

## Lent 3 - Morning Prayer – March 23, 2025

### Hymn 143, stanzas 1-3 – The Glory of these forty days

The glory of these forty days we celebrate with songs of praise;  
for Christ, through whom all things were made, himself has fasted and has prayed.

Alone and fasting Moses saw the loving God who gave the law;  
and to Elijah, fasting came, the steeds and chariots of flame.

So Daniel trained his mystic sight, delivered from the lions' might;  
and John the Bridegrooms friend, became the herald of Messiahs' name.

### Opening Sentence for Lent

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us,  
but if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and  
cleanse us from all.

### Invitation to Confession

Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly  
Father, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received at his hands, to  
set forth his most worthy praise, to hear his holy Word, and to ask , for ourselves and  
on behalf of others, those things that are necessary for our life and our salvation. And  
so that we may prepare ourselves in heart and mind to worship him, let us kneel in  
silence, and with penitent and obedient hearts confess our sins, that we may obtain  
forgiveness by his infinite goodness and mercy.

*Almighty and most merciful Father, we have erred and strayed from thy ways like lost  
sheep, we have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, we have  
offended against thy holy laws, we have left undone those things which we ought to  
have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done.*

*But thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, spare thou those who confess their faults,  
restore thou those who are penitent, according to thy promises declared unto mankind  
in Christ Jesus our Lord; and grant, O most merciful Father, for his sake, that we may  
hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of thy holy Name. Amen.*

The Almighty and merciful Lord grant you absolution and remission of all your sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of his Holy Spirit.  
*Amen.*

### **Venite – pages 44-45**

O come, let us sing unto the Lord;  
    let us heartily rejoice in the strength of our salvation.  
Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving,  
    and show ourselves glad in him with psalms.  
For the Lord is a great God,  
    and a great King above all gods.  
In his hand are all the corners of the earth,  
    and the strength of the hills is his also.  
The sea is his and he made it,  
    and his hands prepared the dry land.  
O come, let us worship and fall down  
    and kneel before the Lord our Maker.  
For he is the Lord our God,  
    and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.  
O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness;  
    let the whole earth stand in awe of him.  
For he cometh, for he cometh to judge the world,  
    and the peoples with his truth.

### **First Reading: Exodus 3:1-15**

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I must turn aside and look at this great sight, and why the bush is not burned up." When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings; and I have come down to

deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?” He said, “I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain.” But Moses said to God, “If I come to the Israelites and say to them, ‘The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,’ and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I am who I am.” He said further, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘I am has sent me to you.’” God also said to Moses, “Thus you shall say to the Israelites, ‘The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you’: this is my name forever, and this my title for all generations.”

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

### **Psalm 63:1-8**

O God, you are my God; eagerly I seek you;  
*my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you, as in a barren and dry land where there is no water.*

Therefore I have gazed upon you in your holy place,  
*that I might behold your power and your glory.*

For your loving kindness is better than life itself;  
*my lips shall give you praise.*

So will I bless you as long as I live  
*and lift up my hands in your Name.*

My soul is content, as with marrow and fatness,  
*and my mouth praises you with joyful lips.*

When I remember you upon my bed,  
*and meditate on you in the night watches.*

For you have been my helper,  
*and under the shadow of your wings I will rejoice.*

My soul clings to you;  
*your right hand holds me fast.*

## **I Corinthians 10:1-13**

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters that our ancestors were all under the cloud, and all passed through 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, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness. Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." We must not indulge 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. And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God he will also provide and way out so that you may be able to endure it.

The Word of the Lord. *Thanks be to God.*

## **Hymn 143, stanzas 4 and 5**

Then grant us, Lord, like them to be full oft in fast and prayer with thee;  
our spirits strengthen with thy grace, and give us joy to see thy face.

O Father, Son, and Spirit blest, to thee be every prayer addressed  
who art in three-fold Name adored, from age to age, the only Lord.

## **Gospel: Luke 13:1-9**

At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them – do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did." Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come

looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil? He replied "Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down."

