



GOD ON TRIAL: ACCUSATIONS

Midweek Lent

BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH | York, Nebraska

March 6, 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 Steven Kahrs
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Acknowledgments

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Opening Hymn: 784 Now the Light Has Gone Away

- | | |
|---|---|
| 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?

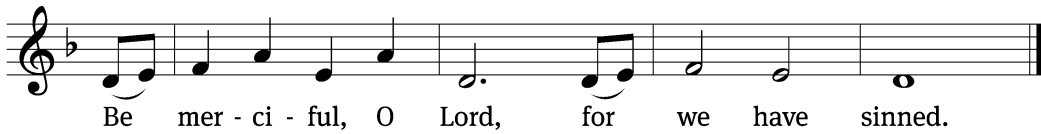
Yes, I believe.

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: 51A Be Merciful, O Lord

Refrain



Tone

Have mercy on / me, O God,
according to your un- / failing love;
according to your great com- / passion
blot out my trans- / gressions.

Wash away all my in- / iquity
and cleanse me / from my sin.
For I know my trans- / gressions,
and my sin is always be- / fore me. *Refrain*

Against you, you only, / have I sinned
and done what is evil / in your sight.
Surely I was sin- / ful at birth,
sinful from the time my mother con- / ceived me.

Cleanse me with hyssop, and I / will be clean;
wash me, and I will be whit- / er than snow.
Hide your face / from my sins
and blot out all my in- / iquity.

**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***

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Psalm Prayer

Lord, we confess our sins to you and plead for your mercy. We acknowledge that sin runs too deep in our nature for us ever to rid ourselves of it, but we thank you that Jesus has done what we could not do, washing us clean of every stain. We plead that your Spirit would give us the strength to live a new life; through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Readings

Joel 2:12–19

Rend Your Heart

¹²Even now, declares the Lord,
return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and grief.

¹³Tear your heart and not your clothing.
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in mercy,
and he relents from sending disaster.

¹⁴Who knows?
He may turn and have pity and leave behind a blessing—
grain offerings and drink offerings for the Lord your God.

¹⁵Blow the ram's horn in Zion.
Set aside a day for fasting.
Call a solemn convocation.

¹⁶Gather the people.
Consecrate the assembly.
Bring together the elders.
Gather the children, even those nursing at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room,
and the bride her chamber.

¹⁷Let the priests, who minister before the Lord,
weep between the temple porch and the altar.
Let them say:

Have compassion on your people, O Lord.
Do not subject the inheritance you have given us to the scorn of the nations.
Do not make us notorious among the nations as an object of ridicule.

Why should they say among the peoples,
“Where is their God?”

¹⁸ The Lord is zealous for his land,
and he will take pity on his people.

¹⁹ The Lord will respond to them:

I am sending you grain, new wine, and fresh oil,
enough to satisfy you fully.

Never again will I subject you to scorn among the nations.

Revelation 3:1–3

To the Church in Sardis

¹ To the messenger of the church in Sardis write:

The one who has the seven spirits of God and the seven stars says this:

I know your works. You have a reputation for being alive, but you are dead. ² Wake up, and strengthen what is left, which is about to die, for I have found that your works are not complete in the sight of my God. ³ Therefore remember what you received and heard. Hold on to it and repent! If you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what time I will come upon you.

Luke 12:13–21

The Parable of the Rich Fool

¹³ Someone from the crowd said to him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” ¹⁴ But Jesus said to him, “Man, who appointed me to be a judge or an arbitrator over you?”

¹⁵ Then he said to them, “Watch out and be on guard against all greed, because a man’s life is not measured by how many possessions he has.”

¹⁶ He told them a parable: “The land of a certain rich man produced very well. ¹⁷ He was thinking to himself, ‘What will I do, because I do not have anywhere to store my crops?’ ¹⁸ He said, ‘This is what I will do. I will pull down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store all my grain and goods. ¹⁹ And I will tell my soul, “Soul, you have many goods stored up for many years. Take it easy. Eat, drink, and be merry.”’

²⁰ “But God said to him, ‘You fool, this night your soul will be demanded from you. Now who will get what you have prepared?’

²¹ “That is how it will be for anyone who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

Hymn of the Day: 393 Savior, When in Dust to You

- 1 Savior, when in dust to you
low we bow in homage due,
when, repentant, to the skies
scarce we lift our weeping eyes,
O, by all your pains and woe
suffered once for us below,
bending from your throne on high,
hear our penitential cry!
- 2 By your helpless infant years,
by your life of want and tears,
by your days of deep distress
in the savage wilderness,
by the dread, mysterious hour
of th' insulting tempter's pow'r,
turn, O turn a fav'ring eye,
hear our penitential cry!
- 3 By your hour of dire despair,
by your agony of prayer,
by the cross, the nail, the thorn,
piercing spear, and torturing scorn,
by the gloom that veiled the skies
o'er the dreadful sacrifice,
listen to our humble sigh,
hear our penitential cry!
- 4 By your deep expiring groan,
by the sad sepulchral stone,
by the vault whose dark abode
held in vain the rising God,
O, from earth to heav'n restored,
mighty, reascended Lord,
bending from your throne on high,
hear our penitential cry!

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Sermon

Sermon Text

Job 40:1–2; 42:1–6

- ¹The Lord responded to Job and said:
²Will the one who makes charges against the Almighty
dare to correct him?
The one who accuses God should make his case!

- ¹Job responded to the Lord. He said:
²I know that you can do all things.
No purpose of yours can be thwarted.
³You asked, "Who is this who spreads darkness over my plans
with his ignorant words?"
I have made statements about things I did not understand,
things too wonderful for me to know.
⁴You said, "Listen now and I will speak.

I will ask you questions, and you will inform me.”

⁵ My ear heard about you.

Now my eyes see you.

⁶ So I despise myself.

I repent in dust and ashes.

Offering

Offering Hymn: 651 In Hopelessness and Near Despair

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 In hopelessness and near despair,
I cry to you, my Savior!
My guilt is more than I can bear,
I have not earned your favor.
You know me as I really am:
how much is truth, how much is sham;
why should you heed my pleading? | 3 I tremble as I feel your hand,
expecting retribution,
yet hear no curse or reprimand,
but grace and absolution.
With you there is forgiveness, Lord;
you speak the sweet, consoling word,
and I am sure you love me! |
| 2 I see my heart’s condition now,
my heart’s diverse affections.
Why do I love the things you loathe?
I’m torn in two directions:
now prodigal, now Pharisee,
O God, be merciful to me;
who else but you can help me. | 4 Forgiven, free of guilt and shame,
grant me some time to render
a gift to glorify your name,
love to reflect your splendor.
This world must know what I have
learned,
that you bestow what none has
earned:
the joy of full forgiveness! |

Text: Jaroslav J. Vajda, 1919–2008

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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: 394 Come to Calvary's Holy Mountain

- 1 Come to Calv'ry's holy mountain,
sinners, ruined by the fall;
here a pure and healing fountain
flows to you, to me, to all,
in a full, perpetual tide,
opened when our Savior died.
- 2 Come in poverty and meanness,
come defiled, without, within;
from infection and uncleanness,
from the leprosy of sin,
wash your robes and make them
white;
you shall walk with God in light.
- 3 Come in sorrow and contrition,
wounded, paralyzed, and blind;
here the guilty, free remission,
here the troubled, peace may find.
Health this fountain will restore;
they that drink shall thirst no more.
- 4 They that drink shall live forever;
'tis a soul-renewing flood.
God is faithful; God will never
break his covenant of blood,
signed when our Redeemer died,
sealed when he was glorified.

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