

**Emmanuel Lutheran Church**

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**At Home Worship February 21, 2021**

**Introduction**:

*You may prepare for this service of prayer at home by finding a place to pray. Arrange other items of worship if desired; a lighted candle, a Bible, a bowl of water as reminder of your baptism. Take time to center your heart and approach this worship with intention.*

*Beach glass begins as something whole and yet discarded. As it is tumbled by the sea, it is broken and polished until it becomes a treasured “mineral gem.” We begin this Lenten series reminding ourselves of our brokenness, and that Jesus has claimed us, healed us and made us a treasure.*

**Confession and Forgiveness**

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, One God, the keeper of the covenant, the source of steadfast love, our rock and our redeemer. **Amen**

God hears us when we cry and draws us close in Jesus Christ. Let us return to the one who is full of compassion. *(silence for reflection*)

**Fountain of living water, pour out your mercy over us.**

**Our sin is heavy, and we long to be free.**

**Rebuild what we have ruined and mend what we have torn.**

**Wash us in your cleansing flood.**

**Make us alive in the Spirit to follow in the way of Jesus,**

**As healers and restorers of the world you so love. Amen.**

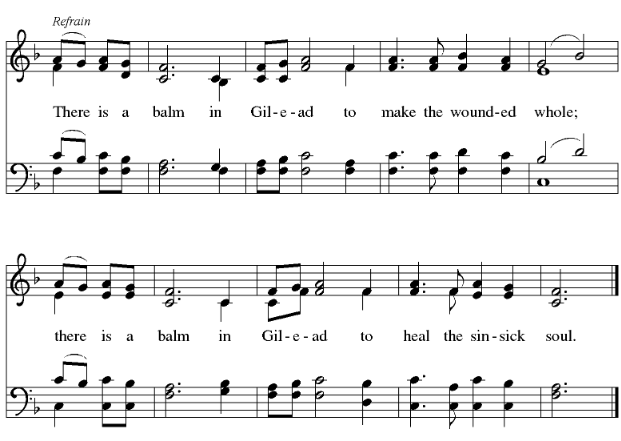
Beloved, God’s word never fails.

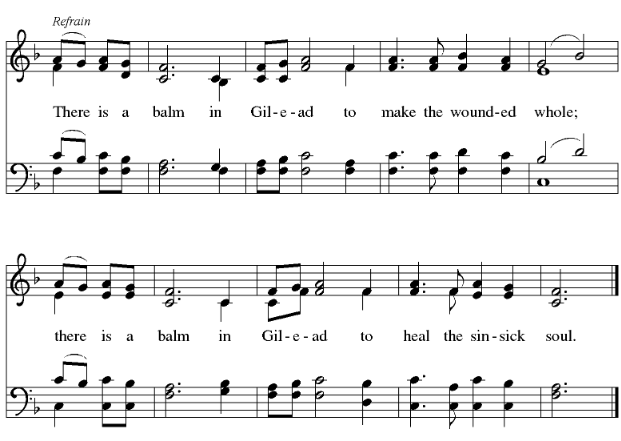
The promise rests on grace: by the saving love of Jesus Christ, the wisdom and power of God, your sins are forgiven, and God remembers them no more.

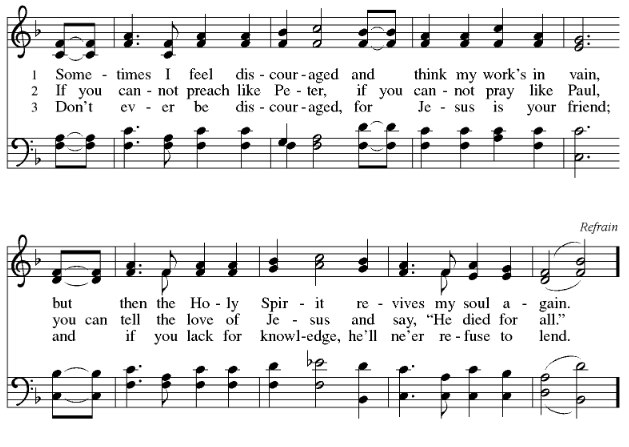
Journey in the way of Jesus.

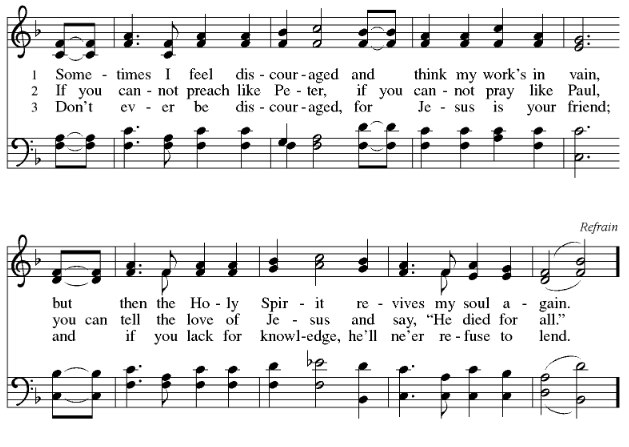
**Amen**.

