



Drawing by Jon Hlafter

The Lutheran Church of the Messiah

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Martin K. Erhardt, *Pastor*

Janice Hofreiter, *Organist*

Paul C. Hofreiter, *Choir Director*

John Mark Goerss, D. Min., *Pastor Emeritus*

Fourth Sunday in Lent (Laetare)

March 30, 2025

Prayer upon entering: God of all mercy, by your power to heal and to forgive, graciously cleanse us from sin and make us strong; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen

Guests, welcome! We are delighted you are with us for worship this morning. Please introduce yourself to Pastor Erhardt, sign our guest book next to the main doors. Bibles are available on a shelf in the back of the nave. Kneelers and large-print bulletins are available from the ushers upon request. If you are seeking a church home, we invite you to join us here at Messiah.

Worship begins with the prelude and continues through the postlude. Once the prelude begins, please refrain from conversation. We use two hymnals: the green *Lutheran Book of Worship* (LBW) and the blue paperback *With One Voice* (wov). Hymn numbers below 600 are generally in LBW; above 600, in wov. The pastor's parts (spoken and sung) are designated "P:." Parts spoken or sung by the congregation are italicized, prefaced by "C:." The liturgy text and music are in the LBW on the pages noted in this service folder.

Holy Communion: Lutheran Christians celebrate a divine service of Word and sacrament in which God comes to us both in his proclaimed Word and in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. We invite to commune at the Lord's table all baptized Christians who with contrite hearts trust God's word of forgiveness for their sins, acknowledge the presence of Jesus Christ both in the Communion elements and in this gathered body of believers, and seek, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to follow Jesus and walk in newness of life. If this doesn't describe you, we invite you to come to the altar rail to receive a blessing instead of the Communion elements. Indicate this by folding your arms across your chest at the rail. All are invited to bring their children forward for a blessing.

Individual cups are available in addition to the chalice (the common cup). Gluten-free wafers and grape juice are also available upon request from the server at the Communion rail. All are invited to bring their children forward for a blessing.

Families with young children: Welcome! We have children's activity backpacks in the back of the church for use during the service, as well as an unstaffed nursery on the stage downstairs. Feel free to ask an usher for help locating them. The stairs are at the back of the sanctuary.

Confession and Forgiveness

Please stand as you are able.

P: In the name of the Father and of the ✚ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C: *Amen*

P: Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

P: Our help is in the name of the Lord,

C: *who made heaven and earth.*

P: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,

C: *and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.*

Please kneel or sit for silent reflection and confession.

P: Almighty God, our maker and redeemer, we poor sinners confess unto You that we are by nature sinful and unclean and that we have sinned against You by thought, word, and deed. Wherefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy, seeking and imploring Your grace for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ.

C: *Most merciful God, who has given Your only begotten Son to die for us, have mercy upon us and for His sake grant us remission of all our sins; and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen*

P: Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they turn from their wickedness and live. Therefore we implore him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do on this day, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy, and that at the last we may come to his eternal glory. Resting in Christ's righteousness and not on your own confession, receive God's free and full forgiveness, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

C: Amen

Please stand as you are able.

Divine Service of Word and Sacrament

Opening Hymn

We Plow the Fields and Scatter

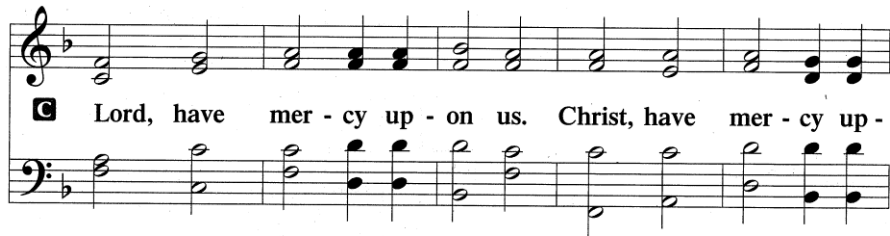
LBW 362

Apostolic Greeting

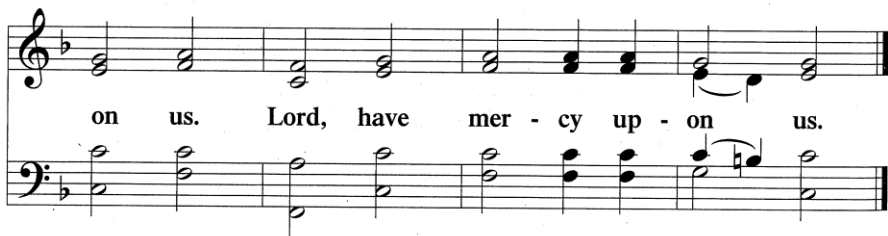
P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: *And also with you.*

Kyrie



Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have mer - cy up -



on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

P: The Lord be with you.

