

## *Fourth Sunday after Epiphany*

**Sunday, January 31, 2021**

**Sunday Morning Worship**

### **Call to Worship**

What does the Holy One require of us?  
To be just, kind, and humble before God.  
Give thanks to God with your whole heart.  
Great are the works of the Lord.  
Now faith, hope, and love abide;  
and the greatest of these is love.

### **Opening Prayer**

Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom by giving your kingdom to the lowly and pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice and perseverance in striving for peace, that by our words and deeds the world may see the promise of your kingdom, revealed in Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

### **Invitation to Confession**

The One who pardons, heals, and strengthens all who repent calls us to name our failings and our hopes. Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and one another.

## **Prayer of Confession**

Holy and all-powerful God, who commands all spirits, comforts those in distress, and casts out destructive forces, we confess that we are unable to do your will. We protect what is familiar and reject what is unknown. We admire those with courage but excuse ourselves when we falter from the truth. We forget that you are always with us, and that with you all things are possible. Forgive us, lead us, make us new. Remove our desires to heed false prophets, and show us your way; in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God. Amen.

## **Silent Confession**

## **Assurance of Pardon**

The God who made us and knows our every thought, hears us now and forgives us all our sin. We have been redeemed through Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior, who is Alpha and Omega, all in all. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## **Prayer of Illumination**

Holy Spirit, your people call out for understanding. Bring to our yearning hearts and minds the truth of your Word: in Jesus' name. Amen.

## **Scripture Reading**

Esther, Chapter 4

*When Mordecai learned all that had been done, Mordecai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and went through the city, wailing with a loud and bitter cry; he went up to the entrance of the king's gate, for no one might enter the king's gate clothed with sackcloth. In every province, wherever the king's command and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, with fasting and weeping and lamenting, and most of them lay in sackcloth and ashes.*

*When Esther's maids and her eunuchs came and told her, the queen was deeply distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordecai, so that he might take off his sackcloth; but he would not accept them. Then Esther called for Hathach, one of the king's eunuchs, who had been appointed to attend her, and ordered him to go to Mordecai to learn what was happening and why. Hathach went out to Mordecai in the open square of the city in front of the king's gate, and Mordecai told him all that had happened to him, and the exact sum of money that Haman had promised to pay into the king's treasuries for the destruction of the Jews. Mordecai also gave him a copy of the written decree issued in Susa for their destruction, that he might show it to Esther, explain it to her, and charge her to go to the king to make supplication to him and entreat him for her people.*

*Hathach went and told Esther what Mordecai had said. Then Esther spoke to Hathach and gave him a message for Mordecai, saying, "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman goes to the king inside the inner court without being called, there is but one law—all alike are to be put to death. Only if the king holds out the golden scepter to someone, may that person live. I myself have not been called to come in to the king for thirty days." When they told Mordecai what Esther had said, Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. For if you keep silence at such a time as this, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another quarter, but you and your father's family will perish. Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." Then Esther said in reply to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews to be found in Susa, and hold a fast on my behalf, and neither eat nor drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish." Mordecai then went away and did everything as Esther had ordered him.*

## **Prayers of Intercession and The Lord's Prayer**

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and glory forever. Amen.

## **Benediction and Sending**



## *Prayers for at Home This Week*

### **Morning Household Prayer**

In the light of your new day, O God, I rise to greet you always on the path in front of me. Let me follow with integrity where you will lead. Give me the courage to know the difference between what is false and what is true. Teach me to love my neighbor as you love me. Amen.

### **Evening Household Prayer**

Heavenly Father, you are the power above all powers, the healer who knows our every need. You have guided me throughout this day and now give me sleep to renew my tired body and mind. Guard me and keep me in your care. Amen.