

## Order of Worship for February 26, 2023

P: The Lord be with you.

**C: And also with You.**

**Opening Hymn:** *“A Mighty Fortress is Our God”* – Hymn #657

### Confession and Forgiveness

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

**C: Amen.**

P: “When the time came, I listened to you,” says the LORD, “and when you needed help, I came to save you.”

**C: But we are dust, and to dust we shall return.**

P: “Yet even now, “says the LORD, “return to Me with all your heart, with fasting and with weeping, and with mourning.”

**C: The sacrifice the LORD desires is a broken, contrite heart; it will not be despised.**

P: O God, we have sinned.

**C: In our thinking, in our speaking, in our doing we have sinned. We have disobeyed Your will, and we have neglected it. We stand condemned. But Jesus Christ stands with us. His Spirit makes it possible for us to plead for mercy. We come with broken, contrite hearts, for we have sinned.**

P: Christ never sinned! But God treated Him as a sinner, so that Christ could make us acceptable to God. By His command I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**C: Amen**

### Service of the Word

#### Psalm 32:1-7

P: You are a hiding place for me;

**C: You preserve me from trouble.**

P: Blessèd is the one whose transgression is forgiven,

**C: whose sin is covered.**

P: Blessèd is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity,

**C: and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

P: For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away

**C: through my groaning all day long.**

P: For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me;

**C: my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**

P: I acknowledged my sin to You, and I did not cover my iniquity;

**C: I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

P: Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayers at a time when You may be found;

**C: surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him.**

P: You are a hiding place for me; You preserve me from trouble;

**C: You surround me with shouts of deliverance.**

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: You are a hiding place for me;

**C: You preserve me from trouble.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

P: Lord God, our strength, the battle of good and evil rages within and around us, and our ancient foe tempts us with deceits and empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your Word and, when we fall, raise us again and restore us through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and rules with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

**Hymn: "I Walk in Danger All the Way" – Hymn #716 vs. 1,5,6**

### **Old Testament Lesson – Genesis 3:1-15**

R: Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." God said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel."

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

### **Epistle Lesson – Romans 5:12-19**

R: Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned— for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sinning was not like the transgression of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come. But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the result of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brought justification. For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

**C: Thanks be to God.**

Choir Anthem: Jesu, Meine Freude by J.S. Bach

### **Gospel – Matthew 4:1-11**

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter.

**C: Glory to You, O Lord.**

P: Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting forty days and forty nights, He was hungry. And the tempter came and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But Jesus answered, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took Him to the holy city and set Him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to Him, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command His angels concerning you,' And 'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Again, the devil took Him to a very high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. And he said to Him, "All these I will give You, if You will fall down and worship me." Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.'" Then the devil left Him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to Him.

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C: Praise to You, O Christ.**

**Children's Message: (8:30)**

**Sermon Hymn: "The Tree of Life" – Hymn #561**

## **Sermon: “Blame Game” – Genesis 3:1-15**

The comic strip Family Circus has a running gag where something will be broken, all of the kids say “Not Me,” and an invisible kid labeled “Not Me” will be shown causing all sorts of trouble. In April 1975, Keane introduced an invisible gremlin named "Not Me", who watches while the children try to shift blame for a misdeed by saying, "Not me." Additional gremlins named "Ida Know" (in September 1975), "Nobody," "O. Yeah!," and "Just B. Cause" were introduced in later years.

That’s what we see in the reading of the Fall into sin. No one takes responsibility. Everyone just passes the blame. The serpent tempts Eve by getting her to question God’s word. “Did God really say...?” Eve’s response adds to God’s word, saying that it’s not just the fruit they can’t eat, but they can’t touch the tree. The serpent continues to twist the words, and makes Adam and Eve want to be like God, and that they can be like God if they just eat of the fruit, and disobey God’s commands. “So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired and to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate” (Genesis 3:6).

But then comes the blame. God comes and questions them, giving them a chance to take responsibility for what they’ve done. Instead, they try to hide. When that doesn’t work, they start passing the blame.

When he’s questioned by God, Adam manages to pass the blame onto both Eve and God. The man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Eve refuses to take responsibility, and just passes the blame onto the serpent. The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." The serpent doesn’t pass the blame, but the damage is done. As the saying goes, “If the devil made you do it, you blew it.”

Isn’t that so often how we handle these situations? We don’t take responsibility for ourselves. We just try to pass the blame onto others.

