

4rd Sunday in Lent March 11, 2018

Year B – the Gospel of Mark

LUTHERAN

LIVING THE ^ LECTIONARY

*A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.
An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the
rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.*

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“**Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Parma**” or “**Harold Weseloh**”

March 8, 2018 (Thursdays at 10:00 AM)

Bethlehem Lutheran Church, 7500 State Road, Parma, OH 44134

Presented as a part of the bible study/worship at a weekday service (currently on Fridays at 7:00pm) in a house church setting, bi-weekly at an assisted living site, St. Philip Lutheran Church, Cleveland (First Sunday of the month at 11:00am) and used by Lutherans in Africa. Contact puritaspastor@hotmail.com for details.



<https://sermonquotes.com/authors/8016-the-gospel-2.html>

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 571 (972) The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) 245 (319)

“God loved the world so that He gave”

(“I trust, O Christ, In You alone” (LSB) 972, (TLH) 319)

“[George Elvey](#) (composer of LBW 571) is best known for his hymn tunes, particularly for two that are still widely used in Christian services today: Diademata (Crown Him with many crowns) and St. George's Windsor (Come, ye thankful people, come). He set many other texts, including "Come, ye lofty" and "Pilgrimage," and he also composed oratorios, songs, anthems, and other music for church services, most of it long forgotten, however. [Elvey](#) was an arch-conservative, writing music that looked backward a half century or more, showing the influence of [Handel](#) and rejecting most modern trends.” <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/george-elvey-mn0001649668/biography>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tJr6b1RMigA> “One in Christ: Hymns of the Season”
Concordia Publishing House. Sung by 8th grade students.

The alternative hymn was first published in the [Lutheran Book of Worship \(1978\)](#), then retained in [Lutheran Worship \(1982\)](#), making its final move into the [Lutheran Service Book \(2006\)](#). Conrad (Konrad) Hubert “also **Konrad Huber**, **Konrad Huober**, or **Konrad Humbert** (13 April 1507 – 13 April 1577), was a German Reformed theologian, hymn writer and reformer...” is the author of this hymn. He is not to be confuse with [Konrad Huber](#), a Finnish sport shooter who competed in the 1924 Summer Olympics and the 1952 Summer Olympics. Nor is he to be confused with “**Conrad Hubert** (15 April 1855 – 14 March 1928) ... a Russian inventor known for electric flashlights...” www.wikipedia.org

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mEBnwwHvMFO> [The Substitute Lutheran Organist](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8eT3-QRxEY> Not a sing along version. “[Christian Hymn Series - Topic](#) ,
Hymns of Trust”

Just to add to the festivities, this hymn originally appeared in [The Lutheran Hymnal](#) with a different author, Johannes Schneising. Both hymns had the harmonization changed in the [LBW](#), changing one from the original by J. S. Bach. And as a final twist, the first hymn is 571 in [LSB](#), and 391 in [Christian Worship](#). Hymn 972 in [LSB](#) is 319 in [TLH](#). Give yourself extra points if you caught on to the color coding.

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

The Holy Bible, [English Standard Version \(ESV\)](#) Copyright © 2001 by
[Crossway Bibles, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.](#)

Numbers 21:4-9; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), the same reading (*Next week: Jeremiah 31:31-34; RCL, the same reading*)

“There are certain texts that are just head scratchers. These are what I term “problem texts” to myself, because something about them tends to pull against my understanding (or lack thereof) of God. Yet I often find that studying or preaching one of these texts can become some of the most powerful moments of enlightenment.

And as I mulled on the reading from Numbers 21 this week, as I struggled with the idea of God setting serpents upon God's people, as I wrestled with what can be edifying about this story of God's wrath and miraculous healing for a portion of the people through a near-idolatrous item (cf.

2 King 18:4)...I was reminded of today's Gospel reading where Christ on the cross was linked by John's Gospel to the story of the bronze serpent: "And 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" (John 3:14)..."

