



Jesus: a way in the  
**WILDERNESS**

*Sunday, March 23, 2025*  
*Third Sunday in Lent*



BETHLEHEM  
LUTHERAN CHURCH

48 Perrin Street, Fairport, NY ~ (585) 223-0634 ~ [www.blcfairport.org](http://www.blcfairport.org)

## **PRELUDE**

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing  
(Nettleton)

Paul Manz  
tune, *Repository of Sacred Music*, 1813

Be Thou My Vision  
(SLANE)

Paul Manz  
tune, Irish traditional

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God's invitation to attentiveness: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live." The landowner's ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener's readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!*

## **GATHERING**

### **CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the holy Trinity, † one God, who forgives all our sin, whose mercy endures forever.

**Amen.**

Let us return to God, confessing our sin in the assurance of God's abiding compassion.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Compassionate One,  
**you are slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love, but our lives do not always reflect you and your love for the world. We do not show others the tender compassion you have shown to us. We do not welcome others with the radical hospitality you grant to all people. We oppress others, even though you have set us free again and again. We squander the abundant gifts of the earth. Transform our lives and guide us again in the way of the cross. Amen.**

Beloved in Christ, God's arms are always stretched open wide to welcome the wandering ones home. In † Christ your sins are forgiven. You have a place in God's house forever.

**Amen.**

<b>GATHERING HYMN</b>	There in God's Garden	ELW 342
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**GREETING**

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

**And also with you.**

**KYRIE**

The musical score for the Kyrie consists of three staves of music in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. The first staff is for the Leader and the second for the Assembly. The lyrics are: "Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy." for the first two staves, and "Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy." for the third staff. The music features a simple melody with a descending line for the first part and an ascending line for the second part of each phrase.

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **HEARING GOD'S WORD**

### **DISMISSAL TO WORSHIP FOR KIDS**

*All kids ages 3 through elementary are welcome to a special time of hearing the Word, conversation and activity! Parents can remain in the sanctuary while the kids gather in the room across the hall from the side entrance to the sanctuary. Kids will return during the offering so they can participate in Communion.*

### **READING: Isaiah 55:1-9**

*To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.*

<sup>1</sup> Hear, everyone who thirsts;

    come to the waters;

and you who have no money,

    come, buy and eat!

Come, buy wine and milk

    without money and without price.

<sup>2</sup> Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread

    and your earnings for that which does not satisfy?

Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,

    and delight yourselves in rich food.

<sup>3</sup> Incline your ear, and come to me;

    listen, so that you may live.

I will make with you an everlasting covenant,

    my steadfast, sure love for David.

<sup>4</sup> See, I made him a witness to the peoples,

    a leader and commander for the peoples.

<sup>5</sup> Now you shall call nations that you do not know,

    and nations that do not know you shall run to you,

because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel,

    for he has glorified you.

<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while he may be found;  
 call upon him while he is near;  
<sup>7</sup> let the wicked forsake their way  
 and the unrighteous their thoughts;  
 let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them,  
 and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.  
<sup>8</sup> For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
 nor are your ways my ways, says the LORD.  
<sup>9</sup> For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
 so are my ways higher than your ways  
 and my thoughts than your thoughts.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Christ, you lead and we shall fol - low, stum-bling  
 though our steps may be; one with you in joy and  
 sor - row, we the riv - er, you the sea, we the  
 riv - er, you the sea.

The holy gospel according to Luke.  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

**GOSPEL: Luke 13:1-9**

*Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.*

<sup>1</sup> At that very time there were some present who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.<sup>2</sup> [Jesus] asked them, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?”<sup>3</sup> No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish as they did. <sup>4</sup> Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the other people living in Jerusalem? <sup>5</sup> No, I tell you, but unless you repent you will all perish just as they did.”

