Instructions:

For this electronic copy, the order is devotion with readings (pages 1-3), prayers, (page 4) and sermon (pages 5&6).

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Vicar Nehring

Youtube links may contain ads for which we cannot be responsible. ☹️

890 O Blessed Light, O Trinity https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fgY900KqZ9E

1 O blessed Light, O Trinity,
   O everlasting Unity:
   As now the fiery sun departs,
   Send forth Your light into our hearts.

   We praise Your light in ev’ry age,
   The glory of our pilgrimage.

   All glory be to God above
   And to the Son, the Prince of love,
   And to the Spirit, One in Three!
   We praise You, blessed Trinity.


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

Introt

My eyes are ever | toward the LOR D,*
   for he will pluck my feet out | of the net.
One thing have I asked of the LOR D, that will I seek | after:*
   that I may dwell in the house of the LOR D all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LOR D and to inqu ire
   in his | temple.
For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of | trouble;*
   he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high up- | on a rock.
And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with | shouts
   of joy;*
   I will sing and make melody | to the LOR D.
Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
   and to the Holy | Spirit;
   as it was in the be- | gin ning,*
   is now, and will be forever. | Amen.
My eyes are ever | toward the LOR D,*
   for he will pluck my feet out | of the net.

Old Testament Reading

14 For a long time I have held my peace; I have kept still and restrained myself; now I will cry out like a woman in labor; I will gasp and pant.
15 I will lay waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their vegetation; I will turn the rivers into islands, and dry up the pools.
16 And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them.

I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.
17 They are turned back and utterly put to shame, who trust in carved idols, who say to metal images, “You are our gods.”
18 Hear, you deaf, and look, you blind, that you may see!
19 Who is blind but my servant,
Psalm

1With my voice I cry out to the LORD,*
with my voice I plead for mercy to the LORD.
2I pour out my complaint before him;* I tell my trouble before him.
3When my spirit faints within me, you know my way.*
In the path where I walk they have hidden a trap for me.
4Look to the right and see: there is none who takes notice of me;* no refuge remains to me; no one cares for my soul.

Psalm 142: antiphon: v. 5

I cry to you, O LORD,* I say, “You are my refuge, my portion in the land of the living.”
Attend to my cry, for I am brought very low!* Deliver me from my persecutors, for they are too strong for me!
Bring me out of prison, that I may give thanks to your name!* The righteous will surround me, for you will deal bountifully with me.

Epistle

For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”

Ephesians 5:8–14

Holy Gospel

As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” (His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” The man answered, “Why, this is
an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. 31 We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. 32 Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. 33 If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” 34 They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out. 35 Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” 36 He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” 37 Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” 38 He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. 39 Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” 41 Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.”

849 Praise the One Who Breaks the Darkness
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kVXb1SMGa Ug

1 Praise the One who breaks the darkness
With a liberating light;
Praise the One who frees the pris’ners,
Turning blindness into sight.
Praise the One who preached the Gospel,
Healing ev’ry dread disease,
Calming storms, and feeding thousands
With the very Bread of peace.

2 Praise the One who blessed the children
With a strong, yet gentle, word;
Praise the One who drove out demons
With the piercing, two-edged sword.
Praise the One who brings cool water
To the desert’s burning sand;
From this Well comes living water,
Quenching thirst in ev’ry land.

3 Let us praise the Word Incarnate,
Christ, who suffered in our place.
Jesus died and rose victorious
That we may know God by grace.
Let us sing for joy and gladness,
Seeing what our God has done;
Let us praise the true Redeemer,
Praise the One who makes us one.

Nicene Creed

Sermon

Prayer of the Church - next page.

Lord’s Prayer

744 Amazing Grace https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GwZXK7SkDMM

1 Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see!

2 The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.

3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;

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Acknowledgments

Divine Service, Setting One from Lutheran Service Book
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Prayer of the Church  
Fourth Sunday in Lent  
22 March 2020

Blessed Lord, You give sight to the blind, You open the ears of the deaf, and You make the lame to walk. Hear the prayers of Your people on behalf of all people as they have need.