C: *And also with you.*

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray.

C: *God of steadfast love, you await the return of the wayward and wandering, and eagerly embrace us in pardon. Through baptism you have clothed us with the righteousness of Christ and restored our inheritance. Keep us looking to Your Son, Jesus, the image of our humanity made new, that we may live in Him, the model and the pioneer of your new creation. Amen*

Please be seated for the scripture readings, printed on the last two pages of this service folder.

First Lesson

Joshua 5:9-12

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

C: *Thanks be to God.*

Psalm 32

p. 230

Second Lesson

2 Corinthians 5:16-21

Reader: The Word of the Lord.

C: *Thanks be to God.*

Choir Anthem Thy Priceless Grace Words: Emmanuel Grantson
Music arranged by John Helgen
from Ghanaian traditional melody

That priceless grace, which gave me life:

Jesus' life is priceless grace.

That priceless grace is life for me.

(continued on the next page)

That priceless blood which gave me life:
Jesus' blood is priceless grace.
That priceless grace is life for me.

That painful death took sins away:
Jesus' death is priceless grace.
Jesus' death is life for me.

That precious word, which brought me light:
Jesus' word is priceless grace.
That priceless grace is life for me.

Verse (Joel 2:13) (please stand): *p. 63*

*C: Return to the Lord, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger,
and abounding in steadfast love, and abounding in steadfast love.*

P: The Holy Gospel according to Luke, the 15th chapter.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

Gospel Lesson

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

P: The Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

Children's Sermon

Sermon

This Fellow Welcomes Sinners

Hymn of the Day

Our Father We Have Wandered

WOV 733

Creed (Apostles') Spoken in unison

C: I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended into hell.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy catholic Church,

the communion of saints,

the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen

The Prayers of the People

P: Led by Christ in our journey of repentance and moved by his compassion, let us pray for the church of Christ throughout the world and for those known to us in need of prayer.

After each prayer or petition,

P: Create in us a clean heart, O God,

C: *and renew a right spirit within us.*

P: Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior.

C: *Amen*

The Sharing of the Peace

P: The peace of the Lord be with you always.

C: *And also with you.*

Please exchange a greeting of peace with your neighbors, then be seated.

Gathering of Offerings

As the offering is brought forward, please stand and sing vv. 10–12 of Psalm 51:

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 Thy pres - ence, and take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it
from me. Re - store un - to me the joy of Thy sal - va -
tion, and up - hold me with Thy free spir - it. A - men.

The musical score is written for voice and piano. It consists of five systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo and meter are not explicitly stated but appear to be a common time signature. The lyrics are printed below the vocal line, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across two notes. The piano accompaniment provides harmonic support with chords and moving lines.

P: Let us pray.

Blessed are you,

C: *O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

The Great Thanksgiving

P The Lord be with you.

C And with thy spir - it.

P Lift up your hearts.

C We lift them up un - to the Lord.

P Let us give thanks un - to the Lord, our God.

C It is meet and right so to do.

Meet means fitting, proper.

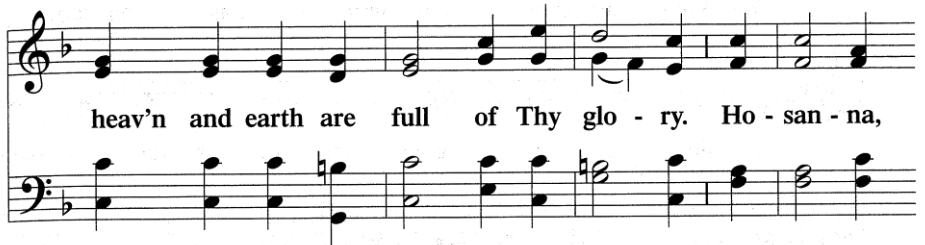
P: It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks unto Thee, O Lord, holy Father, almighty, everlasting God: Who on the tree of the cross didst give salvation unto mankind that, whence death arose, thence Life also might rise again; and that he who by a tree once overcame might likewise by a tree be overcome, through Christ, our Lord; through whom with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Thy glorious name, evermore praising Thee and saying:

