

Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup> 2026

The Second Sunday in Lent



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[facebook.com/epiphanybastrop](https://facebook.com/epiphanybastrop)**

## WELCOME TO EPIPHANY LUTHERAN CHURCH!

“How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!”  
(Psalm 84:1) We are thankful that God has brought you here with us this morning to hear His Word and receive His gifts! You’ll find everything you need for the worship service in this bulletin and in *Lutheran Service Book*, our hymnal. If you have any questions about our worship service, our congregation, or what we believe, please ask our pastor or any of our members.



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### OUR COMMUNION POLICY:

The Lord’s Supper is celebrated at this congregation by baptized believers in the confession and glad confidence that, as he says, our Lord gives into our mouths not only bread and wine but his very body and blood to eat and to drink for the forgiveness of sins and to strengthen our union with him and with one another. Our Lord invites to his table those who trust his words, repent of all sin, and set aside any refusal to forgive and love as he forgives and loves us, that they may show forth his death until he comes.

Because those who eat and drink our Lord’s body and blood unworthily do so to their great harm and because Holy Communion is a confession of the faith which is confessed at this altar, any who are not yet instructed, in doubt, or who hold a confession differing from that of this congregation and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and yet desire to receive the sacrament, are asked first to speak with the pastor.

For further study, see Matthew 5:23; 10:32; 18:15-35; 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

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### SERVANTS DURING WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

Pastor – Rev. E.B. Holschuh  
Musician – Susan Michael  
Lay Reader – Carole Holschuh  
Assisting Elder – Alex Monroe  
Usher – Clayton Wolf  
Acolyte – Madeline Robb

## AS WE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING:

### *The Word of the Gospel Opens the Eyes of Faith and Fixes Them on Christ Jesus*

The Lord called Abram (Abraham) to leave his home and go to a land that God would show him. He also promised to make of Abram “*a great nation,*” to bless him and make his name great as a blessing to “*all the families of the earth*” (Gen. 12:2–3). “*Abram went, as the LORD had told him*” (Gen. 12:4), and in Canaan “*he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD*” (Gen. 12:8). He “*believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness*” (Rom. 4:3). Here the grace of God is manifested, that He “*justifies the ungodly*” (Rom. 4:5), not by works of the Law, but through faith in His promises. He removes all of our sins and lawless deeds through Jesus Christ, the offspring of Abraham in whom all the Lord’s promises are realized. This forgiveness of sins is the Word of the Gospel, the voice of the Holy Spirit, which “*gives life to the dead*” (Rom. 4:17). It opens the eyes of faith to behold Christ Jesus, the Son of Man lifted up on the cross, “*that whoever believes in him may have eternal life*” (John 3:14–15).

### DIVINE SERVICE SETTING FOUR

<b>Prelude</b>		Selected Music
<b>Welcome and Greeting</b>		Pastor
<b>Announcements</b>		
<b>Opening Hymn</b>	<i>“Today Your Mercy Calls Us”</i>	LSB 915
<i>(stand)</i>		

### CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

*The sign of the cross ✠ may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.*

**P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

*Matthew 28:19b; [18:20]*

**P** Our help is in the name of the Lord,

**C** who made heaven and earth.

*Psalms 124:8*

**P** If You, O Lord, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand?

**C But with You there is forgiveness; therefore You are feared.** *Ps. 130:3-4*

**P** Since we are gathered to hear God's Word, call upon Him in prayer and praise, and receive the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of this altar, let us first consider our unworthiness and confess before God and one another that we have sinned in thought, word, and deed, and that we cannot free ourselves from our sinful condition. Together as His people let us take refuge in the infinite mercy of God, our heavenly Father, seeking His grace for the sake of Christ, and saying: God, be merciful to me, a sinner. *[Luke 18:13]*

**C Almighty God, have mercy upon us, forgive us our sins, and lead us to everlasting life. Amen.**

**P** Almighty God in His mercy has given His Son to die for you and for His sake forgives you all your sins. As a called and ordained servant of Christ, and by His authority, I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✝ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C Amen.**

*[John 20:19-23]*

## **SERVICE OF THE WORD**

**Introit**

Psalm 105:4-7

**P** Seek the LORD and his strength;  
seek his presence continually!

**C Remember the wondrous works that he has done,  
his miracles, and the judgments he uttered,**

**P** O offspring of Abraham, his servant,  
children of Jacob, his chosen ones!

**C He is the LORD our God;  
his judgments are in all the earth.**

*Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.*



**C** Lord, have mer - cy; Christ, have mer - cy; Lord, have mer - cy.

## Salutation and Collect of the Day

**P** The Lord be with you.

*2 Timothy 4:22*

**C** And also with you.

**P** Let us pray.

O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C** Amen.

