

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany
February 7, 2021
Cross of Glory Lutheran Church
Brooklyn Center, MN

This week, the first Sunday of the month, Cross of Glory celebrates Holy Communion. Even while we're physically apart, we trust that God draws us together as one body. Please collect bread (or a cracker) and wine (or grape juice) as we prepare to take part in this holy meal together.

PRELUDE

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, whose voice is upon the waters, whose mercy is poured out upon all people, whose love cascades over all creation. **Amen.**

Let us take a moment of silence to confess our sin, trusting in the abundant grace of God.

Holy God, **we confess that we have sinned against you. We turn inward and fail to live your outward way of love. We ignore the suffering of others. We believe that we have all the answers. Forgive us our sins—those we commit knowingly and unknowingly, individually, and communally, by our actions and by our inaction—and grant us your divine mercy. Amen.**

Through the power and promise of † Christ Jesus, our sins are forgiven and we are claimed as God's beloved children. In the wake of God's forgiveness, we are freed to live as beloved community, to work for justice, and to strive for peace in all the earth. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG #611 I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say verses 1, 2 and 3

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| <p>1 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Come unto me and rest;
lay down, O weary one, lay down
your head upon my breast."
I came to Jesus as I was,
so weary, worn, and sad;
I found in him a resting-place,
and he has made me glad.</p> | <p>2 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"Behold, I freely give
the living water, thirsty one;
stoop down and drink and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank
of that life-giving stream;
my thirst was quenched, my soul revived,
and now I live in him.</p> |
| <p>3 I heard the voice of Jesus say,
"I am this dark world's light;
look unto me, your morn shall rise,
and all your day be bright."
I looked to Jesus, and I found
in him my star, my sun;
and in that light of life I'll walk
till trav'ling days are done.</p> | |

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.**

KYRIE

In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above, and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house, and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen, amen.

HYMN OF PRAISE

Refrain: This is the feast of victory for our God. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.

Worthy is Christ, the Lamb who was slain, whose blood set us free to be people of God.

Power and riches, wisdom and strength, and honor and blessing and glory are his. *Refrain*

Sing with all the people of God, and join in the hymn of all creation: Blessing and honor, glory and might be to God and the Lamb forever. Amen. *Refrain*

For the Lamb who was slain has begun his reign. Alleluia. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

Let us pray . . . **Ever-present God, you renew the weary and give power to the faint. When we struggle to make sense of suffering, replace our desire to find explanations with a daring trust in your grace. And when we feel stuck in our suffering, move us toward one another in love. Amen.**

READING: Isaiah 40:21-31

²¹Have you not known? Have you not heard?

Has it not been told you from the beginning?

Have you not understood from the foundations of the earth?

²²It is he who sits above the circle of the earth,

and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers;

who stretches out the heavens like a curtain,

and spreads them like a tent to live in;

²³who brings princes to naught,

and makes the rulers of the earth as nothing.

²⁴Scarcely are they planted, scarcely sown,

scarcely has their stem taken root in the earth,

when he blows upon them, and they wither,

and the tempest carries them off like stubble.

²⁵To whom then will you compare me,

or who is my equal? says the Holy One.

²⁶Lift up your eyes on high and see:

Who created these?

He who brings out their host and numbers them,

calling them all by name;

because he is great in strength,

mighty in power,

not one is missing.
²⁷Why do you say, O Jacob,
and speak, O Israel,
“My way is hidden from the LORD,
and my right is disregarded by my God”?
²⁸Have you not known? Have you not heard?
The LORD is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
He does not faint or grow weary;
his understanding is unsearchable.
²⁹He gives power to the faint,
and strengthens the powerless.
³⁰Even youths will faint and be weary,
and the young will fall exhausted;
³¹but those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength,
they shall mount up with wings like eagles,
they shall run and not be weary,
they shall walk and not faint.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

SPECIAL MUSIC “Be Thou with Them” by Bach

GOSPEL: Mark 1:20-39

The Holy Gospel according to St. Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

²⁹As soon as [Jesus and the disciples] left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. ³⁰Now Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him about her at once. ³¹He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her, and she began to serve them.

³²That evening, at sunset, they brought to him all who were sick or possessed with demons. ³³And the whole city was gathered around the door. ³⁴And he cured many who were sick with various diseases, and cast out many demons; and he would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew him.

