

===== *in view of* =====

G O D ' S

M E R C Y

A S E R I E S O F S E R V I C E S

===== *for the Season of Lent* =====

Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy,
to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God.

Romans 12:1

W O R S H I P K I T

————— *in view of* —————

G O D ' S M E R C Y

A SERIES OF SERVICES *for the Season of Lent*

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in view of

G O D ' S M E R C Y

A S E R I E S O F S E R V I C E S

for the Season of Lent

ABOUT “IN VIEW OF GOD’S MERCY”

Lent is a season when we take a look at our lives in view of God’s mercy toward us in the sacrifice of his Son for us on the cross. We, in turn, are called by God, especially during this time of repentance and reflection, to be living sacrifices for him, displaying our devotion to him in word and deed. Jesus helps us to see the richness of God’s mercy in his life, death and resurrection. The services in this worship series for Lent by theology professor David Peter focus our eyes of faith on the meaning behind God’s mercy made manifest in Christ.

For each service, the kit contains: order of service • sermon • children’s sermon • prayers • music for the accompanist

The kit includes everything you need for each service as well as digital files with the text of the entire kit in .rtf (rich text format), newsletter/bulletin notices, hymns, visual media recommendations, contemporary music song suggestions, pdfs of the worship bulletins as well as promotional inserts and posters for you to print on your own and PowerPoint documents of all the services with images and text (along with a copyright release) for use on screens.

ORDERING INFORMATION

Additional resources are available from Creative Communications for the Parish. Contact us for current pricing and availability. Call us at 1-800-325-9414. Or visit our website:

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G O D ' S M E R C Y

A S E R I E S O F S E R V I C E S
for the Season of Lent

WEEK 2:
MERCY IN SUFFERING

ORDER OF SERVICE

By his wounds you have been healed. 1 Peter 2:24

Invocation and Call to Worship

P The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C Amen.

P My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

C Be not far from me, for trouble is near.

P Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning?

C Be not far from me, for trouble is near.

P O my God, I cry by day and by night, but I find no rest.

C Be not far from me, for trouble is near.

P Deliver my soul from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dog.

C O you my help, come quickly to my aid.

P You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen.

C O you my help, come quickly to my aid.

P You who fear the LORD, praise him! All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him.

C O you my help, come quickly to my aid.

P For he has not despised or abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, and he has not hidden his face from him.

C But God has heard when we cried to him. Amen.

Jesus, I will ponder now on your holy passion;
With your Spirit me endow for such meditation.
Grant that I in love and faith may the image cherish
Of your suff'ring, pain and death that I may not perish.

Make me see your great distress, anguish and affliction,
Bonds and stripes and wretchedness and your crucifixion;
Make me see how scourge and rod, spear and nails did wound you,
How for them you died, O God, who with thorns had crowned you.

Yet, O Lord, not thus alone make me see your passion,
But its cause to me make known and its termination.
Ah! I also and my sin wrought your deep affliction;
This indeed the cause has been of your crucifixion.

Grant that I your passion view with repentant grieving.
Let me not bring shame to you by unholy living.
How could I refuse to shun ev'ry sinful pleasure
Since for me God's only Son suffered without measure?

Confession and Forgiveness

P The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD" (Numbers 21:7). We likewise confess to God that we have often spoken against him and have sinned.

C Holy God, we confess our sin to you. When adversity and suffering have come our way, we have complained and spoken against you. We have forgotten your many benefits and blessings to us. We have not trusted you through the hard times, but have resented you

and resorted to our own strength. Forgive our iniquity, and pardon our sin.

P We cry to you for mercy.

C **Lord, have mercy. Christ, have mercy. Lord, have mercy.**

(Please silently reflect on the fact that though our sin is great, God's mercy is greater.)

P Hear the good news! God's Word declares that "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). In the mercy of Almighty God, his Son Jesus was given to die for you to remove the guilt of your sin. For Christ's sake God forgives you all your sin and gives you eternal life. His mercy endures forever because his love for you is steadfast.

C **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day

Children's Sermon

Old Testament Reading Numbers 21:4-9

Epistle Reading 1 Peter 2:21-25

Gospel Reading Matthew 8:14-17

Stricken, smitten and afflicted, see him dying on the tree!
'Tis the Christ, by man rejected; yes, my soul, 'tis he, 'tis he!
'Tis the long-expected Prophet, David's Son, yet David's Lord;
Proofs I see sufficient of it: 'Tis the true and faithful Word.

