

THE 4TH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY  
January 29th, 2023



**CHRIST LUTHERAN CHURCH**

140 Russell Avenue  
St. Catharines, Ontario L2R 1W1  
Church: 905-685-8294  
[www.christlutheransc.ca](http://www.christlutheransc.ca)

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**Office Hours:** Tuesday to Friday—9 a.m. – 12 noon  
**Bulletin Announcements:** Please send to [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca).  
Deadline for submission is Thursday at 9 a.m.

**Pastor:** Pastor Todd Hoeffs (289-362-0113) [pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com](mailto:pastortoddhoeffs@gmail.com)  
**Parish Assistant:** Louise Gondosch (905-329-8579) [parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:parish.assistant@christlutheransc.ca)  
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**Bulletin by email:** Judy Mason [chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:chairman.outreach@christlutheransc.ca)

A recording of Sunday's service will be uploaded to YouTube at:  
[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING\\_TKTi9c\\_OIBbMqGwLw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCpING_TKTi9c_OIBbMqGwLw)

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**Prayer:** Almighty God, because You know that we are set among many and great dangers that by reason of the weakness of our fallen nature we cannot always stand upright, grant us Your strength and protection to support us in all dangers and carry us through all temptations; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**DAILY SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS:**

Monday: Luke 12: 22-33      Wednesday: Jer. 5: 20-24      Friday: Rom. 7: 14-25a  
Tuesday: Jer. 8: 4-7      Thursday: Acts 28: 1-6      Saturday: Hos. 2: 20-23

**Musician:** 10 a.m. – Louise Gondosch  
**Reader:** 10 a.m. – Chris Mason  
**Greeters:** 10 a.m. – James & Wendy Hyatt

**February Worship Schedule 2023**

Sunday, Feb. 5 – Epiphany 5: Scripture & Song Contemporary [Worship & Praise Team]  
Sunday, Feb. 12 – Epiphany 6: Creative Communion  
Sunday, Feb. 19 – Transfiguration: Gospel Melodies Service of the Word  
Wednesday, Feb. 22 – Ash Wednesday Simple Communion with imposition of Ashes  
Sunday, Feb. 26 – Lent 1 – Divine Service Setting 1 [without Communion]

**EVENTS THIS WEEK:**

Today: 9:10—9:40: Confirmation Class (*meet downstairs in youth room*)  
Tuesday: 9:30 – 11:00 a.m. – Precious Moments  
7:30 p.m. – Worship Committee Meeting  
Thursday: 10 -11:30 a.m. – SOUL  
Next Sunday, Feb. 5<sup>th</sup>—Youth Lunch and tobogganing (*see note below*)

**SUNDAY SCHOOL:** Resumes in February with our regular schedule of meeting on the first 2 Sundays of each month (Feb. 5<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>).

**PRECIOUS MOMENTS:** If you or someone you know would benefit from friendly conversation, a time for kids to play & sing, hear a Bible story and make a craft - please join us Tuesdays in the nursery area. Coffee and tea are always on.

**SNOW IS CALLING! All Youth & Confirmands**—get prepared for a fun afternoon of tobogganing NEXT Sunday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. Following the service we will have lunch together (to be determined), then go tobogganing. More details will be emailed.  
**(Thursday, February 23rd at 7 p.m. is our next fun event----stay tuned)**

**VISITATION AND FUNERAL INFORMATION:** The following is the information we have regarding the funeral arrangements for Catherine McBride:

- **Visitation:** Wednesday, February, 8 2023, 4 – 7 p.m. at Henry Walser Funeral Home Ltd., 507 Frederick St., Kitchener, ON N2B 2A5.
- **Funeral Service** will take place on Thursday, February 9, 2023, 1 p.m. at St. John the Evangelist Church, 39 Henderson Street, Elora, ON N0B 1S0

If you plan on attending, please let Carole Pink know so she can give David a rough count on how many will be coming from the church. Thank you.

