

# Rethinking Religion



**RETHINKING THE SOLUTION TO SIN**

*Fourth Sunday in Lent*

# **BETHEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH** | York, Nebraska

*March 10, 2024*

## **SERIES THEME: RETHINKING RELIGION**

Everyone has assumptions about God. Likewise, everyone has assumptions about religion. Increasingly, those assumptions are negative. Americans are walking away from Christianity in breathtaking numbers. It raises the question. How do those people know if their assumptions about religion are correct? Do they really understand Christianity at all? Do we? Do we truly understand this religion? In the season of Lent, as much as any other, Jesus teaches things that turns the world's assumptions about religion completely upside down. We call it "Christianity." So, in this holy season, let us go straight to Christ and let him replace assumptions with truth. Jesus, help us to rethink religion!

## **THEME OF THE DAY: RETHINKING THE SOLUTION TO SIN**

While not every religion uses the word "sin," they all embrace the concept. Every religion acknowledges that mankind's flawed attitudes or misguided actions are a source of pain, both now and potentially in eternity. So, every religion offers a solution: a set of laws, a moral code, a path to more enlightened behavior. What do they have in common? We are to solve sin through human effort. Be better! Try harder! This is the heart of every false religion. Those who correctly understand they will never overcome their sin are crushed by guilt. Those who ludicrously believe they have defeated their sin are killed by pride. True religion offers a better way—one that frees us from guilt and has no room for pride. Jesus teaches that the solution to our sin is not to work harder. It is to trust in the work he has done for us. Salvation comes through Spirit-wrought faith in Christ.

**Worship Leader**  
**Organist/Pianist**

Pastor Justin Wilkens  
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## **Acknowledgments**

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## **The Service, Setting Two (page 172 in Christian Worship 21)**

### **Hymn: 409 Jesus, Refuge of the Weary**

*Stand*

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

**Amen.**

### **Confession**

*CW 172*

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just  
and will forgive us our sins  
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

**Holy God, gracious Father,**

**I am sinful by nature**

**and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.**

**I have not loved you with my whole heart;**

**I have not loved others as I should.**

**I deserve your punishment both now and forever.**

**But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins**

**with his innocent suffering and death.**

**Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.**

*Silence for meditation and reflection*

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

### **Lord, Have Mercy**

*CW 174*

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

**Lord, have mercy.**

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

**Amen.**

## **THE WORD**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

### **Prayer of the Day**

Let us pray.

Grant, O merciful Lord, to your faithful people pardon and peace that they may be cleansed from all their sins and serve you with a quiet mind; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Be seated*

### **First Reading**

*Numbers 21:4–9*

*The Lord promised a solution for the bite of venomous snakes. That solution perhaps seemed nonsensical. Yet, all those who trusted God's promise lived.*

### **The Bronze Snake**

<sup>4</sup>They set out from Mount Hor along the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom, but the people became very impatient along the way. <sup>5</sup>The people spoke against God and against

Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? Look, there is no food! There is no water! And we are disgusted by this worthless food!"

<sup>6</sup>The Lord sent venomous snakes among the people, and the snakes bit the people. As a result many people from Israel died. <sup>7</sup>The people went to Moses and said, "We have sinned, because we have spoken against the Lord and against you. Pray to the Lord to take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed on behalf of the people.

<sup>8</sup>The Lord said to Moses, "Make a venomous snake and put it on a pole. If anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will live." <sup>9</sup>Moses made a bronze snake and put it on the pole. If a snake had bitten anyone, if that person looked at the bronze snake, he lived.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## Second Reading

*Ephesians 2:1–10*

*God's solution to sin is offered by grace and received through faith.*

### **Made Alive in Christ**

<sup>1</sup>You were dead in your trespasses and sins, <sup>2</sup>in which you formerly walked when you followed the ways of this present world. You were following the ruler of the domain of the air, the spirit now at work in the people who disobey.

<sup>3</sup>Formerly, we all lived among them in the passions of our sinful flesh, as we carried out the desires of the sinful flesh and its thoughts. Like all the others, we were by nature objects of God's wrath.

<sup>4</sup>But God, because he is rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup>made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in trespasses. It is by grace you have been saved! <sup>6</sup>He also raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup>He did this so that, in the coming ages, he might demonstrate the surpassing riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>Indeed, it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not by works, so that no one can boast.