*(sit)*

## Old Testament Reading

Genesis 12:1-9

<sup>1</sup>The LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

<sup>4</sup>So Abram went, as the LORD had told him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. <sup>5</sup>And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother’s son, and all their possessions that they had gathered, and the people that they had acquired in Haran, and they set out to go to the land of Canaan. When they came to the land of Canaan, <sup>6</sup>Abram passed through the land to the place at Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. At that time the Canaanites were in the land. <sup>7</sup>Then the LORD appeared to Abram and said, “To your offspring I will give this land.” So he built there an altar to the LORD, who had appeared to him. <sup>8</sup>From there he moved to the hill country on the east of Bethel and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east. And there

he built an altar to the LORD and called upon the name of the LORD. <sup>9</sup>And Abram journeyed on, still going toward the Negeb.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Epistle Reading

Romans 4:1-8, 13-17

<sup>1</sup>What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? <sup>2</sup>For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. <sup>3</sup>For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.” <sup>4</sup>Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. <sup>5</sup>And to the one who does not work but trusts him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, <sup>6</sup>just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works:

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,  
and whose sins are covered;

<sup>8</sup>blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin.” . . .

<sup>13</sup>For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. <sup>14</sup>For if it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. <sup>15</sup>For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression.

<sup>16</sup>That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, <sup>17</sup>as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

**A** This is the Word of the Lord.

**C** Thanks be to God.

*(stand)*

**P** The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the third chapter.

**C** **Glory to You, O Lord.**

<sup>1</sup>Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup>This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered him, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.**” <sup>4</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup>Jesus answered, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup>That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup>Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup>The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.**”

<sup>9</sup>Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup>Jesus answered him, “**Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup>Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup>If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup>No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup>And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.**”

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

**P** This is the Gospel of the Lord.

**C** **Praise to You, O Christ.**

*(sit)*

**Hymn of the Day**

*“Lord, Thee I Love with All My Heart”*

LSB 708

**Sermon**

*That is why it depends on faith...*

*Romans 4:1-8, 13-17*

*(stand)*

## **Apostles' Creed**

**☩** I believe in God, the Father Almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His 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 into hell.  
The third day He rose again from the dead.  
He ascended into heaven  
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.  
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
the holy Christian Church,  
the communion of saints,  
the forgiveness of sins,  
the resurrection of the body,  
and the life ✠ everlasting. Amen.

## **Passing of the Peace**

*(sit)*

## **Prayer of the Church**

**☩** Lord, in Your mercy  
**☩** hear our prayer.

## **Offering**

Usher

*(stand)*

## SERVICE OF THE SACRAMENT

### Preface

**P** The Lord be with you.

*2 Timothy 4:22*

**C** And also with you.

**P** Lift up your hearts.

**C** We lift them to the Lord.

*[Colossians 3:1*

**P** Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**C** It is right to give Him thanks and praise.

*[Psalm 136]*

**P** It is truly meet, right, and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, holy Lord, almighty Father, everlasting God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who overcame the assaults of the devil and gave His life as a ransom for many that with cleansed hearts we might be prepared joyfully to celebrate the paschal feast in sincerity and truth. Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven we laud and magnify Your glorious name, evermore praising You and saying:

### Sanctus

*Isaiah 6:3; Matthew 21:9*



**C** Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth a - dored;



Heav'n and earth with full ac-claim shout the glo-ry of Your name.



Sing ho - san-na in the high-est, sing ho-san - na to the Lord;



## The Words of Our Lord

*Matthew 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24  
Luke 22:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25*

**P** Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said: “Take, eat; this is My ✠ body, which is given for you. This do in remembrance of Me.”

