

# Again & Again

## Midweek Lenten Services 2021



St. John Lutheran Church, Celina OH  
February 24, 2021

## AGAIN & AGAIN

Lent is a season that we are again and again reminded of our brokenness and suffering. Again we are filled with doubts. Again we struggle with our faith. Yet, God continues to reach out to us again. To love us again and again. This is a season to reflect on God's love that comes to us again and again.



## **PRELUDE**

## **WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **CALL TO WORSHIP**

God meets us in the night-

**Before the sun rises,**

**Before the wounds heal,**

**Before there are answers,**

**Before there is closure.**

God meets us in the light-

**Where joy is effervescent,**

**Where laughter is contagious,**

**Where flowers bloom from cracks in the sidewalk,**

**And where people gather around a table.**

God meets us at the threshold-

**At the edge of the water,**

**At the beginning of the wilderness,**

**At the start of something new,**

**On the edge of faith**

And if God meets us in all those places,

Then surely God meets us in between-

**Staying with us through the wilderness**

We are not alone. God is all around.

**Let us worship the God of the here and now.**

## **GATHERING**

### **PRAYER OF ILLUMINATION**

Holy God,

If I am honest, faith often feels like water in my hand.

No matter how hard I try to hold onto it, some of it slips through-

Like droplets of truth running down, back towards my heart.

This human inability to hold onto you leaves me thirsty for more.

So as we prepare to read scripture,  
I pray that once again, you would meet us here.  
Meet us in our hopes and our heartache.  
Meet us in our fear and joy,  
Meet us in our cupped hands and clenched fists.  
And even if the water keeps running,  
Even if we do not hear the words, "This is my beloved,"  
Ringing in our ears,  
We trust that you are near,  
Always and forever meeting us here,  
Running toward our hearts.  
Gratefully we pray,  
**☩ Amen.**

## **SCRIPTURE READING**

### **Mark 1: 9-15**

<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

<sup>12</sup>And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him. <sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."

*The reading is concluded:*

**☐** Word of God, Word of Life,  
**☩ Thanks be to God.**

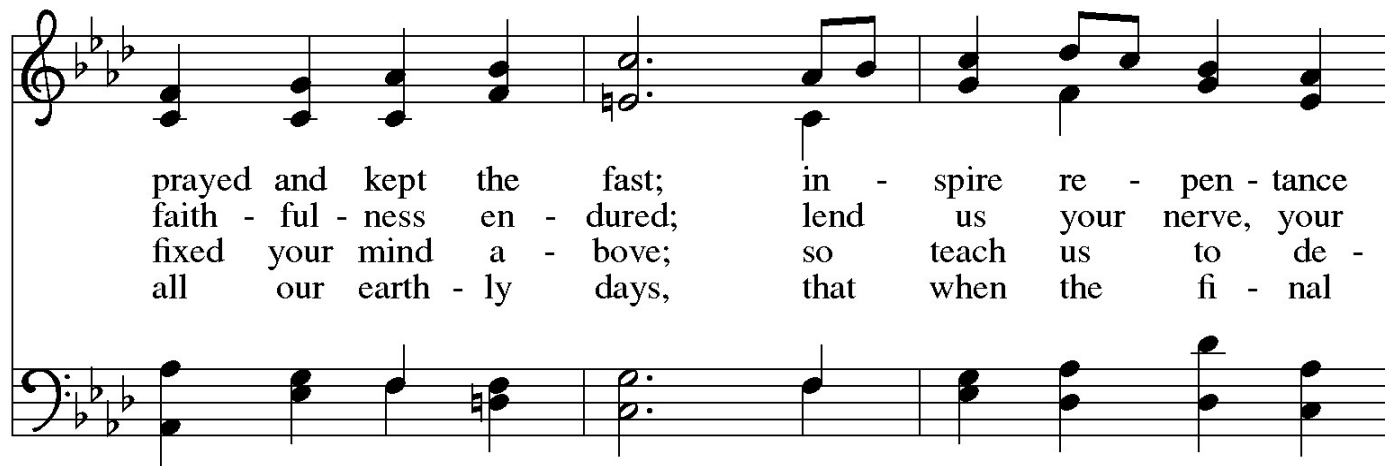
## **SERMON**

## **HYMN OF THE DAY**

# O Lord, throughout These Forty Days



1 O Lord, through - out these for - ty days you  
2 You strove with Sa - tan, and you won; your  
3 Though parched and hun - gry, yet you prayed and  
4 Be with us through this sea - son, Lord, and



prayed and kept the fast; in - spire re - pen - tance  
faith - ful - ness en - dured; lend us your nerve, your  
fixed your mind a - bove; so teach us to de -  
all our earth - ly days, that when the fi - nal



for our sin, and free us from our past.  
skill and trust in God's e - ter - nal word.  
ny our - selves that we may know God's love.  
Eas - ter dawns, we join in heav - en's praise.

