

The Fourth Sunday in Lent



March 14, 2021
10:30AM

We Gather

Introduction:

Celebrant: Welcome to Grace Episcopal Church in Muskogee for our first day of in-person worship in a long time.

Welcome back to all of you here in the church, and welcome to Grace to those of you who are watching online.

We are still in the church's penitential of Lent. If you have made resolutions for Lent, it is never too late to go back to them even if you gave up trying to give up. We have two more weeks until Palm Sunday. Today we hear again from the gospel according to John. This time we hear the most famous single line of scripture in the entire New Testament, John 3:16. Today's focus will be on one word.

Thank you for joining with us today.

Opening Sentence:

Celebrant: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 3:2

Processional Hymn: #686

Come, thou fount of every blessing

Please stand as you are able.

Words: Robert Robinson; Music: Gerre Hancock

1 Come, thou fount of ev - ery bless - ing, tune my
2 Here I find my great - est trea - sure; hith - er,
3 Oh, to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly

heart to sing thy grace! Streams of mer - cy nev - er
by thy help, I've come; and I hope, by thy good
I'm con - strained to be! Let thy good - ness, like a

ceas - ing, call for songs of loud - est praise.
plea - sure, safe - ly to ar - rive at home.
fet - ter, bind my wan - dering heart to thee:

Teach me some me - lo - dious son - net, sung by
Je - sus sought me when a stran - ger wan - dering
prone to wan - der, Lord, I feel it, prone to

flam - ing tongues a - bove. Praise the mount! Oh, fix me
from the fold of God; he, to res - cue me from
leave the God I love; here's my heart, oh, take and

on it, mount of God's un - chang - ing love.
dan - ger, in - ter - posed his pre - cious blood.
seal it, seal it for thy courts a - bove.

Opening Acclamation

Celebrant: Bless the Lord who forgives all our sins.

People: **His mercy endures for ever. Amen.**

Decalogue

Celebrant: Hear the commandments of God to his people: I am the Lord your God who brought you out of bondage. You shall have no other gods but me.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: You shall not make for yourself any idol.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: You shall not invoke with malice the Name of the Lord your God.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: Honor your father and your mother.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: You shall not commit murder.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: You shall not commit adultery.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: You shall not steal.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: You shall not be a false witness.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

People: **Amen. Lord have mercy.**

Celebrant: If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8,9

Confession and Absolution

Celebrant: Let us confess our sins against God and our neighbors.

Silence is observed.

Celebrant & People: **Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We are truly sorry and we humbly repent. For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us; that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways, to the glory of your Name. Amen.**

Celebrant: Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you all your sins through our Lord Jesus Christ, strengthen you in all goodness, and by the power of the Holy Spirit keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

Kyrie: #S-86

Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e
e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Chri - ste e -
le - i - son. Chri - ste e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.
Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son. Ky - ri - e e - le - i - son.

Collect of the Day

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: Let us pray. Gracious Father, whose blessed Son Jesus Christ came down from heaven to be the true bread which gives life to the world: Evermore give us this bread, that he may live in us, and we in him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

We Hear God's Word

First Lesson: Numbers 21:4-9

Please be seated.

Reader: A reading from the book of Numbers.

From Mount Hor the Israelites set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. The people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food." Then the LORD sent poisonous mserpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Reader: The word of the Lord.

People: **Thanks be to God.**

Psalms 107:1-3, 17-22

Reader: Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, *

People: **and his mercy endures for ever.**

Reader: Let all those whom the LORD has redeemed proclaim *

People: **that he redeemed them from the hand of the foe.**

Reader: He gathered them out of the lands; *

People: **from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.**

Reader: Some were fools and took to rebellious ways; *

People: **they were afflicted because of their sins.**

Reader: They abhorred all manner of food *

People: **and drew near to death's door.**

Reader: Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, *

People: **and he delivered them from their distress.**

Reader: He sent forth his word and healed them *
 People: **and saved them from the grave.**

Reader: Let them give thanks to the LORD for his mercy *
 People: **and the wonders he does for his children.**

Reader: Let them offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving *
 People: **and tell of his acts with shouts of joy.**

Second Reading: Ephesians 2:1-10

Please remain standing as you are able.