In the darkness of sin and its death, we cry to You, O Lord. Open our ears by Your Word, our minds by Your Spirit, and our hearts by Your grace, that we may know and be thankful for all the blessings You have given to us in Christ, our Lord, especially the gifts of forgiveness, life and salvation. Strengthen us in faith, that we may serve You with all our body, mind, soul and strength. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Encouraged by Your Word, we pray to You, O Lord, on behalf of Your Church and all Your people in every place. Give to us good pastors and servants of Your Word who will preach the full counsel of Your Word and serve us with Your Sacraments. Raise up many more to serve as church workers, and bless those who are now preparing for full-time church work. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Defended by Your grace, we ask You, O Lord, to provide us with good and faithful leaders who will honor the cause of justice in our land, preserve the precious gift of liberty, and protect the lives of those least able to defend themselves. Give them special wisdom, nd help them to work in harmony during this pandemic. Bless the members of our armed forces and protect them as they defend us,and grant Your blessing to all emergency workers who come to our aid in time of need and medical personnel who care for the sick. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Enjoying the riches of Your grace, we ask You, O Lord, to give us generous hearts, that we may share with the poor what You have provided and work for the common good of all. Give us patience in our seclusion, and comfort the lonely. Be with those who are unemployed and in search of honest labor, the underemployed in pursuit of better jobs, and the homeless seeking basic shelter for themselves and those in their families. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Knowing Your healing will and gifts, we pray You, O Lord, to remember the sick in their afflictions, to calm those troubled in mind, and to keep steadfast the dying. [Hear us especially for those in our ongoing prayers, Vicki, Linda, Darci, Molly, Tiffany, Marilyn, Samantha, and Tammy] Show us Your gracious will, O Lord, and sustain those who are afflicted in body or mind until that day when You will bestow upon us new bodies fit for the eternal life You have prepared for us in Christ. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

Mindful of Your promise, we ask You, O Lord, to comfort those who grieve especially the family and friends of David, and to build up those who mourn with hope for the resurrection. Remembering the faithful who have died in Christ, we pray You to bring us at last to be with them in Your nearer presence, looking forward to that day when we shall join in the marriage supper of the Lamb in His Kingdom without end. Lord, in Your mercy, hear our prayer.

All these things, O Lord, we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, asking You to grant our prayers not for our sake but for the sake of Him alone. Teach our hearts to be content with Your will and to trust that You will answer us with what is best for us and at the right time for our need. So do we pray, giving testimony of our confidence in Your gracious favor in Christ by answering with one voice. Amen.
Grace, Mercy and Peace be to you from God our Father and Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen.

As I have gotten older, light has become more and more important to me. It wasn’t that many years ago that I could tie two pounds test fishing line in almost any light. I could read small print in any light. But these days, I must have more light to see. Small print really requires more light. If you come into my office, you’ll see that I have the ceiling light, a florescent light under the overhead and a gooseneck light sitting on my desk. I really need light. I even need the light on my phone to read the shelf tags at the grocery store.

We depend on light and our sight to navigate in our daily lives. We had a blind PHD student at the seminary. For the most part, he could navigate quite well. But from time to time, he’d get turned around and end up somewhere he shouldn’t be. Usually there were enough people coming and going that someone would find him and help him get back to his dorm room or to the library or chapel or wherever he was headed. And if he didn’t know where he was going, he really needed someone to help him get there.

Our readings this morning are about darkness and light; and blindness and sight. The Old Testament reading from Isaiah tells of both God’s rebuke of Israel and his love and concern for his people. Earlier in Isaiah, Israel has come upon difficult times. Isaiah 39 describes the visit of the Babylonians who will conquer Israel and take her into captivity. Instead of resisting, King Hezekiah has welcomed the Babylonians in and showed them all of Israel’s storehouses, encouraging the Babylonians to conquer Israel. As this unfolds, the people of Israel accuse God of being blind to their plight, when instead the people of Israel have blinded themselves. They have turned away from God. They are unable to see God’s provision and blessing in their lives. Isaiah prophesies that those who have lost sight of God, those who are blind to God, God himself will lead them. He will lead them in ways not know and paths not known. God will lead them and show them his paths and his ways. God’s faithfulness and love will light the path; His care will smooth the ground they will walk that they will not fall. His care, his faithful love will see them through the troubles they face. As the explanation of the First Article of the Apostles’ Creed explains “He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life. He defends me against all danger and guards and protects me from all evil. All this He does only out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me.”

