

SERMON
Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 30, 2025
Turtle Island

Joshua 5:9-12, Psalm 34: 1-6, II Corinthians 5:17-21,
Luke 15:1-32

BECAUSE OF THE TERRIBLE THINGS HAPPENING IN THIS WORLD, THINGS THAT WOULD MAKE CHARLES LINDBERGH DELIGHTED, WHY, BECAUSE JUST LIKE MUSK, HE WAS A NAZI SYMPATHISER, I WANT TO START THIS SERMON WITH THIS STATEMENT,

“JESUS WAS A JEW AND HE CAME OUT OF THE MILIEU OF PEOPLE LIKE MOSES.”

KARL BARTH SAID,

“THE NAME OF JESUS THE CHRIST IS CONCEALED UNDER THE NAME OF ISRAEL IN THE HEBREW BIBLE, THAT IS, THE OLD TESTAMENT.”

I SAY THIS ESPECIALLY NOW BECAUSE I FIND THAT MANY, INCLUDING MYSELF, HAVE OFTEN MADE JESUS A HERO BY PORTRAYING JESUS AS SOMEONE WHO MADE THE JEWS LOOK BAD INSTEAD OF PORTRAYING JESUS AS A JEW TALKING TO OTHER JEWS AND TO PEOPLE LIKE US. THEREFORE, WE OFTEN HAVE HAD A WAY OF MAKING THINGS JESUS SAID AS BEING UNIQUE, INSTEAD OF UNDERSTANDING THAT HE WAS SPEAKING AND TEACHING OUT OF HIS JEWISH BACKGROUND.

HOPEFULLY IN EVERY SERMON THAT I HAVE EVER PREACHED, YOU WILL HAVE HEARD, IN SO MANY WORDS,

“GOD IS SLOW TO ANGER AND ABOUNDING IN KINDNESS.”

IF WE REFUSE TO CHANGE OUR VALUE SYSTEM – TO REPENT – TO DO METANOIA – THAT IS, “TO CHANGE ONE’S MIND, TO EXPAND OUR MIND IN SUCH A WAY AS TO HAVE A NEW PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD OR ONE’S-

SELF,” WE ARE NO DIFFERENT THAN TOTAL STRANGERS WOULD BE TO GOD. YOU SEE, AT SOME POINT IN OUR PERSONAL SALVATION HISTORY, WE HAVE TO ‘DO SOMETHING.’ [YES, I KNOW THAT KIND OF FLIES IN THE FACE OF OUR LUTHERAN TEACHING. “SAVED BY GRACE ALONE THROUGH FAITH ALONE.”]

WE ESPECIALLY SEE SOME OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THOSE ACTIONS TODAY ON THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT AS WE LOOK AT THE LESSONS. ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA SAID WE SHOULD APPROACH THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGES BY IMAGINING THE SCENE, USING ALL OUR SENSES:

WHAT DO YOU SEE? WHAT DO YOU SMELL? WHAT DO YOU HEAR?

WHERE DO WE FIT IN THIS SCENE? TODAY’S LESSONS FIT THIS WELL. AS WE LIVE THROUGH THESE DISTURBING DAYS, LIKE THE ISRAELITES WHO FINALLY MADE IT TO THE PROMISED LAND, WE ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR SOME OF THE THINGS WHICH WE FORMERLY RELIED ON GOD TO DO FOR US.

AS GOD REMINDS JOSHUA IN OUR FIRST LESSON TODAY, THE DAYS OF FEEDING THE CHOSEN PEOPLE WITH MANNA IS OVER. TWELVE CENTURIES LATER THE WRITER OF THESSALONIANS SAID, “IF YOU DO NOT WORK, YOU DO NOT EAT.”

NOW THAT IS HARSH, BUT ... ?

ONE OF THE REASONS CONSERVATIVES GET ELECTED TO GOVERNMENT IN ANY COUNTRY IS THAT PEOPLE SEE TOO MANY PEOPLE NOT WORKING. OF COURSE, THE EXTREME OF THAT IS THE USA, BUT THERE IS SOME TRUTH TO IT. I THINK DENMARK PROBABLY HAS GOTTEN IT RIGHT TODAY. [THAT IS HARD FOR A SWEDE TO SAY.] THEY CERTAINLY ARE A WELFARE STATE, BUT THEY HAVE LIMITED THEIR IMMIGRATION TO A MANAGEABLE LEVEL. PRIME MINISTER FREDERICKSEN AND HER SOCIAL DEMOCRATS HAVE CONFRONTED THEIR PEERS WITH A QUESTION,

“IN THE MODERN AGE, IS A RESTRICTIONS’ BORDER POLICY A PREREQUISITE FOR SUCCESSFUL MODERN PROGRESSIVISM?”

