

Bethlehem Lutheran &
St. Stephen's Episcopal



First Sunday in Lent

Announcements

Welcome to all who came to Bethlehem Lutheran Church today!

Holy Communion may be received at the altar with individual cups of wine/juice and bread; or if you choose to remain seated, individual cups of wine/juice and wafer are available in the narthex. Those at home, we welcome you to the table with your own bread and wine/juice.

We welcome Father Stephen Day as our worship leader today.

Flowers are given by Joan Heser in honor of her baptism 84 years ago.

Special Offering for February is Luther's Lodge.

This year the congregation has decided to have a brunch after service on Palm Sunday March 29, instead of after service on Easter Sunday.

A sign up sheet for food and desserts will be out soon.

Upcoming Events:

Thurs, Mar 12 - Women's Bible Study at 1:00 in the kitchen

Sun, Mar 15 – Congregational Council Meeting after service

Please remember in your prayers: Rob E, DeVona & family, Leon & family, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri W, Eva, Josh, Sally, Bill & Lisa, Amanda & family, Danielle, Jamie & family, Jennifer, Karly, Katie, Laura, Lyndsee & family, Libby, and Lynn.

If you are in need of pastoral leadership or spiritual counsel, please leave a message at the church (406)248-6427 or email bethlehembillings@gmail.com.

Showers for our unhoused neighbors – We at Bethlehem and St. Stephen's, in cooperation with St Vincent DePaul and the Salvation Army, provide showers for our unhoused neighbors on Mondays and Wednesdays. If you are willing to help, call Chelsea at 360-915-2762 or Terri Wilker at 406-425-3713

Bethlehem Evangelical Lutheran Church

St Stephen's Episcopal Church

40 10th Street West

Billings, MT 59102

First Sunday of Lent

February 22, 2026

9:30 Worship

ELW Setting 4

Introduction

Today's gospel tells of Jesus' temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God's mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.

Gathering

P: The Holy Spirit calls us together as the people of God.

Confession and Forgiveness

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

C: Amen.

Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt
and blots out all offenses.

Silence is kept for reflection.

P: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you:

Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word:

Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For failing to recognize your coming reign,

and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition,

and for disdaining the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For disregarding voices from the margin,
and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world:
Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent,
and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life:
Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound.

Through faith, the free gift of God,

you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

In the name of ✝ Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead

dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts,

and gives you life and peace.

C: Amen.

Gathering Song: *ELW #319 O Lord Throughout These 40 Days*

Greeting

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

C. And also with you.

Kyrie

P: In peace, let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For the peace from above,

and for our salvation,

let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For the peace of the whole world,

for the well-being of the Church of God,

and for the unity of all,

let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: For this holy house,

and for all who offer here their worship and praise,

let us pray to the Lord.

C: Lord, have mercy.

P: Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

C: Amen.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE

Assisting minister



Glo-ry to God in the high-est, and peace to God's peo-ple on earth.

All



Lord God, heav-en-ly King, al-might-y God and Fa-ther, we



wor-ship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glo-ry.



Lord Je-sus Christ, on-ly Son of the Fa-ther, Lord God, Lamb of God,



you take a-way the sin of the world: have mer-cy on us;



you are seat-ed at the right hand of the Fa-ther: re-ceive our prayer.



For you a-lone are the Ho-ly One, you a-lone are the Lord,



you a-lone are the Most High, Je-sus Christ, with the Ho-ly Spir-it,



in the glo-ry of God the Fa-ther. A-men.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

P: Let us pray.

C: Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

WORD

God Speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.

First Reading: Genesis 2:15-17; 3:1-7

Human beings were formed with great care, to be in relationship with the creator, creation, and one another. The serpent's promise to the first couple that their eyes would be opened led, ironically, to the discovery only that they were naked.

¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die."

