

Holy Cross Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

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713-686-8254

Rev. Jim Berggren

March 23, 2025

Third Sunday in Lent

WORSHIP SERVICE

PRELUDE

GATHERING SONG

Eternal Father, Strong to Save

ELW 756

INVOCATION

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

P: In the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

C: *Amen.*

P: God of all mercy and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: *Amen.*

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

Most merciful God,

C: *We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. 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. 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.*

P: 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 V 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.

C: *Amen.*

PASTORAL GREETING

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also, with you.**

P: Let us pray, together.

C: *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.*

SCRIPTURE LESSONS

March 23, 2025 – Third Sunday in Lent

FIRST READING: Isaiah 55:1-9

An Invitation to Abundant Life

“Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has 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? Hearken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness. ³ Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. ⁴ Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. ⁵ Behold, you shall call nations that you know not, and nations that knew you not shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, and of 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 his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. ⁸ For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither 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.

The word of the Lord.

*Congregation response following the reading is: **Thanks be to God!***

THE PSALM

Psalm 63:1-8

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers 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 supernatural food ⁴ and all drank the same supernatural drink. For they drank from the supernatural Rock which followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵ Nevertheless with most of them God was not pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶ Now these things are warnings for us, not to desire evil as they did. ⁷ Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to dance.” ⁸ We must not indulge in immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹ We must not put the Lord to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. ¹¹ Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come. ¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. ¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your strength, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

The word of the Lord.

*Congregation response following the reading is: **Thanks be to God!***

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:

*Return to the Lord, your God.
Return for he is gracious and merciful,
slow in anger,
and abounding in steadfast love,
and abounding in steadfast love.*

THE HOLY GOSPEL Luke 13:1-9

Repent or Perish

There were some present at that very time who told him of the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ² And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they

suffered thus? ³ I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Silo'am fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, No; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish.”

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree

⁶ And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷ And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Lo, these three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down; why should it use up the ground?’ ⁸ And he answered him, ‘Let it alone, sir, this year also, till I dig about it and put on manure. ⁹ And if it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

The Gospel of the Lord.

Congregational response: Praise to you, O Christ.

YOUTUBE VIDEO – https://youtu.be/CGNIS_UyTnI?si=nWKOy9cPa3IiyAnI

Sermon Rev. Jim Berggren

LENT 3C, 3-23-25, LUKE 13.1-9

REALNEWS

Karl Barth, great theologian, said that Christians should carry a Bible in one hand and a newspaper in the other. That will help with the task of sorting out communication bias, situational awareness, and the historical context. God says things to us; through the Bible and through the agency of human intellects, hearts and hands. God is also saying things to us through the historical events we remember or witness in the world of current news, and past history.

According to Luke 12, Jesus is speaking to thousands of people. Communication in a crowd of that size passes quite rapidly and inaccurately. It is like the old telephone game. The message becomes less clear the more it is repeated. Fake news. We hear a lot about that. One journalist’s assumption, fabrication or deliberate error, can have international implications in our electronic age. To get the scoop you have to move fast. No time for sober research. Even Pilate would research at Jesus’ trial, asking “What is truth?” “What does Herod think?” “How does my wife see this problem?” “How much credence should I give the noisy crowd?”

The rumored news is: Some Galilean Jews, (not the really observant orthodox ones, but the countrified rebels, like Jesus himself), were killed by Pilate's troops while worshipping.

Christians and Jews frequently get killed in worship, all over the world, even in Texas. That's outrageous. As this news item reaches Jesus' ears, he should be incensed. Outraged. Why does he appear thoughtful or uncommitted due to the nature of the question? Jesus used the word for sinner that indicates they were allegedly engaged in deliberate sinning, 1st degree premeditated sinning; first, by simply being Galileans, and then maybe they were having an alleged illegal meeting about a rumored revolution during worship. "Were they fatally persecuted for thought crimes?" Is there a cause-and-effect relationship between being a Galilean, or an insurrectionist, and being punished by God for that? Is that sketchy question, only an unsupported rumor or accusation?

Jesus very strongly discounts the notion that God causes death because they were sinners. Or that their tragic demise indicated that they were worse sinners than other better more observant Jews.

Jesus goes on with his own little tidbit of news. How about that random death toll of those good Jerusalem Jews; unfortunate debtors, who were victimized, by being forced off of their land, by foreclosed debt to Roman absentee landowners, and therefore, living homeless under a porch with a tower near the aqueduct, which fed water to the Pool of Siloam. The tower collapsed and killed 18. Were they worse Jews as debtors living in the streets, than the rich ones who worked in the temple and lived in the suburbs?

Why do bad things happen to anyone?

