

Rethinking Religion

RETHINKING TRIALS, TESTS, AND TEMPTATIONS

First Sunday in Lent

GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | Seward, Nebraska

February 18, 2024

SERIES THEME: RETHINKING RELIGION

Everyone has assumptions about God. Likewise, everyone has assumptions about religion. Increasingly, those assumptions are negative. Americans are walking away from Christianity in breathtaking numbers. It raises the question. How do those people know if their assumptions about religion are correct? Do they really understand Christianity at all? Do we? Do we truly understand this religion? In the season of Lent, as much as any other, Jesus teaches things that turns the world's assumptions about religion completely upside down. We call it "Christianity." So, in this holy season, let us go straight to Christ and let him replace assumptions with truth. Jesus, help us to rethink religion!

THEME OF THE DAY: RETHINKING TRIALS, TESTS, AND TEMPTATIONS

"If God loves us, why doesn't he remove all the trials and tests and temptations that we face?" That question demonstrates the religious assumption that those things are bad. They aren't. In the hands of a loving God, they are tools by which he refines our faith. He uses tests as a way to compel us to be less self-reliant, and instead trust in his strength. He uses trials to teach us that this broken world is not our true home. God even takes Satan's temptations and uses them for our good. Trials, tests, and temptations are not exceptions to God's love. That's a false assumption! These are examples of God's love. Proof is that God allowed his beloved Son Jesus to face trials and temptations, so that he might be our perfect savior and substitute.

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
Karma Ridpath

Acknowledgments

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The Service, Setting Three (page 188 in Christian Worship 21)

Hymn: 404 Jesus, Grant That Balm and Healing

sts. 1–4

Stand

In the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Confession

CW 188

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lord, Have Mercy

CW 190

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.

THE WORD

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Prayer of the Day

Let us pray.

Mighty God and Father, our Lord Jesus walked into the wilderness to face the devil's temptations, but he did not succumb to Satan's lies or falter in his resolve to save the world from the prison of hell. Bolster our faith by his mighty victory that we may battle against the forces of evil with courage and confidence; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Be seated

First Reading

Genesis 22:1–18

God gives Abraham a test which will demonstrate who Abraham loves and trusts most.

Abraham Tested

¹ Some time later God tested Abraham. He called to him, "Abraham!"

Abraham answered, "I am here."

² God said, "Now take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah. Offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains there, the one to which I direct you."

³ Abraham got up early in the morning, saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him, along with Isaac his son. Abraham split the wood for the burnt offering. Then he set out to go to the place that God had told him about. ⁴ On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance.

⁵ Abraham said to his young men, "Stay here with the donkey. The boy and I will go on over there. We will worship, and then we will come back to you." ⁶ Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and loaded it on Isaac his son. He took the firepot and the knife in his hand. The two of them went on together.

⁷ Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, "My father?"

He said, "I am here, my son."

He said, "Here are the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?"

⁸ Abraham said, "God himself will provide the lamb for a burnt offering, my son." So the two of them went on together. ⁹ They came to the place that God had told him about. Abraham built the altar there. He arranged the wood, tied up Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar on top of the wood. ¹⁰ Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slaughter his son.

¹¹ The Angel of the Lord called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!"

Abraham said, "I am here."

¹² He said, "Do not lay your hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. For now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld your son, your only son, from me."

¹³ Abraham looked around and saw that behind him there was a ram caught in the thicket by its horns. Abraham went and took the ram and offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son. ¹⁴ Abraham called the name of that place "The Lord Will Provide." So it is said to this day, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."

¹⁵ The Angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven ¹⁶ and said, "I have sworn by myself, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, ¹⁷ I will bless you greatly, and I will multiply your descendants greatly, like the stars of the sky and like the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the city gates of their enemies. ¹⁸ In your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice."

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm of the Day: 25A- In front of hymnal: To You, O LORD, I Lift My Soul

Second Reading

Romans 8:31–39

The proof of God's love is not that he removes all our trouble. The proof of God's love is that he gave us his Son. Since he has done this, nothing can separate us from God's love.

More Than Conquerors

³¹ What then will we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² Indeed, he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also graciously give us all things along with him?

³³ Who will bring an accusation against God's elect? God is the one who justifies! ³⁴ Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus, who died and, more than that, was raised to life, is the one who is at God's right hand and who is also interceding for us! ³⁵ What will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble or distress or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁶ Just as it is written:

For your sake we are being put to death all day long.

We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.