^{3:1} Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat from any tree in the garden'?" ² The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, ³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.' " ⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die, ⁵ for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." ⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.
The word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Psalm: Psalm 32

Mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD. (Ps. 32:10)

- ¹ Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven,
and whose sin is put away!
- ² **Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt,
and in whose spirit there is no guile!**
- ³ While I held my tongue, my bones withered away,
because of my groaning all day long.
- ⁴ **For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.**
- ⁵ 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.
- ⁶ **Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of
trouble;
when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.**
- ⁷ You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
- ⁸ **"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go;
I will guide you with my eye.**
- ⁹ 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."
- ¹⁰ **Great are the tribulations of the wicked;
but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.**
- ¹¹ Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD;
shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

Second Reading: Romans 5:12-19

Through Adam's disobedience, humanity came under bondage to sin and death, from which we cannot free ourselves. In Christ's obedient death, God graciously showers on us the free gift of liberation and life.

¹² Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned ¹³ for sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam, who is a pattern of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶ And the gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the gift following many trespasses brings justification.

¹⁷ If, because of the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹ For just as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

The Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Gospel Acclamation

One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God. (*Matt. 4:4*)

Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and mer - ci - ful,

slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

P: The Gospel according to Matthew, the 4th chapter

C: Glory to you, O Lord

Gospel: Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one.

¹ Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written,

'One does not live by bread alone,
but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'

⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written,

'He will command his angels concerning you,'
and 'On their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'

⁷ Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’”

⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, ⁹ and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written,

‘Worship the Lord your God,
and serve only him.’”

¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon Father Stephen Day

Hymn of the Day *ELW #325 I Want Jesus To Walk With Me*

Prayers of Intercession

Reconciled by God’s mercy and sustained by God’s presence, let us pray for the world and its needs.

A brief silence.

God of all grace, grant faith to your church. Give to all the baptized the will to resist temptation and to worship and serve you alone. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

God of all creation, tend this earth. When human greed and disobedience threaten this planet and the life it contains, lead us by your Spirit into ways of reverence, awe, and gentleness. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

God of all nations, preserve us from trouble. Surround all living in places of violence with your steadfast love and give resilience to all who work for peace. Grant courage to those who challenge, especially around issues of racism and systemic oppression. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

God of all healing, mend our wounds. Bring wholeness to all who are sick, give peace to all who groan in grief, and send companions to all who are lonely or isolated. *Especially we pray for: Rob, DeVona & family, Leon & family, Lyle, Lisa & Lindsey, Pastor Kim & Terri W, Eva, Josh, Sally, Bill & Lisa, Amanda & family, Danielle, Jamie & family, Jennifer, Karly, Katie, Laura, Lyndsee & family, Libby, and Lynn.*

Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

God of all people, provide for our community. For any among us who hunger for bread, bring nourishment. For any among us who hunger for truth, speak your life-giving word. Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

God of all life, bring us to you. We thank you for your free and abounding grace, and for those who, by that same grace, now rest eternally in you (*especially*). Hear us, O God.

C: Your mercy is great.

Receive our prayers, O God, through Jesus Christ, our strength and salvation.

C: Amen.

PEACE

P: The peace of Christ be with you always.

C: And also with you.

Share a sign of peace with your neighbors.

Offering

The collection globe is available at the rear of the church. Thank you for the support of our ministries.

Offering Prayer

**C: O God, maker of heaven and earth,
your steadfast love embraces all creation.**

**You send rain and sunshine to nourish the earth
and bring forth its bounty.**

**Through these gifts of bread and wine,
draw us into the death and life of your Son,
who calls us to bear witness to his saving work.**

We ask this in Jesus' name.

Amen.

Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

C: And also with you.

P: Lift up your hearts.

