

LENTEN MIDWEEK SERVICE
MARCH 18, 2026

IN THE NAME OF JESUS, WELCOME TO ST. PAUL'S!

VESPERS

7:00 p.m.



PRELUDE

ENTRANCE VERSE (Stand)

LSB 229

O Lord, open my lips,
and my mouth will declare Your praise.

Make haste, O God, to deliver me;
make haste to help me, O Lord.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.
Praise to You, O Christ, Lamb of our salvation.**

PSALMODY

Psalm 71:1-8

In you, O LORD, do I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame!
In your righteousness deliver me and rescue me;
incline your ear to me, and save me!
Be to me a rock of refuge,
to which I may continually come;
you have given the command to save me,
for you are my rock and my fortress.
Rescue me, O my God, from the hand of the wicked,
from the grasp of the unjust and cruel man.
For you, O Lord, are my hope,
my trust, O LORD, from my youth.
Upon you I have leaned from before my birth;
you are he who took me from my mother's womb.
My praise is continually of you.

I have been as a portent to many,
but you are my strong refuge.
My mouth is filled with your praise,
and with your glory all the day.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

FIRST READING (Be seated)

Romans 8:9-11

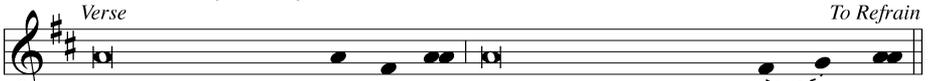
You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORY (Stand)

LSB 231



Verse

To Refrain

- 1 Deliver me, O Lord, my God, for You are
the God of my sal - va - tion.
- 2 In You, O Lord, do I put my trust, leave me not, O Lord, my God.
- 3 Deliver me, O Lord, my God, for You are
the God of my sal - va - tion.



Refrain

- Rescue me from my en - e - mies, protect me
from those who rise a - gainst me.

GOSPEL READING

Mark 5:1-13

They came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gerasenes. And when Jesus had stepped out of the boat, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit. He lived among the tombs. And no one could bind

him anymore, not even with a chain, for he had often been bound with shackles and chains, but he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces. No one had the strength to subdue him. Night and day among the tombs and on the mountains he was always crying out and bruising himself with stones. And when he saw Jesus from afar, he ran and fell down before him. And crying out with a loud voice, he said, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure you by God, do not torment me." For he was saying to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" And Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion, for we are many." And he begged him earnestly not to send them out of the country. Now a great herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him, saying, "Send us to the pigs; let us enter them." So he gave them permission. And the unclean spirits came out, and entered the pigs, and the herd, numbering about two thousand, rushed down the steep bank into the sea and were drowned in the sea.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise to You, O Christ.

HYMN

O Love, How Deep Sts. 1, 3, 7

LSB 544

**1 O love, how deep, how broad, how high,
Beyond all thought and fantasy,
That God, the Son of God, should take
Our mortal form for mortals' sake!**

**3 For us baptized, for us He bore
His holy fast and hungered sore;
For us temptation sharp He knew;
For us the tempter overthrew.**

**△ 7 All glory to our Lord and God
For love so deep, so high, so broad;
The Trinity whom we adore
Forever and forevermore.**

SERMON (Be seated)

Grace, mercy and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen. Dear friends in Christ:

Tonight, we continue our look at God's love as described in the great hymn *O Love, How Deep, How Broad, How High*. Two weeks ago, we examined the hymn's third stanza, noting its description of Jesus' Baptism and Temptation. Tonight, we'll look at that same stanza but drill down on the words: "for us the tempter overthrew."

The tempter, as we've noted, is the devil, also called Satan. The devil is a fallen angel who rebelled against God and wars against God's people. During our week two sermon, we talked about him in some detail while examining the line from the hymn about angels.

At that time, we noted that there's no real discussion about angels without also discussing demons. Demons, after all, are fallen angels too. They followed Satan when he was cast from heaven. Far from being TV or cartoon characters with horns and red pointy tails, they are very real, and nothing to scoff at.

The episode before us in the Gospel Reading from Mark 5 demonstrates this all too well. There we hear a story about an unclean spirit who possessed a man. Note how this spirit, as an agent of death, was most at home among the tombs in a graveyard.

Note, too, how no one could control this demon. No number of shackles or chains could restrain it. The possessed man was completely helpless and trapped in this awful plight, with the demon torturing and hurting him as it desired.

Here we might ask: Why do demons hate us? What did we ever do to them?

The short answer is that evil always hates. That's just what it does.

But another direct cause of the demon's hate is the incarnation.

When God became one of us – taking on human flesh as the Christ,

the Son of God and Son of Mary – the demons knew that God was working toward their defeat.

In tonight's reading, when the demon in the story sees Jesus from afar, it knows that the gig is up and its time is short. This demon stands no chance against God's Son.

Still, it pleads with Jesus, saying: *"What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I adjure You by God, do not torment me"* (Mark 5:7).