<sup>10</sup>For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared in advance so that we would walk in them.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

*Stand*

## Gospel Acclamation

John 3:16

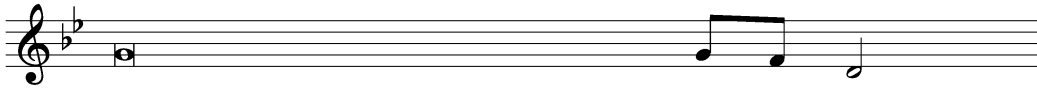


### Refrain

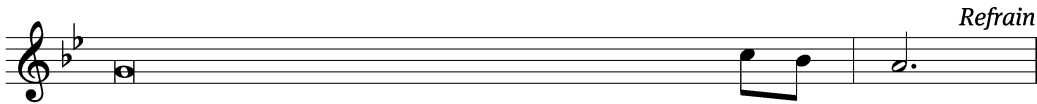


Praise to you, Lord Je - sus Christ, king of end - less glo - ry.

### Tone



For God so loved the world that he gave his one and on - ly Son,



that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have e - ter - nal life.

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## Gospel

John 3:14–21

*Christ is the solution to sin. Whoever believes in Christ shall not perish but have eternal life.*

<sup>14</sup> "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> so that everyone who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> The one who believes in him is not condemned, but the one who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. <sup>19</sup> This is the basis for the judgment: The light has come into the world, yet people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> In fact, everyone who practices wicked things hates the light and does not come toward the light, or else his deeds would be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But the one who does what is true comes toward the light, in order that his deeds may be seen as having been done in connection with God."

The Gospel of the Lord.

**Praise be to you, O Christ!**

*Be seated*

## **Hymn of the Day: 570 God Loved the World So That He Gave**

**Sermon:** Numbers 21:4-9

*Stand*

### **Nicene Creed**

**We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all that is,  
seen and unseen.**

**We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God,  
eternally begotten of the Father,  
God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God,  
begotten, not made,  
of one being with the Father.**

**Through him all things were made.**

**For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven,  
was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary,  
and became truly human.**

**For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate.**

**He suffered death and was buried.**

**On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.**

**He ascended into heaven**

**and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

**He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,  
and his kingdom will have no end.**

**We believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the Lord, the giver of life,  
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,**

**who in unity with the Father and the Son  
is worshiped and glorified,  
who has spoken through the prophets.  
We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church.  
We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.  
We look for the resurrection of the dead  
and the life of the world to come. Amen.**

*Be seated*

## **RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBER**

*Friend in Christ,*

After a review and instruction in the simple teachings of the Bible and our Lutheran church, you have requested to become a member of this congregation. You have come to worship today to confess your unity with us and to take your place as a part of this faith community. I now ask you:

Do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior? If so, answer: I do.

**I do.**

Do you believe that the teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and this congregation, as you have come to know them, are faithful to the Word of God? If so, answer: I do.

**I do.**

Do you desire to remain faithful to the teachings of Christ, be diligent in the use of God's Word and sacraments, and lead a godly life as the Lord gives you strength? If so, answer: I do, and I ask God to help me.

**I do, and I ask God to help me.**

Is it your desire to join us in worship and mission and support this work with your prayers and gifts? If so, answer: It is, and I ask God to help me.

**It is, and I ask God to help me.**

With sincere joy we welcome you as a member of Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church.

*The pastor speaks to the congregation:*

Brothers and sisters,

As we welcome Pam Corwin to our Christian family, I encourage you in the name of Jesus to keep her in your minds, hold her in your hearts, and pray for her again and again. Show her the face of



friendship and offer her a hand of support. Encourage her with your “works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

The peace of Christ be with us all. Amen.

Gracious Father, we thank you for leading Pam to desire to become a member of our congregation and for giving her joy to confess her faith to us. Guide us with your wisdom as we worship and work together. Mold our minds and hearts in a single Christlike will so that we may be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, and faithful in prayer; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Prayer of the Church**

*Brief intercessory prayers may be added in a fitting place.*

Heavenly Father, you loved the world and gave your Son to free us from sin and death by his obedient death on the cross.

**We confess that without your love we are lost.**

Lord of the Church, we thank you for the treasure of the gospel. By your Spirit, keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

**Strengthen our determination to do what pleases you, no matter what the danger or the cost.**

Guard and guide those who carry a cross in the name of Christ and face ridicule and persecution for the sake of the kingdom: missionaries and chaplains, young people who stand up for what is right in the face of pressure to do what is wrong, and all who pay a high price for their faith and values as Christians.