Reader: A reading from the Letter of Paul to the Ephesians.
 People: **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

Reader: The word of the Lord.
 People: **Thanks be to God.**

Gradual Hymn: #467

Sing, my soul, his wondrous love (Vs. 1,2,4)
 Words: Anonymous; Music: John Bacchus

Please stand as you are able.

1 Sing, my soul, his won-drous love, who, from yon bright throne a - bove,
 2 Heaven and earth by him were made; all is by his scep - ter swayed;
 3 God, the mer - ci - ful and good, bought us with the Sa - vior's blood,
 4 Sing, my soul, a - dore his Name! Let his glo - ry be thy theme:

ev - er watch - ful o'er our race, still to us ex - tends his grace.
 what are we that he should show so much love to us be - low?
 and, to make sal - va - tion sure, guides us by his Spi - rit pure.
 praise him till he calls thee home; trust his love for all to come.

Gospel: John 3:14-21

Please Remain standing.

Reader: The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to John.

People: **Praise to you, Lord Christ .**

Jesus said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God."

Reader: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

People: **Glory to you, Lord Christ**

Sermon:

Divine Evolution

The Rev Bob Wickizer

John 3:16 comes up on our Lenten readings every year. Apparently, somebody high up in the ecclesiastical hierarchy thinks it is important for us to hear, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest this scripture. Of course, you can see it plastered on billboards and bumper stickers everywhere, but what does it really mean?

In previous years, we have tackled the word "eternal" as in "eternal life." ζωην αιωνιον (zoe aionion), life everlasting, that's what it's all about, right? We have probably devoted two or three sermons to this in the past. The quick takeaway in case you missed it: zoe aionion, or eternal life is not about fluttering around in heaven on wings and eating bon bons for eternity. It is a finite, righteous life lived right here and now. Life lived in Christ, in the Holy Spirit, to the fullest. At times, it can be a puzzling life because you may not know if you are on the good side of things or not. It is a life well-lived and worth remembering and passing on to your loved ones.

John 3:16 comes with a guarantee, that those who have faith in God's peerless son, MAY NOT PERISH. It is those words to which we need to turn our attention today. To understand this, we need to deep dive to the ancient world of Greek philosophy in 500 BC, to the Mycenaean culture a thousand years before that, and possibly the Minoan culture even earlier. Important words often have a long, cultural usage. Our modern understanding of a translated term often takes us down the wrong rabbit hole.

For example, in our Hebrew Bible reading from the Book of Numbers which is quoted in John, God makes poisonous snakes to bite and kill the Israelites who rebelled against God. I have always thought this was at best a very unflattering understanding of a god who sends snakes to kill people. In trying to understand that, I need to know who or what is the agent causing the destruction and death? For what reasons or purposes? And what is the downstream result of such destruction?

The ancient world view believed that some ruling class of gods or people, or some status quo about the way things are in the world, was what held back the formation of better and greater things. I imagine this as a kind of "divine evolution." Here are some examples of this concept:

- Modern birds are the direct descendants of dinosaurs. Birds could never have evolved if most of the dinosaurs had not been wiped out by a comet strike 65 million years ago. This is an example of the status quo (dinosaurs), holding back the formation of something better (birds). Besides, I like birds much better than T-rex.
- The rebuilding of Jerusalem after Babylon was conquered by Cyrus of Persia is an example of a ruling class of people under Nebuchadnezzar holding back the development of a better Judaism
- The rise of the modern world after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in 70AD

The defeat or destruction of the earlier thing is not accomplished by what comes after. The ancients believed that only divine messengers, angels, intervened to bring about such enormous changes. This understanding of who, what, how and why destruction occurs was in place in the Ancient Near East long before Judaism or Christianity. When John uses the words, "shall not perish," it comes loaded with these ancient understandings. In other words, the destruction is part of God's plan and represents a progression towards better things.