**BABY SHOWER for Daniela Cruz & Eduardo Farias:** Sunday, Feb. 19, 3:00 – 5:00 pm, in the church basement. Eduardo is a MTS student at the Seminary and one of our adopted students, (which means that our LWML group supports them financially). You may also be aware that Eduardo & Daniela are alvery talented musicians. Their baby is due in March and it is a girl. We would like to invite all the ladies from the congregation to join us. Everyone is welcome and we would love to have you. One of the things on Daniela's list was a crib and the LWML has purchased one, if you would like to contribute to that (just give a donation to Ivy) or buy a small gift of your own to bring. Since it is their 1<sup>st</sup> baby they pretty much need everything. If you think you might attend, please let Lorraine Kaija (or one of the executive – Wendy H., Sue H., Ivy, Kathy or Carole) know so we can plan. If you would like to contribute to the appetizers for the afternoon, speak to Carole.

**MARY MARTHA:** *The following is our Mary Martha Schedule for our Winter/Spring program (more details will follow):*

Feb 21<sup>st</sup> -- **Speaker from the Mobile Closet**

Our guest speaker will be Amy Whittaker, Program Manager. The Mobile Closet provides a free mobile shopping experience with each person choosing their own attire.

***At the moment there is an "urgent need of the following items"***

- \*\*Men's pants (track pants and jeans)***
- \*\*Men's Jackets***
- \*\*Men's underwear (New)***
- \*\*Women's Deodorant***
- \*\*Blankets***

If you are cleaning out your closet and find any of the above items in good condition, we would welcome them in time for our meeting on February 21. *(Bring them in by Sunday, February 19th and leave them by the coat racks in the narthex.)* Thank you in advance!

March 21<sup>st</sup> -- Quilt tying and stamp trimming

April 18<sup>th</sup> -- Speaker-Jude Mersereau

May 16<sup>th</sup> -- Bible Study--Pastor Todd (tentative)

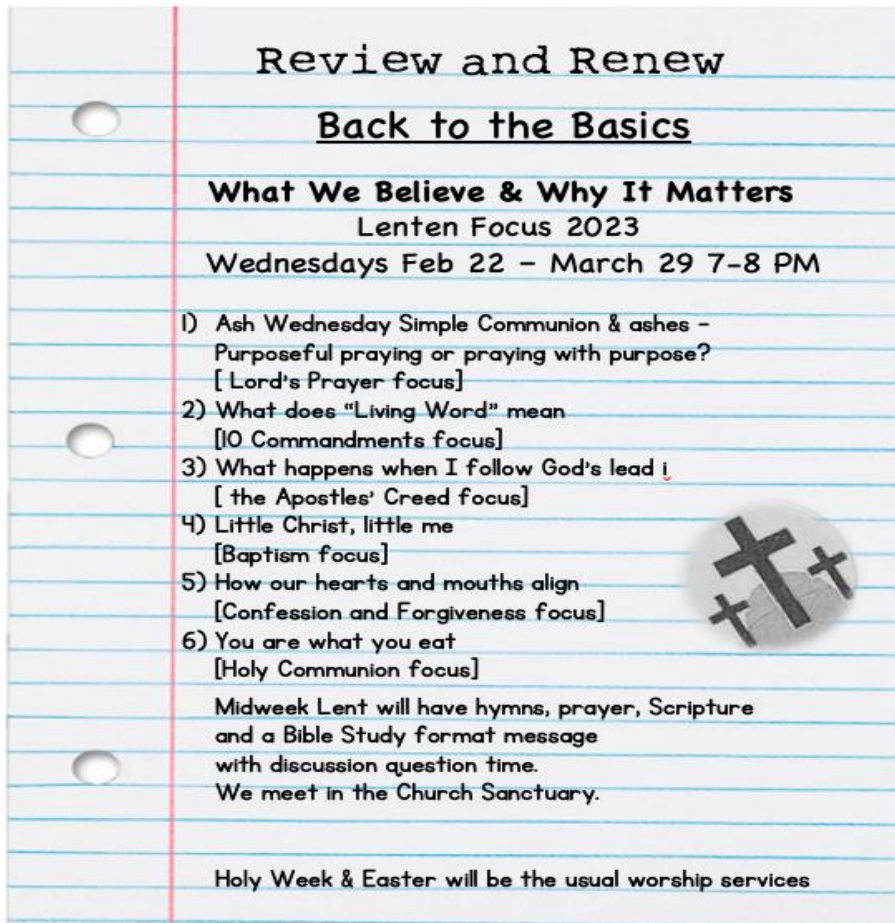
June 10<sup>th</sup> – Potluck

Please feel free to attend any, or all, of our Tuesday night events!  
(If you have any questions, call Lorraine at 905 964 5837

**HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED JOINING THE CHOIR?** Do you like to sing? We could always use more voices and would give you a hearty welcome. We will start practices again on February 6<sup>th</sup> and continuing each Monday evening from 7:30 – 9 pm. We look now towards the Lenten season beginning on Ash Wednesday (Feb 22) until Holy Week in April. Speak to Carole if you might be interested.

