and merciful,
slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and repents of evil.

Seek the Lord while He may be found;

call upon Him while He is near

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts;

**let him return to the Lord, that He may have compassion on him,
and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Let us make our confession to our God, seeking His grace and forgiveness.

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

Most merciful God,

**we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned
against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by
what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your
present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ,
have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may
delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy
name. Amen.**

In the mercy of almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for His sake God forgives us all our sins. To those who believe in Jesus Christ He gives the power to become the children of God and bestows on them the Holy Spirit. May the Lord, who has begun this good work in us, bring it to completion in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lord Jesus Christ, grant us love for You and firmness of faith that we may resist the temptation to deny You and compromise our confession of faith. Strengthen us on the journey of life that we may ever walk with You and joyfully acknowledge You as our Savior, in whom is all our hope. This we ask in Your precious and mighty name.

Amen.

When I Survey The Wondrous Cross

Lutheran Service Book #425

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.

Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast
Save in the death of Christ, my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down!
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

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

FIRST READING

Isaiah 59:1–3, 12–13

¹ Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save,
or His ear dull, that it cannot hear;
² but your iniquities have made a
separation between you and your God,
and your sins have hidden His face from
you so that He does not hear.
³ For your hands are defiled with blood
and your fingers with iniquity;
your lips have spoken lies;
your tongue mutters wickedness.

¹² For our transgressions are multiplied
before You,
and our sins testify against us;
for our transgressions are with us,
and we know our iniquities:
¹³ transgressing, and denying the LORD,
and turning back from following our God,
speaking oppression and revolt,
conceiving and uttering from the heart
lying words.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 118:19–29

Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the gate of the LORD; the righteous shall enter through it.

I thank You that You have answered me and have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.

This is the LORD's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

This is the day that the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Save us, we pray, O LORD! O LORD, we pray, give us success!

Blessèd is He who comes in the name of the LORD!

We bless You from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God, and He has made His light to shine upon us. Bind the festal sacrifice with cords, up to the horns of the altar!

You are my God, and I will give thanks to You; You are my God;

I will extol You.

Oh give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;

for His steadfast love endures forever!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

SECOND READING

1 Peter 5:6–10

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time He may exalt you, ⁷ casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you. ⁸ Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹ Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that

the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. ¹⁰ And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

VERSE FOR LENT

Joel 2:13

Return to the Lord, your God,

**for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love**

HOLY GOSPEL

Luke 22:54–62

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the twenty-second chapter.

Glory to You, O Lord.

⁵⁴ Then they seized Him and led Him away, bringing Him into the high priest's house, and Peter was following at a distance. ⁵⁵ And when they had kindled a fire in the middle of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat down among them. ⁵⁶ Then a servant girl, seeing him as he sat in the light and looking closely at him, said, "This man also was with Him." ⁵⁷ But he denied it, saying, "Woman, I do not know Him." ⁵⁸ And a little later someone else saw him and said, "You also are one of them." But Peter said, "Man, I am not."

⁵⁹ And after an interval of about an hour still another insisted, saying, "Certainly this man also was with Him, for he too is a Galilean." ⁶⁰ But Peter said, "Man, I do not know what you are talking about." And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster crowed. ⁶¹ And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the saying of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows today, you will deny Me three times." ⁶² And he went out and wept bitterly.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

God Loved the World So That He Gave

Lutheran Service Book #571

God loved the world so that He gave
His only Son the lost to save,
That all who would in Him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

Christ Jesus is the ground of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death;
All then who trust in Him alone
Are built on this chief cornerstone.

God would not have the sinner die;
His Son with saving grace is nigh;
His Spirit in the Word declares
How we in Christ are heaven's heirs.

Be of good cheer, for God's own Son
Forgives all sins which you have done;
And, justified by Jesus' blood,
Your Baptism grants the highest good.

If you are sick, if death is near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death;
That is the firmest ground of faith.

Please stand, as is tradition, for the final doxological verse

Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To Thee, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!

SERMON

Rev. Doug Griebenaw (Grace Lutheran, El Centro)

Return From Denial.

PRAYERS *are offered the whole world, the church of God, and for all people according to their needs*

LORD'S PRAYER

CLOSING COLLECT

Let us pray.

I thank You, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that You would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

BLESSING

The blessing of almighty God, the Father, the (+) Son, and the Holy Spirit be and remain with you always.

Amen.

Abide With Me

Lutheran Service Book #878 vs 1-2, 6

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide.
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.

I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour;
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's pow'r?
Who like Thyself my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes;
Shine through the gloom, and point me to the skies.
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.

Acknowledgments

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