The world will not remember or honor the things that are past, that were wiped out or did not contribute in a positive way to the future. Remember the movie “Amadeus”? It starts out with a contemporary of Mozart named Salieri. No one remembers Salieri or his compositions today, but Mozart? Yes.

These ideas of the meanings of eternal life and perishing now take us to a different place. By having faith in the one who lived, died, and ascended to heaven, we will live in a way where we are merciful to others and we forgive others. This is to live life fully, to live in Christ, and to be as much like Christ as we can. In living like that, we are contributing in a positive way to the future, to God’s plan, and to the evolution of things that are even better.

In having faith in God’s peerless son, we are promised that we will not perish, that we will be part of God’s perfection of the world. We are promised that the memory of us will remain after us. We are promised that our life will be honored and remembered by those who come after us. The memory of who we were and how we lived in Christ will survive long after we are gone, just like Mozart’s music.

Silence for reflection after the sermon.

Nicene Creed

Please stand as you are able.

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: by the power of the Holy Spirit he became incarnate from the Virgin Mary, and was made man.

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. With the Father and the Son he is worshiped and glorified. He has spoken through the Prophets. We believe in one holy catholic 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.

Prayers of the People

Please kneel, sit or stand.

Reader: Bound together in Christ in the communion of the Holy Spirit, let us pray with one heart and mind to God our Father.

Reader: For peace from things that separate us from one another and for our salvation.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For the peace of the whole world, for the welfare of the holy churches of God, especially...

People: **Resurrection, Oklahoma City; St. Patrick’s Community, Prison Ministry; Diocese of Hawaii; Hong Kong Sheng Kung Hui**

Reader: For this holy gathering and for those who enter with faith, reverence, and fear of God.

People: **Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For...

People: **Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Poulson, our Bishop; Bob & Tom, our clergy; Tim & Pat, our wardens; vestry, delegates, all who minister in Christ, and for all the holy people of God. Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For the world and its leaders, our nation and its people. We pray for our leaders, especially...

People: **Joe, our President; Kamala, our Vice-president; Markwayne, our Congressman; James & Jim, our Senators; Kevin, our Governor; and Marlon, our Mayor. Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For prisoners, the oppressed, all those in need or suffering, especially...

People: **Barbara & Family, Blackwell Family, Brad, Brewer Family, James & Shirley, Judy, Sherri, Bea, Eathen, Linda, John, Angie, Brian, Glen, Dante, Marilyn, Gary, Ann, Connie, Jan, Cliff, Gabriella, Esther, Ann, Ronald, Michael, Sheila, J.J., Marlee, all those affected by the pandemic, all the front line workers involved with patient care, all first**

responders, law enforcement, all fire and safety personnel, all United States Military serving at home and abroad, postal workers, and those whose suffering is known only to God.

Reader: We pray for those who have died, especially

People: **Mike Voegeli. Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: For ourselves, our families, and those we love. We pray for those in our parish, especially ...

People: **Alyssa, Corey, Tish, Anna, Bill.**

Reader: Also those who are traveling, especially...

People: **Trapper, Phoebe & Gabby. Lord, have mercy.**

Reader: Remembering our most blessed Mary and all the saints, let us offer ourselves and one another to the living God through Christ.

People: **To you, O Lord.**

Reader: Heavenly Father, you have promised to hear what we ask in the Name of your Son: Accept and fulfill our petitions, we pray, not as we ask in our ignorance, nor as we deserve in our sinfulness, but as you know and love us in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Laying on of Hands and Anointing for Healing

Celebrant: Brothers and sisters in Christ, if you wish to seek prayer, for yourself, on behalf of someone, or for a crisis in the world, you are invited to come forward at this time. Jesus says, "Come to me all you who are troubled and I will give you rest." So come, you who are burdened by regrets and anxieties, you who are broken in body or in spirit, you who feel deeply within yourselves the divisions and injustices of our world. Come, for Jesus invites us to bring him our brokenness.

