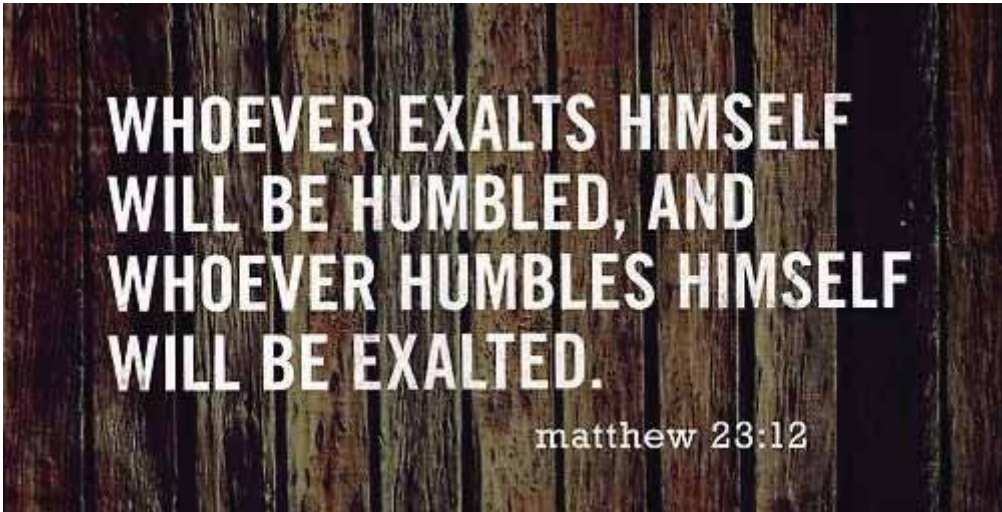


# Zion Lutheran Church



Fourth Midweek Lent  
March 9<sup>th</sup>, 2016

# Welcome to worship!

Our study of the week leading up to Jesus' crucifixion continues this evening as we take a look at Matthew 23 and the very difficult words Jesus speaks to the crowds about the Pharisees and others in the religious and social establishment.

For many of us the image of Jesus we cherish most is that of a gentle shepherd, leading patiently the wandering and confused lambs back to the flock and green pastures. It is important for us that Jesus be gentle, patient, kind and loving. We like to know that we have a savior who would rather look for reasons to save us than to punish us; who would rather withhold his wrath than mercy. The picture we get of Jesus from Matthew 23 is not that of a gentle shepherd, but that of an expert lawyer reading off a list of accusations against a guilty defendant. Over and over Jesus calls down wrath on those he has labeled hypocrites. Over and over again Jesus cut through the external veneer of civil righteousness and exposes the religious establishment for what they really are: whitewashed tombs, children of hell, who have made it their business to lead as many of God's people astray as possible.

This is a difficult image of Jesus for many of us to have. If he can find things wrong—serious things wrong—with people who are respected in the community, have the appearance of righteousness, and are more knowledgeable about the things of God than the rest of us, then what chance do we stand in the court of God's justice? I hope that you will find the Gospel hidden in this text and come to believe that, when it comes to the measure of who you are, God does not look at your thoughts, words, and deeds, but to the cross of Christ. There, and only there, will you find God's forgiveness and love. We have a lot to cover this evening! God bless your time in worship.

--Pastor Duncan

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**ZION EQUIPS, EDUCATES, AND ENCOURAGES BELIEVERS IN CHRIST, SENDING THEM INTO THE WORLD TO SHARE THE GOSPEL.**

Zion Lutheran Church 3197 Washington Pike Bridgeville, PA 15017

# Service of the Word

## *The Prelude*

## *Announcements*

*Opening Hymn:* Hymn Sing

## *The Invocation*

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: **Amen.**

## *Confession and Absolution*

Pastor: If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

People: **But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**

Pastor: Let us then confess our sins to God our Father.

People: **Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. 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 justly deserve your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen.**

## *The Absolution*

## *The Prayers*

Pastor: ...Lord, in your mercy.

People: **Hear our prayer.**

## The Psalm of the Day: Psalm 69

To the choirmaster: according to Lilies. Of David.