Politicians do this all of the time. Michael Douglas plays the title character in the film *The American President*. At the end of the movie, he gives a speech that shows how he’s changed, and what his opponent is trying to do. “We have serious problems to solve, and we need serious people to solve them. And whatever your particular problem is, I promise you [my opponent] is not the least bit interested in solving it. He is interested in two things, and two things only: making you afraid of it, and telling you who's to blame for it. That, ladies and gentlemen, is how you win elections.” That’s not just true in the movies; it’s true in real life, as well.

We are all naturally wired to blame other people or circumstances when things go wrong. This is why when major workplace disasters are reported in the news, “human error” is often the first, and sometimes only, explanation provided, ignoring the systemic factors that led to the failure. It also feels the most satisfying. If someone else is to blame for our problems, then they

need to change — not us. Blame helps us feel innocent, but only passes the guilt to someone else.

This leads to the second problem with blame — we don't notice how often we do it. Michael Timms, a leadership development consultant and author who works on team accountability writes, "Even the best executives I work with confess that they initially thought my "don't blame" message was important for their team members to hear, but not them. However, once they began tracking how often they blame other people or circumstances for problems, they were shocked at how frequently they caught themselves in the act."

While we all try to pass the blame like a hot potato, it eventually has to stop somewhere. We hope it doesn't stop with us, but all too often it does. And even if it doesn't, the hot potato of blame leaves us all with burned hands. Fortunately for us, the blame stops not with us, but with Jesus.

One of the more controversial plays in the Super Bowl a couple of weeks ago was a holding call on Philadelphia Eagles cornerback James Bradberry. The call allowed the Kansas City Chiefs to run out the clock, and win on a field goal in the closing seconds of the game. While Eagles fans were quick to blame the referees, that's not what Bradberry did. In the locker room after the game, he took responsibility. "It was a hold. I tugged his jersey. I was hoping they would let it slide." He didn't attack the refs. He didn't justify himself. He didn't argue that the call shouldn't have been made. "It was a hold."

So, instead of blaming their wrong actions on someone else, what should the man and woman, Adam and Eve, have done? They should have repented. They should have said they were sorry for what they did. And that's what we should do. Instead of blaming other people for the wrong things we do, we should simply repent, tell God that we're sorry, and He'll forgive us because of what Jesus did for us.

That's how we should all respond when we get caught. We shouldn't try to blame the teacher who caught us cheating, the parent who caught us sneaking something we shouldn't have, the boss who caught us slacking at work, the cop who caught us speeding. We should take responsibility and ask for forgiveness.

Taking responsibility is hard, though, and we don't always do it. Fortunately for us, we can ultimately pass the blame. We pass it onto Jesus. In what Luther calls the Great Exchange, we pass the blame for what we've done wrong, the guilt for our sins, onto Jesus. Jesus, the one who was tempted in the wilderness by the devil, yet was without sin. Jesus, the one who is promised to crush the serpent's head, even as his heel is bruised. Jesus takes our sin upon himself on the cross, and gives us his righteousness. Our sin, our guilt, our blame is covered.

That forgiveness is what can halt the cycle of blame. Without forgiveness, we remain stuck to the people who we pass our blame to, and who pass their blame onto us. Instead, forgiveness

stops the blame. Once forgiven, we no longer blame others or ourselves, but live as forgiven children of God.

### **Sharing Our Ministry:**

**Confession:** 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Petitions of the Lord's Prayer page 324-5

### **Prayer of the Church**

P: Lord, in your mercy;

**C: hear our prayer.**

P: This is no ordinary battle, O God. We are not surrounded by the din of combat,

**C: except the honeyed hiss of a serpent.**

P: We are not overcome by the clash of swords, the sting of arrows,

**C: but the tempter's evil barbs.**

P: We are not confronted with carnage and death,

**C: except the threat of our own mortality—sin's savage wage.**

P: This is no ordinary battle, O God. But it IS a battle nonetheless. The ancient battle of good and evil rages—within us and around us.

**C: We are at war.**

P: We need a hero, O God, to defend us against the ancient foe.

**C: We require a conqueror, O God, to slay our sin.**

P: Help us to follow our hero, to follow our conqueror, to follow our Savior.

**C: Help us to follow Your Son.**

P: Through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. He lives and rules with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C: Amen.**

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

#### **Closing Prayer:**

P: Lord God, our strength, the battle for good and evil rages within and around us, and our ancient foe tempts us with his deceits and empty promises. Keep us steadfast in Your Word and, when we fall, raise us again and restore us through Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**C: Amen.**

#### **Blessing (Pastor)**

**C: Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** *"O Lord, throughout These Forty Days"* – **Hymn #418**

#### **Postlude:**