

Gospel and Sermon Transcript -1st Sunday in Lent - February 22, 2026

Welcome to worship.

An exciting day.

Would it be too much to say a gold medal?

There an overtime right now, by the way, just--

what?

Well, I'd rather put a damper on the morning.

What was the final?

2-1.

Well, it can be a silver medal day.

We're still good.

I did see this morning a post on Facebook

from a friend of mine who is also a pastor.

It was, I will not livestream hockey during church.

I will not livestream hockey during church.

So I guess we don't need to.

But delighted you're here.

Today is a lot of things.

It is the first Sunday in Lent.

And we share this period of time with our siblings

of many other faiths, where it's Ramadan for some.

We are approaching Purim in the Jewish faith.

And there are many other faiths across the world
that use this time as a time of humility and reflection,
but also a time of hope.

And so we join our siblings in this stretch of time.

I'll talk a little bit about the service itself in a moment.

But I would like to extend welcomes
to special guests who are here representing our community
and who are representing some of our sibling congregations.

It's a delight that we can be together.

I would like to be sure to invite you
that when communion comes as part of our service today,
we invite everybody.

And really, there's nothing more to say about that.

But it all means all.

When we get to that time, just kind of looking
at the size of a group we are today,

I'll talk you through how I think distributing communion
can work out.

But we'll get there later.

The other thing to talk about is that in this season,
as we kind of let things simmer and grow,
there are some musical items that

will be perhaps new to some of us.

We're going to hear them from now

right on through the season of Lent, one of them

being the first hymn, and the other being

the words we sing before the gospel.

Lucky for us, we have other guests.

We have Sheila Brown, who will be singing a solo today,

but also will be offering some vocal support to help us

as we learn some of these newer passages.

I think I want to say something about expectations

about these things.

When you learn something new, you

don't get it perfect the first time.

I mean, we've learned that from the electricians, right?

That it takes practice.

And so the first go, we are just some people gathered

who love each other, who love life, who love God.

We're just trying to figure this out.

And as we go, our comfort level will increase

as we learn things.

So this might be a good thing for us during Lent,

is to add something, to learn something,

and to let something soak in.

So that's the whole hope behind some of the music
that we are choosing today.

The sermon is probably about half the length
of the introduction.

Just in case anybody's worrying about, oh, man,
you're going to burn the roast today, or what?

[LAUGHTER]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

[MUSIC PLAYING]

The Holy Gospel, according to Saint Matthew, the fourth chapter.

Jesus was led up by the spirit into the wilderness
to be tested by the devil.

He fasted 40 days, 40 nights, and afterwards was famished.

The tempter came and said to him, if you are the Son of God,
then command these stones to become loaves of bread.

But Jesus answered, it is written,
one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that
comes from the mouth of God.

Then the devil took him up to the holy city
and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple.

And he said to him, if you are the Son of God,
throw yourself down, for it is written,
the Lord will command his angels concerning you,
and on their hands they will bear you up,
so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.

And Jesus said to him, again, it is written,
do not put the Lord your God to the test.

Again, the devil took Jesus to a very high mountain,
showing him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

And the tempter said to him, all of these
I will give you if you fall down and worship me.

And then Jesus said, away with you Satan, for it is written,
worship the Lord your God and serve only him.

The devil left him, and suddenly angels
came and waited on him.

The gospel of our Lord.

The Sermon

Grace and peace to you.

May the words we speak and the thoughts we
think bring glory to you, O God, our strength, and our redeemer.

What is it now?

16 days that many bodies have found their way
into recliners and coaches to watch athletes put their bodies
through rigors that seem superhuman.

Oh, there are some annoying smiles here.

So yeah.

Is there any flag waving going on?

Oh, yeah.

Do you know these same bodies find their way
to the same recliners and coaches?

And in real time, we see things that are much less sublime.

We see regimes and dictators that wage war against weaker
bodies, against brown and black bodies,
against gender diverse bodies.

And what do we do with that?

Do we just say, well, that's just the way it is.

That's the way the world works.

That's the way how power works.

I'm going to say to you that God is the havenant.

That Jesus embodies God's response to such things.