SOUNDS LIKE AN OXYMORON, EH? NOW THIS IS NOT A POLITICAL SCIENCE LECTURE SO I WILL STOP THERE. BUT SOMEHOW OR ANOTHER, WE HAVE TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR OWN WELL-BEING. IS THIS NOT WHAT OUR FEDERAL ELECTION IS ALL ABOUT?

IMAGINE FOR ONE MOMENT THAT YOU ARE ONE OF THE ISRAELITES IN THE GENERATION THAT CROSSED THE JORDAN RIVER INTO THE PROMISED LAND. YOU WERE BORN IN THE WILDERNESS OF SINAI, TO PARENTS WHO SAW THE GREAT HAND OF GOD RESCUE THEM FROM THE PHARAOH BY CROSSING THE REED SEA, WHICH WE HAVE OFTEN MISTRANSLATED AS THE RED SEA, AND NOW A GENERATION LATER, YOU AND YOUR FELLOW ISRAELITES, UNDER THEIR NEW LEADER, JOSHUA, ARE ENCAMPED ON THE EDGE OF CANAAN, JUST A FEW MILES FROM THE ANCIENT WALLED CITY OF JERICHO.

IT IS THE PASSOVER. YOU CELEBRATE THE EVENING JUST AS YOUR PARENTS TAUGHT YOU, RECITING AGAIN THE STORY OF HOW GOD LIBERATED YOUR PEOPLE FROM EGYPT, AND HOW HE PRESERVED THEM THROUGH ALL THOSE YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS BY PROVIDING THEM MANNA EVERY DAY. THEN THE NEXT MORNING, JUST AS YOU ARE EATING A SMALL BREAKFAST GATHERED FROM THE PRODUCE OF THIS NEW PROMISED LAND, AN UNSETTLING CRY RISES THROUGHOUT THE CAMP.

“THE MANNA IS GONE! WHERE IS THE MANNA?”

AFTER FORTY YEARS OF UNBROKEN SUCCESSION, THE MANNA THAT APPEARED EVERY MORNING, OUTSIDE THE TENT OF EVERY ISRAELITE, WAS MISSING. IT WAS THE MORNING RITUAL OF EVERY FAMILY TO GATHER THE MANNA, AND USE IT TO PREPARE THE DAY’S MEALS. WAS IT A BORING DIET? YES, BUT IT WAS DEPENDABLE. AND IT WAS EVEN DELIVERED TO YOUR DOOR LIKE THE MORNING NEWSPAPER THAT I DELIVERED THIS MORNING AT 4 AM.

JUST IMAGINE THE PANIC THAT MUST HAVE SWEEPED THE CAMP! THERE HAD NEVER BEEN A DAY IN THE LIVES OF THIS GENERATION OF ISRAELITES

WITHOUT THE DAILY MANNA. AND NOW, MYSTERIOUSLY, AND WITHOUT ANNOUNCEMENT, IT WAS GONE.

THE PEOPLE MUST HAVE GATHERED TO DISCUSS THE PROBLEM. THEY PROBABLY WENT SEARCHING TO SEE IF THERE WAS MANNA DOWN THE ROAD AT THE NEXT CAMP. THEY PROBABLY SAID, "IT WILL BE BACK TOMORROW." BUT DAY AFTER DAY ELAPSED AND IT BECAME APPARENT THAT THE MANNA WAS GONE FOR GOOD.

AND THEN, FINALLY, SOMEONE REMEMBERED THAT THE MANNA CAME FROM GOD. IT WAS NOT A POLITICAL PROBLEM, NOR AN ECONOMIC PROBLEM ... IT WAS A THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM.

WHY HAD GOD STOPPED SENDING THE MANNA? THE MOST OBVIOUS ANSWER WAS THAT GOD WAS PUNISHING THEM BY WITHHOLDING THE MANNA. BUT WHAT WAS THEIR RECENT SIN? JUST THINK ABOUT IT. MANNA WAS GOD'S PROVISION AND GRACE EACH DAY FOR THE ISRAELITES THROUGHOUT THEIR YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS. IT WAS A SIGN THAT MOSES POINTED TO REGULARLY AS EVIDENCE OF GOD'S CARE AND PRESENCE WHEN THE PEOPLE GRUMBLED AND COMPLAINED. SO IT STANDS TO REASON THEN THAT IF THE PRESENCE OF MANNA IS THE SIGN OF GOD'S FAVOUR, THEN THE ABSENCE OF MANNA MUST BE A SIGN OF GOD'S DISFAVOUR.