³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things present nor things to come, nor powerful forces, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

Hebrews 4:15



Refrain

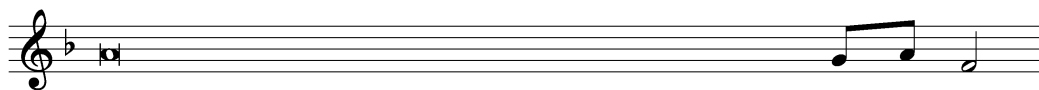


Glo - ry and praise to you, Lord Je - sus Christ.

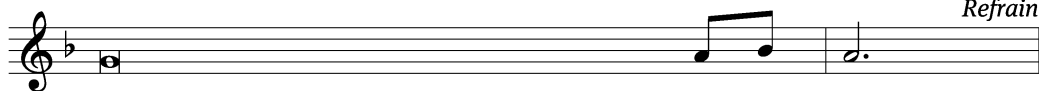


Glo - ry and praise to you, Lord Je - sus Christ.

Tone



We do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weak - ness - es;



we have one who has been tempted in every way,
just as we are—yet he did not sin.

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Gospel

Mark 1:12–15

Sometimes we fail to stand firm in trial or temptation. But by the grace the kingdom of God is still ours because Jesus, as our substitute, perfectly overcame all of Satan's temptations.

¹² The Spirit immediately sent Jesus out into the wilderness. ¹³ He was in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels were serving him. ¹⁴ After John was put in prison, Jesus went to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. ¹⁵ "The time is fulfilled," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near! Repent, and believe in the gospel."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Sermon: Genesis 22:1–18

Stand

Apostles' Creed

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

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day he rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and is seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

Be seated

Prayer of the Church

Gracious Father, after his baptism your Son faced the stern attacks of Satan who tried to derail his journey to the cross. On this day we rejoice in Jesus' victory in the wilderness and praise him for his ultimate triumph over the works of the devil.

Send us your Spirit that we may believe this truth and apply it in our lives.

Satan and his followers seek to overturn our faith and love every day. Their goal is to separate us from your presence and destroy our relationship with your Son. Give us wisdom to be alert for their attacks and recognize the danger they bring.

Protect us as we endure temptation. Keep us from becoming Satan's victims. Forgive us and restore us when we give in to him.

Make our faith stronger than it is now so that we might know more and more that Jesus matters most to us in life and death. Give us wisdom and power to follow him and do his will.

Keep us from thinking that sins are harmless and cannot lead us away from him.

According to your will, Lord, curb the influence of Satan in our world and society. Help people to grasp the appalling effects of his power and to refrain from doing wicked and harmful deeds.

Come to the aid of those who are the objects of devilish power.

Give us courage to warn those we love about the dangers of the devil's temptations. Lead us to speak the truth in love so that family members and friends may discern evil and step back from error and sin.

Move us to share the horror of Satan's power honestly and to offer your forgiveness in love.

Keep in your care all who are struggling with pain, battling with sickness, and facing death. [Especially bless... *here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Spare your people from Satan's temptations in their difficult hours and strengthen them with the promise of your Son's ultimate victory over sin, death, and the grave.

Help us to support them when we can and to keep them in our prayers.

Protect us, gracious God, from the power of Satan, the allure of the world, and the seduction of our sinful nature.

Cause us to believe that we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 525 The Lamb

sts. 1, 2

Lord's Prayer

**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.**

Almighty God, we thank you for teaching us the things you want us to believe and do. Help us by your Holy Spirit to keep your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

Blessing

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.
Amen.

Hymn: 833 I Run to Christ

Choir will sing verse 1. Congregation is invited to sing verses 2-3.

NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Today: 8:00 AM Bible Study, 8:45 AM Worship, 9:45 AM Fellowship and Sunday School

Sunday: 8:00 AM Bible Study, 8:45 AM Worship and Communion, 9:45 AM Fellowship and Sunday School

Thursday 2/22: 6:30 PM Midweek Lent Worship Service

Food Drive

Please drop off any food in the Southeast corner of the fellowship hall. The last day for collecting food will be February 25th.

Midweek Lent Meals

There is a sign sheet in the narthex for our midweek lent meals.

February 25th Tax Presentation for Trinity

Following our service on February 25th Mr. Owen will give a presentation on Nebraska's scholarship tax credit program. He will explain how Grace members can donate tax dollars to support Trinity. The presentation will take place in the fellowship hall.

CONNECTION CARDS: Visitors or members with changes in contact information, please fill out a connection card online at www.graceseward.org on the member connect tab or scan this code.



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Personal assisted listening devices are available.

Given to the Lord: Attendance: Sunday Bible Class 15, Worship 43 in person, Facebook Reached 25, Audio/YouTube 4. Offerings: Home, WELS, NELHS, Trinity **To God be the glory!**