

St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church

627 South Washington, New Ulm, Minnesota



Fourth Sunday of Lent

March 29/30, 2025

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Today's service is televised locally

Channel 14 - Comcast: Monday at 6 pm, Tuesday at 1 pm & Thursday at 10 am

Channel 3 - Nuvera: Monday at 6 pm, Tuesday at 1 pm & Thursday at 10 am

FOURTH SUNDAY OF LENT
March 29/30, 2025

PRAYER BEFORE WORSHIP: God, we admit that far too often, like the prodigal son, we run away from you, want to be in charge of our own lives, and live to serve our selfish purposes. But thank you that, as soon as we return to you in repentance, you welcome us back in your loving arms. You forgive our sin. You rejoice in our return. You give us the best of gifts: forgiveness, peace, and eternal life with you. Help us to wander less and live for you in thanks. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

ORDER OF WORSHIP *Service of the Word*

OPENING HYMN *Today Your Mercy Calls Us* CW 916

- 1 Today your mercy calls us to wash away our sin.
However great our trespass, whatever we have been,
however long from mercy our hearts have turned away,
your precious blood can wash us and make us clean today.
- 2 Today your gate is open, and all who enter in
shall find a Father's welcome and pardon for their sin.
The past shall be forgotten, a present joy be giv'n,
a future grace be promised, a glorious crown in heav'n.
- 3 Today our Father calls us, his Holy Spirit waits;
his blessed angels gather around the heav'nly gates.
No question will be asked us how often we have come;
although we oft have wandered, it is our Father's home.
- 4 O all-embracing Mercy, O ever-open Door,
what should we do without you when heart and eye run o'er?
When all things seem against us, to drive us to despair,
we know one gate is open, one ear will hear our prayer.

Please stand

M: The grace of our Lord † Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you.

C: And also with you.

M: We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve him as his dear children. But we have disobeyed him and deserve only his wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to him and plead for his mercy.

C: Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against you and do not deserve to be called your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy on me according to your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

M: God, our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, he has removed your guilt forever. You are his own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to his will.

C: Amen.

M: In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

OH, TASTE AND SEE



C: Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Bless - ed are



they who take ref - uge in him. Your Word, O Lord, is e -



ter - nal; it stands firm in the heav -



ens. Your faith - ful - ness con - tin - ues for -



ev - er. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good.



Bless - ed are they who take ref - uge in him.

M: Let us pray.

The minister says the Prayer of the Day.



C: A - men.

Be seated

FIRST LESSON

Isaiah 12:1-6

¹ In that day you will say: “I will praise you, Lord. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me. ² Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.”

³ With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

⁴ In that day you will say: “Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted. ⁵ Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. ⁶ Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you.”

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM OF THE DAY *How Blest Are Those the Lord Forgives* Psalm 32B



1 How blest are those the LORD for - gives; how
2 I si - lent - ly con - cealed my guilt, but
3 I then con - fessed my sin to you, my
4 Let all the faith - ful pray to you while
5 You hide me, LORD; you hold me fast in



glad they are to hear their sin is gone, their
then I groaned all day: your heav - y hand, like
griev - ous guilt and shame, and you for - gave my
you may still be found; you place them safe a -
all ad - ver - si - ty, sur - round - ing me with



guilt a - toned, their rec - ord clean and clear.
sum - mer heat, took all my strength a - way.
wick - ed - ness by your most gra - cious name.
bove the flood, se - cure on high - er ground.
faith - ful love and songs of vic - to - ry.

SECOND LESSON

Romans 8:1-10

¹ Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, ² because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. ³ For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

⁵ Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. ⁶ The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. ⁷ The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. ⁸ Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.

⁹ You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. ¹⁰ But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Stand

GOSPEL

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

¹ Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. ² But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them."

³ Then Jesus told them this parable:

¹¹ Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.

¹³ "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father.

“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

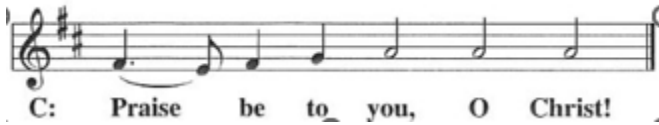
²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’

²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “ ‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ ”

The Gospel of the Lord.

After the Gospel, the congregation sings:



Be seated

HYMN OF THE DAY *How Deep the Father's Love For Us* CW 523

- 1 How deep the Father's love for us, how vast beyond all measure,
that he should give his only Son to make a wretch his treasure.
How great the pain of searing loss. The Father turns his face away
as wounds which mar the Chosen One bring many sons to glory.
- 2 Behold the Man upon a cross, my sin upon his shoulders.
Ashamed, I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers.
It was my sin that held him there until it was accomplished;
his dying breath has brought me life. I know that it is finished.
- 3 I will not boast in anything: no gifts, no pow'r, no wisdom.
But I will boast in Jesus Christ: his death and resurrection.
Why should I gain from his reward? I cannot give an answer.
But this I know with all my heart: his wounds have paid my ransom.