IN ADDITION TO THIS, PERHAPS SOMEONE RECALLED THAT AT ONE TIME DURING THE WILDERNESS YEARS, GOD HAD ALSO PROVIDED QUAIL TO EAT EVERY DAY. BUT REMEMBER, WHEN THE PEOPLE BEGAN TO HOARD AND FIGHT OVER THE QUAIL, GOD GOT MAD AT THEM AND QUIT SENDING THE QUAIL.

SO DID IT NOT STAND TO REASON THEN THAT THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE MANNA WAS YET ANOTHER SIGN OF GOD WITHHOLDING SOMETHING BECAUSE OF THE WAY THEY WERE ACTING? IF THIS WAS TRUE, WHAT WAS THE OFFENCE OF THE PEOPLE THAT MADE GOD SO MAD? YOU SEE GOD WAS

SHOWING HIS MIGHTY HAND AGAIN, JUST LIKE HE DID WHEN HE DAMMED UP THE JORDAN RIVER OR THE REED SEA SO THE PEOPLE COULD GET TO THE OTHER SIDE.

THEY HAD JUST CELEBRATED THE PASSOVER IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE COMMANDS OF MOSES, HOW COULD GOD GET SO MAD AT THEM SO QUICKLY?

THE ANSWER TO THE RIDDLE WAS/IS SO SIMPLE. GOD WAS NOT MAD AT THEM. GOD DID NOT REMOVE THE MANNA BECAUSE GOD WAS ANGRY ... WELL MAYBE A LITTLE BIT ... BUT IT WAS JUST ANOTHER SIGN OF GOD'S GREAT LOVE.

YOU SEE, WHEN YOU WANT YOUR THIRTY-YEAR OLD CHILD OUT OF YOUR BASEMENT SO HE/SHE CAN GET A JOB AND OR GO TO SCHOOL, YES, YOU ARE ANGRY BUT YOU ALSO WANT THEM TO "GROW UP," TO BE INDEPENDENT, RIGHT? NOW I KNOW HOW IT IS HARDER TODAY.

BUT YOU SEE GOD STOPPED THE MANNA WHEN THE PEOPLE ARRIVED AT THE PROMISED LAND BECAUSE GOD LOVED THEM TOO MUCH TO KEEP THEM DEPENDENT ON A FREE LUNCH. GOD HAD PROVIDED THEM WITH THE ABILITY AND THE LAND TO GROW THEIR OWN FOOD, TO HARVEST THEIR OWN CROPS, TO TEND TO THEIR OWN HERDS.

>YES, IT WAS HARDER WORK THAN JUST GATHERING MANNA AT THE DOOR OF THEIR TENT EACH MORNING, TO BE SURE.

>YES, IT IS EASIER TO STAY IN THE BASEMENT AND LET YOUR MOTHER FIX YOUR MEALS AND WASH YOUR CLOTHS FOR YOU.

>YES, IT EASIER TO LET THE USA DO EVERYTHING FOR US.
BUT GOD KNEW, AS EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW, THAT THE GOAL OF LOVE IS TO SEE THE BELOVED CHILD BECOME MATURE, SELF-SUFFICIENT,

AND RESPONSIBLE. THAT IS WHY PARENTS STOP PAYING THEIR ADULT CHILDREN'S EXPENSES, OR AT LEAST THEY OUGHT TO. IT IS THE REASON FLIGHT INSTRUCTORS EVENTUALLY STEP OUT OF THE COCKPIT AND FORCE THE STUDENT TO FLY SOLO. IT IS THE REASON THAT THEY TOOK THIS BOY OFF THE FARM AND TRIED TO MAKE HIM AN OFFICER IN THE MARINE CORPS.

IT IS THE CONTINUAL PROBLEM WITH "WELFARE" AND, YES, I KNOW THAT IS A BAD WORD BUT IS IT NOT BETTER TO HAVE A "HAND-UP" PROGRAMME LEADING TO SELF SUFFICIENCY, RATHER THAN A "HAND-OUT" PROGRAMME WHICH KEEPS A PERSON LOCKED INTO DEPENDENCY?

