

## Lent #4

3-27--2022

J.V. Trautwein, Pastor

### Celebrate (Introduction)

"The psalm sets the tone this day: 'Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!' Happy are those who have 'become the righteousness of God' in the merits of Christ Jesus. Happy are those for whom the forgiveness of God has 'rolled away... the disgrace' of former times. Happy is the father at the return of his prodigal son. Happy are we that our sins are forgiven for Jesus' sake. Rejoice!"

We come together in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Opening Hymn:** "[Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty](#)"

**Psalmody:** Psalm 32

"Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,  
whose sin is covered.

<sup>2</sup>Happy are those to whom the Lord imputes no iniquity,  
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

<sup>3</sup>While I kept silence, my body wasted away  
through my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup>For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;  
my strength was dried up<sup>[a]</sup> as by the heat of summer. *Selah*

<sup>5</sup>Then I acknowledged my sin to you,  
and I did not hide my iniquity;  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,"  
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

<sup>6</sup>Therefore let all who are faithful  
offer prayer to you;  
at a time of distress,<sup>[b]</sup> the rush of mighty waters  
shall not reach them.

<sup>7</sup>You are a hiding place for me;  
you preserve me from trouble;  
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. *Selah*

<sup>8</sup>I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;  
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

<sup>9</sup>Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,

whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,  
else it will not stay near you.

<sup>10</sup> Many are the torments of the wicked,  
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the Lord.

<sup>11</sup> Be glad in the Lord and rejoice, O righteous,  
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart

**Hymn of Praise:** ["Holy God, We Praise Your Name"](#)

**Prayer of the Day**

"God of compassion, you welcome the wayward, and you embrace us all with your mercy. By our baptism clothe us with garments of your grace, and feed us at the table of your love, through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen."

**1<sup>st</sup> Reading:** [Joshua 5:9-12](#)

**2<sup>nd</sup> Reading:** [2 Corinthians 5:16-21](#)

**The Gospel:** [Luke 15:1-3, 11-32](#)

**Hymn:** ["In the Cross of Christ I Glory"](#)

**The Message:** ([Video](#))

A week and a half ago Russia recalled their ambassador from Washington in response to President Biden's labeling Russia with war crimes. When such a move is made it is considered to be a serious break in the relationship between two countries. Of course in our modern age of communications and transportation in many ways the ambassador is almost just ceremonial since the Secretary of State or Foreign Minister can hop on a plane to deal with the more serious problems which may arise anywhere in the world. In general the ambassador retains a day to day role as representative of a country and head of the consulate operations.

Regardless of their official functions they become extremely important for they are the physical representation of their country to the people of a foreign land. In many ways how a country is perceived among the people within the foreign country is formed by the actions and lives of the ambassador. Therefore it is extremely important for him or her to give the right perception by how they live and act for they are living on a stage to be seen and judged along with the country they represent.

With this being said, our impression of an ambassadorship may be far different from what was considered in by-gone years when world-wise knowledge to make decisions and diplomacy was an absolute necessity in who was appointed to that position. Ambassadors were very special

people who lived as true representatives of their nation and could speak in behalf of its fundamental thinking, agenda, and values as well as negotiate. For example; Benjamin Franklin was our first ambassador to France. He not only was able to identify with and appreciate the French people but also was able to negotiate with the government. It was the respect that he earned and his power of diplomacy which obtain the French assistance which was vital to winning the Revolutionary War. Today that function would mainly be with the Secretary of State.

It is in thus light that we read Paul's words, "So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us...." Just as a political ambassador speaks in behalf his or her government so too as ambassadors for Christ we are the instrument in which God reveals Himself to others. In being an ambassador for Christ Paul states that we are to be far more than being just followers. To be just be a follower means that we may mindlessly follow behind someone or some movement without thinking beyond our nose. This can easily lead to falling prey to propaganda which then blinds our minds and lives to the truth. We then can no longer think clearly and logically for we are now being controlled or enslaved to our blinded following,

We are not only experiencing just being followers today in our own society and the dangers to which this path leads us but to the situation in the world today. An evil controlled dictator has propagandized enough of his nation to bring the world to the brink of the unthinkable and the reality that so many innocent people - men women and children are suffering and dying from the deliberate attempt to do so by him. Tragically mankind has not learned the lesson of history and the atrocities which happened in WWII by people just mindlessly following. We still like to take the path of mindless following without having to go through the process of careful thought patterns. It is too inviting and easy to jump onto the merry-go-round of mindless following which is very difficult to try to jump off.

We in the mainline church today are struggling over the dwindling membership and what appears to be a dying situation for the traditional institution. There are many theories but perhaps the church should begin to take the season of Lent seriously and begin to look within and honestly begin to evaluate what we are doing. We just may have fallen prey to mindless following which takes the route of succumbing to our own egos and misguided thinking. Perhaps we have fallen prey to mindlessly being followers of the weaknesses and sins of society.

I just recently ran across this very thought provoking statement by a totally unknown person by me, Zach Lambert. He wrote, "The vast majority of people walking away from Christianity in America are not rejecting the person and work of Jesus. They are rejecting faulty biblical interpretations that leads to bigotry, oppression, and marginalization. This rejection isn't unchristian, it is Christ like."

