



Celebrate

Third Sunday in Lent
March 23, 2025

The warnings are plentiful and blunt on the third Sunday in Lent. Cut it out or get cut down! The warnings are accompanied by God's invitation to attentiveness: "Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live." The landowner's ultimatum is forestalled by the gardener's readiness to till the ground one more year. That is good news for all of us. Thanks be to God!

Prayer of the Day

Eternal God, your kingdom has broken into our troubled world through the life, death, and resurrection of your Son. Help us to hear your word and obey it, and bring your saving love to fruition in our lives, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading

Isaiah 55:1-9

To those who have experienced long years in exile, the return to their homeland is a celebration of abundant life. God calls them into an everlasting covenant of love. Those who return to God will enjoy new life and forgiveness, because God's ways are not our ways.

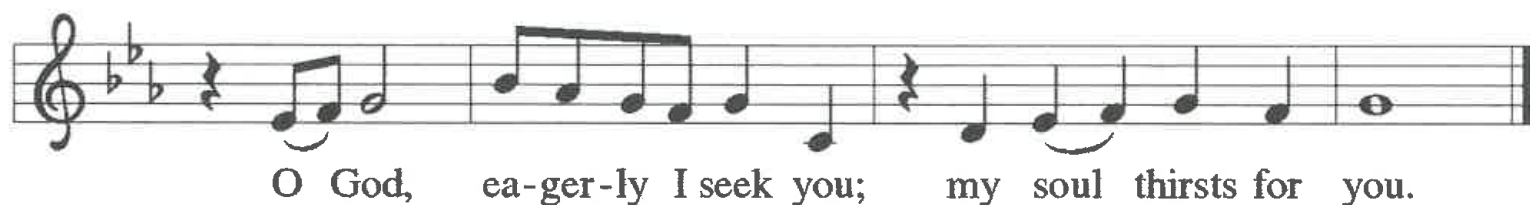
Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
²Why do you spend your money for that
which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does
not satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is
good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
³Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting
covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
⁴See, I made him a witness to the
peoples,
a leader and commander for the
peoples.

⁵See, you shall call nations that you do
not know,
and nations that do not know you
shall run to you,
because of the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.

⁶Seek the LORD while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
⁷let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the LORD, that he
may have mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will
abundantly pardon.

⁸For my thoughts are not your
thoughts,
nor are your ways my ways, says the
LORD.

⁹For as the heavens are higher than the
earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your
thoughts.



O God, you are my God; eager-¹ ly I seek you;
my soul thirsts for you, my flesh faints for you,
as in a dry and weary land where there¹ is no water.

²**Therefore I have gazed upon you in your¹ holy place,
that I might behold your power¹ and your glory.**

³For your steadfast love is better than¹ life itself;
my lips shall¹ give you praise.

⁴**So will I bless you as long¹ as I live
and lift up my hands¹ in your name. R**

⁵My spirit is content, as with the rich-¹ est of foods,
and my mouth praises you with¹ joyful lips,

⁶**when I remember you up-¹ on my bed,
and meditate on you in¹ the night watches.**

⁷For you have¹ been my helper,
and under the shadow of your wings I¹ will rejoice.

⁸**My whole being¹ clings to you;
your right hand¹ holds me fast. R**

Paul uses images from Hebrew scripture and prophecy to speak the truth of Jesus Christ: He is our rock, our water, our food, and our drink. Christ is the living sign of God's faithfulness.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors 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, God was not pleased with most of them, and they were struck down in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things occurred as examples for us, so that we might not desire evil as they did. ⁷Do not become idolaters as some of them did; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and they rose up to play." ⁸We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of

them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. ⁹We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents. ¹⁰And do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹These things happened to them to serve as an example, and they were written down to instruct us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. ¹²So if you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. ¹³No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.

Gospel

Luke 13:1-9

Asked about current tragic events, Jesus turns a lesson about whether suffering is deserved into a hard call to obedience. He then tells a parable that holds out hope that the timeline for ultimate judgment will be tempered by patience.

At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. ²[Jesus] asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? ³No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. ⁴Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them—do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵No, I tell you; but unless you repent,

you will all perish just as they did."

⁶Then he told this parable: "A man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it and found none. ⁷So he said to the gardener, 'See here! For three years I have come looking for fruit on this fig tree, and still I find none. Cut it down! Why should it be wasting the soil?' ⁸He replied, 'Sir, let it alone for one more year, until I dig around it and put manure on it. ⁹If it bears fruit next year, well and good; but if not, you can cut it down.'"

Prayers of Intercession

The prayers are prepared locally for each occasion. The following examples may be adapted or used as appropriate.

Led by the Spirit, let us turn to God in prayer for the church, the world, and all those in need.

A brief silence.

We pray for the church, called to be a witness to all peoples. Grant humility and wisdom to bishops, pastors, deacons, elders, councils, and congregations, that they may call upon you in making decisions. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the earth, called to provide abundantly. Teach your people the goodness of your generosity, that in sharing what we have been given, all life may flourish on the planet that is our shared home. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the nations, called to protect their inhabitants and collaborate in the work of justice and peace. Forge bonds of compassion and mutual care across human borders and boundaries, that all the world may have enough to live. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for those in need, called to receive your compassion (*especially*). Comfort those whose lives have been disrupted through natural disasters and human conflict (*especially*). Aid communities in coming together to mourn, heal, and rebuild. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for this assembly, called to welcome its neighbors to the table of your grace. Bless food pantries, community gardens and kitchens, clean water projects, and all ministries that address human hunger and thirst. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Here other intercessions may be offered.

We give thanks for the faithful lives of those who proclaimed your gospel in times of challenge and strife, and for all those whose lives of love and service have ended (*especially*). May their witness inspire our own. God, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Receive the prayers of your people and draw all things together in your love, in the name of Jesus, who leads us from death to life.
Amen.

Preparing for Next Week

Monday (commemoration of Oscar Arnulfo Romero, Bishop of El Salvador, martyr, 1980) Psalm 39. **Tuesday** (Annunciation of Our Lord) Luke 1:26-38. **Wednesday** Numbers 13:17-27. **Thursday** Psalm 32. **Friday** 2 Corinthians 5:6-15. **Saturday** (commemoration of Hans Nielsen Hauge, renewer of the church, 1824) Exodus 32:7-14. **Fourth Sunday in Lent** Joshua 5:9-12; Psalm 32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32.

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