**GREETERS:** A sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board and we would ask that anyone who is interested in assisting for the coming year to please sign up. It is a wonderful opportunity to get to know everyone in the congregation.

**2023 DONATION ENVELOPES** are in your Church mailbox. If you don't have a mailbox, please look for your envelopes on the table in the Narthex. If you don't have a mailbox and would like a mailbox, please let Pat know at [secretary@christlutheransc.ca](mailto:secretary@christlutheransc.ca) or call 905-685-8294 (Thursday or Friday morning).



**Review and Renew**  
**Back to the Basics**

**What We Believe & Why It Matters**  
Lenten Focus 2023  
Wednesdays Feb 22 – March 29 7-8 PM

- 1) Ash Wednesday Simple Communion & ashes - Purposeful praying or praying with purpose? [ Lord's Prayer focus]
- 2) What does "Living Word" mean [10 Commandments focus]
- 3) What happens when I follow God's lead ! [ the Apostles' Creed focus]
- 4) Little Christ, little me [Baptism focus]
- 5) How our hearts and mouths align [Confession and Forgiveness focus]
- 6) You are what you eat [Holy Communion focus]

Midweek Lent will have hymns, prayer, Scripture and a Bible Study format message with discussion question time.  
We meet in the Church Sanctuary.

Holy Week & Easter will be the usual worship services

**Lenten Study Material** will be available, before Ash Wednesday, for all who wish to join.

Ash Wednesday will be a regular church service with Communion and imposition of ashes.

"**Review & Renew**" is a Bible Study which will be conducted by Pastor Todd in the church sanctuary the remaining Wednesdays of Lent

Holy Week will be regular church services.



Thanks for the "Bear Paws"

They will be delivered this week to

**Positive Living Niagara**

Please still consider donating, as they are greatly appreciated.



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## What does Cheez Whiz have to do with downtown's St. George's Anglican Church?

Cheez Whiz sandwiches are just one of the breakfast options that are being served at St. George's every day, 365 days a year, for over 25 years. Each morning a team of 6-8 volunteers arrives at 6:30 a.m. to make porridge, coffee, sandwiches and cereal for the many in our community who are unable to provide themselves with a nutritious breakfast.

These volunteers are not just members of St. George's. They manage the program but depend on many others from the community to help with the day-to-day preparation, as well as donations from many in order to feed the hungry.

Christ Lutheran Church has agreed to help by making February "Cheez Whiz" month. We will be collecting donations of jars of CheezWhiz (LARGE SIZE PLEASE, +900g.) to contribute to the pantry there. There will be a box in the narthex, starting next week, where you can place your donation.

If you prefer to donate \$20 or more and receive a tax receipt, place a cheque made out to St. George's Anglican Church in a separate envelope, and label it "for Breakfast Program", and put it in the offering plate. Make sure your name and address are included in order to get a tax receipt. The cheques will be taken to St. George's when the jars of CheezWhiz are delivered. You can also donate directly on their website: [stgeorgesanglican.ca](http://stgeorgesanglican.ca) Click on "Contact" at top right and then go to bottom of screen where it says "Donate Now". Click on "Breakfast Program" where it says FUND and mention you are from Christ Lutheran Church in the message box.

Perhaps you want to help make and serve breakfast too. With as little a commitment as one morning a month to serving as a mentor once a week, there is a place for more help. If you might be interested in volunteering, **Speak to Wendy Kuenzel (289-990-4236) to get contact info.**

# MORNING PRAISE

*Adapted from Lutheran Church of Australia Worship services*

The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany  
January 29, 2023 + 10 AM Worship

## FIRST HYMN:

### “Let Justice Flow”

[Tune: Advent of our God]

*Jane Parker Huber, 1984*

*Amos 5:14–15, 24; 7:7–8*

1 Let jus - tice flow like streams of spark - ling wa - ter, pure,  
2 Let righ - teous - ness roll on as oth - ers' cares we heed,  
3 So may God's plumb line, straight, de - fine our mea - sure true,

En - a - bling growth, re - fresh - ing life, a - bun - dant, cleans - ing, sure.  
An ev - er - flow - ing stream of faith trans - lat - ed in - to deed.  
And jus - tice, right, and peace per - vade this world our whole life through.