At first glance, we might feel some sympathy for this demon. It just needed a place to dwell, right? And was it really hurting this man or just making him appear strange?

But make no mistake, this demon wanted nothing more than to hurt and harm the man. And not only to do this to him, but also to hurt and harm everything and everyone around him. Demons want to cause as much destruction as possible. They don't play games.

Our thoughts of sympathy for the demon can remind us that we often treat our sins in this same way. When confronted with our sins, we conclude that they were probably going to happen anyway and that they really aren't that bad.

And even when we do realize that, okay, maybe our sins are a big deal and ought to be addressed, we still tend to shift our attention to other things and simply hope our they will go away.

This, however, is not how our Lord addresses the demon. Jesus says to it directly and firmly: *"Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!"* (Mark 5:8). Jesus was not going to sit by and let the sad situation remain.

Twentieth century pastor and theologian Hermann Sasse once noted how this same tactic may need to be employed when standing against false doctrine. He said: "Every pastor knows, or should know, that there are cases when a discussion is impossible and the only answer to a question can be that same "be gone,

Satan!” which Jesus spoke not only to the devil (Matt 4:10) but also to his faithful confessor, Simon Peter (Matt 16:23). Not every question can be settled by means of a friendly discussion. It is necessary to remember that in an age which has a superstitious belief in dialogue as the infallible means of settling everything, there are questions raised by the devil which are meant to destroy the church of Christ.”

You don't argue with a demon. You simply tell it to be silent and go away.

This tactic modeled by Jesus not only applies to literal demons, but also to the temptations, niggling problems, and weaknesses that we all have. As humans who have fallen into sin, we tend to rationalize our sin, talk about it, and come up with some compromise that will allow us to keep on sinning. We tell ourselves that living in the domain of Satan and the world for a while is no big thing.

But it is. And that's why Jesus once spoke to his beloved disciple Peter with the same tone he spoke to the demon, saying: “*Get behind me, Satan!*” (Mark 8:33). Peter needed to hear that living in a lie is nothing short of satanic, and that this evil must be cast out.

We need to hear this too. And having heard it, we are then to cast out the temptations and “little demons” that catch us up in ourselves by repenting, turning around, and leaving them behind us.

We don't need these sins. And they certainly do us no good.

Even more, Christ has died for them. And because of this, they are no longer yours but his.

The sins that you cling to, those that bring you down and cause you no end of trouble, they can be gone. As surely as the sun rises in the east, Christ has taken your sin into himself and says to any lingering demons: “Come out! This child is mine.”

When you come to recognize the work Jesus does, your view of the world and the life you live begin to change. You begin to see how God orders all things so that you might be saved by faith in him. And this new sight frees you from any bondage.

Knowing this, come and receive the forgiveness of sins proclaimed at Christ's altar. With his word of pardon, God gives you peace that passes all understanding, with a conscience at rest and a life restored.

No demon can take that from you.

In the holy name of Jesus. Amen.

CANTICLE (Magnificat) (Stand)

LSB 231

My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God, my Savior;

for He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden.

For behold, from this day all generations will call me blessed.

For the Mighty One has done great things to me, and holy is His name;

and His mercy is on those who fear Him from generation to generation.

He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

He has cast down the mighty from their thrones and has exalted the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He has sent empty away.

He has helped His servant Israel in remembrance of His mercy as

He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed forever.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

VESPER PRAYERS (Kneel)

LSB 233-234

**Lord, have mercy;
Christ, have mercy;
Lord, have mercy.**

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.**

COLLECT

COLLECT FOR PEACE

Stand

BENEDICAMUS

LSB 234

Let us bless the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

BENEDICTION

LSB 234

The grace of our Lord ✠ Jesus Christ and the love of God and
the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.
Amen.

- 1 Now the light has gone away;
Father, listen while I pray,
Asking Thee to watch and keep
And to send me quiet sleep.
- 2 Jesus, Savior, wash away
All that has been wrong today;
Help me ev'ry day to be
Good and gentle, more like Thee.
- 3 Let my near and dear ones be
Always near and dear to Thee;
O bring me and all I love
To Thy happy home above.
- 4 Now my evening praise I give;
Thou didst die that I might live.
All my blessings come from Thee;
Oh, how good Thou art to me!
- 5 Thou, my best and kindest Friend,
Thou wilt love me to the end.
Let me love Thee more and more,
Always better than before.

POSTLUDE

THOSE SERVING:

Greeter: Steve Janssen

Reader: Dede Dixon

Offerings support the church's mission work – both here and through our many partners. Offerings may be placed in the box at the sanctuary entrance or sent to the church through our website or the mail. **Fellowship Cards** help us welcome new people and track participation. Please fill one out and place it in the offering box following the service.

**ST. PAUL'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
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A member congregation of the Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod

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The. Rev. Wayne Lehrer, Pastor Emeritus

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