(next page)

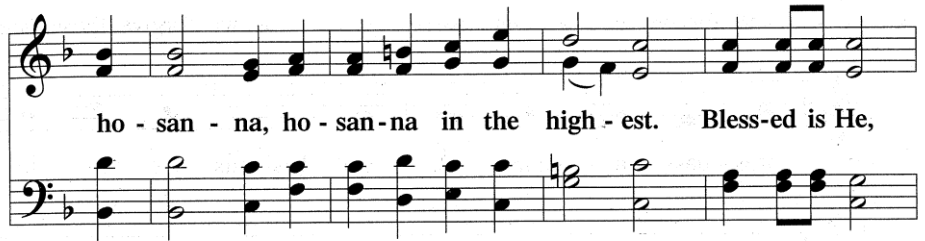
Sanctus



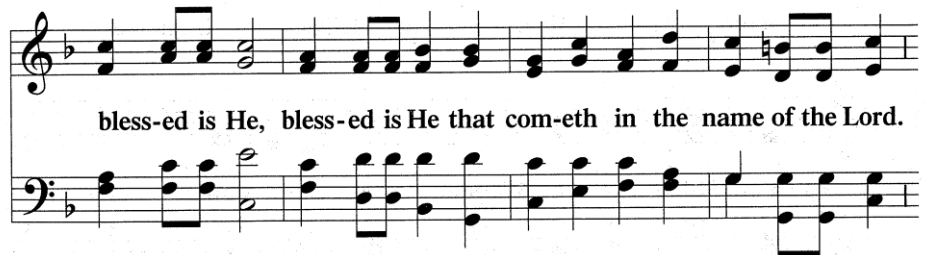
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;



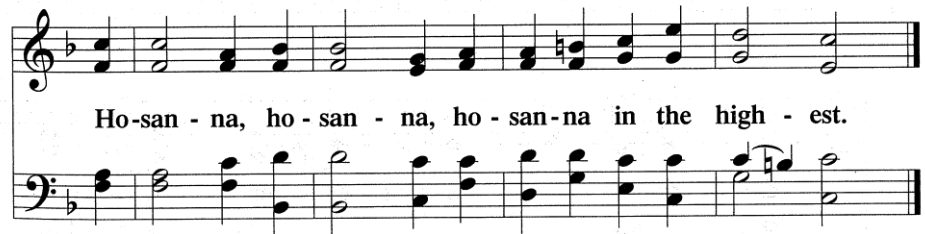
heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry. Ho - san - na,



ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is He,



bless - ed is He, bless - ed is He that com - eth in the name of the Lord.



Ho - san - na, ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

Sabaoth (SAH-bay-oath) is Hebrew for "heavenly hosts."
Hosanna is a Hebrew word of praise meaning "save us now."

The Words of Institution

P: Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you. This do in remembrance of me.”

In the same way also he took the cup after supper, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

The Lord's Prayer

P: Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

C: 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

Agnus Dei: Lamb of God

♩ O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the

The first system of music features a treble and bass staff in a 3/4 time signature with a key signature of one flat (B-flat). The melody in the treble staff begins with a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, Bb4, and C5. The bass line consists of a steady accompaniment of quarter notes: G2, Bb2, D3, and F3.

world, have mer - cy up - on us. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that

The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The treble staff has a quarter rest followed by quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5. The bass line continues with quarter notes G2, Bb2, D3, and F3.

tak - est a-way the sin of the world, have mer - cy up - on us.

The third system continues the melody and accompaniment. The treble staff has quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5. The bass line continues with quarter notes G2, Bb2, D3, and F3.

O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak - est a-way the sin of the

The fourth system continues the melody and accompaniment. The treble staff has quarter notes G4, A4, Bb4, and C5. The bass line continues with quarter notes G2, Bb2, D3, and F3.

world, grant us Thy peace. A - men.