George Burns played God in the "*Oh God,*" movies by that name. A little girl asks him why bad things happen. He gives one of many fairly good answers. "That's the way the system works. Have you ever seen an up without a down? A front without a back? A top without a bottom? You can't have one without the other. If I take away sad, then I take away happy too. You can't know one without the other. They go together."

What complicated questions, the crowd asks!! Is it true? Ain't it awful? Why them? What did they do wrong? If I do things right, can I oblige God, to let me live forever? Ooooooh, now that's a biggie.

Jesus' comeback is focused. Who do we think we are? Telling God how to run the universe. Much of life is not subject to our control. We are always subject to random incursions of chaos. This should help us to live more authentically, to reflect and repent. It is not about, "Those guys must've been bad." It is about, "We're all in

the same boat.” We can’t control death, not even Jesus. In fact, according to the Gospels, doing everything completely and perfectly correctly living only within the will of God, can get you death on a cross. Jesus keeps telling us that. He will die for us and with us, so focus on God and life, not the inevitability of death. Put your dread to work.

Terrible things do happen in a broken world. Be ready for when they come your way. Focus on the solid rock God in a quicksand world. Reflect. “What if this is the last time, I will ever get to do this? Am I appreciating this moment? What if this is the only time I will have this experience? Am I filled with wonder? Am I grateful?” In the face of the world’s opposition, do I freeze in fear or do I bear fruit? Do I focus on the world’s obstructions or can I enjoy God’s instructions.

Psalm 19:7-9 praises the challenges and limits of the world. “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart. The ordinances of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired than gold, sweeter also than honey.” Reflect, remember and repent and use perceived obstruction as instruction.

According to Jesus’ parable of the fruitless fig tree, God is expecting fruit from us; not because it will make him feel happy, but because it will fulfill our purpose in his creation. It will help us feel happy. Jesus is the vinedresser who does everything in his power to help us fulfill our purpose. The sooner fruit happens, the sooner we taste the joy.

Satan called a meeting of his demons to find a volunteer to go to earth and find a way to darken human souls. One demon stepped up. Satan asked, “What will you tell them?”

The demon said, “I’ll tell them there is no heaven.” Satan said, “Forget it. They all know that there is some goodness in them and in the world.”

Another one steps up and says, “Well, I’ll tell them there is no hell.” Satan said, “No good. They all have something inside that makes them feel bad and worry about consequences when they do things they know are not right.”

A third dark demon steps up. Satan asks, “If I send you, what will you tell them?” The demon said, “I’ll tell them there is no hurry.” Satan said, “Go.”

The Parable of the Barren Fig Tree is about judgment, and crisis. And it is about how judgment is suspended in favor of grace, by Jesus the vinedresser. It delicately and delightfully hints about a slight difference of opinion between the 1st and the 2nd persons of the Trinity. Maybe Father and Son are having a gentle difference of opinion. It is, of course, an allegory. God says, “3 years, no fruit, cut it down.” Jesus says, “I love it. Let me work with it. Give it a little time. Then if it

doesn't work, YOU cut it down." You know it is going to work, because Jesus is the gardener. He created it. He knows how to nurture it.

Jesus speaks on behalf of the world and the people that he loves. We all could do better. We all could produce more fruit. And Jesus is working on it as the vinedresser full of grace and love for us all. We are here today, alive in Jesus' bubble of grace.

Just think, every single person here this morning has already beat a Personal Best record, today. Consecutive days in a row waking up, suiting up and showing up. With the privilege to value even the difficult days. Which are still days of grace.

It is a beautiful parable. God the owner of the vineyard enjoys it. He wants the best for it. He favors it, so grace is already built in to his creation. Grace is not an afterthought to mop up messes. It is the gift of Christ the vinedresser, presenting to God his reconciled creation.

Christ is the forgiving judge and he won't go back on the forgiveness he pronounced from the cross in the very teeth of death.

The world lives as the fig tree lives, in the tent of grace and forgiveness. In John 12:47, Jesus says, "I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world."

Remember the strength and heart of the prophet Habakkuk in the face of the Babylonian army. Habakkuk 3:17-19:

"Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails, and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold, and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation. God, the Lord, is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, and makes me tread upon the heights."

Remember, reflect, repent. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY

Beneath the Cross of Jesus

ELW 338

APOSTLES' CREED

P: God has made us His people through our Baptism into Christ. Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith:

**C: 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.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

THE LORD'S PEACE (Please share the Peace with a neighbor)

THE OFFERING

“We Are the Lord’s”

arr. R. E. Martin

THE OFFERTORY RESPONSE *Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful*

ELW Hymn 142

THE OFFERING PRAYER

All pray together: God of grace, your love reaches to the heavens, and your abundance to the depths of the seas. Bless what we offer to your service: our gifts, our abilities, and our hearts. Let us overflow with gratitude and generosity, now and always. Amen.