WHEN I WAS IN DRUMHELLER, AT MY FIRST PARISH, EVEN THE "SOCIAL CREDIT PARTY" WAS LOOKING AT A 'GUARANTEED INCOME POLICY.' WELL, WE OBVIOUSLY STILL DO NOT HAVE THAT, BUT ... ?

YES, THE SAME LOVE THAT PROVIDED THE MANNA IN THE FIRST PLACE, MUST ALSO LOVE ENOUGH TO KNOW WHEN TO TAKE IT AWAY. GOD LOVED ISRAEL SO MUCH THAT GOD STOPPED THE MANNA THAT DAY IN GILGAL. ON THE SURFACE, IT SEEMED LIKE A HARD DAY FOR ISRAEL. BUT IT WAS THE BEGINNING OF THE BEST YEARS OF THEIR LIVES. YES, I THINK IT WILL BE BETTER DAYS FOR US AS WELL.

SPENCER JOHNSON WROTE A BEST-SELLING BUSINESS BOOK NAMED, "WHO MOVED MY CHEESE?" IN 1998 -- LOOK IT UP. IT IS ABOUT CHANGES YOU HAVE TO MAKE AT YOUR JOB, IN YOUR LIFE. WELL, GOD WROTE THE SAME IDEA INTO THE DNA OF OUR FAITH. CHANGE IS SELDOM A WELCOME IDEA AT FIRST, BUT IT IS THE INCUBATOR OF NEW IDEAS, NEW CHAPTERS IN OUR LIVES, AND NEW INSIGHTS INTO OUR FAITH.

IN THE BOOK AND MOVIE 'CONCLAVE,' CARDINAL LOMELI IN THE BOOK, OR CARDINAL LAWRENCE IN THE MOVIE, SAID,

"THE ONE SIN I HAVE COME TO FEAR MORE THAN ANY OTHER IS CERTAINTY."

>CERTAINTY IS THE GREAT ENEMY OF UNITY.

>CERTAINTY IS THE DEADLY ENEMY OF TOLERANCE.

EVEN CHRIST WAS NOT CERTAIN AT THE END,

'MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?'

YOU SEE, OUR FAITH IS A LIVING THING PRECISELY BECAUSE IT WALKS HAND IN HAND WITH DOUBT. IF THERE WERE ONLY CERTAINTY, AND IF THERE WERE NO DOUBT, THERE WOULD BE NO MYSTERY, AND THEREFORE NO NEED FOR FAITH."

WE WILL HAVE AN AGM TODAY, AND I CERTAINLY DO NOT HAVE ANY RIGHT TO SAY ANYTHING BECAUSE I LEFT GRACE FORTY YEARS AGO, BUT MAYBE LENT IS A PERFECT SEASON TO LEARN AGAIN HOW SOMETHING TAKEN AWAY CAN TEACH US HOW TO GROW IN THE FAITH ... YEARS LATER, AS ISRAEL WOULD LOOK BACK ON THE MORNING THE MANNA DISAPPEARED, THEY WOULD SMILE WITH WISDOM AND GRATITUDE. FOR, BY NOW, THEY HAD BECOME FARMERS AND HERDSMEN AND MERCHANTS. THEY HAD SETTLED AND INHABITED THE PROMISED LAND, AND THEY HAD LEARNED TO REALIZE THAT THE MORE VARIED DIET WAS NO LESS A GIFT FROM GOD'S HAND, JUST AS MANNA HAD BEEN TO THEIR FOREFATHERS.

THEY KNEW, LOOKING BACK, WHAT THEY COULD HAVE NEVER KNOWN ON THAT FIRST MORNING. THE MANNA WAS GOD'S WAY OF KEEPING GOD'S PEOPLE ALIVE IN THE WILDERNESS. BUT IT WAS ALSO GOD'S WAY OF KEEPING THEM MOVING. IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE MANNA, THE WANDERING ISRAELITES WOULD EITHER HAVE PERISHED, OR BECOME ADEPT TO LIVING IN THE WILDERNESS AS BEDOUINS. IN EITHER CASE, THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE MADE IT TO THE LAND OF CANAAN ... "THE PROMISED LAND." [DARE I SAY TO CANADA?]

THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE DEVELOPED INTO THE FULL-GROWN PEOPLE OF GOD FOR WHICH PURPOSE GOD'S GRACE WAS EXTENDED TO THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE. WE LIVE NOW, AS ISRAEL DID AFTER GILGAL, LEARNING TO

LOOK AT THE VARIETY OF GOD'S AMPLE PROVISION, AND TO PRAY WITH THANKSGIVING, "GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD," KNOWING FULL WELL THAT THE DAILY BREAD WILL NOT JUST APPEAR OUTSIDE OUR DOOR TOMORROW MORNING, AND FOR THAT GRACE ALSO, WE THANK GOD.

