

Order of Worship for March 23, 2025

Prelude

P: The Lord be with you,

C: and also with you.

Opening Hymn: “*Christ, the Life of All the Living*” - Hymn #420

Confession of Sins

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

C: Amen.

P: We hear our Old Testament lesson from **Ezekiel 33:7–20**:

R: “So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. “And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away because of them. How then can we live?’ Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”

P: Lord, God, You do not want to punish the wicked. You want the wicked to turn from their ways. But so often we live in our old ways.

C: We lie, we ignore others, we lose our temper, we live for our own comforts, we overeat, we do too little exercise, we hurt others, we make excuses to not help.

P: Worst of all we try to turn it back to You:

R: “Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just,’ when it is their own way that is not just. When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by them. Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways.”

P: If You judge us according to our ways, then we should all be wiped away from the face of the earth.

C: Have mercy on us!

R: “And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

P: We cannot turn back. We are lost in our sin. But the God who does judge as we do, who does not desire our death has sent His Son, Christ Jesus to die in our place. In His name and by His command I forgive you all of your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen.

Response: (from Hymn 614 vs. 1-5,8)

All: “As surely as I live,” God said, “I would not see the sinner dead. I want him turned from error’s ways, Repentant, living, endless days”. And so our Lord gave this command: “Go forth and preach in every land: Bestow on all My pardoning grace Who will repent and mend their ways. “All those who sin you thus remit I truly pardon and acquit, And those who sins you will retain Condemned and guilty shall remain. “What you will bind, that bound shall be; What you lose, that shall be free; To My dear Church the keys are given To open, close the gates of heaven.” The Words which absolution give are His who died that we might live; The minister whom Christ has sent Is but His humble instrument. Praise God the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, Three in One, as it was, is now, and so shall be, world without end, eternally!

Service of the Word

Epistle Lesson: 1 Corinthians 10:1–13

R: I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. 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 play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer. Now these things happened

to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 13:1–9

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the thirteenth chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord.

P: There were some present at that very time who told [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. And He answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” 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. And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

P: This the Gospel of the Lord

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Children’s Message

Sermon Hymn: “O Holy Spirit, Grant Us Grace” - Hymn #693

Sermon: “Before We Get Stuck” - 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

A young boy is at the mall with his mom. She holds his hands as she takes him to several stores to pick up various items. She stops in a clothing store and lets go of his hand to check some clothes. The boy looks to his right and sees the bright colors of a sign. He walks over to the sign. As he examines the sign more closely, he hears something. Music is coming from a group of CD players in the electronics department. He moves toward the sounds. Then he is drawn to images on TV screens. After looking at the TV’s, he notices motions. It is an electronic toy. He watches in fascination as the toy moves round and round a metal course. That leads him to still other toys.

Then the thought strikes him. Where is my mom? He looks around, but no mom. He realizes he’s lost!

St. Paul reminds us of the people of Israel wandering through the wilderness. Again and again, they got themselves “lost.”

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 play.” We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

It wasn't that they set out to do that, but we read in Exodus and Numbers that on several occasions these people got all caught up in temptation, abandoned their faith in God, and got punished for that. Paul tells us that those stories were written in God's Word to warn us—so that we don't go down the wrong path.

We notice something interesting on our computer. So we get sidetracked from what we were supposed to be doing. We delve further and further into it. Then we get to the point where we have to stop. We have to get back to what we should have been doing, but nothing happens. The computer is frozen. We are stuck in something we can't seem to get out of.

Our marriage is falling apart. We overeat. We take little time to pray. We have alienated ourselves from our children. How do we get into those traps? Paul tells us about temptation:

No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you get tempted, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

We can read that to say, “Whenever you get into a fix, God will provide the escape hatch.” If we get stuck in the “computer” of life, He is the place we can click onto to get out of that window. Or He is the “Control-Alt-Delete” we can hold down to get unstuck. If we get “lost,” He is the cell phone we can pull out of our pocket to get directions or help.

But Paul is not talking about an escape hatch that says, “Go wherever you want to. Do whatever you want to do. If it gets to be too much, God will forgive you and say everything's okay.” No, God is giving us a warning light before we go down that path. When we get to a junction where we know we are going down the wrong way God says, “There is another way. I will always provide another door, another path away from it.”

Yet we all go down the wrong paths. Paul gets to the heart of the matter when he tells us, “If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.” With all the dishonesty that goes around in politics, historians are always reminded about the downfall of Richard Nixon from Watergate. The ironic thing about that is that what got Nixon into trouble was not what he did, but his attempts to cover up what was done. If he had just let things out into the open, he would not have been forced out of office. Often, we live in that same world of denial. When we are questioning and struggling, then we can look to God. We can see His warnings. But when we think we are standing firm, when we are just “cruising” through life, then we drive past

those warnings. We become like a male driver, not stopping for directions, but figuring that if we just keep going on, we'll find our way out.

Paul mentions three wrong paths we can take. 1.) Idolatry—We usually picture in our minds when we hear the word “idolatry” people kneeling in front of a statue and praying to it. But at the core of idolatry is wanting ourselves and not God to be in the driver’s seat. People made up idols so they could have something they could see, something they could control. And when we treat God that way, when we try to make “deals” with God, then that’s idolatry. 2.) Gratification of our desires—In our world of instant this and instant that, there is a real temptation to build our lives on satisfying our selfish desires. That’s why we often eat too much, exercise too little, watch too much TV, and spend too little time helping others. 3.) Grumbling—It becomes so easy for us to blame others for our problems. In our world of lawsuits, we want someone else to be at fault, not me. Why is it so easy for Christians to condemn homosexuality as such a bad sin? Because it is a sin that someone else does. Unlike sins like lying or heterosexual lust or petty jealousies, I can blame someone else for that sin. Each one of those three paths gets narrower and narrower, until we get caught tightly in the hold of sin.