**By your Spirit, O Lord, grant them patience and endurance.**

Keep in your care those who carry heavy burdens in life: the sick and the chronically ill, the depressed and the lonely, those torn by conflict in personal relationships, and those victimized by war and injustice. [We pray especially for...*here name the person and the cause of the petition.*] Comfort all who face the terrors of life with a heavy heart.

**Grant them peace, O Lord, and in your mercy, be their guardian and friend, their comfort and hope.**

Watch over those who care for others: pastors and counselors; physicians and nurses; social workers and caring friends; all who feed the hungry, comfort the hurting, and stand beside the dying.

**Strengthen them in their work, O Lord, and do not let them become weary in doing good.**

Hear us as we pray in silence.

*Silent prayer*

Help us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Keep us faithful even to the point of death, that we may receive the crown of life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **Offering**

**Offering Hymn: 823 Jesus, Priceless Treasure**

*sts. 1–2*

## **THE SACRAMENT**

*Stand*

### **Preface**

*CW 183*

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them up to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give him thanks and praise.**

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who brought the gift of salvation to all people by his death on the tree of the cross so that the devil, who overcame us by a tree, would in turn by a tree be overcome. Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

## Holy, Holy, Holy

CW 184

The musical score is written in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music. The lyrics are: Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er, God of might. Heav - en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless - ed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na in the high - est!

Tune: Marty Haugen

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## **Prayer of Thanksgiving**

Lord God, you are worthy to receive thanks and praise from all people. You created the world and all who live in it, and in your mercy you saved us. We give thanks to you for the grace of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Though in very nature God, he took the nature of a servant and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. He offered himself as a sacrifice for sin and redeemed us from its curse and penalty. He rescued us from the terrors of death and restored eternal life with you. He conquered our enemies and gained for us the kingdom of grace and glory.

Bless us as we receive your Son's body and blood, and lead us to remember his suffering, death, and resurrection. Forgive our sins and fill us with the hope of new life in heaven. Hear our praise and receive our thanks as we worship you—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

**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.**

## **Words of Institution**

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my + body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my + blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

**Amen.**

### Jesus, Lamb of God

CW 186

Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; have mer - cy on us.

Je - sus, Lamb of God, you take a - way the  
sin of the world; grant us your peace.

The musical score is written in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time. It consists of seven staves of music. The first two staves form the first line of the hymn, and the next five staves form the second line. The lyrics are placed below the notes on the staves.

Tune: Marty Haugen

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*Be seated*

## **Distribution**

**Close Communion** *We ask that only those who have previously spoken to our pastor or are members in good standing of this or another WELS or ELS congregation come to Holy Communion today. Our practice of Close Communion (which has been the practice of the Christian Church throughout the ages) is in no way trying to judge anyone's faith. What we are trying to do is follow the Bible's clear teaching (1 Corinthians 11) to first study God's Word together. As we do so, we can share with/review with you what the Lord's Supper is all about. You, then, also have an opportunity to examine what we believe and teach before you come to the Lord's Supper and make a public profession that you agree with what we teach.*

## **Distribution Hymn: 676 Take and Eat**

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
**his mercy endures forever.**

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,  
**we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**

We give you thanks, O Lord, for the foretaste of the heavenly banquet you have given us in this Sacrament. Through this gift you have fed our faith, nourished our hope, and strengthened our love. By your Spirit, help us to live as your holy people until that day when you will receive us as your guests at the wedding supper of the Lamb, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **Blessing**

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and + give you peace.

**Amen.**

## **Hymn: 519 There Is a Redeemer**



## **NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**Today:** 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship and Communion

**Sunday:** 9:30 AM Bible Study and Sunday School, 10:30 AM Worship

**Wednesday 3/13:** 6:30 PM Midweek Lent Worship Service

**CONNECTION CARDS:** Visitors or members with changes in contact information, please fill out a connection card online at [www.bethelyork.com](http://www.bethelyork.com) on the member connect tab or scan this code.



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Personal assisted listening devices are available.

**Given to the Lord:** Attendance: Worship 58, Offerings: Operating: Needed 2,854.90, Given \$1,470.25. **To God be the glory!**

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