<http://gmcelroy.typepad.com/desertscribblings/2009/03/march-22-2009-fourth-sunday-of-lent-year-b.html> "you might be wondering, who is this guy anyway? i am a mostly life-long United Methodist, and i am currently serving as the associate pastor at Rome First UMC here in Rome, GA. even though i'm in ministry, i know that there is so much more to learn about life and God..."
Geoff McElroy

The Bronze Serpent

⁴From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom. And the people became impatient on the way. ⁵And 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 loathe this worthless food." ⁶Then the LORD sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many people of Israel died. ⁷And the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD, that he take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole, and everyone who is bitten, when he sees it, shall live." ⁹So Moses made a bronze^[a] serpent and set it on a pole. And if a serpent bit anyone, he would look at the bronze serpent and live.

- a. [Numbers 21:9](#) Or copper



Neither of these symbols are related to the story of Moses and the serpent. They are deeply rooted in Greek mythology. Read https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rod_of_Asclepius for details.

“IV. NUMBERS 21:4-9 THE ATTACKING SERPENTS

The bone-weariness that strikes the people in verse 4 of this text sounds similar to what happens to preachers about this time in Lent, at least those who haven't given the whole thing over to Lenten dramas. According to the Hebrew, the people were more than impatient—they were short of breath, running out of the stamina necessary to their wilderness wanderings, utterly discouraged. And they had no post-Easter respite a few weeks ahead of them.

Once again, it is possible to peel back some of the historical layers of the text.

Undoubtedly, snakes must have been a threat to nomads tracking aimlessly between Egypt and Canaan. There was a common belief, underlying 1 Samuel 6:1-5 as well, that images of such vermin could provide protection against them. And according to 2 Kings 18:4 there was a bronze serpent in the temple at Jerusalem, allegedly the very one Moses had made, that was called “Nehushtan.”

Hezekiah destroyed it, for which he is commended. Accordingly, it would be easy to give this text the slip. It smacks of magic. And if it was a story told to justify the presence of a graven image in the temple, Hezekiah and company clearly found the practice involved idolatrous. If the historical sense of the text is confined to the school of the facts and nothing but, the text is a dead end...

There is something petulant about the people’s murmurings—even supernatural food is now revolting. But who can blame them for their discouragement? In God’s idiom, hope contends continually with hopelessness and faith seems to have a magnet’s head for its opposite, sheer unbelief.

In response to the complaints, God becomes both the enemy and the redeemer. The snakes run loose against the people in punishment. God does not take them away, but leaves the threat in force. At the same time, he provides release in the form of the bronze serpent Moses erects...”

http://wordandworld.luthersem.edu/content/pdfs/5-1_Emerging/5-1_Nestingen.pdf

The Lenten First Lessons*, James Arne Nestingen, Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, St. Paul, Minnesota

Psalm 107:1-9; RCL, Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22 (*Psalm 119:9-16; RCL, Psalm 51:1-12 or Psalm 119:9-16*)

“Psalm 107 is a good example of a community psalm of thanksgiving. In the main part of the psalm (vv. 4-32) it surveys four different groups of people which have found themselves in difficult circumstances and been delivered by the Lord. Some have been innocently drawn into danger. Others have experienced it as a result of their own waywardness. A set of repeated refrains as well as the same structure connects the passages on the four groups...”

<http://hwallace.unitingchurch.org.au/WebOTcomments/OrdinaryC/Pent10Psalm107.html> [Howard Wallace's home page](#)

Book Five Let the Redeemed of the LORD Say So

107 Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good,
for his steadfast love endures forever!

² Let the redeemed of the LORD say so,
whom he has redeemed from trouble^[a]

³ and gathered in from the lands,
from the east and from the west,
from the north and from the south.

⁴ Some wandered in desert wastes,
finding no way to a city to dwell in;

- ⁵ hungry and thirsty,
 their soul fainted within them.
- ⁶ Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,
 and he delivered them from their distress.
- ⁷ He led them by a straight way
 till they reached a city to dwell in.
- ⁸ Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love,
 for his wondrous works to the children of man!
- ⁹ For he satisfies the longing soul,
 and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

- a. [Psalm 107:2](#) *Or from the hand of the foe*

The reading for this week is limited to verses 1-9. Most of the commentaries are based on verses 1-3 and 17-22, as found in the Revised Common Lectionary. Again, reading the entire Psalm is of value. James Limburg gives a good outline of the entire psalm and how it fits into the theme for this Sunday's readings:

"The texts for this Sunday provide the preacher with a whole kaleidoscope of themes and images.

