

Rethinking Religion



RETHINKING DEVOTED COMMITMENT

Fifth Sunday in Lent

GRACE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | Seward, Nebraska

March 17, 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 DEVOTED COMMITMENT

Religious sociologists sometimes divide Christians into two groups: committed Christians and cultural Christians. The former are usually defined as those who are active in a congregation, who pray regularly, who read Scripture, etc. The latter are those individuals who call themselves Christian and perhaps have some Christian beliefs. Yet, they do not strive to live a Christian life. They are not interested in church involvement. Those definitions are interesting when trying to understand shifts in American Christianity. However, they demonstrate a false assumption about the Christian religion. There is indeed a devoted commitment at the center of Christianity, but it is not man's commitment to God. Even believers will at times demonstrate lukewarm commitment at best. Instead, at the heart of Christianity we find God's devotion and commitment to us. It is a devoted commitment so strong that it put God on the cross.

Worship Leader
Organist/Pianist

Pastor Justin Wilkens
Cori Humann

Acknowledgments

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The Service, Setting Two (page 172 in Christian Worship 21)

Hymn: 419 Sing, My Tongue, the Glorious Battle

Stand

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

Amen.

Confession

CW 155

Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

Blessed are they whose sin the Lord does not count against them.

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Almighty and merciful Father,

we have strayed from your ways like lost sheep.

We have followed what we have devised and desired in our hearts.

We have offended you and sinned against your holy law.

We have done those things that we should not have done,

and we have not done those things that we should have done.

Have mercy on us, Lord!

Spare us, forgive us, and restore us,

according to your promises in Christ Jesus.

Silence for meditation and reflection

God, our merciful Father, has forgiven all our sins. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Redeemer and Savior. Jesus paid the penalty for our guilt by his death on the cross and freed us from death by his resurrection from the grave. We have peace with God now and forever.

Amen.

Lord, Have Mercy

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.

Eternal God and Father, help us to remember Jesus, who obeyed your will and bore the cross for our salvation, that through his anguish, pain, and death we may receive the forgiveness of sins, victory over the grave, and finally inherit eternal life; 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

Isaiah 43:1–7

In devoted commitment the Lord promises his people that even if they need to pass through raging waters or walk through a wall of fire, he will be right there with them.

Israel's Only Savior

¹ But now this is what the Lord says,
the Lord who created you, O Jacob,
the Lord who formed you, O Israel.

Do not be afraid, because I have redeemed you.

- I have called you by name. You are mine.
- ² When you cross through the waters, I will be with you.
When you cross the rivers, they will not sweep you away.
When you walk through fire, you will not be burned,
and the flame will not set you on fire.
- ³ Because I am the Lord your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior,
I gave Egypt as your ransom,
Cush and Seba in exchange for you.
- ⁴ Because you are precious and honored in my eyes,
and I myself love you,
I will give people in exchange for you,
and peoples in exchange for your life.
- ⁵ Do not be afraid, because I am with you.
From the east I will bring your offspring,
and from the west I will gather you.
- ⁶ I will say to the north, "Give them back!"
and to the south, "Do not hold them."
Bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the end of the earth—
- ⁷ everyone who is called by my name,
everyone I created for my glory,
everyone I formed,
yes, everyone I have made.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Psalm of the Day: 121- In front of hymnal: I Lift Up My Eyes to the Mountains

Second Reading

Hebrews 5:7–9

Because he was truly human Jesus did not relish having to suffer for our salvation. Yet he submitted to the cross out of his devoted commitment to us.

⁷ In the days of his flesh, he offered prayers and pleas with loud cries and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. ⁸ Although he was the Son, he learned obedience from the things he suffered. ⁹ After he was brought to his goal, he became the source of eternal salvation for everyone who obeys him.

The Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

Stand

Gospel Acclamation

Mark 10:45

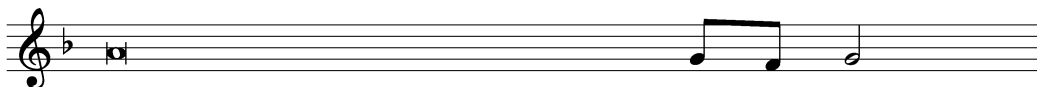


Refrain



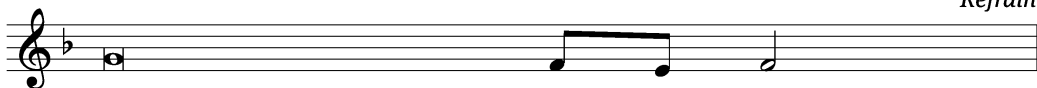
Glo - ry, praise, and hon - or to you, Lord Je - sus Christ.