³⁵In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed. ³⁶And Simon and his companions hunted for him. ³⁷When they found him, they said to him, “Everyone is searching for you.” ³⁸He answered, “Let us go on to the neighboring towns, so that I may proclaim the message there also; for that is what I came out to do.” ³⁹And he went throughout Galilee, proclaiming the message in their synagogues and casting out demons.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON Pastor Ali Tranvik

It’s been a whirlwind. We’re still in the first chapter of the Gospel of Mark, since we began reading it five weeks ago, and Jesus has already gotten a *lot* of ministry under his belt. In these mere 39 verses, Jesus has been baptized, spent 40 days with Satan in the wilderness, recruited his first disciples, taught in the synagogue, and casted out a demon (as we read about last week).

The action does not let up in today's text. Coming off last week's exorcism, Jesus heads to the home of Simon, where his mother-in-law is in bed with a fever. Jesus takes her by the hand, lifts her up, and instantly, she begins serving. But the miracles don't stop here. That night, crowds with demons and diseases of all kinds gather, and Jesus heals many of them. Even after he briefly slips away to pray at the end of today's passage, Jesus returns to his healing spree (healing a leper and then a paralytic in the verses that immediately follow), "for that is what I came to do," as he says in verse 38. Jesus-the-miracle-worker is on the move and it seems his healing cannot be stopped.

But in the midst of these miracles, in the midst of the Healer and the healed, a question arises. What about the ones who were *not* healed? Did you notice that? Verse 34 says "Jesus cured *many* who were sick." There were some in the crowds, presumably, whose demons or diseases remained. Maybe it's because this pandemic continues, because we keep burying dear friends here at Cross of Glory who can't gather for a regular funeral, maybe because I am weary, but I can't help but ask this week: what about the ones who were *not* healed? What about *us*?

What about us—whose diseases or demons remain. We whose hands have not been held, whose fevers continue to burn, whose bodies have not been "lifted up" by Jesus? We who are depressed? Weighed down by the grief? We who don't know when our next paycheck will come? We who are exhausted from caring for children while we wait for daycares or schools to reopen? Who are mourning the fact that we are still cut off from community? Who are weary from Zoom? We who are waiting to live again, or maybe to die? What about the ones who were not healed? What about us?

Don't get me wrong, I love a good miracle story, but right now I want to hear about the people in the Bible who didn't get the miracle. Did Jesus ever encounter an unclean spirit he didn't or couldn't cast out? Did he just sit at a deathbed and keep vigil as a family said goodbye to a loved one? No healing, no resurrection, just tears? Is there a time when Jesus looks a sick person in the eye and says "I can't take away your pain, but I love you, and I'll be here with you to bear it" (Thomas)? I want to read about the people in the Bible whose fever didn't go away. The people in the crowd who weren't cured. The people who were weary and in need of healing that never came.

The problem with miracles, as one pastor writes, "is that it is hard to witness them without wanting one of our own. Every one of us knows someone who could use a miracle, but miracles are hard to come by" (Taylor). And so for those of us who remain un-healed or still waiting on a miracle, it's tempting to explain suffering. To come up with a reason for why it hasn't yet come. To theorize, theologize, spiritualize why God has left us hanging with healing.

I want to share a story about a woman who knew these temptations well. She was a teacher of mine in at Duke Divinity School. Life was good for Kate Bowler: a Mennonite from Manitoba, Kate had moved to the U.S. when she landed her dream job at Duke. She was a rising academic star, and she lived high school sweetheart-turned-husband who she imported from Canada, and her 2-year-old son Zach (who she calls half boy half dinosaur, depending on his mood).

Kate was 35 when she got the phone call notifying her that she had terminal stage IV colon cancer. She describes the moments immediately following: she melted to her knees and cried. She called her husband and said the things that must be said: "I love you. I am so grateful for you. Please take care of our son." But one of her first thoughts, she admits, was also, "Oh, this is ironic. I recently wrote a book called *Blessed*."

You see, Kate is a historian of American Christianity and specializes in the prosperity gospel. As she describes it, the prosperity gospel is the distinctly American belief that God grants health and wealth to those with the right kind of faith. She spent years interviewing Christians with the spiritual formulas for how to earn God's miracle money or magic healing touch. The prosperity gospel tries to answer the question: why are some people healed and others not? (Why are some people blessed and others not?)