Text: based on Claudia F. Hernaman, 1838–1898; para. Gilbert E. Doan Jr., b. 1930  
Music: CONSOLATION, A. Davisson, *Kentucky Harmony*, 1816; arr. Theodore A. Beck, 1929–2003  
Text © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.  
Arr. © 1969 Concordia Publishing House.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH**

**We believe in a God who is everywhere and right here,  
Bigger than the sky and in the smallest details,  
All at once and in every moment.**

**We believe that God meets us where we are-  
In heartbreak and high hopes,  
Around crowded tables and in quiet homes,  
In joy and in suffering,  
In loneliness and in connection,  
In sanctuaries and in living rooms,  
In marches and waiting rooms.**

**We believe that nothing we do or leave undone  
Can distance us from God's love.  
God is forever drawing us close and pulling us in.  
Again and again, God meets us where we are  
And invites us into wholeness.  
Thanks be to God for a love like that.**

## **OFFERING**

*During this season of lent, we will be having time of prayer during the offering. Normally we would pass around an offering plate, but since that is not what is best during this time, we are going to use this time for prayer. A short hymn will be sung repeatedly as we use this opportunity to be in prayer. You may continue to sit in your pew, come up and light a candle and pray, continue to sing, or engage in another form of prayer and reflection that works for you. We will do this for a couple minutes. If you wish to remain in prayer, please feel free to do so.*

## O Lord, Hear My Prayer *The Lord Is My Song*

The musical score is written for two staves, Treble and Bass clef, in the key of D major (indicated by two sharps). The melody is primarily composed of chords, with some single notes in the Treble staff. The lyrics are written below the staves, with the first line of lyrics corresponding to the first system of music and the second line to the second system.

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: when I call, an - swer me.  
OR *The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: all my hope comes from God.*

O Lord, hear my prayer, O Lord, hear my prayer: come and lis - ten to me.  
*The Lord is my song, the Lord is my praise: God, the well-spring of life.*

Text: Psalm 102:1-2; Taizé Community, adapt.

Music: HEAR MY PRAYER, Jacques Berthier, 1923-1994

Text and music © 1982, 1991 Les Presses de Taizé, GIA Publications, Inc., agent, 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638.  
www.giamusic.com, 800.442.3358. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

## OFFERTORY PRAYER

☐ God, whose giving knows no end, we offer up the treasure that you have entrusted to us; we offer up the skills and time that you have graciously given to us; we offer up ourselves in service and praise. Receive these gifts by your grace. Multiply and use them through the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish Christ's work of love in the world.

☑ Amen.

## LORD'S PRAYER

☐ Lord, remember us in your kingdom, and teach us to pray:

☑ **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**

### **BLESSING**

**P** Holy God, Blessed Trinity, strengthen your faith,  
increase your hope, deepen your love,  
+ and give you peace this night and always.

**C Amen.**

### **SENDING HYMN**

*I Want Jesus to Walk with Me  
(On next page)*

### **SENDING**

**P** Go in peace. Rest in God. Rise to serve.

**C Thanks be to God.**

### **POSTLUDE**



# I Want Jesus to Walk with Me

1 I want Je - sus to walk with me;  
2 In my tri - als, Lord, walk with me; walk with  
3 When I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

me; I want Je - sus to walk with me;  
in my tri - als, Lord, walk with me; walk with  
when I'm in trou - ble, Lord, walk with me;

me; all a - long my pil - grim jour - ney,  
when my heart is al - most break - ing,  
when my head is bowed in sor - row,

Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.  
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me. walk with me.  
Lord, I want Je - sus to walk with me.

Text: African American spiritual

Music: SOJOURNER, African American spiritual; arr. hymnal version

Arr. © 2006 Augsburg Fortress.

Duplication in any form prohibited without permission or valid license from copyright administrator.

## **MORE DEVOTIONAL MATERIAL FOR THE WEEK**

The material is from the Lenten Season resource, Again & Again. Please feel free to take this home and continue to use this for devotions this Lent.

A poem by Rev. Sarah Are

### **REMEMBER WHEN?**

God never begins letters with the words, "I hope this finds you well," For those words imply distance.  
Instead, God begins God's letters to you with the words, "Remember when?"

Beloved child,  
Remember when we dipped our toes into the water?  
Remember when we dove right in?  
Remember when the ice cream dripped down our hands  
And the cicadas sang their song, And the seasons changed,  
And the days were long?  
Remember when we fell in love and the world was new?  
Remember when our heart was broken?  
Remember the tears?  
Remember the long nights?  
Remember when we laughed again and the sound surprised us?  
Remember when we marched in the street?  
Remember when we cast our vote?  
Remember when we believed in hope?  
Remember when?  
I do.

That's what God's letters say. So on this day, and every day to come, Remember: God is meeting you. If you look back, you might remember when.

A commentary on Mark 1: 9-15 by Rev. T. Denise Anderson:

My personal story is, though my family wasn't very "churchy," I somehow came to religion in my teens. I came to my denomination in seminary after learning more about the Reformed tradition. Reformed theology emphasizes God's initiative, which is consistent with my own experience. I can't tell you that I ever really found God. It was God who found me, and kept finding me throughout my life. Whether I was observant or indifferent about my faith, God was always close by.

Mark's gospel serves as source material for both Matthew and Luke's gospels. It's the shortest and most perfunctory of all four gospels. In just seven verses, we learn of three significant events in the life of Jesus as he began his ministry. The first is his baptism, where God claims him as God's own beloved son. The second is his experience in the wilderness, where God sends angels to attend to him as he faces the Accuser. Lastly, after John the Baptist's arrest, Jesus begins proclaiming God's proximity and reign while calling for repentance.

The common thread in each account is God's closeness. In pivotal moments, God is extraordinarily present with Jesus and those around him, and for good reason. In the Black church we sing of how God picks us up, turns us around, and places our feet "on solid ground." God's proximity informs our trajectory. God approaches us to claim, equip, and send us to do God's will.

Again and again, God meets us where we are, but doesn't leave us there. We shift from sinking sand to solid ground, navel-gazing to community, personal pietism to justice for all, and away from behaviors, both personal and systemic, that frustrate God's vision for the world.

