

Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup> 2026

The Fourth Sunday in Lent



**Connect. Grow. Multiply.**

**Mailing Address:**

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**Physical Address:**

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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 – Gina Sanders  
Lay Reader – Carole Holschuh  
Assisting Elder – Alex Monroe  
Usher – Rosie Cabrera  
Acolyte – Calvin Monroe

## **AS WE PREPARE FOR WORSHIP THIS MORNING:**

### ***By His Word of the Gospel, Jesus Calls Us Out of the Darkness into His Marvelous Light***

The Lord is grieved by the spiritual blindness of His people, yet in mercy He does not forsake them. He restrains His anger and keeps His peace, until He opens their ears and eyes to hear and see Him. *“For his righteousness’ sake,”* He magnifies His Word and makes it glorious in the coming of Christ Jesus (Is. 42:21). Jesus turns *“the darkness before them into light”* (Is. 42:16) because He is *“the light of the world”* (John 9:5). The incarnate Son of God does the works of His Father and displays the divine glory in His own flesh *“while it is day,”* until that night *“when no one can work”* (John 9:4). By the washing of water with His Word, He opens the eyes of the blind and grants rest to the weary. Therefore, though *“at one time you were darkness,”* now *“you are light in the Lord”* (Eph. 5:8). By our Baptism into Christ, we live in the eternal day of His resurrection, wherein He shines upon us. As often as we fall back into the darkness of sin, He calls us by the Gospel to *“awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead”* (Eph. 5:14).

### **DIVINE SERVICE SETTING FOUR**

<b>Prelude</b>		Selected Music
<b>Welcome and Greeting</b>		Pastor
<b>Announcements</b>		
<b>Opening Hymn</b>	<i>“O Son of God, in Galilee”</i>	LSB 841
<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.

*Psalm 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 27:4-6*

**P** One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after:  
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

**C** **For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble;  
he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high  
upon a rock.**

**P** And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy;  
I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

**C** ***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.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; 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

Isaiah 42:14-21

<sup>14</sup>For a long time I have held my peace;  
I have kept still and restrained myself;  
now I will cry out like a woman in labor;  
I will gasp and pant.

<sup>15</sup>I will lay waste mountains and hills,  
and dry up all their vegetation;  
I will turn the rivers into islands,  
and dry up the pools.

<sup>16</sup>And I will lead the blind  
in a way that they do not know,  
in paths that they have not known  
I will guide them.

I will turn the darkness before them into light,  
the rough places into level ground.

These are the things I do,  
and I do not forsake them.  
<sup>17</sup>They are turned back and utterly put to shame,  
who trust in carved idols,  
who say to metal images,  
“You are our gods.”  
<sup>18</sup>Hear, you deaf,  
and look, you blind, that you may see!  
<sup>19</sup>Who is blind but my servant,  
or deaf as my messenger whom I send?  
Who is blind as my dedicated one,  
or blind as the servant of the LORD?  
<sup>20</sup>He sees many things, but does not observe them;  
his ears are open, but he does not hear.  
<sup>21</sup>The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness’ sake,  
to magnify his law and make it glorious.

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

**C** Thanks be to God.

## Epistle Reading

Ephesians 5:8-14

<sup>8</sup>For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light <sup>9</sup>(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), <sup>10</sup>and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. <sup>11</sup>Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. <sup>12</sup>For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. <sup>13</sup>But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, <sup>14</sup>for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,  
and arise from the dead,  
and Christ will shine on you.”

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

**C** Thanks be to God.

*(stand)*

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

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

<sup>1</sup>As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup>And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” <sup>3</sup>Jesus answered, “**It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.** <sup>4</sup>**We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work.** <sup>5</sup>**As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.**” <sup>6</sup>Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud <sup>7</sup>and said to him, “**Go, wash in the pool of Siloam**” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing. ...

<sup>13</sup>They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. <sup>14</sup>Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. <sup>15</sup>So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” <sup>16</sup>Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. <sup>17</sup>So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.” ...

<sup>34</sup>They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

<sup>35</sup>Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “**Do you believe in the Son of Man?**” <sup>36</sup>He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” <sup>37</sup>Jesus said to him, “**You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.**” <sup>38</sup>He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. <sup>39</sup>Jesus said, “**For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.**”

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

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

*(sit)*

*(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;



Tru - ly blest is He who comes in the name of the Lord!