Tell me, ye who hear him groaning, was there ever grief like his?
Friends through fear his cause disowning, foes insulting his distress;
Many hands were raised to wound him, none would intervene to save;
But the deepest stroke that pierced him was the stroke that justice gave.

Ye who think of sin but lightly nor suppose the evil great
Here may view its nature rightly, here its guilt may estimate.
Mark the sacrifice appointed, see who bears the awful load;
'Tis the Word, the Lord's anointed, Son of Man and Son of God.

Here we have a firm foundation, here the refuge of the lost:
Christ, the Rock of our salvation, is the name of which we boast;
Lamb of God for sinners wounded, sacrifice to cancel guilt!
None shall ever be confounded who on him their hope have built.

Sermon

Offering

Prayers

P Almighty and merciful God, we approach your throne of grace today as those who struggle with hardships and suffer with pain.

C Lord, have mercy.

P When we encounter the brokenness of this world and the suffering that it brings—such as natural disasters, economic reversals and financial losses—restore us with your healing power so that we might rest secure in you as our mighty fortress.

C Lord, have mercy.

P When we experience broken relationships and the suffering that these bring—such as estrangement of family members, alienation from friends and conflict within congregations—restore us with your healing power so that we might seek reconciliation and peace.

C Lord, have mercy.

P When we experience broken bodies and the suffering that it brings—such as illness, injury and disability—restore us with your healing power so that we might live in health once again.

C Lord, have mercy.

P When we experience broken minds and the suffering that it brings—such as with mental illness, neurosis and dementia—restore us with your healing power so that we might know of your love.

C Lord, have mercy.

P When we experience broken spirits and the suffering that it brings—such as depression, despair and desperation—restore us with your healing power so that we might have hope.

C Lord, have mercy.

P When we encounter the death of loved ones and the sorrow that it brings, restore us with your abiding comfort so that we might trust in your victory over death.

C **Lord, have mercy.**

P When we encounter our own death and the terror that it brings, restore us with your resurrection power so that we might live eternally in your glory.

C **Lord, grant me your grace to trust you in times of suffering and sorrow.**

P All these things we pray in the name of Jesus the Suffering Servant.

C **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

P May the merciful God, who suffered the pain of the cross for you and your salvation, strengthen you to trust him through hardship according to his good and gracious will, through Jesus Christ to whom be the glory forever!

C **Amen.**

Alas! And did my Savior bleed, and did my sov'reign die?
Would he devote that sacred head for such a worm as I?

Was it for crimes that I had done he groaned upon the tree?
Amazing pity, grace unknown, and love beyond degree!

Well might the sun in darkness hide and shut his glories in
When God, the mighty maker, died for his own creatures' sin.

Thus might I hide my blushing face while his dear cross appears,
Dissolve my heart in thankfulness, and melt mine eyes to tears.

But drops of grief can ne'er repay the debt of love I owe;
Here, Lord, I give myself away: 'Tis all that I can do.

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G O D ' S M E R C Y

A S E R I E S O F S E R V I C E S

for the Season of Lent

WEEK 2:

MERCY IN SUFFERING

SERMON

- The **Sermon** is delivered by the pastor:

☐ Benjamin Franklin once quipped that there are two certainties we all encounter—death and taxes. But I would add another certainty—suffering. We all face suffering in life, whether it be sooner or later. All you need do to realize that is to watch or read the daily news. We hear of terrorist attacks and threats of retaliation. Innocent people are injured and killed by artillery in war and by gunfire on the streets of our cities. Natural disasters, be they earthquakes in California or hurricanes on the gulf or tornados in the heartland devastate property and lives. Children go hungry. The poor struggle. Injustice deprives citizens of their rights and freedom.

Closer to home, there is more personal evidence that suffering surrounds us. The economy goes sour and we lose employment. Families experience the turmoil of domestic conflicts and even breakups. We witness our own bodies deteriorate as we age. Disease, cancer and injury become our uninvited companions. Lost dreams and depression plague us. Sooner or later, we all experience suffering of some kind. Suffering surrounds us all. Eventually it afflicts us all.