The people may come forward for healing prayers at this time. The Laying on of Hands is administered using these or other suitable words:

Celebrant: In the name of God and trusting in his might alone, receive Christ's healing touch to make you whole. May Christ bring you wholeness of body, mind and spirit, deliver you from every evil, and give you his peace. Amen.

Anointing may be administered.

Celebrant: N, I anoint you in the name of God who gives you life. Receive Christ's forgiveness, his healing and his love. May the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ grant you the riches of his grace, his wholeness and his peace. Amen.

Healing Song:

Ken Yadon

Peace

Please stand as you are able.

Celebrant: The peace of the Lord be always with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Announcements, Birthdays & Anniversary Blessings

Please be seated.

Offertory Sentence

Celebrant: But do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.

Hebrews 13:14, 15

Offertory Hymn:

I want Jesus to walk with me

Verse 1

I want Jesus to walk with me
I want Jesus to walk with me
All along my pilgrim journey,
I want Jesus to walk with me

Verse 2

In my trials, Lord, walk with me
In my trials, Lord, walk with me
When my heart is almost breaking
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me

Verse 3

When I'm troubled, Lord walk with me
When I'm troubled, Lord walk with me
When my head is bowed in sorrow,
Lord, I want Jesus to walk with me

Doxology:

Please stand and sing as you are able.

*3 Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; praise
him, all crea-tures here be - low; praise him a - bove, ye
heaven - ly host: praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

Celebrant: O gracious God

People: **We offer you these gifts which you have given us; this bread and this wine. With them we offer ourselves, our lives, and our work, to become through your Holy Spirit a reasonable, holy, and living sacrifice. Amen.**

The Great Thanksgiving

Eucharistic Prayer B

Sursum Corda

Celebrant: The Lord be with you.

People: **And also with you.**

Celebrant: Lift up your hearts.

People: **We lift them to the Lord.**

Celebrant: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

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

Then, facing the Holy Table, the Celebrant proceeds

Celebrant: It is right, and a good and joyful thing, always and everywhere to give thanks to you, Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord; who was tempted in every way as we are, yet did not sin. By his grace we are able to triumph over every evil, and to live no longer for ourselves alone, but for him who died for us and rose again.

Therefore we praise you, joining our voices with Angels and Archangels and with all the company of heaven, who for ever sing this hymn to proclaim the glory of your Name:

Sanctus: #S-124

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow-er and might, hea-ven 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.

The Celebrant continues:

Please stand or kneel.

Celebrant: † We give thanks to you, O God, for the goodness and love which you have made known to us in creation; in the calling of Israel to be your people; in your Word spoken through the prophets; and above all in the Word made flesh, Jesus, your Son. For in these last days you sent him to be incarnate from the Virgin Mary, to be the Savior and Redeemer of the world. In him, you have delivered us from evil, and made us worthy to stand before you. In him, you have brought us out of error into truth, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life.

On the night before he died for us, our Lord Jesus Christ took bread; and when he had given thanks to you, he broke it, and gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: This is my Body, which is given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me." †††

After supper he took the cup of wine; and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and said, "Drink this, all of you: This is my Blood of the new Covenant, which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins. Whenever you drink it, do this for the remembrance of me." †††

Therefore according to his command, O Father,

Celebrant & People: **We remember his death, we proclaim his resurrection, we await his coming in glory.**

And we offer our sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you, O Lord of all; presenting to you, from your creation, this bread and this wine. We pray you, gracious God, to send your Holy Spirit upon these gifts that they may be the Sacrament of the Body of Christ and his Blood of the new Covenant. Unite us to your Son in his sacrifice, that we may be acceptable through him, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit. In the fullness of time, put all things in subjection under your Christ, and bring us to that heavenly country where, with all your saints, we may enter the everlasting heritage of your sons and daughters; through Jesus Christ our Lord, the firstborn of all creation, the head of the Church, and the author of our salvation.

