



GOD ON TRIAL: TRUTH

Midweek Lent

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

February 21, 2024

SERIES THEME: GOD ON TRIAL

The unbelieving world has always insisted on putting God on trial. As our society becomes more secular, we Christians are increasingly aware of the many ways in which God—and his people—are judged. Temptations are many in this environment: treating unbelievers as enemies, retreating from the world, even questioning God ourselves. How do we live as people of God in this hostile world? We find our model—and our motivation—in Jesus. This series takes us back to the moments when God was literally on trial before humankind in the person of Christ. In these inspired episodes, we find forgiveness for us and all people, love for our enemies, strength for our faith, and courage to testify to the truth.

Worship Leader

Organist/Pianist

Pastor Kevin Stellick

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Acknowledgments

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Opening Hymn: 784 Now the Light Has Gone Away

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|---|---|--|---|
| 1 | Now the light has gone away;
Father, listen while I pray,
asking you to watch and keep
and to send me quiet sleep. | O bring me and all I love
to your happy home above. | |
| 2 | Jesus, Savior, wash away
all that I've done wrong today.
Make me ever more like you,
good and gentle, kind and true. | 4 | Now my evening praise I give;
you once died that I might live.
All your precious gifts are free—
oh, how good you are to me! |
| 3 | Let my near and dear ones be
safe with you eternally. | 5 | Ah, my best and kindest Friend,
you will love me to the end.
Let me love you more and more,
always better than before. |

Text: Frances R. Havergal, 1836–1879, alt.
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Confession of Sins

In the name of our God, to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hidden.

Amen.

I confess that I am by nature sinful.

I am guilty of many sins.

I am distressed by the sins that trouble me.

For all this I am sorry. I pray for forgiveness.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love.

Jesus says to his people, "If you forgive anyone's sins, their sins are forgiven." His death paid for the guilt of your sins and the sins of the whole world. Do you believe this?

Yes, I believe.

By the authority of Christ, I forgive you your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son + and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Psalm: 1A Blessed Are They

Refrain

Bless - ed are they, bless - ed are
they who hope in the LORD.

Tone

Blessed is the one who / does not walk
in step with the / wicked
or stand in the way that / sinners take
or sit in the company of / mockers,
but whose delight is in the law / of the LORD,
and who meditates on his law / day and night.
That person is like a tree planted by streams of / water,
which yields its fruit in / season
and whose leaf does not / wither—
whatever they do / prospers. *Refrain*

Not so the / wicked!
They are like chaff that the wind / blows away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the / judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the / righteous. *Refrain*

For the LORD watches over the way of the / righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to de- / struction.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,**

**as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. Refrain**

Text: Lectionary for Mass (refrain)

Tune: Michel Guimont

Setting: Michel Guimont

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Psalm Prayer

Lord, let your Word so saturate our souls that we grow into lush trees bearing fruit for you. When the voices of the wicked tempt us to stray down other paths, keep us on the way that leads to our heavenly home. We ask this, confident that you watch over the way of the righteous; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Passion History

Matthew 26:36–56

³⁶ Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane. He told his disciples, "Sit here, while I go over there and pray." ³⁷ He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and he began to be sorrowful and distressed. ³⁸ Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to the point of death. Stay here, and keep watch with me."

³⁹ He went a little farther, fell on his face, and prayed. He said, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

⁴⁰ He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He said to Peter, "So, were you not able to stay awake with me for one hour? ⁴¹ Watch and pray, so that you do not enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

⁴² He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to pass from me unless I drink it, may your will be done." ⁴³ Again he returned and found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ He left them again, went away, and prayed a third time. He said the same words as before. ⁴⁵ Then he returned to his disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Rise. Let us go. Look, my betrayer is near."

⁴⁷ While Jesus was still speaking, suddenly Judas (one of the Twelve) arrived. With him was a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people. ⁴⁸ Now the betrayer had given them a sign: "The one I kiss is the man. Arrest him." ⁴⁹ Immediately he went to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him.

⁵⁰ Jesus said to him, "Friend, why are you here?"

Then they advanced, took hold of Jesus, and arrested him. ⁵¹ Suddenly, one of the men with Jesus reached out his hand, drew his sword, and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, "Put your sword back into its place, because all who take the sword

will die by the sword. ⁵³ Do you not realize that I could call on my Father, and at once he would provide me with more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ But then how would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?"