AGNUS DEI

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
have mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
have, mercy upon us.

O Lamb of God, that takest away the sins of the world,
grant us thy peace.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

P: In the night in which he was betrayed, Our Lord Jesus took bread and gave thanks, broke it and gave it to his disciples saying: Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks and gave it for all to drink saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for you and for all people for the

forgiveness of sin. Do this in remembrance of me.

THE 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.

COMMUNION DISTRIBUTION

POST COMMUNION BLESSING

The Body and Blood of Our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and preserve you in Eternal Life.

POST COMMUNION SONG *Thankful Hearts and Voices Raise*

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Presider: Nourishing God, at this table you have refreshed us with holy gifts of food and drink. Strengthen us for service and send us out to embody your good news of liberation and healing for the sake of the world. In the name of Christ, we pray.

Congregation: Amen.

THE BLESSING

SENDING SONG

Christ, the Life of All the Living

ELW 339

GO IN PEACE, IN SERVICE

C: Thanks be to God!

PSALM 19:14

*Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart
be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.*



- ♣ **Lynn Ballard**
- ♣ **Alberto Basurto**
- ♣ **Billy Carty**
- ♣ **David Dupleth**
- ♣ **Maureen Fredrickson**
- ♣ **Eliseo Gonzales**
- ♣ **Anna Gardner**
- ♣ **Eliseo Gonzales**
- ♣ **Mike Hodges**
- ♣ **Nancy Lancaster**
- ♣ **David Magrill**
- ♣ **Kenneth Magrill**
- ♣ **Tracy Makris**
- ♣ **Gloria McGarvey**
- ♣ **Jeremy Mitchell**
- ♣ **Geraine Moore**
- ♣ **Dorothy Preuss**
- ♣ **Steve Schulze**
- ♣ **George Schwalm**
- ♣ **Glenda Suarez**
- ♣ **Jaime Urbanski**



COUNCIL MEETING

Council meeting will be Sunday, **March 23rd**, 2024
at 11:00 a.m. in the Annex.

Church Council

USHERS

Month: March **Team #** 05 **Leader:** Barbara Neumann

LAY READERS & ASSISTANTS

MARCH

- 2 Reader — Jay Fort
 P/E — Julie Kilkenny
- 9 Reader — Steve Schulze
 P/E — Penny Schick
- 16 Reader — Ike Thompson
 P/E — Sharon Wagner
- 23 Reader — Russell Ritcher
 P/E — Alice Braun
- 30 Reader — Linda Cuzzort
 P/E — Wendy Lambeth

P/E stands for Prayers and Eucharist

Nancy Beamesderfer

LENTEN DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS

The Lenten season is here and the daily devotion booklet
"The Way, the Truth, and the Life" is available in the Narthex and Atrium.

The daily messages are based on writings from Henri Nouwen.
They are short but very meaningful and such a lovely way to prepare
for the season. Please pick up a copy. Thank you.

Sharon Wagner

COFFEE FELLOWSHIP

Each week after Sunday service there is a Coffee Hour in the FLC.

Coffee, tea and even hot chocolate are provided.

Please sign up to bring goodies (cookies, coffee cake, etc.) to snack on.

The sign-up sheet is in the FLC.

Thank you.

PRAYER VIGIL

This Lenten Season we would like to take time to reflect on the gifts we have received and the sacrifices that have been made in Christ's name.

On Saturday, **April 19th**, there will be a Prayer Vigil to do just that.

There is a sign-up sheet in the Atrium;
we would like to have people sign up for a given time slot between 9:00 am and 6:00pm. You can come to church and pray in the Chapel or you can commit to pray in your own home.

Hopefully we can have continuous prayers throughout the day!

Wendy Lambeth

LENTEN SERVICES IN 2025

Lenten services will be held on Wednesdays
at 12:00 noon in the Atrium the following dates:

March 12, 19, 26, 30 and April 2 & 9

LENTEN STUDY

FOR WEDNESDAY NOON SERVICES

This year we will explore the Lenten study series
Words from the Cross written by Pastor Jim Berggren.

Lent 1

March 12: “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” *Luke 23:43*

Lent 2

March 19: “Woman, here is your son.” *John 19:26-27a*

Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” *Matthew 27:46b*

Lent 3

March 26: “I am thirsty.” *John 19:28b*

Lent 4

April 2: “It is finished.” *John 19:30a*

Lent 5

April 9: “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” *Luke 23:46*

LENTEN MEALS

Each Wednesday after our noonday Lenten service
there will be a light lunch in the FLC.