**Opening Hymn There is a Balm in Gilead**









**Litany of Healing**

We do not hold that suffering is necessary,

**We do not support that suffering is God-given.**

Suffering is a part of life.

Sorrow and grief

Loss and disappointment

Sickness and pain.

**Brokenness is universal.**

Jesus reaches out to touch us in

Sorrow and grief

Loss and disappointment

Sickness and pain.

**Jesus walks with our brokenness.**

Jesus reminds us we are chosen.

Jesus tells us we are loved.

Jesus shows us we are a treasure.

**Jesus gives us new life in the face of hopelessness.**

We are healed. We look for physical health.

**Christ our healer, have mercy on us.**

**Scripture Reading Matthew 8: 1-4**

1 When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; 2 and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, “Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.” 3 [Jesus] stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, “I do choose. Be made clean!” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. 4 Then Jesus said to him, “See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

**Sermon**

I remember moving schools as a kid. The other students had known each other for years and I didn’t fit into their already established groups. It was sixth grade, the last year of elementary school. I didn’t fit in. I’m sure many of you have experienced something like this, moving schools, changing jobs, beginning life in a new neighborhood. Tring you find your place. It’s not hard to think of a time when you felt left out of a group, felt like you did not belong. This can lead to feelings of isolation, of inferiority, feeling like you’re not good enough, there is something wrong with you.

When we read of the leper in today’s Gospel reading we can feel some level of empathy. Leprosy could have been anything from eczema, to rosacea, to severe acne. Many of us have friends, family with some of these conditions or have suffered ourselves from similar ailments. But I imagine not many of us have gone through something so dramatic as to be completely socially exiled. Lepers were cast out of all social gatherings, all buildings where others gathered, could have no contact with others who were not also categorized as lepers.

So imagine that social ostracism, and then it’s reversal. To be physically healed. To be whole and healthy again. And not only that, but to be reintegrated into the community that, for so long, feared and shunned you. Reunited with family. Able to participate in all the social gatherings of market and table and synagogue.

Can you imagine why this man would want to go back to the temple? So many of us have craved being back in our worship space, to be among others praising and imploring God. To be part of this community physically again. What kind of hope and healing do we come to religion seeking? Healing of our bodies? Of emotional wounds? Of loneliness and isolation?

This text invites us to think about what Emmanuel offers to those in pain, those seeking healing and touch: how are we reaching out to people in pain? Are we acknowledging their suffering in our preaching and worship? In what ways are we stigmatizing certain kinds of pain? Is the pain of racism out of bounds? Is the pain of addiction taboo? Is the pain of domestic violence not to mentioned? How are we promoting physical health, wholeness, and healing?

Emmanuel has altered its building and gone to great expense to put in an elevator to enable physical access to our worship space. We care for our physically challenged neighbors in this way. We offer food to those in need in our community pantry, free to all and available with no paperwork, no gatekeeping. But how else can we welcome and advocate for the physical health of our neighbors and friends?

Jesus’ touch of the leper was an outrageous act, by his simple touch he was risking disease and being cast out of society himself. . By doing it, he signaled that these people with skin conditions simple to severe, were not outside of the kin-dom of God, nor ought they be outside of the love of the community itself. They are family, worthy of touch and inclusion.

Our reading allows us to explore the ways Jesus crosses boundaries. An unmarried Jewish man, finacially supported by female disciples, interacting with Samaritans, Tyro-Phonecians, Romans, and all manner of Hewbrew religious specialists. He wandered the country preaching about God's love, about laws being made for the good of humanity, about the wrongs of exploiting people and creation. And he healed on all these travels. He cast out demons, healed fevers and twisted limbs, blindness and in today's story, even leprosy. He crossed all boundaries. He risked so much in his travels and ministry to reveal the depth of God's love for us.

But we still live in a world of suffering, of boundaries that keep the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer. A country where people die because they cannot afford medical care. A time when children are worried about school shootings. A world where a disease has forced us to create our own boundaries and isolation.

The leper was considered unclean, outcast to keep the rest of the community safe. He was in an extreme form of quarantine. It does make sense that a community would fear a person with a skin disease. What if it was contagious? Communities create boundaries for good reasons. We isolate ourselves to protect others, ones we love.

But what boundaries have we created that do not serve the good? What laws and unspoken barriers have we put in place that are never questioned? Remember, Jesus said that the laws of the Sabbath were created for humanity; humanity was not created to be bound by the Sabbath laws.