The fifth system concludes the piece. The treble staff has a quarter note G4, followed by quarter notes A4, Bb4, and C5. The bass line continues with quarter notes G2, Bb2, D3, and F3. The final measure of the treble staff features a half note G4, which is circled in the original image.

Once the pastor says, “Welcome to the table of the Lord,” kneel or sit. Because Communion is important, please read and follow our Communion policy, printed on p. 2 of this service folder. If you are not communing, you are invited to come forward to receive a blessing, but feel no pressure to do so. If you do come forward for a blessing (only), indicate this by folding your arms across your chest when you kneel at the altar rail. When the pastor dismisses you, please return to your seat by the center aisle. If you would like Communion brought to your seat, please raise your hand to alert the pastor.

Communion Hymn Wide Open Are Your Hands LBW 489

After all have returned to their places, the pastor says: (please stand)

P: The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace. C: Amen

Post-Communion Prayer

P: Let us pray.

Almighty God, you gave your Son both as a sacrifice for sin and a model of the godly life. Enable us to receive him always with thanksgiving, and to conform our lives to his; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: *Amen*

Closing

P: The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth.

C: *He does not faint or grow weary; His understanding is unsearchable.*

P: He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength.

C: *Even youths shall faint and be weary, and the young shall fall exhausted;*

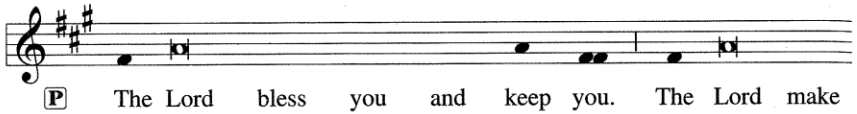
P: But they who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength;

C: *They shall mount up with wings like eagles;*

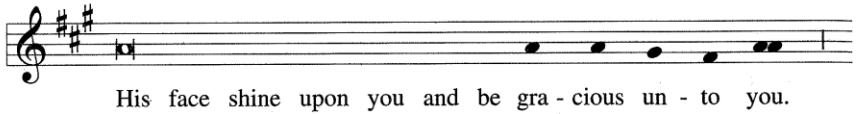
P: They shall run and not be weary;

C: *They shall walk and not faint.*

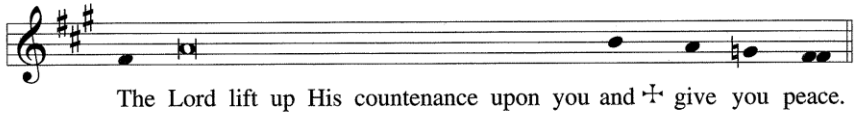
Benediction



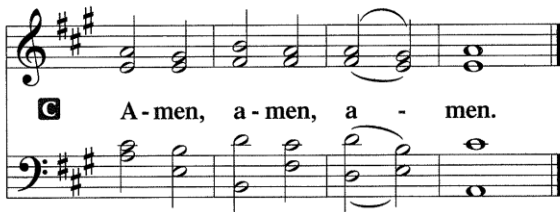
P The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make



His face shine upon you and be gra - cious un - to you.



The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and † give you peace.



C A - men, a - men, a - men.

Postlude

Wide Open Are Your Hands

George W. Martin
arr. J. Bert Carlson

Announcements

P: Go in peace, for God walks with us through the wilderness.

All: *Thanks be to God!*

Curious about the Latin on the dateline on the first page of the service

folder? Latin was the primary liturgical language of Western Christianity until quite recently, and is still used today. Lutherans and other Christians in the Western tradition often begin Sunday worship services with an "introit" (entrance) Bible verse, usually from a psalm. Sundays were named for the first word of the introit. Today's word is "Laetare", which begins Isaiah 66:10 and means "Rejoice..."