## Prayer of Thanksgiving

**P** Blessed are You, O Lord our God, king of all creation, for You have had mercy on us and given Your only-begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed. By His death, He has redeemed us from bondage to sin and death, and by His resurrection, He has delivered us into new life in Him.

Grant us to keep the Feast in sincerity and truth, faithfully eating His body given into death and drinking His life's blood poured out for our salvation until we pass through death to the promised land of life eternal.

Hear us as we pray in His name and as He has taught us:

**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.

**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



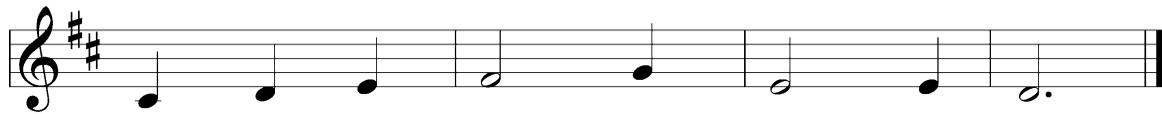
1 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,  
2 O Je - sus Christ, true Lamb of God,



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 Hymn**    *“God Loved the World So That He Gave”*    LSB 571

*(stand)*

# Nunc Dimittis

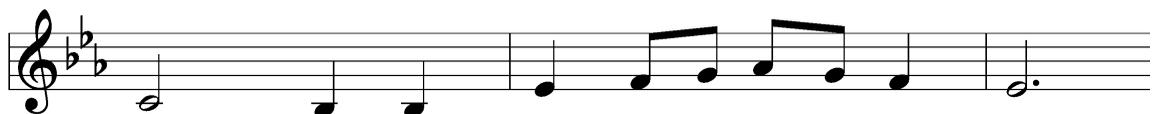
Luke 2:29-32



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**

*“Guide Me, O Thou Great Redeemer”*

LSB 918

**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

#### *Wives*

Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord...as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are as long as you do good and are not afraid with any terror. Ephesians 5:22; 1 Peter 3:6.

## SERMON NOTES: Ephesians 5:8-14

### *“Walk as children of light.”*

1. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.

\_\_\_\_\_ as \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ . (Ephesians 5:8)

2. For you may be sure of this, that \_\_\_\_\_ who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no

\_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ and God. (Ephesians 5:5)

3. If we are \_\_\_\_\_ to living as God has called us to live, we will \_\_\_\_\_ to find out what is

" \_\_\_\_\_ to the Lord."

4. It was fashionable, almost expected, for 1<sup>st</sup>-century Ephesians to engage in certain lifestyles and activities because in their \_\_\_\_\_,

\_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_ it.

5. Christians ought not \_\_\_\_\_ in the same sinful \_\_\_\_\_ as those who are disobedient, but instead try to \_\_\_\_\_ them.

6. The church, body of Christ, is made up of \_\_\_\_\_ called to \_\_\_\_\_ the light of Christ into the darkness of a

\_\_\_\_\_ world.



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).



## 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.



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**10am Adult Sunday School Update:** Our current Lent study, *Symbols of Our Savior*, will wrap up on Palm Sunday (3/29). On 4/12 we'll begin a 19-week video study, *Drive Thru History: Ends of the Earth*, and follow host Dave Stotts as he travels the globe to tell the 2,000-year story of how the Gospel of Jesus Christ reached the Ends of the Earth!

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Join us Wednesday for our **4<sup>th</sup> Lent Midweek Gathering** at the Three Oaks location at 6:30pm (light supper, video study)!

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Upcoming **Zoom Bible study opportunities** on the horizon:

- What if the Bible contains the oldest “map of the world”? In the next one-hour, one-time **FLASH STUDY on Zoom** on Monday 3/23 at 6pm, ***The World According to Genesis 10***, we'll watch an 18-minute video that explores the fascinating Table of Nations in Genesis 10, where the Bible says the nations of the world came from. Register now: [bit.ly/ELC-Nations](https://bit.ly/ELC-Nations)
- Are you weary from your challenges, wounded by your battles, or worried your world is spinning out of control? Have the struggles pilfered the life out of your life? If so, the book of Esther brings welcome news: Relief will come! Our **Thursday 6pm Zoom video study** picks up again on 4/9

(Thursday after Easter) with *You Were Made for This Moment*, a 4-week series based on the OT book of Esther. Register now: [bit.ly/ELC-ThisMoment](http://bit.ly/ELC-ThisMoment)

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**Holy Week Schedule:** Maundy Thursday (4/2) and Good Friday (4/3) services at 7pm at Three Oaks; Easter Sunday (4/5) at SDA - 10am brunch (no Sunday school), 11:30am service. **IMPORTANT NOTE!** Easter Sunday will be our last worship service at the SDA.

