



Sunday, March 23, 2025

Fourth Sunday in Lent

Welcome to The Beloved Community at The Trees, an Episcopal faith community exploring together what a life of faith “outside of a church” may be. Through our faith in Jesus Christ, we believe that all people are God’s beloved and all are welcome, regardless of race, gender identity, sexual identity, ability, faith background, or belief.

In our Baptismal Covenant, we affirm that we will strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being. To remember our baptismal promises, that all are God’s beloved, and that we are all one in Christ, we begin each worship gathering with the “Blessing of the Water.”

Blessing of the Water

Reader We thank you, Almighty God, for the gift of water. Over it the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through it you led the children of Israel out of their bondage in Egypt into the land of promise. In it your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us, through his death and resurrection, from the bondage of sin into everlasting life. We thank you, Father, for the water of Baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit.

Celebrant Now bless this water, we pray you, that it may be a sign to us of our Baptism, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Opening Acclamation

Celebrant The Lord be with you.

People **And also with you.**

Deacon We come by the grace of the one God, creator of beauty, lover of justice.

People **Blessed be God for ever.**

Deacon We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, one with us in sorrow and in joy.

People **Blessed be God for ever.**

Deacon We are one in the Spirit who fills the Church, breath of life, making all things new.

People **Blessed be God for ever.**

Deacon Come and worship the holy and glorious Trinity, as we pray together:

People **God of the feast,
your Wisdom calls us,
your Word teaches us and you feed us with your life.
Give us grace to welcome one another
as you have welcomed us in Christ Jesus,
in whose name we pray. Amen.**

The Collect

Celebrant God be with you.

People **And within you.**

Celebrant Let us pray.

Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The First Lesson

Joshua 5:9-12

Reader A reading from Joshua.

The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal they kept the passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. On the day after the passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and parched grain. The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

Reader The words of holy scripture.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Quiet Reflection on the Reading

The Psalter

Psalm 32

Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, *
and whose sin is put away!

**Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt, *
and in whose spirit there is no guile!**

While I held my tongue, my bones withered away, *
because of my groaning all day long.

**For your hand was heavy upon me day and night; *
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.**

Then I acknowledged my sin to you, *
and did not conceal my guilt.

**I said, " I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." *
Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.**

Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble; *
when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.

**You are my hiding-place;
you preserve me from trouble; *
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.**

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; *
I will guide you with my eye.

**Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding; *
who must be fitted with bit and bridle,
or else they will not stay near you."**

Great are the tribulations of the wicked; *
but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.

**Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD; *
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.**

The Second Lesson

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Reader A reading from 2 Corinthians.

From now on, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Reader The words of holy scripture.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Quiet Reflection on the Reading

The Gospel

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Deacon The holy gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to Luke.

People **Glory to you, O Lord.**

All the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to Jesus. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

So Jesus told them this parable:

"There was a man who had two sons. The younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.' So he divided his property between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. But when he came to himself he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare,

but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe--the best one--and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

"Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.' Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.'"

A reading from the First Nations Version, An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament

Deacon The good news of our Savior.

People **Praise be to Christ.**

Quiet Reflection on the Reading

Lectioary Discussion

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- 1) *What did I learn about God from this week's readings?*
 - 2) *What did I learn about love from this week's readings?*
 - 3) *What did I learn about community from this week's readings?*
 - 4) *What did I learn about myself from this week's readings?*
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Prayers of the People

Celebrant In peace and in faith, let us offer our prayers to God. We remember those among us and those we love in our prayers; especially Anthony, Gregory, Julia, Kathy, Laurie, Melody, Paul, and September.

You are invited to share your prayers aloud or silently in your heart. After each prayer is shared aloud, the following response is said. You are also invited to share your prayers on a prayer card and place it on the altar. Someone from The Beloved Community will take your card home and pray for you over the coming week.

This is my prayer.

This is our prayer.

After all prayers have been shared.

Celebrant Lord, hear our prayers.

People **Use us by your grace so that the world is changed for good and you are known and loved as Lord of all. Amen.**

Confession of Sin

Deacon We remember that the Lord Jesus died to take away our sins.

A moment of silence for private prayer.

Deacon Let us confess our sins to the God who knows us through and through.

People **Holy God, we have disobeyed your commandments,
we have resisted your call,
we have failed to live by your generous love.
We are sorry for all our sins,
and ask you to forgive us,
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Absolution

Celebrant God who has called us is faithful,
and will not remember our sins.

Your sins are forgiven,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Live by the Spirit's transforming power,
and forgive as you have been forgiven. **Amen.**

The Peace

Celebrant The peace of the Lord be always with you.
People **And also with you.**

Announcements

During this time we will share announcements for The Beloved Community at The Trees and others.

The Offering

Celebrant Walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God.

You are invited to share your gifts, financial or other, with the gathered community. During this time of preparation for the Holy Community, you are also invited to remember your baptism.