We hear of snakes in the desert (Numbers 21, John 3:14), shipwrecks at sea (Psalm 107), and grace, faith, and good works (Ephesians 2). In the midst of all this is the most well-known verse in the Bible, John 3:16.

So what's a preacher to do? Many will no doubt choose to tell the story of Nick at night and put John 3:16 in its full context (John 3:14-21). Our focus here, however, is on Psalm 107. The psalm itself concludes with an invitation to "consider" what it has to say -- about God's "steadfast love." We shall begin by doing just that, and then try to bring the kaleidoscopic textual pieces together into a beautiful picture...

Psalm 107: some preliminaries

Psalm 107 begins with "O give thanks to the Lord for he is good" and ends with a directive to "consider the steadfast love of the LORD." In between are four further references to God's "steadfast love" (vv. 8, 15, 21, 31).

Psalm 107 fits the pattern of the hymn of praise, with a *call to praise* "O give thanks," followed by *reasons for praise* "for he is good; for his steadfast love (Hebrew, *hesed*) endures forever" addressed to the congregation (v. 1; for an example of the two-part hymn of praise, see Psalm 113:1-3, 4-9). Four reports of *God's saving acts* provide further reasons for praise (vv. 4-32) as does a reference to *God's activity of blessing* (vv. 33-38).

The pattern of each report of God's rescuing activity is the same:

- 1) a description of the people in trouble (vv. 4-5, 10-12, 17-18, 23-27),
- 2) a report that they prayed and God rescued them (vv. 6, 13-14, 19-20, 28-30),
- 3) a call to give thanks (vv. 8, 15-16, 21-22, 31-32).

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2298 [James Limburg](#)

Professor Emeritus of Old Testament, Luther Seminary, Saint Paul, Minn.

Ephesians 2:1-10; RCL, the same reading (*Hebrews 5:1-10; RCL, the same reading*)

“This text presents the immeasurable nature of God's grace which has totally changed both our reality and conduct forever.

Christian life is examined in terms of a "before and after" contrast resulting from divine intervention. The enactment of divine love and grace has radically altered everything about who we are and whose we are, about how we live, why we live, and even where we live.

As is typical throughout Ephesians, the text is densely packed with clauses heaped upon clauses and prepositional phrases stacked up like cordwood. In the original Greek, verses 1-7 form a single, one hundred twenty four word sentence whose subject does not appear until verse 4 with the main verbs following in verses 5-6. Consequently, it is helpful to examine the text in smaller sections to understand and appreciate the vision of Christian existence which the author displays...”

https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=262 **Richard Carlson**
Professor of New Testament, Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg, Gettysburg, Pa.

By Grace Through Faith

2 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ²in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body^[a] and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.^[b] ⁴But^[c] God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸**For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast.** ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

- a. [Ephesians 2:3](#) Greek *flesh*
- b. [Ephesians 2:3](#) Greek *like the rest*
- c. [Ephesians 2:4](#) Or *And*

“...The Epistle. The contents are much akin to those of Colossians, but also differ greatly from them. (1) In each book half is doctrinal and half practical. (2) Colossians discusses Christ-hood or Christ the head of the church, while Ephesians discusses church-hood or the church as the body of Christ. (3) In Colossians Christ is "All and in all", in Ephesians the ascended Christ is seen in his church. (4) In Colossians we have Paul in the heated arena of controversy; in Ephesians he is quietly meditating upon a great theme.

It has been said to contain the profoundest truth revealed to men, and the church at Ephesus was, perhaps, better prepared than any other to be the custodian of such truth, since Paul's long stay there had so well prepared them to hear and understand it. It may have been written as a circular letter to be sent in turn to several churches of which the church at Ephesus was one.

Date. By Paul, probably from Rome, A. D. 62 or 63.

Theme. The church, Christ's mystical body..."