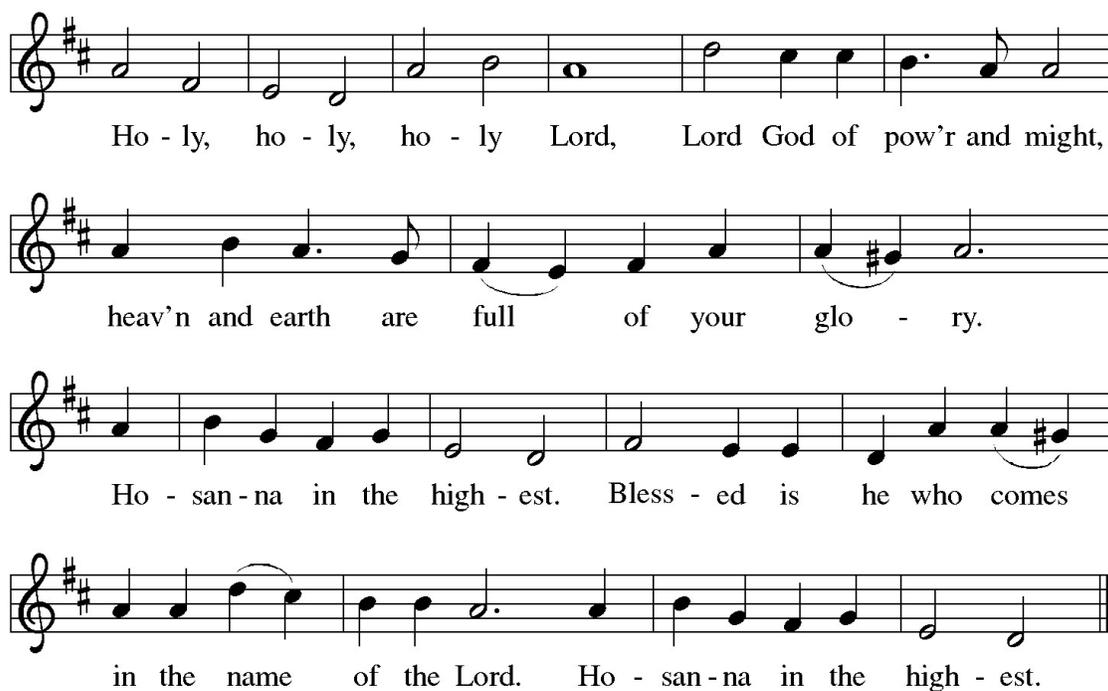
C: We lift them to the Lord.

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You call your people to cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast, that, renewed in the gift of baptism, we may come to the fullness of your grace. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

Holy, Holy, Holy



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, Lord God of pow'r and might,
heav'n and earth are full of your glo - ry.
Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes
in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est.

Words of Institution

You are indeed holy, almighty and merciful God.
You are most holy, and great is the majesty of your glory.

You so loved the world that you gave your only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but have eternal life.

We give you thanks for his coming into the world to fulfill for us your holy will and to accomplish all things for our salvation.

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.