Tone



For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve,

Refrain



and to give his life as a ransom for man - y.

Tune: © 2021 Northwestern Publishing House. Used by permission: OneLicense no. 713578

Gospel

John 12:20–33

Though the thought of the cross troubled his soul, Jesus was committed to glorifying his Father's name by winning eternal life for us.

Jesus Predicts His Death

²⁰ Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Festival. ²¹ They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we want to see Jesus." ²² Philip went to tell Andrew. Andrew came with Philip and told Jesus.

²³ Jesus answered them, "The time has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴ Amen, Amen, I tell you: Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it continues to be one kernel. But if it dies, it produces much grain. ²⁵ Anyone who loves his life destroys it. And the one who hates his life in this world will hold on to it for eternal life. ²⁶ If anyone serves me, let him follow me. And where I am, there my servant will be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

²⁷ "Now my soul is troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, this is the reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!"

A voice came from heaven: "I have glorified my name, and I will glorify it again."

²⁹ The crowd standing there heard it and said it thundered. Others said an angel talked to him. ³⁰ Jesus answered, "This voice was not for my sake but for yours.

³¹ "Now is the judgment of this world. Now the ruler of this world will be thrown out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." ³³ He said this to indicate what kind of death he was going to die.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to you, O Christ!

Be seated

Hymn of the Day: 571 O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth

The Choir will sing verse 1. The congregation is invited to join in when they feel comfortable.

Sermon: John 12:20-33

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

Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.

Heavenly Father, you loved the world and gave your Son to free us from sin and death by his obedient death on the cross.

We confess that without your love we are lost.

Lord of the Church, we thank you for the treasure of the gospel. By your Spirit, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

Strengthen our determination to do what pleases you, no matter what the danger or the cost.

Guard and guide those who carry a cross in the name of Christ and face ridicule and persecution for the sake of the kingdom: missionaries and chaplains, young people who stand up for what is right in the face of pressure to do what is wrong, and all who pay a high price for their faith and values as Christians.

By your Spirit, O Lord, grant them patience and endurance.

Keep in your care those who carry heavy burdens in life: the sick and the chronically ill, the depressed and the lonely, those torn by conflict in personal relationships, and those victimized by war and injustice. [We pray especially for...*here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Comfort all who face the terrors of life with a heavy heart.

Grant them peace, O Lord, and in your mercy, be their guardian and friend, their comfort and hope.

Watch over those who care for others: pastors and counselors; physicians and nurses; social workers and caring friends; all who feed the hungry, comfort the hurting, and stand beside the dying.

Strengthen them in their work, O Lord, and do not let them become weary in doing good.

Hear us as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Help us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Keep us faithful even to the point of death, that we may receive the crown of life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 808 Drawn to the Cross

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: 813 He Will Hold Me Fast

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, 9:45 AM Fellowship and Sunday School

Thursday 3/21: 6:30 PM Midweek Lent Worship Service

Holy Week: Maundy Thursday 6:30 PM Worship Service at Grace; Good Friday 6:30 PM Worship Service at Bethel; Communion will be offered at both services

NELHS Pre-Grad Party

NELHS is asking for assistance in supporting the pre-grad party on Friday, May 10. If you would like to give a monetary donation or donate door prizes please send them to **Moriah Hackbarth c/o NELHS, 203 Kendall St. Waco, NE 68460**. If you have any questions, please contact Moriah Hackbarth or Mandy Wellman at 402-728-5236.

Care Bags

Easter care bags will be delivered on March 24th. Please bring any items for them prior to this date.

Easter Postcards

You are invited to grab the extra Easter Postcards to invite anyone you would like to our Easter Worship Service.

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.



Find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/gracelutheranseward



Personal assisted listening devices are available.

Given to the Lord: Attendance: Sunday Bible Class 13, Worship 34 in person, Facebook Reached 37, Audio/YouTube 8. Offerings: Home 880.00, WELS 80.00, NELHS 0.00, Trinity 1,000.00 **To God be the glory!**

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