



I have come
looking for fruit

LUKE 13:7

March 23, 2025

Third Sunday in Lent

Bethany Lutheran Church (ELCA)

Introduction to the day

The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God's invitation to attentiveness: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live." The landowner's ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener's readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

This worship is being streamed live via Facebook and will be posted to our Website and X (formerly Twitter). The camera captures anyone in the first few pews of our worship space and beyond extending to the altar.

PREDLUDE

LIGHTING OF CANDLES Choir song, "O How He Loves You and Me" during lighting of candles.

RINGING OF BELL

WELCOME

GATHERING

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

The assembly stands.
Please respond with the words printed in bold.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God,
who forgives all our sin,
whose mercy endures forever.

Amen.

Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Silence is kept for reflection.

Gracious God,

have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned from you and given ourselves into the power of sin. We are truly sorry and humbly repent. In your compassion forgive us our sins, known and unknown, things we have done and things we have failed to do. Turn us again to you, and uphold us by your Spirit, so that we may live and serve you in newness of life through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

God, who is rich in mercy, loved us even when we were dead in sin, and made us alive together with Christ. By grace you have been saved. In the name of † Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven. Almighty God strengthen you with power through the Holy Spirit, that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

Amen.

GATHERING SONG *What a Fellowship, Wash O God, Our Sons and Daughters* (ELW 445) See next page.



1 Wash, O God, our sons and daughters, where your cleans-ing wa-ters flow.
 2 We who bring them long for nur-ture; by your milk may we be fed.
 3 Oh, how deep your ho-ly wis-dom! Un-im-ag-ined, all your ways!



Num-ber them a-mong your peo-ple; bless as Christ blessed long a-go.
 Let us join your feast, par-tak-ing cup of bless-ing, liv-ing bread.
 To your name be glo-ry, hon-or! With our lives we wor-ship, praise!



Weave them gar-ments bright and spark-ling; com-pass them with love and light.
 God, re-new us, guide our foot-steps; free from sin and all its snares,
 We your peo-ple stand be-fore you, wa-ter-washed and Spir-it-born.



Fill, a-noint them; send your Spir-it, ho-ly dove and heart's de-light.
 one with Christ in liv-ing, dy-ing, by your Spir-it, chil-dren, heirs.
 By your grace, our lives we of-fer. Re-cre-ate us; God, trans-form!

Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947
 Music: BEACH SPRING, *The Sacred Harp*, Philadelphia, 1844
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GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

A brief silence is kept before the prayer.

Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

The assembly is seated.

CHOIR ANTHEM "Bread of Life"

WORD

God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching, and song.

FIRST READING: Isaiah 55:1-9

To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.

A reading from Isaiah.

¹ Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

² Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.

³ Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

⁴ See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.

⁵ See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

⁶ Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

⁷ let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.

⁹ For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM 63:1-8

¹ O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;

my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water.

² **Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,
that I might behold your power and your glory.**

³ For your steadfast love is better than life itself;
my lips shall give you praise.

⁴ **So will I bless you as long as I live
and lift up my hands in your name.**

⁵ My spirit is content, as with the richest of foods,
and my mouth praises you with joyful lips,

⁶ **when I remember you upon my bed,
and meditate on you in the night watches.**

⁷ For you have been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.

⁸ **My whole being clings to you;
your right hand holds me fast.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Paul uses images from Hebrew Scriptures and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ: He is our rock, our water, our food, and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God's faithfulness.

A reading from First Corinthians.

¹ I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ² and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³ and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴ and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

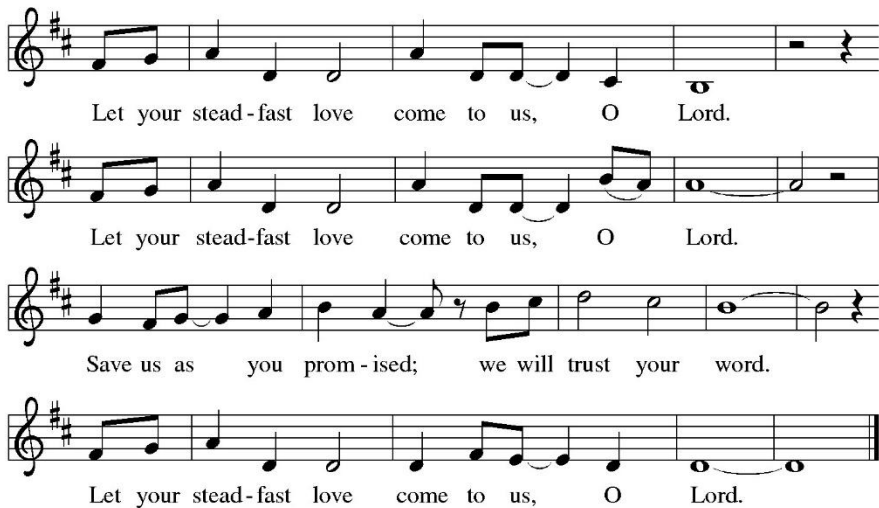
⁶ Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." ⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. ¹⁰ And do not complain as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹ These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹² So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. ¹³ No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

Word of God, word of life.