For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Lord's Prayer

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

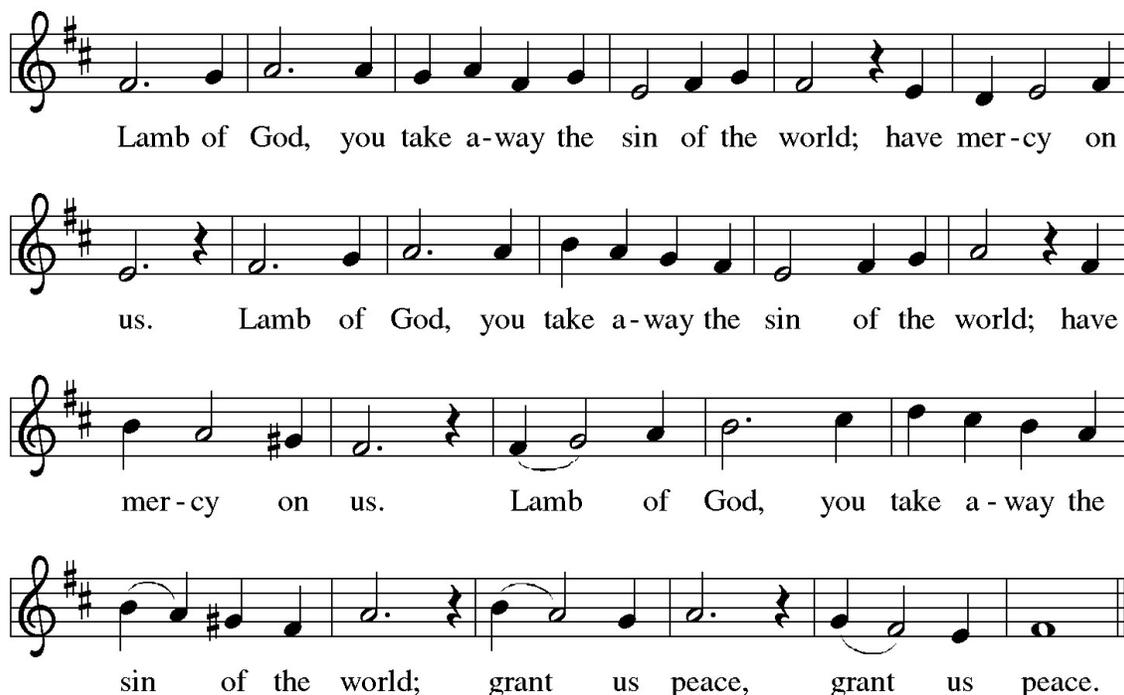
**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
forever and ever. Amen.**

Invitation to Communion

Come to the table.

Feast on God's goodness and mercy.

Agnus Dei (Lamb of God)



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on
us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have
mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a - way the
sin of the world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

Distribution

The Body of Christ given for you

The Blood of Christ given for you

Communion Hymn: *ELW #751 O Lord Hear My Prayer*

Prayer after Communion

C: God of our salvation, we give you thanks for this meal that restores our souls, reconciles us to you, and strengthens us for the journey. Through the body and blood of your Son, may we become Christ's body in the world, bearing witness to your love for all creation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

Blessing

P: Receive the blessing of the holy Trinity:
God, who calls all things into existence,
Jesus Christ, who redeems us,
and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation,

✝ bless you now and always.

C: Amen.

Sending Song *ELW# 609 Chief of Sinners Though I Be*

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Believe the good news.

C: Thanks be to God.

**BETHLEHEM LUTHERAN AND SAINT STEPHEN'S
EPISCOPAL CHURCH INVITE YOU TO A HOLY LENT**

**Lenten Program – Holy Conversations and Light Worship
(Lutheran Liturgy) – Wednesdays at Noon February 25,
March 4, 11, 18, and 25 Thursday, April 2**

Maundy Thursday Liturgy (Lutheran Liturgy) 5:30 pm

**Friday, April 3 – Good Friday Liturgy (Episcopal Liturgy)
Services at Noon and 5:30 pm Sunday, March 29 –**

**Palm Sunday – 9:30 am Potluck brunch following Sunday,
April 5 - Easter Sunday Liturgy at 9:30 am**

All Are Welcome

Christian community should be a place of absolute welcome. Christ has welcomed us, whoever we are. Because of this, we at Bethlehem Lutheran Church are glad to welcome you. None of the distinctions that seem to divide our world apply here!

We welcome you if you are:

- * young, old or in between;
- * white, black, native, Hispanic, or whatever your ancestry;
- * married, single, divorced, a single parent, or whatever your family of choice;
- * rich, poor, middle class, employed or unemployed;
- * a lifelong Christian, just now seeking faith, or not really sure;
- * straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, questioning, or any other identity;
- * healthy of mind and body, living with mental illness, disabled or sick;
- * struggling with addiction, in recovery, or if you love those who are;
- * liberal, conservative, or ambivalent;
- * homeless, a former convict, or in any way someone longing for acceptance.

At Bethlehem, we offer safety, love and the ministry of Word and Sacrament to everyone who seeks it. Come and be part of this welcome, as an equal, as a free and beloved child of God!

ALL ARE WELCOME!

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Facebook: BethlehemBillings