<https://bethesdaucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/let-justice-flow-like-streams.png>

## SPOKEN MORNING PRAISE SCRIPTURE RESPONSES:

Open up my lips O LORD!

**And my mouth will sing praises to Your Name!**

Come quickly to Help me, O Lord

**And be speedy to keep me away from harm.**

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

**As it was then, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**


Praise to You, O Christ!

**Alleluia! Alleluia!**

Give glory to our God, our Light and our Life!

**O Come, let us worship Him!**

## PSALM



1 **Sing out, sing out, all voices, shout to the Rock Who saves!**  
**With thanks, bow down before Him, Come near and praise the Lord**  
**For He, our King has blest us; from mountain top and hill-side,**  
**The heights and depths He fashioned, and we belong to Him.**

2 **Bow down, in faith, before Him, for He has made us all!**  
**As sheep of the Great Shepherd, He feeds us as we go.**  
**All praise to God the Father, All praise to God the Son,**  
**And praise to God, the Spirit, Eternal Three in One!**

*(Hymn version of Psalm 96; Tune: "Stand Up! Stand Up for Jesus!" LSB # 660)*

### PSALM 15

*spoken responsively*

*[Easy to read version]*

Lord, who can live in your Holy Tent?

**Who can live on your holy mountain?**

Only those who live pure lives, do what is right,  
**and speak the truth from their hearts.**

Such people don't say bad things about others.

**They don't do things to hurt their neighbors.**

They don't tell shameful things about those close to them.

**They hate those who fail to please God.**

and honor those who respect the Lord.

**If they make a promise to their neighbor,**

they do what they promised.

**If they loan money to someone,**

they do not charge them interest.

**And they refuse to testify against an innocent person,**

even if someone offers them money to do it.

**Whoever lives like this will always stand strong.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord, hear my prayer;

**And let my concerns come before You.**

Let us pray: Almighty God, You know that we are placed in the midst of such great dangers that we cannot stand upright because of our human frailty. Make us whole in mind and body. Support us in all danger and carry us through all temptations. We ask this through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## THE SCRIPTURES

### **The Old Testament:**           *Micah 6:1-8*

Hear what the LORD says: Arise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. Hear, you mountains, the indictment of the LORD, and you enduring foundations of the earth, for the LORD has an indictment against his people, and he will contend with Israel. "O my people, what have I done to you? How have I wearied you? Answer me! For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O my people, remember what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the righteous acts of the LORD." "With what shall I come before the LORD and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

This is the Word of the Lord.   **Thanks be to God.**

### **The Epistle:**               *1 Corinthians 1: 18-31*

[St. Paul writes:] For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

This is the Word of the Lord.   **Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL VERSE:**                               *"Seek Ye First"*

**Seek ye—first, the—King-dom of God; and His right-eous-ness—  
And all these things shall be added un-to you; All-le-lu, All-le-lu---ia.**

*Words: Karen Leffery, © 1972 Maranatha Publishers www. Hymnary.org*

### **The Holy Gospel:** *St. Matthew 5:1-12*

The Holy Gospel, according to St. Matthew, the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter:

**Glory to You, O Lord.**

Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

This is the Gospel of the Lord.   **Praise to You, O Christ.**



1 On Gal - i - lee's high moun - tain Christ gave the great com - mand  
 2 The Lord who, born of Mar - y, Came down as man and died,  
 3 His strength with - in my weak - ness Will make me bold to say  
 4 And not a - lone to na - tions In far - a - way re - treats,

In words of strength and prom - ise Which all can un - der - stand:  
 Who preache to all who lis - tened, For us was cru - ci - fied -  
 How his re - deem - ing pow - er Trans - forms my stub - born clay;  
 But ev - 'ry - where I broad - cast His love through crowd - ed streets:

"All pow'r to me is giv - en To do what I shall choose;  
 This Lord, our liv - ing broth - er, In pow'r at God's right hand,  
 His touch of fire ig - nites me, With cour - age I am sent,  
 The lives that my life touch - es, How - ev - er great or small -

There - fore I send my chil - dren, Their wit - ness I will use."  
 Has cho - sen us to car - ry His truth to ev - 'ry land.  
 My tongue - tied si - lence bro - ken, With grace made el - o - quent.  
 Let them through me see Je - sus, Who served and saved us all.