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This coming week

Wed	6:00 PM	Soup & Salad Supper
Wed	7:00 PM	Lenten Evening Prayer (LBW p. 142)
Wed	7:45 PM	Choir
Sun	9:00 AM	Adult Forum
Sun	10:30 AM	Service of Word and Sacrament

Thank you to today's Temple Servants

Acolyte	Don Meyer
Reader	Marion Zukas
Ushers	Robert Coyner and Tom Fusco
Fellowship Host	Pat and Jon Hlafter
Chancel	Louise Cooper
Offering Counter	Antti Valkonen
Livestream	Mark von Bargaen

Next Sunday

Isaiah 43:16-21 • Psalm 126 • Philippians 3:4b-14 • John 12:1-8

Opening Hymn: O Day of Rest and Gladness (LBW 251)

Hymn of the Day: Straining Toward What Lies Ahead

Communion Hymn: Jesus, Refuge of the Weary (LBW 93)

Lenten Wednesdays at Messiah, Mar. 12 – Apr. 9 (not Mar. 5 or Apr. 16)

6:00 PM Soup & Salad Supper

7:00 PM Lenten Evening Prayer (LBW p. 142)

Theme: *Navigating Troubled Waters*

7:45 PM Choir rehearsal (join us for the season or longer!)

Thank you to those who have generously volunteered to host Lenten soup & salad suppers! If you will need to enter the church building before 5 PM on a supper Wednesday and don't have a key, please contact Pastor.

Supper Hosts

March 12: Laura Bennett, Elizabeth, and Julia

March 19: Pat Hlafter & Carolyn Gishlick

March 26: Debbie Baer

April 2: Louise Cooper and Miranda Hempel

April 9: Marion Zukas and Miranda Hempel

Adult Forum meets at 9am on Sundays in the parish building library.

Current Series (March 9 – April 13): *Navigating Troubled Waters in the Bible, Hymns, & Our Lives*

Easter Flowers: Members of Messiah's chancel guild are planning a beautiful flower arrangement for Easter Sunday. Contributions toward the flowers are welcome and may be made in memory or in honor of someone you name. Contributions may be put in the offering plate or mailed to the church and should be clearly designated as follows: "For Easter flowers, given by _____ in honor (or in loving memory) of _____." Please write clearly so we spell the names correctly in the Easter bulletin. To ensure inclusion in the Easter bulletin, contributions need to be received by Maundy Thursday (April 17). Donations exceeding the cost of the flowers will be used for general operating expenses.

Save the Date: Our May voters meeting will be after worship on Sun., May 4. Messiah members, please plan to attend this important meeting, at which we will elect church officers to serve in the following positions in the coming year: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Financial Secretary, and on the Board of Trustees and the Board of Social Ministry. Messiah members may nominate a candidate to stand for any elected office described in Messiah's constitution via a letter signed by two voting members of the congregation. Each nomination must be accompanied by a letter of acceptance by the nominee. Nominations should be submitted by Sunday, April 13, via mail or email to the church, via email to the Secretary of the congregation, Miranda Hempel, or by giving the nomination(s) to Miranda in person. If you have questions, contact Miranda or another current Executive Board member.

Available on the back pew:

- (1) March/April 2025 edition of the *Messiah Messenger*
- (2) Portals of Prayer devotion booklets for April-June 2025
- (3) February-May 2025 Temple Servant schedule

Prayer Corner

We remember in our prayers:

- The Stohs family (mourning the death of Pastor Erhardt's great-uncle, Eugene Stohs), the family of Bernice Singh (friend of Carolyn Gishlick, mourning the death of her granddaughter), family and friends mourning the death of Carole Bleicher (friend of Carolyn Gishlick), Micha Livne (friend of the Gishlicks who is ill), Julia Majsztrik (with thanksgiving for healing from heart surgery and praying for continued good health), Ted Alslev (son of Elda Alslev, to overcome his addiction to smoking), Mary Pickens (friend of Jon and Pat Hlafter, undergoing an experimental medical treatment), Sue Parisi (friend of Pat Hlafter, being treated for breast cancer), Peter Schulze (son of Lydia and Carl Schulze, friends of Miranda Hempel, Brad Bergmann, and Jenny Mills – for comfort, strength, and healing

Prayer requests are generally printed in the Prayer Corner and included in the Sunday intercessory prayers for 4 weeks. If you would like us to keep someone there longer, we are happy to do that. Please call the church office or email lcprincceton@gmail.com to let Pastor Erhardt know.

First Lesson: Joshua 5:9-12

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 roasted 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.

Second Lesson: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21

From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! 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 God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Gospel Lesson: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, “This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them.” So he 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 wealth that will belong to me.’ So he divided his assets between them. A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. But when he came to his senses 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 as 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 assets 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.’”