By him, and with him, and in him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit all honor and glory is yours, Almighty Father, now and for ever. **AMEN.**

Lord's Prayer

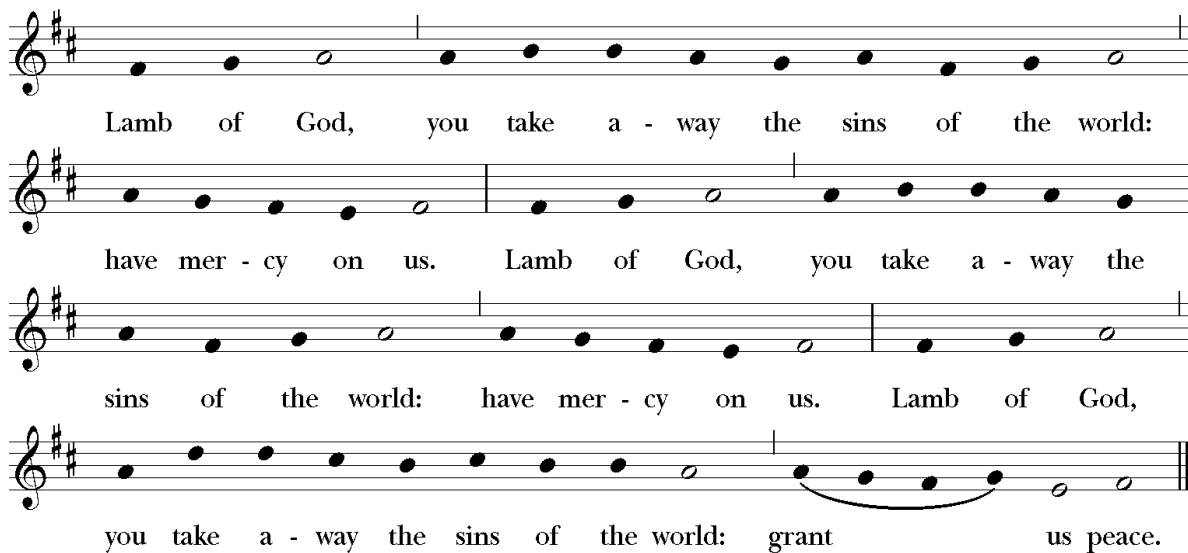
Celebrant: And now, as our Savior Christ has taught us, we are bold to pray,

Celebrant & People: **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, for ever and ever. Amen.**

Breaking of the Bread

A moment of silence is kept following the breaking of the bread.

Fraction Anthem: #S-161



*At Grace Episcopal Church, **all are welcome to receive Holy Communion.***

Celebrant: The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.

Communion Hymn:

Ken Yadon

We Go Out To Do Our Work

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Celebrant: Let us pray.