Thanks be to God.

The assembly stands to welcome the gospel.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Let your stead-fast love come to us, O Lord.

Let your stead-fast love come to us, O Lord.

Save us as you prom-ised; we will trust your word.

Let your stead-fast love come to us, O Lord.

GOSPEL READING: Luke 13:1-9

Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.² [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?”³ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴ Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did.”

⁶ Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷ So he said to the gardener, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ ⁸ He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹ If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

The assembly is seated.

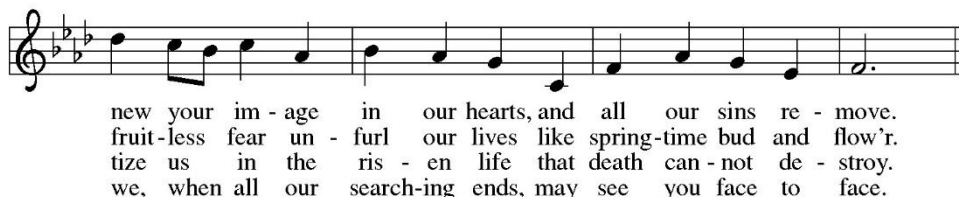
SERMON

The assembly stands.

HYMN OF THE DAY *Restore in Us, O God* (ELW 328)



1 Re - store in us, O God, the splen-dor of your love; re -
2 O Spir - it, wake in us the won - der of your pow'r; from
3 Bring us, O Christ, to share the full - ness of your joy; bap -
4 Three-per - soned God, ful - fill the prom - ise of your grace, that



new your im - age in our hearts, and all our sins re - move.
fruit-less fear un - furl our lives like spring-time bud and flow'r.
tize us in the ris - en life that death can - not de - stroy.
we, when all our search-ing ends, may see you face to face.

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

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.
Each petition ends with, "Lord, in your mercy" and the people of God sing "O Lord, Hear My Prayer" (ELW 751).

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.
or The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: all my hope comes from God.

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.
The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the well-spring of life.

Text: Psalm 102:1-2; Taizé Community, adapt.
Music: HEAR MY PRAYER, Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994
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Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through Jesus Christ,
our Savior.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

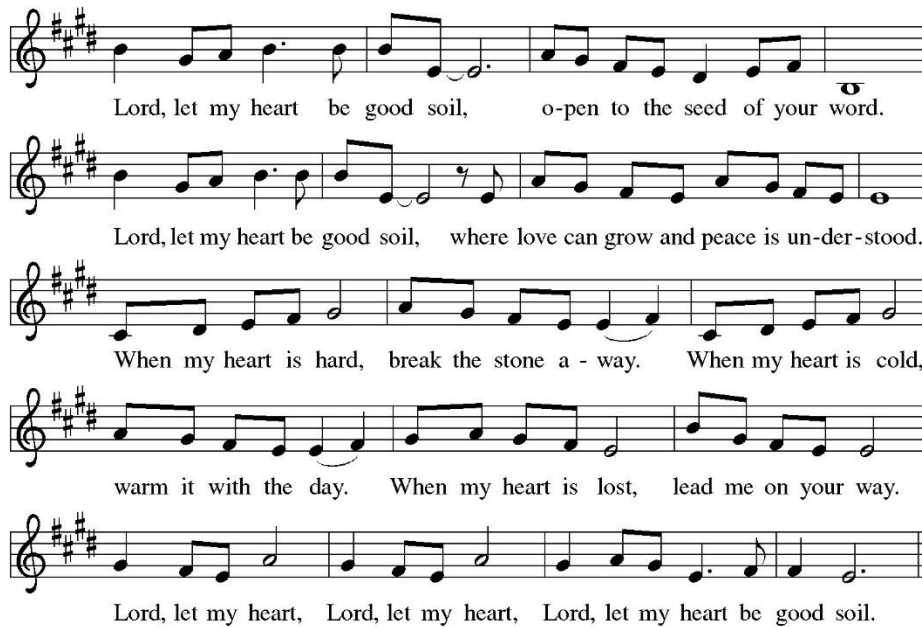
And also with you.