SERMON

Our Prodigal God

Luke 15:1-3, 11-32

Please 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

OFFERING

HANDBELLS 8 & 9:30 am *Jesus Priceless Treasure* arr. Linda Lamb

Please stand

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Lord God, our maker and preserver, we praise and thank you for all that you give us day after day.

We are not worthy of all the mercies you show us.

You have given us your precious Word to nourish our souls and to protect us from the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature.

We thank you for those who teach and preach your saving truth at this place and everywhere. Grant them a rich measure of patience, wisdom, and love.

Heavenly Father, we pray that you shield us from every kind of danger: sudden catastrophe, terrors of crime, and the pain of disease. Watch over those who travel by land, sea, and air. Keep our loved ones from whatever perils may threaten them.

Heal those who are sick, cheer those who are sad, calm those who are distressed, and comfort all who are old and infirm.

Bless our land, our people, and those who hold offices of high trust. Keep our government and schools upright and strong for the advancement of good citizenship and useful vocations, that we may enjoy your gifts of peace, security, and well-being.

Grant your blessing to every nation on earth. Where there are wars, may there be peace. Where there is hatred, let it be healed. Where there is poverty, danger, or disaster, come with your almighty power to help and restore.

Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.

We bring these requests before you in the name of Jesus our Lord, and ask you to hear us. Take all that we have, our bodies and minds, our time and skills, our ministries and offerings, and use them to your glory.

We give ourselves to you that we may serve you in whatever way is pleasing in your sight. Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

Be seated

- 1 I am trusting you, Lord Jesus, trusting only you;
trusting you for full salvation, free and true.
- 2 I am trusting you for pardon; at your feet I bow,
for your grace and tender mercy trusting now.
- 3 I am trusting you for cleansing in the crimson flood;
trusting you to make me holy by your blood.
- 4 I am trusting you to guide me; you alone shall lead,
ev'ry day and hour supplying all my need.
- 5 I am trusting you for power; you can never fail.
Words which you yourself shall give me must prevail.
- 6 I am trusting you, Lord Jesus; never let me fall.
I am trusting you forever and for all.

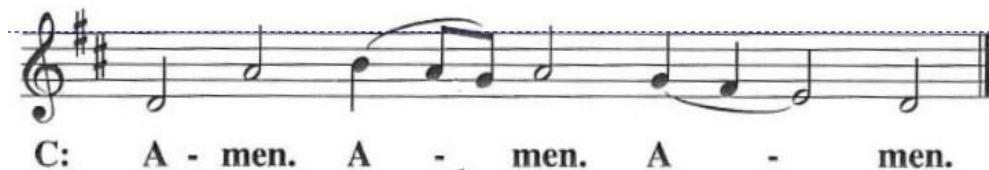
Stand

O Lord God, our heavenly Father, pour out the Holy Spirit on your faithful people. Keep us strong in your grace and truth, protect and comfort us in all temptation, and bestow on us your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

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.



CLOSING HYMN

Amazing Grace

CW 576

- 1 Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see.
- 2 The Lord has promised good to me, his Word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be as long as life endures.
- 3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares I have already come;
'tis grace has brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home.
- 4 When we've been there ten thousand years, bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun.

PREACHER

Pastor Rob Guenther

PRESIDING MINISTER

Pastor Jeff Bovee

ORGAN

Susan Decker

HANDBELLS

Becky Berg

FLUTE

Cassie Goeglein

Welcome, Visitors!

Please scan the QR code to sign our guest register.



THIS WEEK AT ST. JOHN'S

Sunday	8, 9:30, 11 am	Worship
	9:30 am	Bible Class: Psalms
Tuesday	7 pm	Women of St. John's
Wednesday	11 am	Midweek Lenten Service
	3:30 pm	Public & Homeschool Catechism
	4, 6:30 pm	Midweek Lenten Service
	5 pm	Handbells
	6:30 pm	Bible Information Class
	7:15 pm	Choir
Thursday	10 am	Bible Class: Proverbs
	7 pm	Bible Class: Vices and Virtues
Friday	9:30 am	Women's Bible Class: Vices and Virtues
Saturday	6:30 pm	Worship
Sunday, Apr. 6	8, 9:30, 11 am	Worship
	9:30 am	Bible Class
Monday, Apr. 7	6:30 pm	Elders Meeting
Tuesday, Apr. 8	6 pm	Sunday School Meeting
Wednesday, Apr. 9	11 am	Midweek Lenten Service
	3:30 pm	Homeschool & Public School Catechism
	4, 6:30 pm	Midweek Lenten Service
	5 pm	Handbells
	6:30 pm	Bible Information Class
	7:15 pm	Choir
Thursday, Apr. 10	10 am	Bible Class: Proverbs
	7 pm	Bible Class: Vices and Virtues
Friday, Apr. 11	9:30 am	Women's Bible Class

