

**St. Matthew Lutheran Church
North Tonawanda, NY
March ^{23rd}, 2025**



AS WE GATHER

A main emphasis of our Lenten discipline is our struggle against temptations to sin and toward true repentance that leads to living faithful Christian lives. As our physical well-being depends in part on healthy choices of diet, in today's Readings God uses the metaphor of eating and drinking to warn and encourage His people to avoid the temptations of the world and our own sin that leads us away from God and to rely constantly on the forgiveness and faith that God provides to enable us to lead godly lives. In the Epistle, Paul has in mind how God provides for us in His Word and Sacraments. We are to remember not only that we *were* baptized but that we *are* baptized, meaning God still provides us with saving, bold faith that relies on His mercy and grace because we belong to Him now. The center of the Divine Service is the Sacrament of Christ's body and blood, through which we are given forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation—all the benefits won for us by the cross and sacrifice of Jesus on our behalf. Today we are encouraged to receive and rely on God's gifts and provision constantly, that we may maintain a healthy and strong faith in the face of all adversities and challenges.

Welcome to all our Members, Guests and Visitors today, if you're a visitor, please introduce yourself to the pastor after service in the Narthex. We here at St. Matthew pray that you enjoy your time worshiping with us today.

TLH 140 Jesus, I Will Ponder Now

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Restore us again, O God of our salvation,
and put away Your indignation toward us!
Show us Your steadfast love, O LORD,
and grant us Your salvation.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

God has made us His people by our Baptism into Christ. He graciously provides us with all we need to live in true faith, confidence, and hope. Let us present ourselves before Him, confessing our sins and need for His mercy, and receive His promised help.

Almighty God, our Father in heaven, we come to You seeking Your forgiveness and the strengthening of our faith that we may live and serve You faithfully. We confess all our sins against You and against those whom we have hurt or failed to help. Even our very thoughts and desires have been soiled with sin. In true sorrow, we ask for Your grace, Your forgiveness, and that You strengthen our faith, all for the sake and in the praise of Your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

“No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful.” Upon this, your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of Christ, announce the grace of God to all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
Amen.

INTROIT

For the LORD knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.
For you are not a God who delights in wickedness;

evil may not dwell with you.
The boastful shall not stand before your eyes;
you hate all evildoers.
You destroy those who speak lies;
the LORD abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.
But I, through the abundance of your steadfast love, will enter your house.
I will bow down toward your holy temple in the fear of you.
Lead me, O LORD, in your righteousness because of my enemies;
make your way straight before me.
Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

SALUTATION & Prayer of the Day

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with penitent hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Old Testament Ezekiel 33:7–20

⁷“So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the house of Israel. Whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. ⁸If I say to the wicked, O wicked one, you shall surely die, and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked person shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand. ⁹But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way, that person shall die in his iniquity, but you will have delivered your soul. ¹⁰“And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, Thus have you said: ‘Surely our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we rot away

because of them. How then can we live?’ ¹¹Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel? ¹²“And you, son of man, say to your people, The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses, and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness, and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. ¹³Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and does injustice, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered, but in his injustice that he has done he shall die. ¹⁴Again, though I say to the wicked, ‘You shall surely die,’ yet if he turns from his sin and does what is just and right, ¹⁵if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, not doing injustice, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ¹⁶None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he shall surely live. ¹⁷“Yet your people say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just,’ when it is their own way that is not just. ¹⁸When the righteous turns from his righteousness and does injustice, he shall die for it. ¹⁹And when the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is just and right, he shall live by them. ²⁰Yet you say, ‘The way of the Lord is not just.’ O house of Israel, I will judge each of you according to his ways.”

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Epistle 1 Corinthians 10:1–13

¹I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not

be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play.”⁸ We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day.⁹ We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents,¹⁰ nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.¹¹ Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come.¹² Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall.¹³ No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

This is the Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Luke 13:1-9

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the thirteenth chapter

Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

¹There were some present at that very time who told [Jesus] about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²And he answered them, “Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered in this way? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. ⁴Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them: do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who lived in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.” ⁶And he told this parable: “A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. ⁷And he said to the vinedresser, ‘Look, for three years now I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and I find none. Cut it down. Why should it use up the ground?’ ⁸And he answered him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and put on manure. ⁹Then if it should bear fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.’”

This is the Gospel of the Lord.

Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

Apostle's Creed

**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.**

**And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.**

He descended into hell.

The third day He rose again from the dead.

He ascended into heaven

and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.

From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

the holy Christian Church,

the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins,

the resurrection of the body,

and the life everlasting. Amen.

TLH 154 Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed

Sermon

*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from
me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free
spirit. Amen.*

Offering

Prayer of the Church

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs. For the faithful proclamation of Christ's saving

name, that God's people be strengthened in the true faith and His kingdom extended, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the Holy Christian Church throughout the world and for all who confess the name of Christ, that God guard and defend us from the temptations of the devil, the world, and our sinful nature, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the government and all who have been set into positions of leadership, that they use the authority entrusted to them honorably and for the good of all people, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For those who are sick, [*especially . . . and*], all who are injured or suffer in body or soul, that God grant healing to their bodies and strength to bear their infirmities with patience and trust, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

O Lord, heavenly Father, we gratefully remember the sufferings and death of Your dear Son, Jesus Christ, for our salvation. Rejoicing in His victorious resurrection from the dead, we draw strength from His ascension before You, where He ever stands for us as our own High Priest. Gather us together from the ends of the earth to celebrate with all the faithful the marriage feast of the Lamb in His kingdom, which has no end. Graciously receive our prayers, deliver and preserve us, for to You alone we give all glory, honor, and worship, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

**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.**

Benedicamus

The Lord be with you.

And with thy spirit.

Bless we the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

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

Amen, amen, amen.

TLH 673 Let There Be Peace on Earth