MESSAGE

EPIPHANY SEASON PRAISE SONG:

"Magnificat"

LSB # 933



1 My soul re - joic - es, My spir - it voic - es—Sing the  
2 His arm now bar - ing, His strength de - clar - ing—Sing the



great - ness of the Lord! For God my Sav - ior Has shown me  
great - ness of the Lord! The proud He scat - ters, Their rule He



fa - vor—Sing the great - ness of the Lord! With praise and  
shat - ters—Sing the great - ness of the Lord! Op - pres - sion



bless - ing, Join in con - fess - ing God, who is the  
hal - ted; The meek ex - alt - ed. Full are the



sole - ly Might - y and ho - ly— Oh, sing the  
hun - gry; Emp - ty, the wealth - y— Oh, sing the



great - ness of God the Lord! His ten - der mer - cy Shall rest se -  
great - ness of God the Lord! Here is the to - ken All that was



cure - ly On all who fear Him, Love and re -  
spo - ken To A - br'am's off - spring God is ful -



vere Him—Oh, sing the great - ness of God the Lord!  
fill - ing—Oh, sing the great - ness of God the Lord!

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THE OFFERING is received.

## THE PRAYERS

Gracious and loving Father, thank you for giving Jesus to bear our sin and failures and raise us all up to walk in newness of life. Thank you that he has won peace for the whole world by his death on the cross. And thank you for bringing us to baptism and faith so that we enjoy the blessings of life and salvation in Jesus' name.

*Gracious God, hear our prayer -- and listen to our call for help.*

Thank you for those families who are united in the faith – support and sustain them by your word, give them hope with the people given to care and comfort them and keep them growing in faith, trust and security.

*Gracious God, hear our prayer -- and listen to our call for help.*

Give the whole church wisdom in witnessing to the truth of Christ in our times of upheaval and confusion. May the church have winsome influence in making your truth and love known to all who need it. Make our own endeavours at outreach and service bear fruits in your holy name.

*Gracious God, hear our prayer – and listen to our call for help.*

We pray for peace in the world wherever there is division and violence. Bring an end to hatred and hostility, and bring people to live together as children of your one human family. Ease the pain of those suffering from the shootings in the US, ease the violence in Ukraine. Bring loyalty and harmony to all married couples, to parents and children, and strengthen all family relationships.

*Gracious God, hear our prayer – and listen to our call for help.*

Supply all that we need for our daily life, dear Father. Thank you for the rain and sunshine you give to us in good measure, and please prosper the work of our farmers. Give healing to those who are not well at this time. Support and strengthen those we know with special needs and whom we now name silently in our hearts... *(brief silence)*

*Gracious God, hear our prayer – and listen to our call for help.*

Gracious God and Father, teach us to see your own dear Son in the face of all who suffer. May we be your instruments of love and healing in the world. We ask this through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**THE LORD'S PRAYER:** *“Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name...”*

**LUTHER'S MORNING PRAYER:** I thank You, Heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, Your dear Son, that You have kept me this night from all harm and danger. And I pray that You would keep me this day, also, from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please You. For into Your hands I commend myself, my body and soul and all things. Let Your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe have no power over me. Amen.

**CLOSING GREETING & BLESSING :**

Let us praise the Lord. **Thanks be to God!**

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

LAST HYMN:

"Here I Am, Lord"



1 "I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my peo - ple cry.  
2 "I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my peo - ple's pain.  
3 "I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame.



All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.  
I have wept for love of them. They turn a - way.  
I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.



I, who made the stars of night, I will make their dark-ness bright.  
I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love a - lone.  
Fin-est bread I will pro-vide till their hearts be sat - is - fied.



Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?"  
I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?"  
I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?"

