



St. John's Lutheran Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.



The 3rd Sunday in Lent – Matthew 18

March 8, 2026

10:30 Service of the Word

Who are the “little ones” in society? Children? Poor? Weak/Sick? Uneducated/Unintelligent? Inexperienced? Awkward? It’s hard to define, especially in light of what we read in Matthew 18 today. Ultimately we learn that the way God judges people is very different from all the categories we are likely to use.

Welcome to worship today!

If you are visiting with us we invite you to sign the Guest Book in the back of the sanctuary.

Large print bulletins are available on the usher’s stand.

The Zoom feed for this service is available in the nursery.

† GATHERING †

Prelude and Announcements

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, one God,
who journeys with us these forty days,
and sustains us with the gift of grace.

C: Amen.

P: Let us confess our sin before God, who removes our guilt and blots out all offenses.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For seeking worldly delights that deceive us and dishonor you:
Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For desiring self-reliance instead of hungering for your word:
Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For failing to recognize your coming reign,
and for hindering the work of the Spirit: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For drawing from the well of self-serving ambition,
and for disdainning the living water Christ offers: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For disregarding voices of those unimportant to us,
and for distrusting signs of your healing and hope in the world: Gracious
God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: For dwelling in tombs of self-pity and discontent,
and for disregarding Christ's call to come forth to life: Gracious God,

C: have mercy on us according to your steadfast love.

P: God's steadfast love, grace, and forgiveness abound.

Through faith, the free gift of God,
you have been clothed in the righteousness of Christ.
In the name of Jesus Christ, your sins are forgiven.

The Spirit of the One who raised Christ from the dead
dwells in you, pours God's love into your hearts,
and gives you life and peace.

C: Amen.

Gathering Hymn Messiah

(for music, please turn to Hymn 61 in the Songbook)

1. **Someone's shouting from the desert.**
Someone's shouting from the sea.
Someone's shouting from the mountain.
Someone's shouting from the valley.

Chorus

Messiah, come and be our King.
Messiah, come and be our King..

2. **Someone's shouting from the city.**
I am young, I am cold.
Someone's shouting from the country.
I am lonely, I am old.

Chorus

3. **Someone's shouting I am broken.**
Someone's shouting make me whole.
Someone's shouting come and change me.
Someone's shouting save my soul.

Chorus

Dakota Road Music, used by permission

Greeting (2 Corinthians 13:13)

P: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C: And also with you.

Gathering Dialog (Romans 10)

A: The word is near you,

C: on your lips and in your heart.

A: If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord,

C: and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

A: Faith comes from what is heard,

C: and what is heard comes through the word of Christ.

Prayer of the Day

A: Let us pray...

O God, our leader and guide, in the waters of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit we may lift up your life to all the world through your

Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

‡ WORD ‡

First Reading 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

A: [Paul writes] For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. ¹⁴Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. ¹⁵If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. ¹⁹If all were a single member, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many members, yet one body. ²¹The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” ²²On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; ²⁴whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, ²⁵that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. ²⁶If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

After the reading the reader may say: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Scripture Poetry Psalm 131 (*read together*)

**C: Lord, I am not proud,
holding my head too high,
reaching beyond my grasp.**

**No, I am calm and tranquil
like a weaned child
resting in its mother’s arms:
my whole being at rest.**

**Let God's people rest in the Lord,
now and forever.**

Second Reading Matthew 18

B: At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"² He called a child, whom he put among them,³ and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.⁵ Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

D: ⁶"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.⁷ Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!⁸ "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire.⁹ And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.

E: ¹⁰"Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.¹² What do you think? If a shepherd has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray?¹³ And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray.¹⁴ So it is not the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

B: "If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one.¹⁶ But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses.¹⁷ If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.¹⁸ Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.¹⁹ Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done

for you by my Father in heaven. ²⁰For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

D: Then Peter came and said to him, “Lord, if another member of the church sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?” ²²Jesus said to him, “Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.

E: ²³“For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴When he began the reckoning, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him; ²⁵and, as he could not pay, his lord ordered him to be sold, together with his wife and children and all his possessions, and payment to be made. ²⁶So the slave fell on his knees before him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ ²⁷And out of pity for him, the lord of that slave released him and forgave him the debt. ²⁸But that same slave, as he went out, came upon one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and seizing him by the throat, he said, ‘Pay what you owe.’ ²⁹Then his fellow slave fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ ³⁰But he refused; then he went and threw him into prison until he would pay the debt. ³¹When his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their lord all that had taken place. ³²Then his lord summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked slave! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. ³³Should you not have had mercy on your fellow slave, as I had mercy on you?’ ³⁴And in anger his lord handed him over to be tortured until he would pay his entire debt. ³⁵So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart.”

After the reading the reader may say: The Word of the Lord

C: Thanks be to God.