FOR THOSE OF US WHO ARE WORKING AT BEING OTHER CHRISTS, TO PEOPLE, HOW DO WE PROCLAIM THE ABOVE STORY TO THE WORLD?

IN OUR SECOND LESSON THE WRITER SEES THAT AS OUR MINISTRY OF "RECONCILIATION." PAUL POINTS OUT TO THE CORINTHIANS THAT SUCH A MINISTRY CONSISTS OF BEING ONE WITH THOSE AROUND US. JUST AS THE HISTORICAL JESUS HELPED US BECOME ONE WITH GOD – NO MATTER OUR SINS – SO WE SHOULD BECOME ONE WITH OTHERS – NO MATTER THEIR SINS.

SO POPE FRANCIS' ANSWER TO TRUMP WAS/IS,
"BUILD BRIDGES INSTEAD OF WALLS."

PLEASE REMEMBER OUR BRIDGE-BUILDING WILL NOT BE A REWARD FOR INDIVIDUALS BEING GOOD. IT WILL HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH THEIR BEHAVIOUR. IT WILL REVOLVE AROUND OUR OWN BEHAVIOUR.

SO, FINALLY, WE CANNOT END TODAY'S SERMON WITHOUT REFERRING TO THE GOSPEL. WHICH IS ORDINARILY ONE OF MY FAVOURITES. [IT IS INTERESTING THAT THIS STORY WAS NOT IN THE SUNDAY LITURGY UNTIL THE LECTIONARY REFORMS OF THE 1970s, WHICH, BY THE WAY, GRACE LUTHERAN, THIS CONGREGATION, WAS A TRIAL CONGREGATION, AND IT CAME INTO OUR LUTHERAN BOOK OF WORSHIP, [GREEN BOOK] IN 1978.

I REMEMBER A NEWSPAPER CLIPPING FROM THE DAILY COLONIST, OF THAT ERA WHEN GRACE LUTHERAN MADE THE FRONT PAGE AS WE DEDICATED THE NEW LUTHERAN BOOK OF WORSHIP.]

YOU SEE THE PARABLE TODAY IS MUCH MORE A REFLECTION ON THE "PRODIGAL FATHER" THAN ON THE "PRODIGAL SON." BOTH OF THEM GO

OVERBOARD, BUT, AS DISCIPLES OF THE RISEN CHRIST, WE SHOULD BE IMITATING THE FATHER'S BEHAVIOUR, NOT THE SON'S.

INTERESTINGLY ENOUGH, THE REASON FOR JESUS TELLING THE STORY IS BECAUSE OF THE OLDER BROTHER'S ATTITUDE. AS WE WATCH AND LISTEN TO OUR POLITICS TODAY, AND ESPECIALLY IN THE USA, I HOPE, WE EASILY SEE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THEM AND US.

THOSE WHO STUBBORNLY SUPPORT THE OLDER BROTHER'S POSITION ARE THE PEOPLE JESUS WAS/IS TRYING TO REACH. IT IS THEY WHO TRIGGERED THIS PARABLE. YES, THEY MIGHT BE 'HARD-WORKING,' 'FAIR-MINDED' PEOPLE WHO JUST WANT TO CREATE A WORLD IN WHICH EVERYONE IS TREATED EQUALLY, A WORLD IN WHICH EVERYONE GETS HIS OR HER "JUST DESSERTS," YET, YOU SEE, JESUS WANTS US TO GO BEYOND EQUALITY, TO ALWAYS ACT WITH LOVE.

IF WE, IMITATING THE PSALMIST, SAY,

"TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD,"

WE MUST ALSO IMITATE GOD'S ACTIONS OF GENEROUSLY LOVING THOSE AROUND US. AS OTHER CHRISTS, WE ARE OBLIGATED TO DO MUCH MORE THAN JUST TO THINK ABOUT GIVING SUCH LOVE. AND WHEN WE DO, WE WILL, "TASTE AND SEE THAT THE LORD IS GOOD."

AND WE WILL SAY,

OUR FATHER, WE HAVE WANDERED
AND HIDDEN FROM YOUR FACE,
IN FOOLISHNESS HAVE SQUANDERED
YOUR LEGACY OF GRACE.

BUT NOW IN EXILE DWELLING,
WE RISE WITH FEAR AND SHAME,
AS, DISTANT BUT COMPELLING,
WE HEAR YOU CALL OUR NAME.