**P** In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: “Drink of it, all of you; this cup is the new covenant in My ✠ blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

## Pax Domini

*John 20:19*

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

**C** Amen.

## Agnus Dei

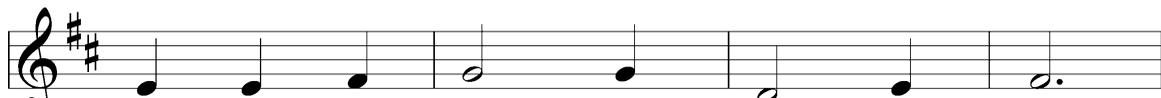
*John 1:29*



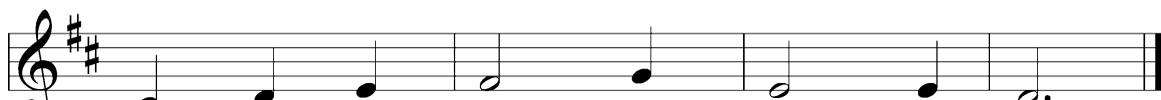
**C** 1 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,  
2 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,



You take the sin of the world a - way;  
You take the sin of the world a - way;



O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,  
Have mer - cy on us, Je - sus Christ,



Have mer - cy on us, Lord, we pray.  
And grant us peace, O Lord, we pray.

(sit)

### Distribution Hymns

*"God's Own Child"*  
*"God Loved the World So That He Gave"*

LSB 594  
LSB 571

(stand)

### Nunc Dimittis

*Luke 2:29-32*

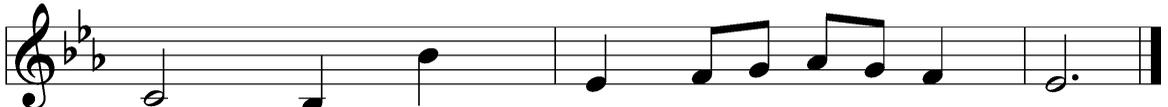
1 O Lord, now let Your ser - vant De -  
2 All glo - ry to the Fa - ther, All

part in heav'n - ly peace, For I have seen the  
glo - ry to the Son, All glo - ry to the

glo - ry Of Your re - deem - ing grace:  
Spir - it, For - ev - er Three in One;

A light to lead the Gen - tiles Un -  
For as in the be - gin - ning, Is

to Your ho - ly hill, The glo - ry of Your  
now, shall ev - er be, God's tri - une name re -



peo - ple, Your cho - sen Is - ra - el.  
 sound - ing Through all e - ter - ni - ty.

**Post-Communion Collect**

**P** Let us pray.

We give thanks to You, almighty God, that You have refreshed us through this salutary gift, and we implore You that of Your mercy You would strengthen us through the same in faith toward You and in fervent love toward one another; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**

**Benedicamus and Benediction**

**P** Let us bless the Lord.

*[Psalm 103:1]*

**C Thanks be to God.**

**P** The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

*Numbers 6:24-26*

**C Amen.**

*(sit)*

**Closing Hymn**

*“My Faith Looks Up to Thee”*

LSB 702

**P** Go in Peace!

**C Serve the Lord!**

**Postlude**

Selected Music

*Initial and ongoing funding for Epiphany Lutheran Church has been received through a grant made possible by the Roy D. and Ingaborg G. Randolph Memorial Endowment Fund.*



## CATECHISM CORNER | *Bite-sized teachings from Luther's Small Catechism*

Written in 1529 in Q&A format, the Small Catechism explores the Six Chief Parts of Christian Doctrine: the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, the Lord's Prayer, the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar.

### TABLE OF DUTIES

#### *Citizens*

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's. Matthew 22:21.

Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake. For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are God's ministers attending continually to this very thing. Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor. Romans 13:5-7.

I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior. 1 Timothy 2:1-3.

Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work. Titus 3:1.

Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake, whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good. 1 Peter 2:13-14.