<sup>6</sup> Then he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. <sup>7</sup> So he said to the man working the vineyard, ‘See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?’ <sup>8</sup> He replied, ‘Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. <sup>9</sup> If it bears fruit next year, well and good, but if not, you can cut it down.’ ”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

*Take a breath to reflect on God’s Word in silence before we begin to sing the hymn of the day.*

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

As the Deer Runs to the River

ELW 331

## THE PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

*Our prayers are always offered on behalf of the whole community.*

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

*A brief silence.*

#1 We pray for the church, called to be a witness to all peoples. Grant humility and wisdom to bishops, pastors, deacons, elders, councils, and congregations, that they may call upon you in making decisions. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

#2 We pray for the earth, called to provide abundantly. We pray also for this assembly, called to welcome its neighbors to the table of your grace. Teach your people the goodness of your generosity, that in sharing what we have been given, all life may flourish on the planet that is our shared home. God, in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

#3 We pray for the nations, called to protect their inhabitants and collaborate in the work of justice and peace. Forge bonds of compassion and mutual care across human borders and boundaries, that all the world may have enough to live. God in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for children, youth, and young adults, called to lead us into your future especially: David, Delaney, Dylan, Eliana, and Elizabeth. We pray also for our twinned parish in Shurugwi, Zimbabwe, called to minister to its community in love. God in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

We pray for those in need, called to receive your compassion.

*We pray for those who grieve, especially the family and friends of:*

- Richard S, former husband of Donna B's sister, who died on 3/17
- Jeff, especially his wife, Cynthia. Jeff and Cynthia are long-time friends of Bob and Julie S. Jeff died from cancer on Monday, 3/16

*We pray for those in need of healing, especially:*

- Ginny S, who is experiencing back pain
- Barbara S, mother-in-law of David (Kathy F's son) with Alzheimers
- David O, who is recovering from pneumonia
- George F, who is recovering at home from an illness

Hear these concerns we raise to you in our hearts or on our voice.

*Silence for individual prayer.*

God in your mercy,  
**receive our prayer.**

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.

**Amen.**

## **SHARING GOD'S MEAL**

### **THE PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

*Share the peace in a way that cares for friend and neighbor. If you worship virtually, share the peace through the comments section or text.*

## OFFERING

*Thank you for your offerings that support the ongoing ministry that we share. Information about supporting Bethlehem's ministry with your offerings is available in the Welcome insert in your pew rack or by visiting [blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry](http://blcfairport.org/support-our-ministry) or scan the QR (quick response) code on the right and you'll be brought to BLC's mobile giving page.*



## OFFERING OF MUSIC

Lead, Kindly Light

text, John Henry Newman / S. C. Warner, ad.  
music, Steven C. Warner

The Chancel Choir

## OFFERTORY



Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right  
spir - it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from your  
pres-ence, and take not your Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re -

store un - to me the joy of your sal - va - tion,  
and up - hold me with your free Spir - it.

### OFFERTORY PRAYER

Let us pray. Gracious Provider,  
**you give us all that we need: faithfulness, mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and love and open your heart to the world. As we prepare to feast on your bounty, deepen our commitment to sharing those provisions with others, through our Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.**

### WORDS OF INSTITUTION

#### THE LORD'S PRAYER

We pray as Jesus taught us:

**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.**

**Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen**

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Here is food and drink for the journey. Take and be filled.

**Thanks be to God!**

### **JOY – JESUS, OTHERS, YOU**

*Once a month, kids in Grades 3-5 are invited to come forward first for communion and then leave worship for a special activity time until 10:15 am. During this time they will work on a project together and use the Faith 5 practices (Share, Read, Talk, Pray, Bless).*

### **DISTRIBUTION OF COMMUNION**

*Our communion bread is gluten-free, unless noted by the pastor. Grape juice is available; indicate your need to the communion assistant.*

### **THE COMMUNION**

The musical score is written on a single treble clef staff with a key signature of one flat (Bb). It consists of three lines of music. The first line has a 3/4 time signature and the lyrics "Lamb of God, you take a-way the sins of the". The second line is marked "To repeat" and has a 4/4 time signature, with lyrics "world, have mer - cy on us.". The third line is marked "Last time" and has a 4/4 time signature, with lyrics "world, grant us peace.". The score includes various note values, rests, and repeat signs.

**HYMN AND MUSIC FOR COMMUNION**

Let Us Break Bread Together

ELW 471

My Faith Looks Up to Thee

Karl Osterland

(OLIVET)

tune, *Psalter* - Edinburgh, 1615**TABLE BLESSING****POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Let us pray. Generous Host, you have shared your feast with us and sustained us with your very self. Send us now to set tables of love and grace in our communities, that your loving presence might nourish the world, in the name of the crucified one, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.****LEAVING TO SERVE****BENEDICTION**

May God who calls us to travel along new paths and through unknown perils fill us with faith and courage, and may † Christ's hand lead us in love and support us each step of the way by the power of the Spirit.