The existence of suffering has led many people to reject the Christian faith. Famous voices such as Bertrand Russell and Steve Jobs regarded the reality of pain and sorrow to be the clinching argument against the idea of a loving God. But the Bible does not ignore the messy reality of the world. Nowhere does Christianity deny the existence of pain and suffering. Indeed, the Bible unequivocally declares that this is a fallen world, a broken planet.

Especially during the season of Lent do Christians acknowledge the reality of suffering. But Lent provides us with a new lens through which to view suffering. That is through the lens of God's mercy. In it we see a God who entered into our suffering to bear our suffering and to bring healing to us.

The Cause of Suffering – Sin

Why is there suffering in the world? That's a heavy question, but the Bible says that ultimately the answer is because there is sin in the world. God created the world without suffering, but when humanity rebelled against God's perfect plan, sin along with suffering was introduced. Genesis 3 describes the consequences of the human race's fall into sin. It says that at that time suffering entered the world and thorns were introduced into our lives.

So ultimately the problem is not pain and suffering. It is not the crime and illness and catastrophes that plague life. These are only symptoms of a deeper problem that has infected all humanity. That problem is sin. And each of us has been infected with sin.

Nevertheless, these results from a sinful and fallen world are painful. Suffering is real. In the book *Migrants, Sharecroppers and Mountaineers*, a poverty-stricken mother describes an incident in which her husband lost his temper at a preacher who was speaking on the topic of suffering in a church service:

“Then [my husband] did the worst thing he could do: he took the baby, Annie, and he held her right before his face, the minister's, and he screamed and hollered at him ... He told him that here was our little Annie, and she's never been to the doctor, and the child is sick ... and we've no money, not for Annie or the other ones or ourselves ... Then he told the reverend he was like all the rest, making money off us, and he held our Annie as high as he could, right near the cross, and told God He'd better stop having the ministers speaking for Him, and He should come and see us Himself” (quoted in *Where Is God When It Hurts & Disappointment with God* by Philip Yancey, © 1999. Zondervan, 222).

This migrant father sums up the dilemma of pain and suffering about as well as it can be expressed. Why are there sick children, and why is there no money and little hope among so many? Perhaps you have held similar feelings as these. But there is one point in the father's tirade in which he was mistaken. He demanded that God come down and see for himself the suffering in this world. Yet God did exactly that. And not only did God see what suffering is

like, he also experienced it to the full. He felt what it's like. For above all people in history, Jesus Christ suffered most.

II. The Cure of Suffering – the Cross

God's own Son came down to this fallen world and experienced its imperfection, its ugliness, its cruelty, its suffering. Christ was treated with more injustice than we will ever know. He was betrayed by friends and rejected by his people. He was humiliated, stripped, mocked, ridiculed and beaten. Our text from 1 Peter 2 (verses 22-23) describes Jesus's suffering: "He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

The cross on which Jesus died was not a pretty sight. It was meant to produce supreme suffering. Christ was nailed to the cross. His back, which was shredded from the scourging that preceded the crucifixion, scraped against the splintered lumber of the beam. Jesus' body was in continuous contorted movement as he struggled from a slow suffocation. His pain was excruciating. In fact, that is where we get the word. *Excruciating* literally means "out of a crucifixion." Crucifixion is the most terrible experience of pain and suffering that our minds can imagine.

More than anyone else, Jesus Christ tasted the curse that was brought about by our first parents and their sin. But he also brought about the reversal of that curse. The cross before which the migrant father held up his baby is the very symbol that God shared in our pain and suffering and death. Not only did he share that, Christ experienced it in our stead. We can, therefore, trust the Lord through all of our suffering because he endured it with us and for us.

Yes, God knows what suffering in this world is like. Jesus is a wounded healer. Because of Christ's sacrificial and substitutionary suffering, we are made whole and healed from our greatest ailment, the sickness of sin. The apostle Peter wrote in our text: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness." (1 Peter 2:24). Because Jesus has definitively dealt with the cause of suffering—sin—we can trust him to deal compassionately with the symptoms of our suffering—the pains and sorrows we experience in life.

III. A New Perspective on Suffering – God's Mercy

Because Jesus endured suffering on our behalf, we can endure as well. The text from 2 Peter 2:21 reminds us: "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps." Entering the Christian life does not mean that suffering is automatically withdrawn from us. In fact, it may mean just the opposite, that we will experience more hostility from the world, just as Jesus did. Jesus suffered, and we