## SERMON NOTES: Romans 4:1-8, 13-17

### *That is why it depends on faith...*

1. It's only \_\_\_\_\_ forgiveness that \_\_\_\_\_ reconciliation \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The good news of the Gospel is that God in His \_\_\_\_\_ has forgiven \_\_\_\_\_ through the redemptive and sacrificial \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_\_\_ righteousness, it is counted or reckoned as \_\_\_\_\_ righteousness.
4. God didn't say to Abraham, "If you do \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_, I will \_\_\_\_\_ you."
5. In Christ God has made an unconditional \_\_\_\_\_ to us, a \_\_\_\_\_ not based on what we can or must do, but \_\_\_\_\_ based solely on what God Himself has done.
6. What has been achieved, obtained, and perfected by Christ outside of \_\_\_\_\_, is delivered to \_\_\_\_\_ and reckoned to \_\_\_\_\_ in the word of the Gospel.

## INTERESTED IN BECOMING A MEMBER?

The first step to becoming a member of our congregation is to speak with our pastor.

We believe, teach, and confess that we are all broken sinners in need of God's salvation, which He freely gives through His Word and Sacrament. Church is not a club for the sinless— it's a hospital for sinners!

You may become a member of Epiphany Lutheran Church by transferring your membership from a sister congregation of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) or you may receive instruction from the pastor and become a communicant member of Epiphany and the LCMS through Adult Instruction Class or through a profession of faith.

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**Epiphany Events Calendar:** Our congregation calendar is on our website ([epiphanybastrop.org](http://epiphanybastrop.org)); to add an event, please email [secretary@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:secretary@epiphanybastrop.org).

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**Offering:** Should you wish to make your regular tithe or offering online, you may do so at <https://secure.myvanco.com/L-ZKYH/home> or scan this QR code.



**10am Adult Sunday School:** Today we'll begin *Symbols of Our Savior*, a 5-week Lent video study that will explore how God uses simple, even surprising symbols to reveal the depth of Christ's saving work (a cross, a table set for sinners, broken bread, poured wine, and waving palm branches). Join us!

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**Wednesday Midweek Gatherings** during Lent will be held at the Three Oaks location.; midweek gatherings at 6:30pm (light supper, video study) on 3/4, 3/11, 3/18 and 3/25.

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**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED** to help with the dedication service on Saturday, May 2. Contact Linda Hanson or Terri Rosser.

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**Voters' Meeting Today:** We will have a brief Called Voters' Meeting today after the service for the purpose of authorizing one ordained delegate and one lay delegate from our congregation to vote for the President of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

**Lutheran Radio:** Hear The Lutheran Hour each Sunday on station KBUK-FM 104.9 at 7:00 a.m. or on station KANJ-FM 91.5 at 12:30 p.m. or go to [lhm.org](http://lhm.org) for a link to listen to the Lutheran Hour live. You can also listen to The Lutheran Hour on the local Austin station KLBK (590 AM or 99.7 FM) at 7am on Sunday.

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**KFUO Radio**, the broadcast voice of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, shares Christ for you anytime, anywhere on **KFUO.org** via worship services, Bible and theology studies, practical talk programs, and sacred music. Find programs on demand at [kfu.org](http://kfu.org) and wherever you get your podcasts! Find us on social: **@KFUOradio** on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#).

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**RightNow Media:** Every person in our Epiphany family has (and can share) free access to over 25,000 biblical video series for adults, youth, and kids—**RightNow Media** has a free app that’s available on all major streaming devices so you and your family can access content anywhere, anytime. Visit [app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb](http://app.rightnowmedia.org/join/elcb) or scan the QR code.



**ChristianBook Giveback Program:** Did you know that your purchases at Christianbook can help fund our congregation? Just visit [christianbook.com/apps/giveback](http://christianbook.com/apps/giveback) and enter the Giveback ID for Epiphany Lutheran Church: JQWHTN. After this one-time signup, we’ll be eligible to receive 4% cashback on your purchases.

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Epiphany Lutheran Church has a podcast! Our **Peace Be With You** podcast is available on popular podcast apps, but you can always find it at [peacebewithyou.podbean.com](http://peacebewithyou.podbean.com) (or just scan the QR code).