If we are to be healthy, if we are to uphold healing, if we are to serve our neighbors, we must question the reasons and the effectiveness of our boundaries. Is this for the good of myself and my neighbor? Is creation cared for by this guideline? How can I or we show the love of God for all humanity, all creation in our actions?

Jesus crosses social boundaries in every way imaginable. Jesus teaches us that the boundaries we thought were helping us might actually be hurting us and hurting others. Look around your neighborhood, around the community of Emmanuel; who is missing? How are our community standards including or excluding people who long to belong?

Jesus has crossed barriers to claim us as treasures. He has cross the bridge of death and entered new life to show the depth of God’s love for us. We are like the broken shards of glass, worn by the world’s suffering. But through our unity with Christ we are given a new life, a new purpose, a new identity as Children of God. We are all treasured by God. We are beautiful. We belong. How can we help all people feel this deeply?

Join me in prayer: Gracious God, you have made us whole and treasured. Heal us in all the many and various ways we are wounded. Give us your spirit of wholeness so that we may be light to all the world. Amen.

**Prayers of the People**

Lover of our souls, You who weeps, bleeds, cries, and waits for us and because of us, we come before you to make our petitions known. We know that already you are at work among us, showing us the way to recovery from the toxicities and grief of our time.

We pray for healing of body, mind, and spirit for ourselves and for others. *(silent prayers)*

We pray for those who are shattered by the violence of circumstances, in wars and conflicts of ideologies. *(silent prayers)*

We pray for those tumbled by the forces of life, and washed up on shores, distant from all that feels whole. *(silent prayers)*

We pray for those whose wounds go unseen, whose cries go unheard, whose need is overlooked. *(silent prayers)*

Into your hands, merciful God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.  
**Amen.**

**Offering**

*Part of our worship of God is giving of our talents, our passions, our gifts, our possessions, our time. Please take a moment to commit to healthy ways give back to God through service or financial gifts.*

Let us pray; **O Faithful One, accept these gifts of our hearts and hands, of our bodies and minds. May they be multiplied and magnified as the living presence of Christ in the world. Amen.**

**The Lord’s Supper**

*We not only remember, but we proclaim, we preach to each other and ourselves, Christ is present for us in, with, and under this simple bread and wine. You are invited to use any bread, juice or wine you choose and proclaim that Christ is for you!*

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: “Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**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,**

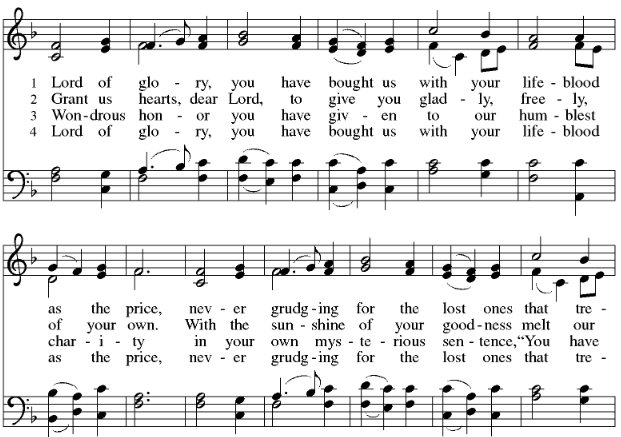
**forever and ever. Amen.**

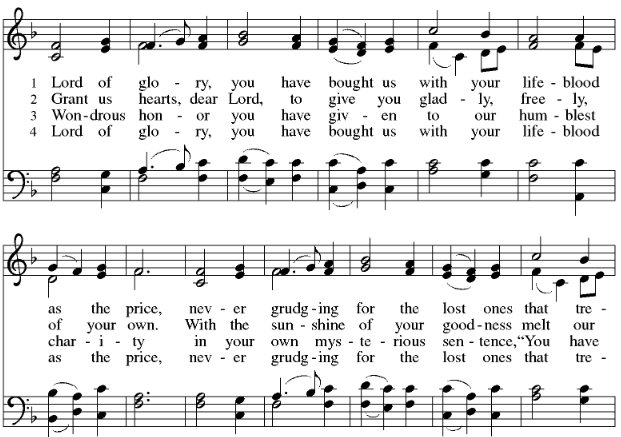
*Knowing you are in spirit with all the company of saints and Christians around the globe, share the bread and cup with these words:* The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you.

**Post-Communion Prayer**

Let us pray; God of steadfast love, at this table you gather your people into one body for the sake of the world. Send us in the power of your Spirit, that our lives bear witness to the love that has made us new in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**.

**Sending Hymn: Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us**









**Blessing**

You are what God made you to be, created in Christ Jesus for good works, chosen as holy and beloved,

freed to serve your neighbor. God bless you that you may be a blessing, in the name of the Holy and Life-Giving Trinity. Amen.