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Attendance for this past weekend was 406

Fruits of Faith:

\$20,004 Home Operations ~ Needed: \$213,575 / YTD: \$227,965
\$1,044 WELS Missions ~ YTD: \$23,710 (2025 Goal: \$87,000)
\$1,422 MVL ~ YTD: \$14,308 (2025 Goal: \$57,000)
\$425 Building Fund
\$183 K-12 Education Assistance
\$30 Food Shelf
\$100 Youth Group
\$235 Undesignated Memorials
\$10 Endowment Fund
\$626 Food and Fellowship
\$40 Meditations
\$100 Ministerial Education Endowment Fund
\$438 Iris Boxes
\$30 Memorial to Academia Cristo

Ask the Pastor Evening ~ on April 10, 7–8 pm Come to the next “Ask the Pastor” evening and bring a friend! This is our third “Ask the Pastor” event which has turned out to be a fun and learning-filled evening. Bring your questions that evening or place your questions in the box on the table in the narthex area.

Easter Breakfast ~ Easter breakfast is quickly approaching! Signup sheets for food donations and volunteering on Easter morning can be found in the narthex. This year we will make the egg bakes in-house rather than catering them in. Be sure to join us for this wonderful fellowship opportunity!

Givelify...Giving Simplified ~ Do you have an account with retailers like Amazon or Walmart and appreciate the convenience it offers? Are you the kind of person who prefers to pay your purchases and bills digitally? Considering moving from weekly offering envelopes to an electronic option? Good news! St John's now has a very simple and safe way for you to make one-time or ongoing gifts via a website or app. A short video explaining the service was shown after the March 8/9 services. If you want more information about how to use Givelify, check out the March edition of St John's newsletter (p. 8) or go to the St. John's website, click on support, and then click the "Information" button. This will take you to a more detailed description with links to answer questions like:



- How can I use Givelify to donate from a computer or tablet?
- How can I download and use the Givelify app?
- How can I add/edit my assigned envelope number to my Givelify account? The QR code can be scanned with your smartphone's camera and it will take you to a place where you can download the Givelify app. Oh, and no. St John's does not discourage or plan to eliminate the opportunity to use envelopes or cash/check offerings. This is simply another option for those who no longer write checks or carry cash and prefer digital transactions.

New Ulm Food Shelf ~ Thank you to everyone who has made a donation to the New Ulm Area Food Shelf this month. If you have forgotten your items, the boxes will remain in the narthex through Tuesday, March 31st, or items can always be donated directly at the Food Shelf (1305 North Valley Street) on Mondays and Wednesdays 8:30 am-2:45 pm.

Women of St. John's ~ Tuesday, April 1 at 7 pm, Ruth Westphal from New Beginnings - A Home for Mothers will be our guest speaker. We will be collecting items until that evening to send back with Ruth for the residents. Be sure to check out the display in the new narthex for additional information or visit homeformothers.com. All are welcome to attend and bring a friend!

CAMM Collection ~ There will be an ongoing collection of empty, label-free, small pill bottles for our WELS Central Africa Medical Mission. However, we will also be collecting small, lightweight items until the LWMS Spring Rally on Saturday, April 5 that can be sent to Malawi and Zambia with the pill bottles. Check out the display in the new narthex for further details or visit camm.us.

Iris Boxes ~ The Iris Box Project is a continuing ministry at St. John's. Almost 100 boxes have been distributed since the ministry began. We need to replenish the supply and could use your help, whether it's with your time, talents, or treasures. If you would like to support the Iris Box Project, you may donate the amount for a box (approx. \$40/box) or any amount. You may include it in your offering envelope with "Iris Box Project" on the envelope. If you knit or crochet and would like to help by making small blankets, please contact Kelly by phone/text or email listed below. Yarn and specifications will be provided to you. If you are willing to donate your time by assembling boxes or other tasks, also please contact Kelly. The Iris Box is designed to be given to families who lost their baby through miscarriage or stillbirth. The items included in the box are intended as a source of comfort and a symbol of our love and care. Members are welcomed and encouraged to pick up a box from the church office for any family member, friend, neighbor, co-worker, etc. who experiences a miscarriage or stillbirth. Please contact Kelly Diersen (507-766-9085), Catherine St. John (248-346-0402) or Sarah Strackbein (612-361-0425) email irisboxproject@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Memorial Gifts ~ The following memorial gifts were received in February and March: \$50 for the Ministerial Education Endowment Fund in memory of Rev. David Plocher; \$30 for St. John's Endowment and \$670 undesignated in memory of Marlys Schwartz; \$20 for sanctuary renovation, \$10 for St. John's Endowment, and \$35 undesignated in memory of Kurt Karstens; \$30 for Academia Cristo in memory of Ricky Mosqueda; \$20 for St. Paul's School in memory of Emer Nelson; \$100 undesignated in memory of Bruce Savoy; and \$100 undesignated in memory of Bill Penkert. We thank the donors, and join them in giving thanks to our Lord for his grace to these our brothers and sisters in Christ.