[ELW 606]

AND WE ASK,

LOVE DIVINE, ALL LOVE EXCELLING,
JOY OF HEAVEN, TO EARTH COME DOWN!
FIX IN US THY HUMBLE DWELLING,
ALL THY FAITHFUL MERCIES CROWN.
JESUS, THOU ART ALL COMPASSION,
PURE, UNBOUNDED LOVE THOU ART,
VISIT US WITH THY SALVATION,
ENTER EVERY TREMBLING HEART.
[ELW 631]

AMEN.

PRAYERS of the People Lent 4 March 30, 2025

Faithful God of love, you blessed us with your servant Son so that we might know how to serve your people with justice and with mercy. We gather the needs of ourselves and others, and offer them to you in faith and love, seeking to be strengthened to be of service to others.

Lord God of Hosts: Make of us pilgrims throughout these forty days. Lead us through discipline to discipleship, through fasting to feasting, through privation to freedom. Free us from our own struggles, so that we may more fully serve one another.

Heavenly Father, when our Lenten journey ends and you call us to act as your hands and feet in our lives of discipleship, remind us to look back and see where you carried us through, deepened our faith, and provided us with your loving care.

Holy Spirit, when suffering is the result of our own sin, inspire us to turn around, ask for help, accept your forgiveness, and live a new life in your grace.

Almighty God, hope beyond hope, love beyond understanding, forgiver and forgetter of all our sins, wait for us in patience, but needle us with the memory of your loving self, your loving home. We pray for those who need to be reminded that there is healing in your presence, and homecoming, because there is a forever home awaiting us.

We bring before you our concern for all displaced people: in refugee camps, asylum seekers and fugitives from oppression, those forcefully taken from their country and placed into detention centres, for prisoners and hostages, for all separated families and traumatised children. We pray for those regions recently impacted by the strong earthquake in Myanmar and Thailand. For those who have lost their former way of life, for the families who have lost loved ones, provide hope that they may find support to create a new beginning.

Shepherd all peoples. Break the barriers of hatred and prejudice between those of different races, faiths, genders, age, ability, and sexual orientation, that we live peaceably together. We pray for the rise of peace throughout the world, particularly in Ukraine, Sudan, the Congo, Haiti, and the Holy Land: that You will open new pathways to resolve conflicts and bring opportunities and well-being to all people.

We pray for the Church around the world and its leaders who are faithfully seeking to do your will: Bishops Susan and Kathy, Bishop Anna, Anglican Primate Anne Germond; congregations in our BC Synod including Spirit of Life Lutheran in Vancouver - Rev. Aneeta Saroop and North Thompson Ecumenical Shared Ministry in Barriere and Clearwater. We pray for the Bishops and their congregations of the Moravian Worldwide church; The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land; and our sister congregation San Juan Camino d'Esperanza and Pastor Ana Maria Jara. We pray that you would bless the ministries of all pastors, priests, deacons, musicians and volunteers.

We pray for this congregation. Guide us as we meet together today to plan for the future of this congregation. We give thanks for the founders of this congregation over 100 years ago, and the many faithful members, lay and rostered leaders who have supported and sustained your ministry through these many years. We give thanks for the abundance of blessings we have shared during the past year. Continue to be present in our loving community to sustain us and inspire us for you are always creating something new.

Lord, we pray for all people in their daily life and work—for our families, friends, and neighbours, and for those who are alone. We name before you individuals and families experiencing personal hardship or facing an uncertain future, those who are separated from loved ones, and those who are sick in hospital, receiving treatment, recovering from surgery, or are ill at home. Hear us Lord as we now lift up those people and those situations you have placed upon our hearts.

We pray for all those who are mourning the death of a loved one. Comfort the family and friends with the knowledge that Jesus has won a victory over death, so that everyone who dies in Christ may have eternal life. Keep us from fearing death, but at times of doubt, help us put our faith in Jesus.

Loving God, help us, in our own small way, to be more like your compassionate Christ. Shape our thoughts, help us make sense of our present confusing times and the mixed feelings that occupy our minds, oversee our efforts, and bless our abilities, that we may bring the best of who we are to each day and give the best to those around us. Give us grace to share one another's burdens and joys in humble service.

From every wilderness, Good Lord deliver us. Receive our prayers of adoration, lamentation and thanksgiving. We ask all this and whatever else is on your hearts, in the name of your Son, Jesus the Christ, who taught us to pray

Our Father ...