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/kpc/ephesians.html> "he Popular Commentary by Paul E. Kretzmann"

Care to do some digging? Start with this author's premise about Ephesians "By now it is commonly assumed that the author of Paul's Letter to the Ephesians was not the apostle himself but perhaps a disciple writing in his name. For this reason we tend to be a little more wary of the theology we find here, simply because it does not always match up with what we read in the authentic letters. John Dominic Crossan and Marcus Borg, in their very compelling book, *The First Paul: Reclaiming the Radical Visionary behind the Church's Conservative Icon* (HarperOne, 2009), suggest that when reading the epistles we need to distinguish at least three Pauls: a radical, a conservative, and a reactionary..."

http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1247 **Daniel G. Deffenbaugh** Professor of Religion, Hastings College, Hastings, NE

THE MARK CHALLENGE – Today would be Chapter 5:7-8. If you didn't write it at least read it.
"He shouted at the top of his voice..." (NIV)

"The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the 3rd Chapter"

John 3:14-21; RCL, the same reading (*Mark 10:(32-34)35-45; RCL, John 12:20-33*)

John 3 begins with the story of Nicodemus, and the reading is part of Jesus's answer to his question, "How can these things be?"*

* "When it comes to forming the possessive of a proper name that ends in s, guides disagree.

Some stylebooks recommend a single apostrophe for Biblical or classical names like Jesus and Achilles, but 's for names like James and Charles; others say, "Treat all names ending in s the same."

The Chicago Manual of Style once recommended a single apostrophe to form the possessive of Biblical or classical names: Moses' tent, Achilles' helmet, Jesus' name.

Some guides still recommend this usage, but CMOS has changed its policy in a spirit of consistency; now it recommends that all proper names ending in -s form their possessive by adding 's:..."

<https://www.dailywritingtips.com/possessive-of-proper-names-ending-in-s/>

"In Mark and John, in the first three weeks of Lenten gospels, we have explored our new covenant relationship with God. We have been reintroduced to its obligations and its blessing... to repentance and renewal... to sacrifice and salvation... to discipleship and deliverance. In this week's gospel we see that this new covenant exists entirely in the context of God's unfailing love. It is the most constant characteristic of our infinitely constant God. Jesus is obviously not playing a game of inches. He is all-in... all the way... all the time..." (continued after the reading)

¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.^[a]

For God So Loved the World

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world,^[b] that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God.

¹⁹ And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. ²⁰ For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. ²¹ But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”

- a. [John 3:15](#) Some interpreters hold that the quotation ends at verse [15](#)
- b. [John 3:16](#) Or *For this is how God loved the world*

“This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

“So what to make of this week’s gospel? Jesus is obviously not just another preacher. His every message is a grand slam – and none grander than this: *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.* Perhaps the most frequently cited reference in the Bible, John 3: 16, has been called the whole gospel in a nutshell.

It is a limitation of our language, and perhaps of our imagination, that God’s love is presented in the past tense.* For the truth is that God has loved us, does love us and will love us with the same intensity that sent Jesus to the cross. It is not that we are so lovable, but that God is love. Loving is what he does. Loving is what he is. And again, our language and experience fail us. God’s love is not emotion or hormone driven. Feelings come and go. God’s love abides. His love is not transactional. It does not require reciprocity. God simply delights in loving us. It is the essence of his being.

<https://www.episcopalcafe.com/speaking-to-the-soul-a-game-of-inches/> The Reverend David Sellery, Episcopal Priest, Author, and Coach. Fr. Sellery presently serves as Priest-in-Charge, [St. John’s Salisbury, CT](#).

* A little tidbit εχη : STOP. read carefully: This is a present tense verb. This means that we HAVE the eternal life, not we will have, but we HAVE the eternal life. In John's Gospel life begins here and in as we, through faith, live in the son.

<http://lectionarygreek.blogspot.com/2015/03/rcl-for-march-15-john-314-21-and.html>

Or as David Lose puts it, “God’s love, you see, is tenacious. And so God’s love will continue to chase after us, seeking to hold onto us and redeem us all the days of our lives, whether we like it or not.” Read his complete perspective at <http://www.davidlose.net/2015/03/lent-4-b/>



2015-03-11 — Besides, the snakes were only following orders.

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