AREA ANNOUNCEMENTS

Open Positions at LMSG ~ Lutheran Military Support Group (LMSG) is seeking a part-time paid bookkeeper to manage financial transactions, contributions, and reports for the organization. Additionally, there is a volunteer opening for an LMSG Their Stories Told interviewer/writer to share the stories of WELS/ELS Military Service Members. LMSG provides Christ-centered support to WELS and ELS Military Service Members, Veterans, and their Families. Learn more at www.lutheranmilitary.org.

MVL's After Prom ~ is on April 26, 2025, at the New Ulm Rec Center! This event is all about giving our students a safe space to celebrate after their big night. MVL Junior parents are reaching out for donations! Your contributions will help cover costs like venue rentals, food, and entertainment, making this night one that students will cherish for years to come. Would you be willing to support our efforts to ensure our kids have a memorable and secure experience? You can donate by scanning this QR code or going to this link online <https://gofund.me/05027fd3>. Donation checks can also be made out to the MVL After Prom Committee and mailed to MVL! Thank you for considering our request and for your ongoing support of our students!



Choral Concert ~ *Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See* Join the Southwest Area Lutheran Chorale for an inspiring choral concert featuring a mix of new music and beloved classics. Under the theme *Lord, When Your Glory I Shall See*, the choir will perform works by renowned composers including Pepper Choplin, Keith and Kristyn Getty, and Rosenphanye Powell. Don't miss this uplifting experience! Concerts will take place April 6th at 2:00 PM – Trinity Lutheran Church, Nicollet, MN and April 6th at 7:00 PM – Zion Lutheran Church, Sanborn, MN. We look forward to sharing this beautiful music with you!

LWMS Rally ~ All are invited to attend the LWMS rally on April 5 at Friedens Lutheran Church in New Prague, MN. The rally begins with a coffee fellowship at 8:00AM, and the speaker of the day is Pastor Larry Schlomer- World Mission board Chairman. Please RSVP to Carrie Schaefer carriehieb@yahoo.com.

Nicollet Carnival ~ The annual CEA Carnival for Trinity, Nicollet will be held Saturday, April 5th from 11-3 pm. Come and enjoy great food, ice cream, silent auction items, pie auction items and fun carnival activities for the kids. We hope to see you there!

MLC Recital ~ Martin Luther College senior Benjamin Foster presents his senior organ recital, *Bach Bossa Nova and the Boys* on April 12, 2025 at 3:00pm in the Chapel of the Christ. Foster is the second place winner of the Ottumwa National Organ competition and will be joined by Soprano Saxophonist Joseph Panning to present a wide array of music spanning centuries and various genres of organ literature. All are invited to join in this afternoon of invigorating organ music.

MLC Service ~ You are cordially invited to attend Martin Luther College's annual Lent Vespers service on Tuesday, April 15 at 7:30pm. The Women's Choir, Männerchor, and Chorale will be presenting Michael John Trotta's beautiful *Seven Last Words*. We hope you can make this annual service a meaningful part of your Holy Week.

About the Cover ~ In 1669 the great Dutch painter Rembrandt turned Jesus' most famous parable into one of his masterpieces: *The Return of the Prodigal Son*. Today this painting hangs in the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. The reckless son has returned home from the far country clothed in dirty and torn rags, in stark contrast to the luxurious robes of his father. He has the shaved head of a prisoner and his shoes have nearly disintegrated. Rembrandt draws our attention to the hands of the father as they rest tenderly upon his son. Strangely, the right hand is feminine and the left hand is masculine. Of course this is not due to some deficiency in the skill of the painter. Rembrandt seems to want to capture both the fatherly and motherly nature of God's love. This masterpiece is a portrait of a sinner in the hands of a loving God. Those hands will soon present his son with a rich robe, new shoes, and a costly ring. Then those hands will clap with authority as the father orders the preparation of a great feast to celebrate the return of his long lost son. This parable brims with theological significance as Jesus shows us that the heart of the Father contains no wrath toward sinners, but overflows with gracious love.