The assembly is seated.

OFFERING

We are grateful for your gifts, and they are needed to continue the work of the church. For those worshipping online, options on ways to give are found on our website (www.wbbethany.org). Thank you! After the offering is gathered, the people of God stand and sing the hymn on the next page as the gifts are brought forward.

OFFERTORY HYMN *Lord, Let My Heart Be Good Soil (ELW 512)*



Lord, let my heart be good soil, o-pen to the seed of your word.
Lord, let my heart be good soil, where love can grow and peace is un-der-stood.
When my heart is hard, break the stone a - way. When my heart is cold,
warm it with the day. When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.
Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart be good soil.

Text: Handt Hanson, b. 1950
Music: GOOD SOIL, Handt Hanson
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OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray.

God our provider, you have not fed us with bread alone, but with words of grace and life. Bless us and these your gifts, which we receive from your bounty, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

SENDING

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

BLESSING

The God of steadfastness and encouragement
grant you to live in harmony with one another,
in accordance with Christ Jesus.

Amen.

The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The God of all grace ✠ bless you now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG *Light Dawns on a Weary World* (ELW 726)



1 Light dawns on a wea - ry world when eyes be - gin to
 2 Love grows in a wea - ry world when hun - gry hearts find
 3 Hope blooms in a wea - ry world when crea - tures, once for -



see all peo - ple's dig - ni - ty. Light dawns on a
 bread and chil - dren's dreams are fed. Love grows in a
 lorn, find wil - der - ness re - born. Hope blooms in a



wea - ry world: the prom - ised day of jus - tice comes.
 wea - ry world: the prom - ised feast of plen - ty comes.
 wea - ry world: the prom - ised green of E - den comes.



The trees shall clap their hands; the dry lands, gush with springs;



the hills and moun - tains shall break forth with sing - ing!



We shall go out in joy, and be led forth in peace,



as all the world in won - der ech - oes sha - lom.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is with you.

Thanks be to God.

Please join us for fellowship and refreshments in the Great Hall following worship

OUR WORSHIP ASSISTANTS		
Ministers of:	Today	March 30
Music	Jill Barnhart	Jill Barnhart
Proclamation (Lector)	Patsy Ernst	Jill Barnhart
Technology	Dave Poppen	Paula Casper
Hospitality	Stacy Beyer	Nancy Bruns
Worship (Altar Care)	Paula Casper & Patsy Ernst	Paula Casper & Patsy Ernst



Thank you for worshipping with us today. Just as Jesus welcomed the stranger, we believe all are welcome here. Please join us again next week. For more information about our life together in Christ, visit: www.wbbethany.org

LENT SCHEDULE

MARCH 12
DINNER @ 6:15 PM
PRAYER AROUND
THE CROSS
WORSHIP @ 7:00 PM

MARCH 26
DINNER @ 6:15 PM
PRAYER AROUND
THE CROSS
WORSHIP @ 7:00 PM

APRIL 2
DINNER @ 6:15 PM
PRAYER AROUND
THE CROSS
WORSHIP @ 7:00 PM

APRIL 9
DINNER @ 6:15 PM
PRAYER AROUND
THE CROSS
WORSHIP @ 7:00 PM

WE INVITE EVERYONE TO JOIN US!

THERE WILL BE NO ACTIVITIES MARCH 19

Sunday School

Preschool - Grade 2
8:30 - 9:15AM

March 2 April 6 May 4
March 23 April 13 May 18
March 30 April 27

Land Acknowledgement

Bethany Lutheran is located in the original and ancestral homelands of the Iowa, Sauk, Fox, Kickapoo and Oceti Sakowin peoples, and we give thanks for their presence here since time immemorial. We also wish to recognize and honor all our Indigenous siblings who have and continue to call this land their home.

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EVERY EASTER WE ARE GREETED WITH THE BEAUTY AND SWEET FRAGRANCE OF LILIES ADORNING OUR SANCTUARY. IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS DISPLAY, PLEASE FILL OUT THE INFORMATION BELOW AND RETURN THIS SLIP WITH **\$15.00** PER PLANT TO PAULA BY TUESDAY, APRIL 1ST IF RETURNING BY MAIL, USE THE ADDRESS BELOW.

Dedications will be listed in the bulletin on Easter morning.

YOUR NAME:

_____ I would like Bethany to purchase an Easter lily for me.

Please print your dedication as you wish it to appear in the bulletin.

Please indicate if this is "In honor of" or "In memory of" and list those names below:

Bethany Lutheran P.O. Box 236 West Branch, IA 52358