Children’s Sermon

Sermon

Hymn of the Day God, When Human Bonds are Broken
(For music see Hymn 603 in the Red Hymnal)

**1. God, when human bonds are broken
and we lack the love or skill
to restore the hope of healing,
give us grace and make us still.**

2. **Through that stillness, with your Spirit
come into our world of stress,
for the sake of Christ forgiving
all the failures we confess.**
3. **You in us are bruised and broken:
hear us as we seek release
from the pain of earlier living;
set us free and grant us peace.**
4. **Send us, God of new beginnings,
humbly hopeful into life.
Use us as a means of blessing:
make us stronger, give us faith.**
5. **Give us faith to be more faithful,
give us hope to be more true,
give us love to go on learning:
God, encourage and renew!**

Text: Fred Kaan, b. 1929. Music: Williams H. Monk, 1823-1889. Text copyright 1989 Hope Publishing Company

Response to the Word

P: In Christ you have heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.

C: We believe in him and are marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit.

P: Living together in trust and hope, we confess our faith.

**C: I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

I believe in the Holy Spirit,

**the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

A: Build yourselves up on your most holy faith;

C: pray in the Holy Spirit.

(Jude 20)

A: Keep yourselves in the love of God;

C: look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ. *(Jude 21)*

A: If anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation:

C: Everything old has passed away;

behold, everything has become new!

(2 Corinthians 5:17)

Peace

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

C: And also with you.

P: Let us share that peace with one another.

The congregation may greet one another with a sign of Christ's peace.

† THANKSGIVING †

Gathering of Prayers and Offerings

You are invited to write a prayer concern on the small blank slip of paper in your worship bulletin. This slip will be collected by the ushers in the offering plates. The concerns raised will be prayed for later in the service.

Offertory

Hymn of Thanksgiving *As the offering is brought forward:*

Lord Let My Heart Be Good Soil

For music turn to Hymn 713 in the Blue Hymnal

**Lord, let my heart be good soil,
open to the seed of your Word.**

**Lord, let my heart be good soil,
where love can grow and peace is understood.**

When my heart is hard, break the stone away.

When my heart is cold, warm it with the day.

When my heart is lost, lead me on your way.

Lord, let my heart, Lord, let my heart,

Lord, let my heart be good soil.

Text and music: Handt Hanson, b. 1950, Copyright 1985 Prince of Peace Publishing/Changing Church, Inc.

✠ PRAYER ✠

Offering Prayer

P: Let us pray: Gracious God,

C: in the abundance of your steadfast love, you call us from death to life, from silence to speech, from idleness to action. With these gifts we offer ourselves to you, and with the Church through all the ages we give thanks for your saving love in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

P: With the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, let us pray for the church, those in need, and all of God's creation.

Issues raised by the congregation lifted in prayer.

The prayer concludes:

P: Into your hands, gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

C: Amen.

Lord's Prayer

P: Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

**C: 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.**

† SENDING †

Blessing

P: Receive the blessing of the Holy Trinity:
The Father who calls all things into existence,
Jesus Christ, who redeems us,
and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation,
bless you now and always.

C: Amen.

Sending Hymn On Our Way Rejoicing
(For music see Hymn 537 in the Red Hymnal)

**1. On our way rejoicing
gladly let us go.
Christ, our Lord has conquered;
Vanquished is the foe.
Christ without, our safety;
Christ within, our joy;
who, if we be faithful,
can our hope destroy?**

Refrain: **On our way rejoicing;
as we forward move,
hearken to our praises,
O blest God of love!**

**2. Unto God the Father
joyful songs we sing;
unto God the Savior
thankful hearts we bring;
unto God the Spirit
bow we and adore,
on our say rejoicing
now and evermore. *Refrain***

Text: John S.B. Monsell, 1811-1875, alt. Music: Frances R. Havergal, 1836-1879

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Serve the Lord.

C: God's Work. Our Hands.

Matthew 18 – Community Discourse

I. Consideration for the Little People, 18:1-14

- A. Big People and Little People 18:1-5
- B. Against Disdaining Little People 18:6-10
- C. Parabolic Conclusion (Concern for Strays) 18:10-14

II. Discipline and Forgiveness, 18:15-35

- A. Church Discipline and Christ's Presence 18:15-20
- B. "Forgiveness" Without Grace 18:21-22
- C. Parabolic Conclusion (Grace Beyond Imagining) 18:23-35

Worship assistants TODAY:

Greeters and Ushers	Tom and Carol Urbanic
Acolyte	Charlotte Stroup
Counters	Burdie Gillern and Janice Lockwood
Coffee Hour	

Worship assistants for next Sunday, March 15, 2026

Greeters and Ushers	Bruce and Connie Stevenson
Acolyte	Elijah Young
Altar Care	Gary Boisseau
Communion Assistant	Janice Lockwood
Counters	John and Linda Thompson
Coffee Hour	Almost St. Patrick's Lunch

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St. John's Lutheran Church
888 County Road 9, Victor, NY 14564
stjohnsvictor.com (585) 924-5192
The Rev. Jonathan Deibler, Pastor
Dongwon Shin, Pianist