I find a lot of truth in this statement and see that we are living the results of mindless, supposed followers of Jesus who have taken the easy way out in how they interpreted the scriptures. I have lived through times where ministers and lay leaders turned a blind eye to the fact that

everybody was a child of God and therefore brothers and sister of equal standing within His family. They were afraid of their jobs or standing. It was during the rebellious years of the sixties that mainly young people saw the hypocrisy of the church and people blindly and mindlessly saying that they followed Jesus but in fact had bypassed His message and turned it into something else.. If you follow history, this is when the exodus out of the church began and continues till today. We are living the results of the sins of the past while in many instances such blind following due to manipulated interpretations of the scriptures continues to be alive and well in many churches today that are attracting those who have chosen to live totally by false emotions.

This leads us back to Paul who saw that just to say you were a follower of Jesus could be totally misleading for that may be just an emotional experience, a joy ride if you please. Paul saw the loopholes in the word follower. Instead he turned to the word ambassador which takes much more of a commitment of one's life to live up to. It means the Christian is a representative of God and one who must understand the truths in the message which He has given through Jesus. But Paul continues in the being an ambassador comes tremendous responsibility for he states, "...since God is making his appeal through us...." God relies upon us, you and me, to be that example of his unending love to all of His children. He is directly pointing His finger to us to answer this call of ambassadorship. It is no mindless emotional call in which we can carve out our own message but it is a life which lives the truths of God's message of love and forgiveness. It is a life which regardless of the circumstances or the repercussions we stay true to representing Jesus' life and message. We are called to take on this responsibility.

In saying this I immediately look to example of such people who knew what it meant to be an ambassador of Christ. Several years ago during Lent we studied the life of Dietrich Bonhoeffer. If you recall, he was a German minister during the time of the Third Reich and Hitler. Bonhoeffer never yielded to the pressure of that authoritarian state to give the allegiance of his church and himself. He saw the evil perpetrated against the Jews and never change the truth of the scriptures in order to justify what was happening. This was not the case with most of the churches, including Rome, who turned a blind eye as to what was happening. He went on to join the underground resistance movement. In answering the call to be an ambassador of Christ, a personal representative of God, he would be arrested and in the last days of the war he was executed.

To be an ambassador of Jesus is no guarantee that life will be a bed of roses. It means that we may have to make difficult choices in our lives which our egos and wants may not desire but which are in the best interest of sharing this message of Jesus, sharing the life of God's love with others. This also may mean that the choices we may make are not the most popular among other people who may turn against us. Just like a country's ambassador at times must make the difficult choices which may mean sacrifice.

Paul concludes, "...we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." Therefore the first step in being God's ambassador is to be reconciled to God. This is why we are observing Lent. We must first find the need to be receive the reconciliation which God continually extends to us

through the resurrected Christ. Then we must welcome this reconciliation in order to joyfully become His ambassador to this troubled World. We are then given the joy of letting others see Jesus through how we represent Him/

**Anthem:** ["Great Is Thy Faithfulness"](#) The Mormon Tabernacle Choir

**Offering\*:** ([On-Line giving Link](#)):

We give thee but thine own, what e'er the gift may be; all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee.

### **The Prayer**

Ever present God, during this Lenten season give us the willpower to take the time to examine our lives in light of the life of Jesus. Block any barriers which we may have that keep us from discerning the truth of who we are. We know you are there when forgiveness is needed but let us accept this act of grace with a contrite heart. Continue to be with all those suffering from the horrible war which is raging in the Ukraine. Comfort and protect them. Open our hearts so that we may help them in any way possible.

We pray for all who need your comforting and healing presence especially Bob and Pat Allen, Eugene Ash, Pam Ash, Heidi Brackbill, Parker Brennan, the Cronin family, Leo Dickel, Dotty Gibson, Nancy Griebel, the Johnson Family, Robert Karner, David Kieffer, Pam Lambert, Charles Larsen, Donna Mayhew, the McNamara family, Wendy Neumann, Elise Oliver, Peter Olsen, Brenda Penyak, Dottie Reitz, Robert Reitz, Colin Shea, Jerry Shea, Jack Smith, the Spiegler family, Esther and Buck Trautwein,, Pastor Jack,

We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen

### **The Lord's Prayer**

#### **The Benediction**

The Lord bless you and keep you;  
The Lord make His face shine upon you;  
The Lord lift up His presence upon you and give you peace. Amen

And now my brothers and sisters  
Live on knowing God's love,  
The joy of living this life of love,  
And the peace which only comes through the power of His presence within you.  
So live on in Love, Joy, Peace, and Power.

**Closing Hymn:** ["Lord, Speak to Us, That We May Speak"](#)

### **Announcements**

Easter lilies for the altar are \$10.00. See Debbie Fultz

\*Offering to be sent to  
Robert Brackbill  
10274 Raleigh Tavern Lane  
Ellicott City, MD 21042

Epiphany Lutheran Church  
9122 Sybert Drive  
~~00~~Columbia Hills  
Ellicott City, MD 21043  
<https://www.epiphanylutherancolumbia.org>

Please note that you now have the opportunity of online giving with the link found after the offering designation or here: [https://tithe.ly/give\\_new/www/#/tithe/give-one-time/2627291](https://tithe.ly/give_new/www/#/tithe/give-one-time/2627291)