Our theme this year will be “bars”. Each week the basics (potatoes, tacos, etc.)
will be provided, with members contributing the “add-ons”.

There will also be an ice cream bar each week.

March 19th : Baked Potato bar

March 26th : Taco bar

April 2nd : Pasta bar

April 9th : Sandwich bar

Please contact Wendy Lambeth to let her know what you’ll be bringing (so we
won’t end up with 5 bags of cheese and no ice cream toppings)!

Wendy's cell: 713-854-1573

EASTER SERVICES

Palm Sunday	April 13	9:30 am –WC
Maundy Thursday	April 17	6:00 pm –FLC
Good Friday	April 18	7:00 pm –WC
Easter Prayer Vigil	April 19	9:00 am –6:00 pm
Easter Day	April 20	
Easter Sunrise		7:00 am –WC
Easter Breakfast		8:00 am –FLC
Traditional Worship Service		9:30 am –WC

INSTALLATION OF COUNCIL OFFICERS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS

Holy Cross 2025 Installation of Council Officers
and Council Members will be Sunday, **March 30**, during the service.

Church Council

SAFEGUARDS SAFETY TRAINING HOLYCROSS COUPON CODE FOR 15% DISCOUNT: HCLC2025			
CLASS	DAY	DATE	TIME
Adult CPR *CPR only (\$79) *CPR + First Aid (\$92)	Sunday Sunday Sunday	1/19/2025 2/16/2025 3/16/2025	1 pm — 4:30 pm 1 pm — 4:30 pm 1 pm — 4:30 pm
Adult & Pediatric CPR *CPR only (\$85) *CPR + First Aid (\$99)	Saturday Saturday Saturday Saturday	1/11/2025 2/08/2025 2/22/2025 3/08/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm
Basic Life Support (BLS) (for Healthcare Providers and Professional Rescuers) (\$89)	Friday Saturday Saturday Friday Saturday Friday Saturday Saturday	1/10/2025 1/18/2025 1/25/2025 2/07/2025 2/15/2025 3/07/2025 3/15/2025 3/22/2025	1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm 1 pm — 5:30 pm
CPR Instructor Course (\$299)	Saturday Friday Saturday Friday	1/04/2025 1/31/2025 3/01/2025 3/28/2025	9 am — 5:30 pm 9 am — 5:30 pm 9 am — 5:30 pm 9 am — 5:30 pm

Classes are in the Youth Room, Media Room and in the Annex.

You can sign up online for classes by going to

www.safeguards-safety.com and choosing “Register for Classes.”

Or call 713-854-8085 for more information

Congregation members and their families will receive a discount of 15% for any class by using the above-mentioned coupon code when signing up.

John Lambeth

SUNDAY'S SCHEDULE

- 9:30 a.m.** *Traditional Worship service with Rev. Jim Berggren —WC*
 Nursery is available for small children during the service — Crib Room
- 10:30 a.m.** *Coffee fellowship following the service —FLC*
- 11:00 a.m.** *Council Meeting —FLCA*
- 1—3:30 p.m.** *Boy Scouts: Eagle Ceremony —WC followed by a reception —FLC*

THIS WEEK AT HOLY CROSS

24 Mon	25 Tues	26 Wed	27 Thurs	28 Fri	29 Sat
<p>11—12 ELC <i>Chapel —WC</i></p> <p>7—8 pm <i>Boy Scouts</i> <i>—FLC room</i></p>	<p>11—12 ELC <i>Chapel —WC</i></p>	<p>10—12 pm <i>ELC Snake show —FLC</i> 10 am <i>Roundtable group —VR</i> 11 am <i>Choir practice —CL</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">12:00 pm —AT LENTEN SERVICE <i>Followed by a light meal</i> <i>“Taco bar”</i></p>	<p>10—12 pm <i>ELC Snake</i> <i>show —FLC</i></p> <p>8 pm AA <i>Women mtg.</i> <i>—FLCA</i></p>	<p>9—5:30 pm <i>SST CPR</i> <i>Instructor</i> <i>—MR/YR</i></p> <div style="background-color: #4a7ebb; color: white; padding: 5px; text-align: center; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Fri 9 am – Sat 12 noon ELC Fundraiser --FLC</p> </div>	<p>6:00 pm <i>Saturday</i> <i>Informal Service</i> <i>—AT</i></p>

AT =Atrium, CL=Choir Loft, CR=Choir Room, FLC= Family Life Center, FLCA=Annex,
 KiM= Kids in Motion, MR=Media Room, WC=Worship Center, YR=Youth Room
 BLS=Basic Life Support, SST=Safeguards Safety Training, UCL=Upcycled Crafty Ladies