God’s love for His people remains unchanged, constant. By His Grace, the Holy Spirit works faith in our hearts, calling us out of the darkness of sin into His Marvelous Light. God calls us to be His children through the waters of Baptism in which our old Adam is drowned and our new Adam is brought to life. But while we walk this earth, we are both sinner, our old Adam, and saint, our new Adam, a baptized Child of God. The Holy Spirit continues to strengthen our faith through the hearing of the Word of God and the Sacraments. Luther teaches us to recall our Baptism every day by making the sign of the cross and saying the words “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”, reminding ourselves that we are God’s Baptized Children, those given forgiveness, life and salvation. We are to daily put to death our old, sinful Adam, to drown the Old Adam in the waters of Baptism that the new Adam may live as God’s child, walking in God’s ways.

Like the people of Israel, God’s Church and God’s people, God’s children, face uncertain times in this world. Times never seen. Ways never walked. Challenges never faced. Competition for our attention, for our priorities, for our love. Sports, recreation, shopping, and work all compete with Worship for our attention and devotion on a Sunday Morning. And when we worship, our minds wander to other things, worldly things., things to be done outside of church. Yet, throughout the history of the church, even in her darkest days, Jesus’s promise at the end of the Great Commission rings true “Lo, I am with you to the very end of the age.” God has always and will always provide for His Bride, His one Holy Christian Church in all places and times.

Individually, we find ourselves facing very challenging and dangerous times. Times never seen. Ways never walked. Challenges never faced. Corona Virus, COVID-19 has dramatically changed our lives over the last few weeks. Covid-19 has spread quickly. Only a few weeks ago, Covid19 was a concern in China only. And within weeks, we’re now hearing of cases as close as Girard and Springfield.

While others panic and we are tempted to panic, we remain God’s people, called to be His children, heirs of His heavenly kingdom. As His children, God’s unfaithing love is with us. Just as God promised to lead the blind of Israel on paths unseen, to guide them in His ways, to light the path before them, to be with them and to never forsake them, so too he promises to lead us, to guide us in His ways, to light the path before us, to be with us and never forsake us. As Paul tells the Romans ‘ 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good,[h] for those who are called according to his purpose.”

Trinity Lutheran Church, Harvel, IL  
Vicar Joe Nehring
God would not have us live in fear. God would have us lead godly, self-controlled lives. Lives directed by God’s great love for us, lives aligned with God’s will. Aligned with God’s Law as a guide for how to live our lives in response to God’s great love for us, His gift of Jesus to take our sins away; to take our sins as His own and to give us His Righteousness instead. In Luther’s writing, “Whether One May Flee From A Deadly Plague”, Luther points out our God given ability to protect and care for ourselves by recognizing danger and taking reasonable action to avoid danger. However, Luther also considers one’s faith and one’s vocation into the decision-making process as well. For example, Luther encourages those whose vocation is caring for the sick to not abandon the sick unless suitable care can be provided. For Pastors, Luther encourages both properly caring for the sick and dying and allowing some to continue to minister while allowing others to avoid catching the disease. For all, he recommends “not being reckless, tempting God and disregarding everything which might counteract death and the plague” Most of all, Luther recommends prayer and being in the word so that one would be prepared should one be overtaken by disease.

Even in these times of the Corona Virus and COVID-19, God’s love, promises and faithfulness remain true. God’s love drives out all fear. God’s love transcends time and space, the bounds of this world and this life. Psalm 46 tells us “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. “Be still and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth!”

Even though you live and walk in dark times, God is your light and your salvation. God promises to be with us in all things, including sickness and turmoil. God is faithful and he will do it. God calls you to trust him in all things, to honor those in authority over you, and to use your intelligence to avoid danger. So, maintain social distancing, keep praying and being in God’s Word, and wash your hands like Mom always told you. Do what you can to take care of yourself and those around you and rest in God’s promises to care for you and to protect you from all evil and pestilence. Amen.

And now, may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.