But God works to stop us. He gives us that wonderful way out of the trap of temptation through confession and forgiveness. We come before God, first realizing our sin, our weakness. Then we hear His forgiveness. Confession shows us that we aren’t standing firm—that we can’t just keep plowing on heading in life. We need to stop and realize, “I am a sinner.” Then we can hear God telling us, “I forgive you.” Then God can put us back on the firm footing he has given us in baptism. We have nothing of our own to stand on. But we are children of God, totally dependent on our Savior. Confession places us back to our Baptisms where our only hope as well is our Savior, Christ Jesus. Then we want to go on God’s path, because we see the other way He offers us in Christ Jesus.

Is there something that really tempts you? Is there something that keeps pulling you from God? Don’t ignore it. Don’t try to hope it goes away. All that happens then is that we get stuck deeper and deeper in the “woods” of sin. God is providing you a way out now. He has the door open for you to bring your fears, your guilt to Him. He invites you to share that in a real way with Him by sharing it with a pastor or another Christian. And He invites you to do that again and again, because he knows how real those temptations are. Don’t wait until later. Right now, jump into His arms; take the way out He offers to us all.

Prayer of the Church:

Lessons on Falling Into and Resisting Temptation:

P: When the people of Israel entered the Promised Land, they stood on two mountains next to each other. Half the people shouted blessings on those who followed God; the other half shouted curses on those who went astray from God. In the same way we remind each other of those who ignored God and those who obeyed Him:

(Left side of church) In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. And Abel also brought an offering—fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must rule over it.” (Genesis 4:3-7)

P: Cain fell into temptation and killed his brother.

(Right side of church) Sometime later God tested Abraham. He said to him, “Abraham!” “Here I am,” he replied. Then God said, “Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you.” (Genesis 22:1-2)

P: Abraham was ready to sacrifice his son, Isaac.

(Left side) Once when Jacob was cooking some stew, Esau came in from the open country, famished. He said to Jacob, “Quick, let me have some of that red stew! I’m famished!” (That is why he was also called Edom). Jacob replied, “First sell me your birthright.” “Look, I am about to die,” Esau said. “What good is the birthright to me?” But Jacob said, “Swear to me first.” So he swore an oath to him, selling his birthright to Jacob. (Genesis 25:29-33)

P: Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of soup.

(Right side) The LORD was with Joseph so that he prospered, and he lived in the house of his Egyptian master. When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the LORD gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes and became his attendant. Potiphar put him in charge of his household, and he entrusted to his care everything he owned. Now Joseph was well-built and handsome, and after a while his master’s wife took notice of Joseph and said, “Come to bed with me!” (Genesis 39:2-4, 6b-7)

P: Joseph resisted Potiphar’s wife.

(Left side) So Delilah said to Samson, “Tell me the secret of your great strength and how you can be tied up and subdued.” Samson answered Delilah, “If anyone ties me with seven fresh bowstrings that have not been dried, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” Then Delilah said to Samson, “You have made a fool of me; you lied to me. Come now, tell me how you can be tied.” He said, “If anyone ties me securely with new ropes that have never been used, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” Delilah then said to Samson, “All this time you have been making a fool of me and lying to me. Tell me how you can be tied.” He

replied, “If you weave the seven braids of my head into the fabric on the loom and tighten it with the pin, I’ll become as weak as any other man.” So while he was sleeping, Delilah took the seven braids of his head, wove them into the fabric. Then she said to him, “How can you say, ‘I love you,’ when you won’t confide in me? This is the third time you have made a fool of me and haven’t told me the secret of your great strength.” with much nagging she prodded him day after day until he was sick to death of it. (Judges 16)

P: Samson let Delilah cut his hair and lost his strength.

(Right side) But Naomi said to Ruth, “Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons— would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD’s hand has turned against me!” (Ruth 1:11-12)

P: Ruth stayed with Naomi.

(Left side) The Philistines assembled to fight Israel, with three thousand chariots, six thousand charioteers, and soldiers as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They went up and camped at Mikdash, east of Beth Aven. When the Israelites saw that their situation was critical and that their army was hard pressed, they hid in caves and thickets, among the rocks, and in pits and cisterns. Some Hebrews even crossed the Jordan to the land of Gad and Gilead. Saul remained at Gilgal, and all the troops with him were quaking with fear. He waited seven days, the time set by Samuel; but Samuel did not come to Gilgal, and Saul’s men began to scatter. (1 Samuel 13:5-8)

P: Saul gave into the people and did the sacrifice without Samuel.

(Right side) After Saul returned from pursuing the Philistines, he was told, “David is in the Desert of En Gedi.” So Saul took three thousand able young men from all Israel and set out to look for David and his men near the Crags of the Wild Goats. He came to the sheep pens along the way; a cave was there, and Saul went in to relieve himself. David and his men were far back in the cave. The men said, “This is the day the LORD spoke of when He said to you, ‘I will give your enemy into your hands for you to deal with as you wish.’” Then David crept up unnoticed and cut off a corner of Saul’s robe. (1 Samuel 24:1-4)

P: David did not kill Saul who was God’s chosen king.

(Left side) While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. “You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said. When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.” (Mark

14: 66-70)

P: Peter denied Jesus three times.

(Right side) Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in His own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords. (1 Timothy 6:12-15)

P: Jesus gave His life for us!

Closing Prayer:

P: Almighty and everlasting God, You desire not the death of a sinner but that all would repent and live. Hear our prayers for those outside the Church. Take away their iniquity, and turn them from their false gods to You, the living and true God. Gather them into your holy Church to the glory of Your name, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: *“Oh, That the Lord Would Guide My Ways.”* - Hymn #707

Postlude