⁵⁵ At that same time Jesus said to the crowd, "Have you come out to arrest me with swords and clubs as if I were a robber? Day after day I was sitting in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. ⁵⁶ But all this has happened so that the writings of the prophets would be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Hymn of the Day: 521 Christ the Eternal Lord

- 1 Christ the eternal Lord,
whose promise here we claim,
whose gifts of grace are freely poured
on all who name your name;
with thankfulness and praise
we stand before your throne,
intent to serve you all our days
and make your glory known.
- 2 Christ the unchanging Word
to ev'ry passing age,
whose timeless teachings still are heard
set forth on Scripture's page;
transform our thought and mind,
enlighten all who read,
within your Word by faith to find
the bread of life indeed.
- 3 Christ the redeeming Son
who shares our human birth,
and by his death salvation won
for ev'ry child of earth;
- inspire our hearts, we pray,
to tell your love abroad,
that all may honor Christ today
and follow him as Lord.
- 4 Christ the unfading Light
of everlasting day,
our Morning Star in splendor bright,
the Life, the Truth, the Way;
that light of truth you give
to servants as to friends,
your way to walk, your life to live,
till earth's brief journey ends.
- 5 Christ the ascended King
exalted high above,
whose praise unending ages sing,
whom yet unseen we love;
when mortal life is past
your voice from heaven's throne
shall call your children home at last
to know as we are known.

Text: Timothy Dudley-Smith, b. 1926

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Sermon

Reading

John 18:33–40

³³ Pilate went back into the Praetorium and summoned Jesus. He asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?”

³⁴ Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you about me?”

³⁵ Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?”

³⁶ Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here.”

³⁷ “You are a king then?” Pilate asked.

Jesus answered, “I am, as you say, a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.”

³⁸ “What is truth?” Pilate said to him.

After he said this, he went out again to the Jews and told them, “I find no basis for a charge against him. ³⁹ But you have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you?”

⁴⁰ Then they shouted back, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” (Now Barabbas was a rebel.)

Offering

Offering Hymn: 547 At the Name of Jesus

sts. 1, 3

1 At the name of Jesus
ev’ry knee shall bow,
ev’ry tongue confess him
King of glory now;
’tis the Father’s pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

3 Humbled for a season
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed;

Text: Caroline M. Noel, 1817–1877, abr., alt.
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Responsive Prayer

Gracious Lord, according to your will and promise,

You sent your Son into our world to atone for sin and restore eternal life.

You planned his path to the cross,

and he followed it perfectly.

He confronted the blindness of unbelief, the confusion of doubt, and the hurt of death

but was not deterred as he proclaimed your kingdom to the least, the last, and the lost.

As we hear and contemplate the holy record of our Savior's passion and death,

Use the sharp message of the law to empty us of pride and self-reliance.

Humble us as we view the Savior in his humility,

remembering and believing that he endured the cross so we might be freed from its horror.

In his suffering show us our healing,

in his grief show us our joy,

and in his death show us our life.

Hear our prayers, Lord, for the sake of Jesus. 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.

Blessing

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him.

Amen.

Closing Hymn: 629 O God from God, O Light from Light

- 1 O God from God, O Light from Light,
O Prince of Peace and King of
kings,
to you in heaven's glory bright
the song of praise forever rings.
To him who sits upon the throne,
the Lamb once slain but raised
again,
be all the glory he has won,
all thanks and praise! Amen, amen.
- 2 For deep in prophets' sacred page,
and grand in poets' wingèd word,
slowly in type, from age to age
the nations saw their coming Lord;
till through the deep Judean night
rang out the song, "Good will to
men!"
What angels sang in heav'nly light
reechoes now, "Good will!" Amen.
- 3 That life of truth, those deeds of love,
that death of pain mid hate and
scorn—
these all are past, and now above
he reigns, our King once crowned
with thorn.
Lift up your heads, you heav'nly
gates!
So sang his hosts, unheard by men.
Lift up your heads, for you he waits.
We lift them up. Amen, amen.
- 4 Then sing to Christ a mighty song;
extol his name, his mercies tell!
Sing, heav'nly hosts, your praise
prolong,
and all on earth, your anthem swell!
All hail, O Lamb for sinners slain!
Forever let the song ascend!
To Christ the King, enthroned to
reign,
all glory, pow'r! Amen, amen.

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