*Refrain*



Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord? I have heard you



call-ing in the night. I will go, Lord, if you



lead me. I will hold your peo - ple in my heart.

Text: Daniel L. Schutte, b. 1946  
Music: Daniel L. Schutte  
Text and music © 1981 OCP Publications, Inc.

HERE I AM, LORD  
7 7 7 4 D and refrain

[https://www.taylorpublications.com/index.php?route=product/product&product\\_id=8754](https://www.taylorpublications.com/index.php?route=product/product&product_id=8754)

**REV. TODD HOEFFS**

**EPIPHANY 4**

**Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1: 18-31**

**“Victory In Vulnerability”**

**January 29, 2023**

“The foolishness of God is wiser than men and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”

A very important and memorable passage for me personally. It's the 1<sup>st</sup> verse of Scripture I learned as a kid in Catechism class. At the age of 10 I didn't read much into it but somehow I knew it was special. Life has taught me to treasure the powerfully simple, comforting message. When we are weak within ourselves we are strong in the Lord. Many times it wound up becoming a pivotal passage. Strong encouraging word to a struggling art teacher / sub -- Forcing upon my heart a lessening of my own desire And replace it with a humble trust in God. Going with His guiding presence, so often quiet and hard to hear--The day I contacted the RC school I had taught in inner city Buffalo. The school principal Nun was just about to offer me a full-time art teaching job.

Upon receipt of my letter, they joyously accepted this and encouraged me on this path of a “greater calling” as they put it. If that wasn't divine timing, I don't know what is. Foolishness of God is wiser than me/us. That He'd want me to be His pastoral vessel for everyone in Church life. I would have to trust that His strength would rest in my own weakness. Something that has carried me all through the years, A trust which has given way for hope and peace to grow. And what exactly gives confidence to a trusting faith –The message of Jesus' cross. We see images of crosses. I wear one. We like seeing crosses. We wear the cross on our forehead and heart from the day of our Baptism, A cross only God can see. The outside world will only see it by your Christ-like way of living. Don't be fooled thinking people of the world hates Christians because of the cross. We are not threatened here because of our message. Satan hates us because of Jesus' cross. Those who live evil hate Jesus' cross.

People of our world need help. So often they never see Christ-like living from Christian people.

Hence, Apostle Paul's message of the cross. We proclaim Christ crucified. A message.

A Word. Signs and wisdom are things people usually see and trust. An educated Corinthian community responds well to images and intelligence. Jews are used to signs from God through the prophets. Greeks are used to philosophical learning and education. Both inevitably trust in the senses. Corinth is a seat of corruption and vice: the disparity between rich and poor painfully evident and, as one might expect under such circumstances, rampant selling of anything you imagine for pleasure. In Paul's time, Corinth is where fortunes are made and lost quickly—The epitome of lavish life on the Vegas Strip. When trusting God is hard, Trusting people is harder still. So trust in ideas. Thoughts. Ideals. Some define human wisdom as the art of living well to be happy. To take care of YOU – organize life to escape any and all problems. Especially any sort of pain or suffering.

Usually this promotes only immediate, emotional responses This causes fogginess is making life choices Always seeking a feeling or a sign – Lost in depression and failure, it's so easy to discover It's not possible to be happy at all – when the truth is, we can't be happy alone, without others, apart from God. Satan wants us isolated, alone, like islands, disconnected from any Word Apart from his lies. Saint Paul speaks somewhat negatively about this wisdom because in the name of human wisdom Jesus got condemned to death. Jesus disturbed the established order, called social hierarchies into question and changed peoples' notions of God and His Kingdom. He appeared to be a politically dangerous fool, even a crazy man. Real wisdom is found in the message, more specifically, the language of the cross. Language here is beyond the mere fact of the cross, and is centered in the context of Jesus' entire life –human, divine, perfect, holy, suffering – dying --ending in the glorious resurrection light – in the overarching plan of God's covenant with us to save us. “Message” is the Greek word logos, which to the Jews could be recall the Torah or Biblical wisdom, while to the Greeks it stood for the reason behind the cosmic order. In using that word Paul