**Sermon**

**The Rev. Charles Rowins**

**The Apostles Creed**

**Page 53**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth;

And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord;  
who was conceived by the Holy Ghost,  
born of the Virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, dead, and buried.  
He descended into hell.  
The third day he rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven,  
and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty.  
From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost,  
the holy catholic Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life everlasting. Amen.

**The Lord's Prayer – page 54**

The Lord be with you. *And with thy spirit.* Let us pray as 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, for ever and even. Amen.

### **Suffrages – page 55**

O Lord, show thy mercy upon us;  
*and grant us thy salvation.*  
Endue thy ministers with righteousness;  
*and make thy chosen people joyful.*  
Give peace, O Lord, in all the world;  
*for only in thee can we live in safety.*  
Lord, keep this nation under thy care;  
*and guide us in the way of justice and truth.*  
Let thy way be known upon earth;  
*thy saving health among all nations.*  
Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten;  
*nor the hope of the poor be taken away.*  
Create in us clean hearts, O God;  
and sustain us with thy Holy Spirit.

### **Collect for Sundays**

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

### **Additional Collects –page 100**

O God, you make us glad with the weekly remembrance of the glorious resurrection of your Son our Lord: Give us this day such blessing through our worship of you, that the week to come may be spent in your favor; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

O God, the King eternal, whose light divides the day from the night, and turns the shadow of death into the morning: Drive far from us all wrong desires, incline our hearts to keep your law, and guide our feet into the way of peace; that, having done your will with cheerfulness during the day, we may, when night comes, rejoice to give you thanks; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## **The General Thanksgiving, page 58**

Almighty God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all goodness and loving kindness to us and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful; and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honor and glory, world without end. *Amen.*

## **Prayer of St. Chrysostom, page 59**

Almighty God, who hast given us grace at this time with one accord to make our common supplications unto thee, and hast promised through thy well-beloved Son that when two or three are gathered together in his Name thou wilt be in the midst of them: Fulfill now, O Lord, the desires and petitions of thy servants as may be best for us; granting us in this world knowledge of thy truth, and in the world to come life everlasting. *Amen.*

## **Announcements and Special Occasions**

### **Offertory Sentence and Anthem**

#### **Hymn 43 (verse 4)**

Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise him, all creatures here below;  
Praise him above ye heavenly host: praise Father Son, and Holy Ghost.

#### **Presentation of Flag and Hymn 717 (stanzas 1/4)**

My country 'tis of thee, sweet land of liberty, of thee I sing;  
long may our land be bright with freedom's holy light;  
protect us by thy might, great God, our King.

## **Closing Prayer – BCP page 834**

Grant, we beseech thee, Almighty God, that the words which we have heard this day with our outward ears, may, through thy grace, be so grafted inwardly in our hearts, that they may bring forth in us the fruit of good living, to the honor and praise of thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

## **Hymn 573, stanzas 1-3 – Father eternal, Ruler of creation**

Father eternal, Ruler of creation,  
Spirit of life, which moved ere form was made,  
through the thick darkness covering every nation,  
light to our blindness, O be thou our aid:  
thy kingdom come, O Lord, thy will be done.

Races and peoples, lo, we stand divided,  
and, sharing not our griefs, no joy can share;  
by wars and tumults love is mocked, derided;  
his saving cross no nation yet will bear:  
thy kingdom come, O Lord, thy will be done.

Envious of heart, blind-eyed, with tongues confounded,  
nation by nation still goes unforgiven,  
in wrath and fear, by jealousies surrounded,  
building proud towers which shall not reach to heaven:  
thy kingdom come, O Lord, thy will be done.

## **Dismissal**

Alleluia. Alleluia. Go in peace to love the Lord.  
*Thanks be to God. Alleluia. Alleluia.*





**Sermon preached by the Rev. Charles Rowins on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Lent,  
March 23, 2025, St. Christopher-by-the-Sea, Gibson Island, Maryland.**

Today's lessons are full of sermon possibilities.

In the Exodus passage, God identifies himself: "I am who I am." So, listen up!

The author of Psalm 63 pledges to God life-long obedience. "My soul clings to you."

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul assures us that "we will not be tested beyond our strength."