And the answer that the prosperity gospel gives, Kate explains, is quite simple: we get what we deserve. So on the one hand, we can earn God's reward. If we only think positively enough, work hard enough, act good enough, God will reward us (evidenced by our wealth, health, happiness, etc.). This reward is often narrated by people as being "blessed" (think: photo of a celebrity posing in front of a multimillion-dollar mansion that's captioned #blessed). But the other hand, if we fail to follow these rules, then God will punish us (evidenced by cancer, poverty, pandemics, etc.). Or at least, if God is not punishing us, then God's just choosing not to reward us yet...

It was *this* gospel that Kate was suddenly confronted with after being diagnosed with cancer. This gospel that was responsible for the endless explanations and justifications for Kate's suffering. This gospel that had well-meaning and loving people telling Kate to "Just keep smiling! Just be grateful! Things will work out! God may have closed a door, but God's opening a window!" This gospel that compelled a neighbor to knock on Kate's door with a casserole in hand and tell her husband that everything happens for a reason. "I'd love to hear it," Kate's husband said. "Pardon?" the neighbor replied, startled. "I'd love to hear the reason my wife is dying."

Kate says she's had hundreds of people tell her the reason for her cancer: it's because of her sin. Because of her unfaithfulness. Because God is fair. Because God is unfair. Because of her aversion to Brussels sprouts. "I mean, no one is short of reasons," she says.

And Kate says she gets it. I do too! We come up with reasons out of our desire to have something to hold on to in the midst of a cruel world. We give reasons out of our desire to give those we deeply love something to hold on to. We give reasons to try and make meaning of, or find hope in, even the worst moments. And that is beautiful, Kate says. But what Kate learned and what she helped me learn is that, as she puts it: "it can also be oppressive to dump that on somebody who maybe because of illness or random tragedy or institutional evil puts them on the losing side of life."

So she wrote a book called *Everything Happens for a Reason (And Other Lies I've Loved)*. Even though the prosperity gospel was just something Kate thought she researched—not believed—she discovered that she too had her own version of it: that life before cancer was good because, well, she was good. She'd worked hard and found success, and she assumed she would be around long enough to feel "blessed" by it.

Kate's cancer forced her to open up to some hard truths. That maybe everything doesn't happen for a reason. That maybe everything happens *period*. That maybe there is evil that has no explanation, questions that have no answers, suffering that can't be justified. That maybe control is an illusion and certainty a thing we cling to in our attempt to avoid confronting our frailty and finitude. Kate puts it most eloquently herself: "Cancer required that I stumble around in the debris of dreams I thought I was entitled to and plans I didn't realize I had made.

But Kate says cancer also opened her to new ways of being alive. Freed from the impossible burden of having to manage the unmanageable or explain the inexplicable, Kate said she learned to encounter God's presence and love in new ways. She writes: "What would it mean for Christians to give up that little piece of the American Dream that says, 'You are limitless?' Everything is not possible. The kingdom of God is not yet here. What if 'rich' did not have to mean 'wealthy', and 'whole' did not have to mean 'healed'? What if being the people of 'the gospel' meant that we are simply people with good news: God is present. We are loved. That is enough."

What about the ones who were not healed? What about Kate? What about us? As Kate puts it, the good news is this:

God is present: This is not a God who rewards or punishes from a distance, but a God who came to earth and *suffer with us*. A God who knows what it's like *not* to be healed. A God who knew the world's greatest ills on a cross. A God who rose again to say that our disease and demons are not the end.

We are loved: Did you hear the gospel in Mark? *This love lifts us*. Did you hear the gospel in Isaiah? *This love moves us*. Even in the suffering—in the cancer diagnosis, the pandemic, the

For the weary: for those who are poor, those lacking supportive relationships, those who are lonely, those crushed by debt, those struggling with disease or demon, those exhausted in mind, body, or spirit, and for all who cry out to you, especially Mavis Wold, Gil Hartlage, Terry Stejskal, Vicky Jacobson, Jeannie Kuzmich, Nick, nephew of Lori Balzer, Jennifer, granddaughter of Penny Lindblom, Cindy, daughter of Dave and Nancy Hengel, and the loved ones of Gordon Nelson as they grieve his death, we pray... **Refrain.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, sung or spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

OFFERING

Offering can be mailed to the church (5929 Brooklyn Blvd, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429), or to given electronically via the "Give" button at the bottom of our website (www.crossofglory.us). Thanks for continuing to support God's work here at Cross of Glory!