shows that message of the cross is contrary to both the prideful religious mind and the arrogant reasoned mind. The logos of the cross is not merely good advice to us, telling us what we must do to be saved. Rather, that logos is a message about what God has done. More than that, the cross itself is HIS power at work doing what we cannot do. The message of the cross is not a system of thought or a way of life; Its God's working to save those who cannot save themselves, over and over, no matter how hard they think or how well they live. The cross looks foolish because Jesus really did nothing to escape it – that He really should have found a road around the cross. That's what human wisdom expects. Death = failure. Especially dying innocently. The message of the cross proves the power of love and just how far Jesus' gift of his life reaches. The rejection of God by the "wise", and He turned it into total solidarity with the "fools" that we are. The condemnation of Jesus for blasphemy, and Jesus turned it into the forgiveness of those who crucified him and the return of all humanity back to God. So the Christian's idea of happiness is enlightened by the foolishness of Jesus' love. The art of living well conforms to that total gift of self that is the life—and the death—of Jesus! Our Lord's strength within our weakness is God's power at work. Jesus was never seen as wise or strong by most of the eyes which looked at Him. He's born to a mother and father among the lowest of the low within Jewish society. Carpenters were your basic "fix it" people who patched up people's things because they didn't own any land. While he had an interesting and once promising career as a travelling rabbi and gained quite a following, Jesus' popularity waned early on. Jesus was supposed to be the Messiah and play that role. But he failed to garner the support of enough people. Further, He failed to devise the necessary strategy to cast the Romans out of Palestine, the most necessary part of the messiah's job description. After a brief parade, betrayal, hasty trial and unnecessary torture, Jesus is publicly executed on a cross, along with two others. While many people survived the torture for days, Jesus died after only about 6 hours. Alone. Even all but one of His disciples runs away and hides. Looks like Jesus lost. It. All. Paul tells a different story. He claims, rather unbelievably, that the one who lost so completely was not only loved by God, chosen by God, called beloved at His Baptism, but represents the very wisdom and the way of God to bring change to the human race. Change from the old ways of sin to the new way of grace. The cross is not the failure of Jesus but his triumph, and not only Jesus' triumph but it is God's triumph over evil. The cross marks the new way of living which trusts that God will bring out the good for those who love and follow Him. Jesus' cross shows how God works in the world – He enters deeply into the pain of human existence and the pain caused by human failure and meets us there. The Judean leaders wanted signs – they wanted results.

The Greeks wanted to make sense of things.

Both of these are a part of a culture in which people boast, that is: seek power over each other in status games. God doesn't play status games. God isn't about earthly winning. God invites us into the celebration of a game already won, a war long over, a fight already resolved. A celebration where all people are seen as God's children, worthy of love, full of dignity, and respect. In Jesus' acceptance of the cross rather than to take up arms, Jesus shows the wisdom of God to risk His very self so that we might see the foolishness of our struggling world.

We all grew up in a culture which has been progressing in self-serving directions--

- The way things are
- The reality of the situation
- What common sense tells us
- That the ladder climbers always win
- It's each person for themselves
- The cream rises to the top
- That we are powerless to change things
- Nice people finish last

But God's wisdom is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. But NOT because God is stronger by comparison – He's perfect almighty divine and we are mere mortals.... The message of the cross proves that what is stronger than human strength is DIVINE VULNERABILITY—God is willing to be weak, to be one of us, to become lower than us, to even die. God is willing to be a loser to change the game so that all can win together.

God joins human beings in our weakness and vulnerability.

He takes the side of the most vulnerable in the chaos of society's injustice. This means that we can learn to embrace our own vulnerability and know that we are loved precisely there.

This means that when we are vulnerable within a culture, that we can follow Christ and work for real peace, peace for ourselves and peace for our neighbor. We can be the very faces of Christ in accompanying the vulnerable in our culture as we together seek peace and hope. Because the message of the cross speaks of our identity.

We are baptized into Christ to be Christ to the world.

As we do this, we will likely experience tensions, conflict and suffering.

We can ignore the devilish so-called "debater of the age" – his words are hollow. We live in the power of Christ who is the source of our life, crucified and risen, and we know a different wisdom.

A trusting wisdom. A growing wisdom from a life experiencing both loss and success, mercy and grace, sin and forgiveness with a new start every day.

[Mention CONFIRMANTS embracing the cross message & Bible reading]

What looks foolish completes and fills up God's vulnerable power at work in you, me, in the church, for the good of all.

Amen.