



St. Stephen's Lutheran Church
Worship Service with Holy Communion
Wednesday, March 3, 2021 ■ 11:00 a.m. & 7:00 p.m.

St. Stephen's Lutheran Church

Midweek Lent—Stations of the Cross / Station Three

Worship Service



Welcome to the Lenten journey to the cross ...

For this season of Lent at St Stephen's we are using the eight biblical Stations of the Cross as a framework for our worship, including Scripture readings, meditations, music and prayers. Beginning on Ash Wednesday and concluding on Good Friday, we will follow Jesus along the *Via Dolorosa*, the Way of Sorrow, as he journeys from Pilate's Hall to his death on the cross, meditating on one station each service.

We enter this journey with the penitent's prayer, "*Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*" (Psalm 139:23-24)

We pray that you find peace and be blest by these reflections on God's grace and gift of love. Amen.

WE PREPARE TO WORSHIP

Music

Ben D.

Welcome

*Good evening and welcome to Lent at St Stephen's Lutheran Church in West St Paul, MN. Our 2021 Journey to the Cross focus' our meditation on eight Biblical Stations of the Cross. We are reflecting on one station at each of our midweek Lenten meditations, including Ash Wednesday through Holy Week. This evening we are focusing on **Station 3: Simon Helps Carry the Cross**. The remaining stations will be meditated on in the subsequent weeks leading up to Good Friday, Jesus Dies on the Cross. If you've missed previous meditations on the Stations of the Cross, you may view those on our Facebook page, sslcwsp.*

Blessing

*All may make the sign of the cross,
the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.*

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

And also with you.

WE HEAR GOD'S WORD

Reading from the Psalms

Psalm 118:19-29

Open to me the gates of righteousness,
that I may enter through them and give thanks to the LORD.

This is the LORD's gate; the righteous shall enter through it.
I will give thanks because you have answered me.
You have become my salvation.

The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone.
This has come from the LORD.

It is marvelous in our eyes.
This is the day on which the Lord has acted.
Let us shout with joy and rejoice in it.

Please, save us, O LORD! Please!

O LORD, please bring success!

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD.

We bless you from the house of the LORD.

The LORD is God

He has given us light.

With cords bind the festival sacrifice to the horns of the altar.

You are my God, and I will give thanks to you.

You are my God, I will extol you.

O give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.

For his steadfast love endures forever.

Hymn

"Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

ELW #338 vs. 1, 2

**Beneath the cross of Jesus
I long to take my stand;
the shadow of a mighty rock
within a weary land,
a home within a wilderness,
a rest upon the way,
from the burning of the noontide heat
and burdens of the day.**

**Upon the cross of Jesus,
my eye at times can see
the very dying form of one
who suffered there for me.
And from my contrite heart, with tears,
two wonders I confess:
the wonder of his glorious love
and my unworthiness.**

Text: Elizabeth C. Clephane, 1830-1869
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Prayer

O Lord, we are gathered together here this day as your people,
as those who have been called out of darkness into your marvelous light.
We are here only because you have loved us and been faithful
across the generations that we might be your people.
And yet we quickly confess that we are not worthy of that love.

As we contemplate the Cross and what it means,
we are filled with joy and wonder at the sacrifice that Jesus
has made to show us light in the darkness
and offer us life in the midst of death.

We confess that we have nothing to offer in return for that sacrifice,
nothing that will match such love.

We know that only love can respond to such a gift.

Yet we know that we are not always loving or lovable.

But you remain steadfastly faithful to us.
You love us even when we are not lovable,
and remain steadfast in your grace that calls us
to follow the example of Jesus who is the Christ.

We are committed to that journey,
to be followers of the One who has given so much
that we might be sons and daughters of God.
But sometimes the journey that we take in following Jesus
who is the Christ is not all light and joy.
Sometimes the Way is rough and dimly lit.
Sometimes the darkness of life threatens to engulf the light.

And so we cry out to you, O Lord.
Forgive us for our sometimes faltering steps.
Show us more clearly the Way.
Shine anew the light of your presence into our lives
so strongly that a new love for You will be kindled.
Light within us a love beyond emotion and sentimentality,
a love that is willing to lay aside all privilege and self-centeredness.
Grow within us a love that is willing to surrender
all our fears and uncertainties to you,
that desires nothing more than to love God
with all our being and to love those around us
with the same faithfulness with which you love us.