OFFERING RESPONSE Trust in You

1 Letting go of every single dream I lay each one down at Your feet Every moment of my wondering Never changes what You see	2 I've tried to win this war I confess My hands are weary I need Your rest Mighty warrior King of the fight No matter what I face You're by my side
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Chorus When You don't move the mountains I'm needing You to move When You don't part the waters I wish I could walk through When You don't give the answers As I cry out to You I will trust I will trust I will trust in You	You are my strength and comfort You are my steady hand You are my firm foundation The Rock on which I stand Your ways are always higher Your plans are always good There's not a place where I'll go You've not already stood
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3 Truth is You know what tomorrow brings
There's not a day ahead You have not seen
So in all things be my life and breath
I want what You want Lord and nothing less

OFFERING PRAYER

O God, receive these gifts as you receive us: like a mother receives her child, with arms open wide. Nourish us anew in your care, and empower us in faithful service to tend to others with this same love, through Jesus Christ, our saving grace. **Amen.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**
Lift up your hearts. **We lift them to the Lord.**
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God. **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

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 for the 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 for the remembrance of me.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered together as one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray the prayer Jesus taught us...

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.

HOLY COMMUNION

The body of Christ is given for you. The blood of Christ is shed for you.

You are invited to partake in Holy Communion at home with bread and wine/juice, trusting that God is present in it, and that we are present to one another, even while apart.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Christ Jesus, at this table we are strengthened for our journey. Send us forth from this feast nourished in body and in spirit to proclaim your good news and extend this table hospitality to all who are hungry. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May your strength be renewed, may you be mounted up with wings like eagles, may you run and not be weary, ☩ and may you walk and not faint. **Amen.**

SENDING FORTH SONG

Guide My Feet

Guide my feet while I run this race,
guide my feet while I run this race,
guide my feet while I run this race,
'cause I don't want to run this race in vain!

Hold my hand while I run this race,
Hold my hand while I run this race,
Hold my hand while I run this race,
'cause I don't want to run this race in vain!

Refrain:

Lord guide my feet,
(direct my path,) and keep my way,
Can't make a step without you,
I don't want to run this race in vain!

Stand by me while I run this race,
Stand by me while I run this race,
Stand by me while I run this race,
'cause I don't want to run this race in vain! **Refrain**

DISMISSAL

Go in peace and move in Christ. **Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE

The Order of Service is from Evangelical Lutheran Worship which is commended for use in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

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Worship Leadership:

Lead Pastor: Rev. Ali Tranvik

Pianist, vocalist, worship team director: Mark Trease

Vocalist, choir director: Keith Williams
Lector: Dawn Bailey
Acolyte: Earl Simons
Tech Director: Ryan Bailey
Ministers: The people of Cross of Glory

<p style="text-align: center;">Congregational Support as of 12/31/2020 Annual Budget: \$225,000.00 Year to Date Budgeted: \$225,000.00 Year to Date Received: \$225,853.63 Difference: \$853.63</p>
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Community Announcements:

- If you're worshipping on Zoom, grab another cup of coffee and join us for Virtual Coffee Hour, a short time of small-group fellowship following today's service.
- Thanks to everyone for taking part in last week's Annual Meeting! If you were unable to attend but would like to see a recording, reach out to the church office for a link. Copies of the Annual Report (printed and electronic) are also still available upon request.
- There will be an abbreviated newsletter sent out this month. If you have a brief piece you'd like to include, please let Sue in the office know by Monday, Feb 8. The mini-Glory Banner will be sent out with next week's bulletin.
- If you have not yet had the chance to pick up your 2021 offering envelopes, please stop by the church office M-W 9am-3pm. To request home delivery, please call the church office at 763-533-8602.
- Due to the significant decrease in the 14-day positive Covid-19 case counts for Hennepin County over the past few weeks, Cross of Glory will now move into Level 2 of our Preparedness & Response Plan. This means indoor groups of 10 or fewer people are welcome to gather on-site assuming all Building Entry Policy guidelines are maintained. Please schedule gatherings ahead of time by calling the church office. Worship services will continue to be virtual under this level. For more information, please consult Cross of Glory's Covid-19 Plan on our website or reach out to the Task Force.
- All are welcome to take part in Bible Study this Tuesday morning at 9:30 am on Zoom.
- We are excited to welcome Rev. John Schwehn, Associate Pastor at Christ the King Lutheran in New Brighton, as our guest preacher next Sunday, Feb 14.
- Please reach out to Pastor Ali with any other announcements or pastoral care concerns by email (atranvik@crossofglory.us) or phone (763-533-8602).