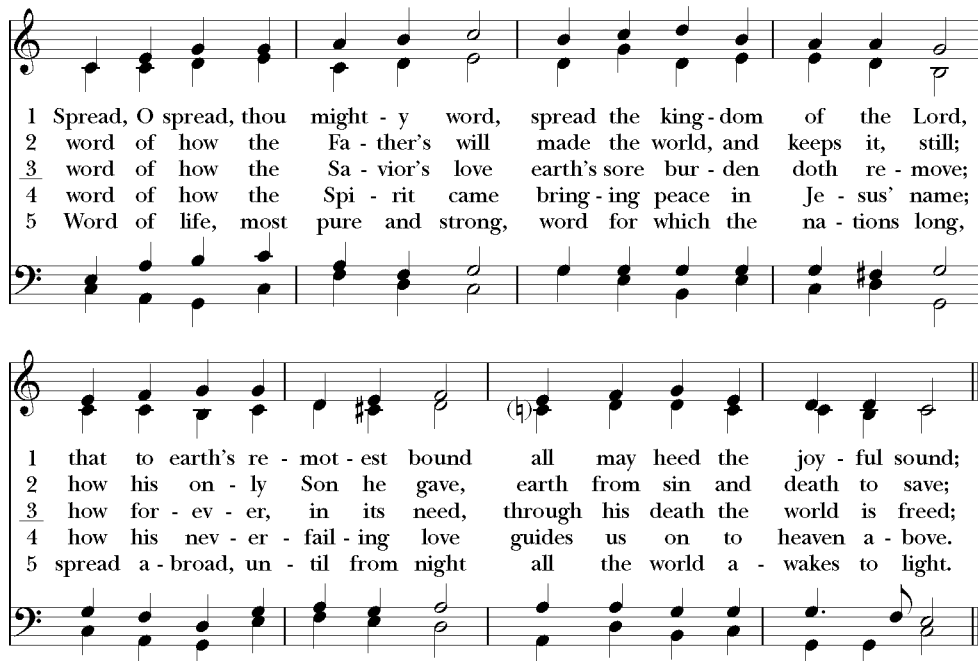
Celebrant & People: **Eternal God, heavenly Father, you have graciously accepted us as living members of your Son our Savior Jesus Christ, and you have fed us with spiritual food in the Sacrament of his Body and Blood. Send us now into the world in peace, and grant us strength and courage to love and serve you with gladness and singleness of heart; through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

Blessing

Celebrant: May God bless you, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be upon you and remain with you for ever. **Amen.**

Recessional Hymn: #530***Spread, O spread, thou mighty word****Please stand as you are able.*

Words: Jonathan Friedrich Bahnmaier Music: William Henry Havergel

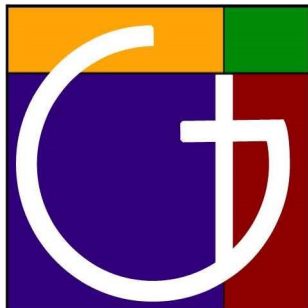


1 Spread, O spread, thou might - y word, spread the king - dom of the Lord,
2 word of how the Fa - ther's will made the world, and keeps it, still;
3 word of how the Sa - vior's love earth's sore bur - den doth re - move;
4 word of how the Spi - rit came bring - ing peace in Je - sus' name;
5 Word of life, most pure and strong, word for which the na - tions long,

1 that to earth's re - mot - est bound all may heed the joy - ful sound;
2 how his on - ly Son he gave, earth from sin and death to save;
3 how for - ev - er, in its need, through his death the world is freed;
4 how his nev - er - fail - ing love guides us on to heaven a - bove.
5 spread a - broad, un - til from night all the world a - wakes to light.

Dismissal*Celebrant:* Let us bless the Lord.*People:* **Thanks be to God.****THOSE WHO SERVE****March 14**

Celebrant:	The Rev Bob Wickizer
1st Reader:	Van Odom
2nd Reader:	Thomas Bentley
Head Usher:	David Wilcox
Greeter:	Nancy Hurley
1st Cross/Server:	Thomas Bentley
2nd Cross	Terra Tomblinson



Grace Episcopal

218 N. 6th Street Muskogee, OK 74401**Phone:** (918) 687-5416**Email:** Office@GraceMuskogee.org;**Website:** www.GraceMuskogee.org**Ministers:** All the People of God (BCP p. 855)**Rector:** The Rev. Bob Wickizer;**Rector's Email:** bob@gracemuskogee.org**Deacon, emeritus:** The Rev. Thomas A. Harrington**Music Director:** Kenneth Yadon**Youth & Children's Director:** Nancy Scott