Music for Preparation

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

The Holy Communion

From The Anglican Church of Australia (2009)

Celebrant The Lord be with you.
People **And also with you.**

Celebrant Lift up your hearts.
People **We lift them to the Lord.**

Celebrant Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
People **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

Celebrant With all our hearts we praise you, faithful God.
In the beginning, you called light to shine in darkness,
you made living things to grow and flourish
and you created human beings in your image.

You chose us in love,
guided us by your presence

and blessed us with your holy law.
Yet we chose our own sinful ways.
We broke your commandments,
persecuted your prophets,
forgot your wisdom and,
time after time,
refused to answer your call.

So you spoke an eternal word in a human voice
in Jesus of Nazareth, son of Mary, Son of God.
He called and people followed,
leaving every other loyalty.
He set us free to praise your holy name.

But hatred and violence shouted Jesus down.
Betrayed and abandoned and nailed to a cross,
he laid down his life for the world he loved,
and broke the chains of evil and death.
Then you turned our sorrow into joy.
On the third day you raised him up
to lead your people into life.

So we praise you, holy God,
with angels and archangels
and all your faithful people:

People

**Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might.
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Celebrant

On the night before he died,
Jesus gathered with his friends
to share a meal and wash their feet,
teaching one more lesson of love.

He took bread and blessed you and broke it.
He gave it to them and said:

“Take this and eat it. This is my body.”

He took a cup of wine and blessed you
and gave it to them.

He said: “Take this and drink it.

This is my blood,
sealing God’s promise to forgive your sins.
Whenever you do this,
do it in memory of me.”

As we share these holy gifts,
we remember the Lord Jesus.

For the love you taught us,
the sacrifice you made for us
and the hope you give us,
we acclaim you, O Christ:

People **Dying you destroyed our death.
Rising, you restored our life.
Christ Jesus, come in glory.**

Celebrant And now, faithful God,
send us your Spirit to feed us with the body and the blood
of our Saviour, Jesus Christ.
Make us one body in Christ.
Send us as your messengers in the world
and fill us with energy, courage and love.

Now to you, most holy God,
through Christ your Son and in the Spirit’s power,
we bring our worship and our songs of praise:

People **Blessing and honour and glory and power are yours for ever and ever. Amen.**

Celebrant And now as our Savior has taught us, let us pray:

Celebrant and People

**Our Lord that is in heaven:
blessed be your name.**

Your dominion come:

your will be done

on earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us today our next day's bread:

and forgive us our sins,

as we forgive those who sin against us.

And leave us not prey to temptation:

but deliver us from evil.

For yours is the dominion: the power and the glory,

for ever and ever. Amen.

The Breaking of the Bread And The Communion

A period of silence is kept.

Celebrant As this broken bread was once many grains,
which have been gathered together and made one bread:
so may your Church be gathered
from the ends of the earth into your kingdom.

The gifts of God for the people of God.

Draw near with faith, to feed on Christ in your hearts with thanksgiving.

Taize & Contemplation

Ubi Caritas et Amor

Ubi Caritas et amor, ubi caritas Deus ibi est.

Where true charity and love abide,

God is dwelling there; God is dwelling there.

We will observe a few moments of quiet for personal prayer and reflection following the Eucharist. You are invited to pray where you are, light a prayer candle, or move about the space. Deacon Dan is available for healing prayers and anointing during this time.

Post Communion Prayer

Celebrant Let us pray.

We thank you, God,

for all the blessings of this table:
for the life-giving story, the living bread
and the wine of new creation.

People **Send us, we pray, in the strength of this meal,
to tell the Good News to neighbours and strangers
with creative words
and compassionate service,
walking the way of Christ.**

Celebrant God who has called you is faithful.
Go into the world with joy,
forgive generously,
love extravagantly,
live abundantly.

The Blessing

Celebrant Beloved, remember, you are one in whom Christ delights and dwells.
You live in the strong and unshakeable kingdom of God.
The kingdom is not in trouble, and neither are you.

And the blessing of God almighty,
our most holy, glorious and undivided Trinity,
be among you this day, and remain with you always. **Amen.**

Prayer for Our Shared Meal

Deacon Bless the food that you have made, and human hands have prepared. May it satisfy our hunger, and in sharing it together may we come closer to one another. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Deacon Go in the peace of Christ.

People **Thanks be to God.**

You are invited to join our community for a shared meal of soup/salad and bread immediately following our worship service.

We are grateful for our sending parish, The Church of the Nativity, Raleigh, who supported The Beloved Community with their presence, prayer, and resources for our first year.

We are grateful for the use of The Trees, graciously provided to us at no cost by St. Philip's Episcopal Church, Durham. We also give thanks to St. Philip's for the gift of flowers and printing. Each Sunday, St. Philip's shares their flowers with The Beloved Community so that we too may enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

We acknowledge that we are gathering on the ancestral territory of the Eno, the Tuscarora, the Occaneechi, and others.

We are grateful that you are with us. Your presence is a gift to The Beloved Community at the Trees, and that is enough. If you would like to support our community financially, you can do so by leaving your offering in the basket.

The Beloved Community at The Trees

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