Now, as we begin this journey of the Cross,
we open our hearts and minds to you.
We lay aside for these moments the trivialities of our life
and bring ourselves into your presence.
Speak to us what we need to hear.
And help us to hear, not just the words that are spoken,
but your Word spoken afresh in our hearts.

Speak, for your servants are listening.

[A short time of silent prayer and meditation]

Let us continue our journey.

Stations of the Cross

Station 3: Simon Helps Carry the Cross

Leader:

They compelled a passer-by,
who was coming in from the country,
to carry his cross;
it was Simon of Cyrene,
the father of Alexander and Rufus. (Mark 15:21)

Speaker:

Jesus, I can only imagine the awful weight of that cross you carry.
It is not just the weight of beams of wood that presses down on you.
It is also the weight of the burden you carry for those whom you have loved.
You came to offer them life, and yet they return only death.

So I see you fall from the crushing weight of pain and grief.
I don't know how many times you have fallen.
But I know that your physical strength is failing.
The soldiers must recognize this as well,
because they force a man from the crowd
to help you carry the cross the rest of the way
to the place where you will be crucified.

Perhaps they are afraid that you will die
before you make it to the top of the hill.
The man of Cyrene was just a bystander passing through
on his way into town from the countryside.
And yet he bears the weight of the cross to save your strength.

I would like to think that if I had been there
I would have rushed from the crowd
and volunteered to carry that cross for you.
But would I have had the courage to face the Roman soldiers
and risk being forced to join you on a cross?
Would I have really been so eager to share your cross
if it meant that I might have to die on one as well?
Would I have been willing to risk everything to ease your suffering
for a few moments by letting you know that you were not alone?

Besides, I have my own crosses already.
I have as much as I can bear without taking on
the added burdens of others.
And what would people think of me if I were seen
consorting with criminals and enemies of Rome in such a public spectacle?
So instead of offering to help,
I tried to become invisible in the crowd.
And when the soldiers were looking around for someone to press into service,
I looked away and pretended not to notice what was happening.

It is easy to pretend not to see the needs, the grief,
and the suffering around me every day.

It is easy to pretend not to hear the cries for help
that come in many forms from those among
whom I walk every day.

It is easy to convince myself that I am too busy,
or too tired, or have too much on my plate already
to get involved in the lives of others.

There are simply too many who need too much.

And yet, I remember something that you said,
something about taking up my own cross and following you.
You said something about becoming a servant of all,
of putting myself last and others first.
Is this what it means to be a servant?
Jesus, are you showing me what it means to be that kind of servant.
Is this man from Cyrene modeling for me the path of discipleship?

Leader:

O Lord, forgive me for becoming so preoccupied with myself
that I have become deaf and blind to the grief
and suffering of those around me.

Forgive me for my indifference.

Constantly remind me that I cannot love you
without loving others as well.

Help me always remember that to be a follower of yours
means that I share in the burdens of others.

Lord, show me someone whose cross I may help carry.

O Lord, hear our prayers.

Hymn

“Must Jesus Bear the Cross Alone?”

TFF #237 vs. 1, 3

**Must Jesus bear the cross alone
and all the world go free?**

**No, there's a cross for ev'ryone,
and there's a cross for me.**

Upon the crystal pavement, down
at Jesus' pierced feet,
joyful, I'll cast my golden crown
and his dear name repeat.

Text: Thomas Shepherd, 1665-1739
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[The third candle is extinguished followed by
a short time of silent prayer and meditation.]

[Screen fades to Black. Silence]



Leaders in Today's Service

Pastor The Rev. Dr. John Snider
Lay Liturgist Debbie Pirkl
Director of Worship Bryon Dockter
Song Leader Deborah Ellis, Philip Dahl
Christian Music Leader Ben D.
Lectors Jessica Donahue
Audio Visual Ministry Norm Goetzke, Keith Gregory, Jan Perkins
Prayer Chain Rachel Circle, Mary Circle, Kathy Ericson, Abby Vavra
Altar Guild Lori Ritt
Outdoor Street Sign Jerry Thoreson



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Bulletin Acknowledgements

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