Answers to Sermon Notes:  
1. It's only **true** forgiveness that **makes** reconciliation **possible**.  
2. The good news of the Gospel is that God in His **grace** has forgiven **sinners** through the redemptive and sacrificial **work** of Christ.  
3. **Faith** is **not** righteousness, it is counted or reckoned as **being** righteousness.  
4. God didn't say to Abraham, "If you do **this** or **that**, I will **bless** you."  
5. In Christ God has made an unconditional **promise** to us, a **promise** not based on what we can or must do, but **one** based solely on what God Himself has done.  
6. What has been achieved, obtained, and perfected by Christ outside of **us**, is delivered to **us** and reckoned to **us** in the word of the Gospel.

## PRAYERS AT EPIPHANY

**PRAYER REQUESTS:** Please share any prayer request on the Prayer Requests sheet as you enter on Sunday. You may also email a prayer request, as well as a request to become a part of Epiphany's prayer chain, to [secretary@epiphanybastrop.org](mailto:secretary@epiphanybastrop.org).

Please continue to pray for...

- Rev. Jonathan and Anita Clausing and their 9 children, Emil, Ellie, Ernie, Eunice, Ethan, Eric, Eileen, Elijah, and Emmanuel – missionaries in Eastern Africa, based in Tanzania
- Clayton Wolf
- Carl and Peggy Guetersloh – Parents of Deana Guetersloh-Hanson
- Elaine Ottinger
- Carl and Sandy Sneck

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### THIS WEEK AT EPIPHANY:

#### Sunday, March 1<sup>st</sup>

- 10:00am – Children's Sunday School (Fellowship Area)
- 10:00am – Adult Sunday School (Sanctuary)
- 11:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
- 11:30am – Worship Service with Communion
- Immediately Following the Worship Service – Voters' Meeting

#### Tuesday, March 3<sup>rd</sup>

- 3:00pm – Devotional at Argent Court
- 6:20pm – Elders Meeting

#### Wednesday, March 4<sup>th</sup>

- 6:30pm – Lent Midweek Gathering

#### Sunday, March 8<sup>th</sup>

- 10:00am – Children's Sunday School (Fellowship Area)
  - 10:00am – Adult Sunday School (Sanctuary)
  - 11:00am – Fellowship / Coffee Time
  - 11:30am – Worship Service with Communion
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## Justification and Sanctification 101

Imagine standing in a courtroom, waiting for the verdict. Everything hangs on one word: guilty—or not guilty. The Bible tells us that apart from Christ, the verdict over humanity is clear: “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). We are not just people who occasionally make mistakes; we are sinners by nature. That is why the Lutheran Church speaks so clearly about *justification*.

Justification is a courtroom word. It means to be declared righteous. Not improved. Not placed on probation. Declared righteous.

And here is the heart of the Gospel: God justifies the ungodly (Romans 4:5). Because of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, God pronounces over you the verdict “righteous.” Jesus takes your sin; you receive His righteousness. This happens not because you have earned it, but because Christ has accomplished everything on the cross. We are justified by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Justification means your standing with God does not rise and fall with your spiritual performance. On your worst day, you are justified in Christ. On your best day, you are justified in Christ. The verdict rests on Him, not on you.

So what, then, is *sanctification*?

Sanctification means being made holy. If justification is the verdict in the courtroom, sanctification is what happens after you leave the courtroom and return to daily life. In justification, God declares you righteous. In sanctification, He begins reshaping your life to reflect that righteousness.

Confusion often creeps in here. Some imagine sanctification is what keeps them justified—as though God says, “I’ve declared you righteous—now prove it.” But that would turn the Gospel back into law. Lutheran teaching keeps the order clear: justification comes first, and it is complete. Sanctification flows from it.

Because you are already God's child, the Holy Spirit now works in you. He creates new desires. He convicts you when you sin. He leads you to love your neighbor. He produces fruit—sometimes slowly, sometimes through struggle. Sanctification is not perfection; it is growth. It is daily repentance and faith.

Christians remain, as Luther said, at the same time righteous and sinner—fully justified in Christ, yet still battling the old sinful nature. Think of a tree. Justification is being planted and declared alive. Sanctification is the gradual growth of branches and fruit. The fruit does not make the tree alive; it shows that it is alive.

This is good news for weary Christians. Justification is God's once-for-all verdict over you in Christ. Sanctification is His ongoing work within you by the Spirit. And both are gifts.