Save me, O God! For the waters have come up to my neck.

I sink in deep mire, where there is no foothold;

I have come into deep waters, and the flood sweeps over me.

I am weary with my crying out; my throat is parched.

My eyes grow dim with waiting for my God.

More in number than the hairs of my head are those who hate me without cause;

mighty are those who would destroy me, those who attack me with lies.

What I did not steal must I now restore?

O God, you know my folly; the wrongs I have done are not hidden from you.

Let not those who hope in you be put to shame through me, O Lord God of hosts;

let not those who seek you be brought to dishonor through me, O God of Israel.

For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face.

I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.

For zeal for your house has consumed me,

and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

When I wept and humbled my soul with fasting, it became my reproach.

When I made sackcloth my clothing, I became a byword to them.

I am the talk of those who sit in the gate, and the drunkards make songs about me.

But as for me, my prayer is to you, O Lord. At an acceptable time, O God,

in the abundance of your steadfast love answer me in your saving faithfulness.

Deliver me from sinking in the mire;

let me be delivered from my enemies and from the deep waters.

Let not the flood sweep over me, or the deep swallow me up,

or the pit close its mouth over me.

Answer me, O Lord, for your steadfast love is good;

according to your abundant mercy, turn to me.  
Hide not your face from your servant; for I am in distress; make haste to answer me.  
Draw near to my soul, redeem me; ransom me because of my enemies!  
You know my reproach, and my shame and my dishonor, my foes are all known to you.  
Reproaches have broken my heart, so that I am in despair.  
I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none.  
They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me sour wine to drink.  
Let their own table before them become a snare;  
and when they are at peace, let it become a trap.  
Let their eyes be darkened, so that they cannot see,  
and make their loins tremble continually.  
Pour out your indignation upon them, and let your burning anger overtake them.  
May their camp be a desolation; let no one dwell in their tents.  
For they persecute him whom you have struck down,  
and they recount the pain of those you have wounded.  
Add to them punishment upon punishment; may they have no acquittal from you.  
Let them be blotted out of the book of the living;  
let them not be enrolled among the righteous.  
But I am afflicted and in pain; let your salvation, O God, set me on high!  
I will praise the name of God with a song; I will magnify him with thanksgiving.  
This will please the Lord more than an ox or a bull with horns and hoofs.  
When the humble see it they will be glad; you who seek God, let your hearts revive.  
For the Lord hears the needy  
and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.  
Let heaven and earth praise him, the seas and everything that moves in them.  
For God will save Zion and build up the cities of Judah,  
and people shall dwell there and possess it;  
the offspring of his servants shall inherit it, and those who love his name shall dwell in it.

**Pastor:** This is the Word of the Lord.

**People:** Thanks be to God.

## **The Gospel Reading: Matthew 23**

Then Jesus said to the crowds and to his disciples, “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat, so do and observe whatever they tell you, but not the works they do. For they preach, but do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by others. For they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces and being called rabbi by others. But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brothers. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. Neither be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Christ. The greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

“Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? And you say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel!

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the monuments of the righteous, saying, ‘If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.’ Thus you witness against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? Therefore I send you prophets and wise men and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify, and some you will flog in your synagogues and persecute from town to town, so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. Truly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

Lament over Jerusalem

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to

you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

**Pastor:** This is the Gospel of our Lord.

**People:** **Thanks be to God.**

***Sermon Hymn:*** A Lamb Goes Uncomplaining Forth 438

***Sermon***

***The Offering***

***The Lord's Prayer***

***Benediction***

**Pastor:** Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the saints greet you. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**People:** **Amen!**

***The Recessional:*** My Song is Love Unknown 430

***The Postlude***



† *Service Participants* †

Pastor:	Rev. Duncan McLellan
Organist:	Sandra Quinlan
Elders:	Bill Bishop & Peter Fisher
Acolyte	Elder
Ushers:	Brian Pasquini, Dale Miller, Barb & Wayne Oechslein Ross Chilcott, Dan Harris, Chuck LaJeunesse
Altar Guild:	Janet, Marian Oelschlager