**Amen.****SENDING HYMN**

Jesus, Still Lead On

ELW 624

*Parents of children or those interested in learning about summer camp opportunities go downstairs for time with Kaitlyn Blend, Executive Director of LCLC. Coffee and treats are waiting for you!*

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace. Jesus walks with you.

**Thanks be to God.**

**CHORAL BENEDICTION**

Lead Me, Lord

text, based on Psalms 4:8 and 5:8  
music, Samuel Sebastian Wesley

*Lead me, Lord, lead me in thy righteousness;  
make thy way plain before my face.  
For it is thou, Lord, thou, Lord only,  
that makest me dwell in safety.*

*During the season of Lent we omit the Postlude and provide  
space for silence and reflection following worship. Please honor this  
time of meditation by moving conversations outside of the sanctuary.*

## **BLC Pastors**

The Rev. Abigail Zang Hoffman and The Rev. Amy Walter-Peterson, co-Pastors

## **BLC Musicians**

Raelynn Clare, Music Director and Organist

Chrisanne Gates, Chancel Choir Director

Rich Towsley, Director of The Folk Group and BLC Dulcimers

**Thank you** to Susan DePasquale for serving as our organist today.

**Thank you** to all those who participated in worship this Sunday! Want to learn more about what roles are needed in worship or sign-up for a pre-scheduled role? Talk with one of the pastors following worship or send an email to [volunteersupport@blcfairport.org](mailto:volunteersupport@blcfairport.org) and we'll follow up!

**Communicate with us:** Share more about who you are, request further information, or leave a prayer request or comment through our website - <https://blcfairport.org/share-in-worship/> - scroll down the page to request or share information.

**What's happening at BLC this week?** Visit the Calendar of Events at [www.blcfairport.org](http://www.blcfairport.org). Zoom links for virtual meetings are also found there. If you would like to schedule a meeting or event, please email the church office at [office@blcfairport.org](mailto:office@blcfairport.org) or visit <https://blcfairport.org/blc-facility-request/>

**Church office hours:** Our co-Pastors are available Sunday – Thursday and on-call for emergencies. Contact them directly to schedule an appointment either by calling (585) 223-0634 or emailing [pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org](mailto:pastor.hoffman@blcfairport.org) or [pastor.amy@blcfairport.org](mailto:pastor.amy@blcfairport.org).

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"Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing" – NETTLETON. "Be Thou My Vision" – SLANE, Music: Paul Manz

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"Lead Me, Lord", Text: based on Psalms 4:8 and 5:8, Music: Samuel Sebastian Wesley

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to receive our weekly  
STAR e-newsletter  
and other  
announcements!*



between sundays 



Find episodes of our  
podcast here!



## **Fertilized, Fruitful, and Free**

God's word for us today is nutritious and wholesome, though hard to digest. The gospel reading seems oddly brutal alongside the abundance and comfort of the texts from Isaiah ("delight yourselves in rich food") and Psalm 63:1-8 ("My spirit is content as with the richest of foods"). Surrounded by this food imagery, we now find Jesus using some horrific events as illustrations. After the mingled blood and fallen towers, it may be hard to hear the fig-tree parable as the grace-full story it really is. But here is Christ himself as gardener: digging, fertilizing, protecting, and nurturing us. We are fragile creatures, living in a world of tragedy and terror, but God does not punish fragility with death. On the contrary, God sent Jesus to us so that we may live.

Living in that nurtured garden of Christ, tended to and cared for as we grow in that love, how can we keep from blossoming? Live, yes, and live fruitfully, our gospel proclaims! Grow, yes, and grow gloriously! Now the good news of Christ's redeeming mercy becomes clear: we are each treated with boundless mercy, not impartial justice. While the world may want to blame the withering tree for its inability to be productive, our Savior and Lord reaches into our lives, reminds us of our roots, nourishes us with grace, and allows us to bloom, to flourish, to freely share our gifts with the world.