

***The Fifth Sunday in Lent – March 29, 2020***

***Gathering Hymn: Amazing Grace – ELW 779*** (these hymns throughout the service are just suggestions – sing or hum or call to mind whatever music you need for this time...)

O Lord, I cry to you for help.

**In the morning my prayer comes before you**

Let my mouth be full of your praise

**and your glory all the day long**

Every day will I bless you,

**and praise your name forever and ever.**

Awesome things will you show us in your righteousness, O God of our salvation,

**Oh hope of all the ends of the earth**

**and of the seas that are far away.**

Bless the Lord, O my soul,

**and all that is within me, bless God's holy name.**

You redeem my life from the grave,

**and crown me with mercy and steadfast love.**

Lord, hear my prayer,

**and let my cry come before you.**

Let us pray:

**Bend your ear to our prayers, O Christ, and come here among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts and hope to a world that is living in fear. Send us your spirit, that our eyes may be opened and we might learn to trust in you, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.**

First reading: Psalm 23

*(verse 4: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil.")*

The Gospel: John 9:1-7 (and 8-41)

*(verse 5: "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.")*

*Did you notice, in that story about Jesus healing the blind man, how much confusion there is? The disciples try to understand why the man is born blind – is it his fault? His mom and dad's fault? And then they just disappear, and we never hear whether they understand. The Pharisees and religious leaders are either confused or just plain unwilling to listen: they keep asking the man who it was who healed him and how it all happened, and he keeps telling them, and they won't understand. Finally he says,*

*“What? You still don’t get it?” (verse 27), And the experts say something that really just sounds like a schoolyard argument: “Oh yeah? What do you know!?” (verse 34)*

*It’s occurred to me in the past few weeks how confused we really are. Some people are trying to place blame – it’s China’s fault; it’s the government’s fault; it’s your fault for not washing your hands.... Some people think there’s hope – social distancing will save us! – and some people just think it’s too late. Maybe the simple truth is that it’s all happening too fast and we can’t get our heads around it....sort of like a man who was blind and could suddenly see, and like some experts in religion who saw something happen that they couldn’t understand, or like a blind man’s parents who can’t figure out how their son can see.... When so much happens so suddenly, everyone is....to use the old expression...thrown into a tizzy.*

*In the confusion and the “tizzy”, where is Jesus? He’s there at the beginning of the story with some teaching and a healing, and then he’s silent in the background for awhile, only to reappear at the end with words of comfort for the healed one and words of challenge for those who think they know more than they do. And tucked into the story, right there near the start, is this promise: “As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world.”*

*And maybe that’s what matters most in this story today: In confusing times and in frightening times the light of Christ still shines. When we are most unsure, when light is hard to find, when we are most afraid – “walking through the darkest valley”, as the writer of Psalm 23 says – we are still wrapped in the gracious light of Christ, whose light and life shine into the darkest corners and will not be overcome.*

### **Hymn of the Day: Christ, Be Our Light – ELW 715**

*The prayers of intercession:*

***As I went down to the river to pray,  
studyin’ about that good old way  
and who shall wear that starry crown,  
O Lord, show me the way.  
O children, let’s go down, let’s go down,  
don’t you want to go down.  
O children, let’s go down,  
Down to the river to pray.***

Let us pray.

Mighty God of mercy, we thank you for the resurrection dawn, bringing the glory of our risen Lord who makes every day new.

Especially we thank you –

for the sustaining goodness of your creation...

for the new creation in Christ and all gifts of healing and forgiveness...

for the gifts of relationships with others...

for the communion of faith in your church...

*(name some other things for which you are thankful...)*

Merciful God of might, renew this weary world, heal the hurts of all your children, and bring about your peace for all in Christ Jesus, the living Lord.

Especially we pray –

for those who govern the nations of the world...

for the people in countries ravaged by strife or warfare...

for the people in this and all nations in fear of illness and pandemic...

for all who work for peace and international harmony...

for all who strive to save the earth from carelessness and destruction...

for all our sisters and brothers throughout the earth...

*(name some other people or places or situations that need our prayer...)*

Almighty God, you have brought us in safety to this new day. Preserve us with your gracious power, that we may not fall into sin nor be overcome in adversity. In all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**AMEN.**

*The peace may be shared:*

The peace of Christ be with you **And also with you.**

**Our Father in heaven,**

**Hallowed be your name,**

**Your kingdom come,**

**Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.**

**Give us today our daily bread.**

**Forgive us our sins**

**As we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial**

**And deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours,**

**Now and forever. Amen.**

***Hymn: This Little Light of Mine – ELW 677***

Go in peace. Serve your neighbour. Serve the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*The opening litany (“O Lord, I cry to you”) is from the ELW (“the Red Book”), p. 329.  
The prayers of intercession are from ELW, p. 304.*