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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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**Land Dedication Service May 2<sup>nd</sup>:** Please RSVP by scanning this QR code.



**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 KLBJ (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](https://www.facebook.com/KFUOradio), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/KFUOradio), and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/KFUOradio).

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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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## 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. Herb and Markie Burch – missionaries in Belize
  - Carl and Peggy Guetersloh – Deana's Parents
- 

## THIS WEEK AT EPIPHANY:

### Sunday, March 15<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

### Tuesday, March 17<sup>th</sup>

- 3:00pm – Devotional at Argent Court

### Wednesday, March 18<sup>th</sup>

- 6:30pm – Lent Midweek Gathering

### Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</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
- 

Answers to Sermon Notes:  
1. For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. *Walk as children of light* (Ephesians 5:8)  
2. For you may be sure of this, that *everyone* who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no *inheritance* in the *kingdom* of Christ and God. (Ephesians 5:5)  
3. If we are *committed* to living as God has called us to live, we will *strive* to find out what is "*pleasing* to the Lord."  
4. It was fashionable, almost expected, for 1<sup>st</sup>-century Ephesians to engage in certain lifestyles and activities because in their *world*, *everybody* was *doing* it.  
5. Christians ought not *participate* in the same sinful *acts* as those who are disobedient, but instead try to *expose* them.  
6. The church, body of Christ, is made up of *believers* called to *shine* the light of Christ into the darkness of a *sinful* world.

3-minute



Seminary

## The Unforgivable Sin?

Few passages of Scripture trouble Christians more than Jesus' warning about the "sin against the Holy Spirit." In Matthew 12:31–32, Jesus says, "Every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven people, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven." For many believers, these words raise an unsettling question: *Is there a sin so serious that God will never forgive it?*

To understand Jesus' warning, we must look at the context. In Matthew 12 and Mark 3, Jesus had just cast a demon out of a man. The crowd was amazed, but the Pharisees responded with hostility. Instead of acknowledging God's power at work, they claimed that Jesus was casting out demons by the power of Satan. In other words, they looked at the work of the Holy Spirit and deliberately called it the work of the devil.

Jesus' warning follows directly from that accusation. The Pharisees were not merely confused or doubtful. They were knowingly resisting the truth standing before them. They were rejecting the testimony of the Holy Spirit about who Jesus really was.

Martin Luther explained that the sin against the Holy Spirit is not a single careless word or moment of weakness. Rather, it is the deliberate and persistent rejection of the truth of the Gospel. Luther wrote that this sin occurs when a person "knowingly and maliciously opposes the truth and the work of the Holy Spirit, although he knows it is God's Word."

Why does Jesus say such a sin cannot be forgiven? It is not because God suddenly becomes unwilling to forgive. Scripture repeatedly proclaims that Christ died for all sins. Instead, the problem lies in the person who rejects the very means through which forgiveness comes.

The Holy Spirit's primary work is to bring people to repentance and faith in Christ. Through the Word of God, the Spirit convicts us of our sin and points us to the

forgiveness won by Jesus on the cross. But if someone stubbornly resists that work—refusing repentance and rejecting Christ—then they are rejecting the very forgiveness God offers.

In Lutheran theology, this is closely connected to what Luther called *final impenitence*—dying in unbelief. The unforgivable sin is not a particular act, but a hardened condition of the heart that continually refuses the Spirit's call to repentance.

This teaching also relates to the Office of the Keys, the authority Christ gave His Church to forgive the sins of the repentant and to withhold forgiveness from the unrepentant. When the Church announces forgiveness in Christ, the Holy Spirit is at work through the Gospel. But when someone persistently rejects that message, they are resisting the Spirit who speaks through it.

Yet this passage should not terrify tender consciences. Luther himself offered a comforting reminder: anyone who fears they may have committed the sin against the Holy Spirit has not committed it. The very concern over sin and the desire for forgiveness are signs that the Holy Spirit is still at work in the heart.

The truly hardened person feels no such concern; they simply reject the Gospel altogether. For those who repent and trust in Christ, the promise of Scripture still stands: "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).