And in the gospel reading, Jesus reminds us that if we want to bear fruit, we need to "dig around it and put manure on it."

Here's the common ground. God reminds us that He is with us, but He leaves it to us to acknowledge that Divine help.

And that's why we're here. To hear again what God expects, and to try again to meet those expectations. But always with the assurance that as we stumble – which we will – God is there to help us up. That is God's nature. Which is wonderful and necessary, given our propensity to stumble.

God's nature trumps this propensity. And thank God for that. Because life without someone to pick us up is not a very happy life.

Well, how does God get through to us? We're on different wave lengths, aren't we. Our ability to reach out, never mind accept, what's out there, or in there, is limited. We need help, don't we? And what does God do? He becomes one of us. God – the great I AM – says in Jesus "Here I AM." If you can't comprehend the Father, the Son will help. And just how will we recognize that help? Is there a partner in this dilemma? Yes, it is of God, but with its own Name: Capital S Spirit.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There's a comma after Father, and a period after Spirit. But how are they connected? Enter Jesus, the Son. He is the Link: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Three in One and One in Three.

It's a pretty straight-forward approach on God's part. But what about our part? What is our approach to this great Mystery? It is God the Son, isn't it? The more we study Jesus, the closer we feel to God Himself. That's not an accident. It is intentional. And God as Spirit is available 24-7-365. And He doesn't wait for us to contact Him. He contacts us. All the time. Our role is to answer the phone.

Sometimes when the phone rings, we don't pick up. Other times, we pick up, but quickly put the receiver down. And still other times, we answer the phone and say "I'm so glad you called. I've been missing you. I need your help."

Well, there's another possibility here, isn't there? "For the last time, stop calling me. I don't want to hear from you again." It's a stage that we believers go through. We don't like to be targeted. But when we stop answering, we miss Who is on the other end.

The solution here is for us to initiate a new conversation. "Dear Lord, it is I. I've been missing our conversations. Please return my call when you get a chance."

When we do this, there is a smile on God's face. And a special conversation ensues. God says "I've been calling you every day, and you don't pick up. But I AM grateful that you called today."

Perhaps that is why God is the I AM. Of course there are all kinds of I AM calls. I am disappointed. I am angry. But, God says, I won't stay disappointed. I won't stay angry. My love for you is strong. So don't give up on me. I won't give up on you. Let's stay in touch. I AM. You ARE. And together we are at our best.

"Togetherness." It's the hallmark of communities like this one. And it's not automatic. There's a role in this endeavor for each of us. And it's not a burdensome role. It's a privilege, and it's a joy. And it is a safeguard against thinking too highly of ourselves.

One of the features of church communities is the potluck supper. Everybody contributes something special. And everybody enjoys the contributions of others.

What a concept! Can you imagine a community without these characteristics? No potlucks. No coffee hours. No contact at all between services. No communion services. No Lord's Prayer.

Well, we here can't imagine such a community. And that's a tribute to you all. And it's an experience that is shared in all sorts of ways, including invitations to the leaders of other non-profit organizations to share their community experiences.

Yes, togetherness. And there's no greater example than God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And don't forget St. Christopher by the Sea. Now there's a really special community!

But what about communities that aren't so special? What about communities that don't gather through thick and thin? What about communities that never acknowledge the Great I AM? Well, they're out there, aren't they? And, without the I AM, we're left with just the We Are.

Which is not that bad. We Are pretty special ourselves. Do we even need the I AM?

Well, of course we do. Small acts of forgiveness, on our part, have a prominent place in the scheme of things. But there are other acts – Big Acts, as well as small acts – that only the I AM can address.

Can you even imagine a world that doesn't recognize, first the need for, and second the reality of, Forgiveness? Forgiveness is what gets us back on track. We need the Great I AM. As individuals, and as a society, we need God. Otherwise we're in a whole heap of trouble. Even more trouble than we seem to be in right now.

One of the joys of living is forgiving and being forgiven. And here we are, a joy-filled community, thanks first and last and beyond to a Loving God, who shared that profound Love in a first century carpenter. Quite a Story. Quite a Reality for you and me. I AM and WE ARE. What a twosome. *Amen*.