And if we look at this episode in Jesus' life where
he is so vulnerable and tempted, we begin to think about what
does it mean to have any sort of power

or any sort of personal agency?

I'm relying fairly heavily on Deacon Sherry Komen today.

She's part of our Eastern Senate.

And she's writing a beautiful set of devotions.

You will find them if you follow our Facebook page.

There's the commercial.

Lutherans connect.

But she speaks about the body, our bodies.

Jesus' body and how we go through these things

that we go through.

And certainly, how Jesus deals with this temptation.

40 days and 40 nights, as Bibles speak, for a very long time,

that Jesus does not eat, does not drink.

Many of us, even when we fast for a simple blood test,

know how we feel the next morning.

Man, if we just get this thing done with,

I can get to Tim's and get those Tim bits and some coffee,

and I'll be fine.

Well, the body does not like privation for a long, long time.

It makes us vulnerable.

It compromises how we think.

And as if on cue, this is where the tempter shows up

and trots out this spiel about the real world and power
and how things are supposed to work.

Well, Jesus, if you are who you say you are,
then these stones, turn them into bread,
and more than daily bread, but so much bread
that you'll be set for life.

Because that's how we think in the real world.

And Jesus, starving body and all, says to the tempter,
you know there's more to life than bread.

There's more to life than just being secure,
but every word that proceeds from God,
every word that has as its end game the restoration of all things.

The story continues, though, as the tempter--
and think about this-- hauls Jesus's body up
to the pinnacle of a temple.

Jesus doesn't go, I think, by consent necessarily.

He's grabbed, and he's hoisted up there.

And the tempter says, now with this body
that I have schlepped up here, if you say and mean who you are,
throw yourself down.

And while we're at it, we'll sweetly deal by misquoting
and twisting a little scripture to justify

this destructive plan.

Jesus' reply, also based in scripture,

is God's not interested in doing parlor tricks to amuse

or prove anything.

Let God be God on God's terms.

Let life be life on life's terms.

And so the tempter frog marches Jesus to a high mountain.

And on this mountain says, all of this real world,

all of this power and this glory and this splendor,

it's yours.

And all you have to do is throw your body down in front of me

and pledge allegiance to me.

And it's here that Jesus says that our allegiance is

to the one who created heaven and earth

and the one whose will it is to restore all things.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

This is only chapter four of Matthew's gospel.

But as Jesus repudiates these temptations,

he does it, body, soul, and spirit, for the rest of his life

and to the end of his life.

[MUSIC PLAYING]

Not too many weeks from now, we will hear again Jesus Sermon

on a mountain of all places where he will say things
like, God blesses the poor.

God comforts those who are born.

God is with those who are brokenhearted,
who hunger and thirst for a better world.

That, yes, a life of mercy, of authenticity.

And I'm going to use the word empathy.

Yes, that's the kind of life that God blesses.

If that's not rebuttal enough, on that same mountain,
there are bodies of people starving
who've come to hear a word of life.

And guess what?

Loaves are multiplied.

And Jesus feeds people.

He gives them bread.

Bread that he refused for himself,
for his personal advantage.

He gives for the sake of the people who are there.

Spoiler alert, it would be toward the end of Jesus' life
that he would be with his friends.

He would take bread.

And he would say, this bread of life,

my life I give for you and for the sake of the world.

Even later in this service, we will come

and we will receive bread and you will hear words broken

for you, given for you.

Because this is what Jesus does.

This is how Jesus bodily repudiates

the so-called claims, the bogus claims of this real world

where brute force or privilege or economic might rule the day.

There's a wonderful tradition in the Black Church

that I won't be able to do justice to,

but I can at least point to.

We live in good Friday, it is proclaimed,

because this real world is really stubborn about just

going away this world of force.

But Sunday's coming.

Resurrection is coming.

And what that means is that even in this world we live in,

as heartbreaking as it can be and as dismaying as it can be,

God gets the last word.

You know what God's last word is?

It might have been no to the tempter, but it's yes to us.

It is yes to creation.

It is yes to the humanity.

It is yes to the restoration of all things.

Sometimes a powerful no leads to a life giving and changing

yes.

Amen.