

## **Sunday, February 18, 2024, First Sunday in Lent**

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### **Introduction**

On Ash Wednesday the church began its journey toward baptismal immersion in the death and resurrection of Christ. This year, the Sundays in Lent lead us to focus on five covenants God makes in the Hebrew Scriptures and to use them as lenses through which to view baptism. First Peter connects the way God saved Noah's family in the flood with the way God saves us through the water of baptism. The baptismal covenant is made with us individually, but the new life we are given in baptism is for the sake of the whole world.

### **Prayer of the Day**

Holy God, heavenly Father, in the waters of the flood you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **First Reading: Genesis 9:8-17**

<sup>8</sup>God said to Noah and to his sons with him, <sup>9</sup>"As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, <sup>10</sup>and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the domestic animals, and every animal of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark. <sup>11</sup>I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." <sup>12</sup>God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: <sup>13</sup>I have set my bow in the clouds, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. <sup>14</sup>When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, <sup>15</sup>I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. <sup>16</sup>When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth." <sup>17</sup>God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

## Psalm 25:1-10

<sup>1</sup>To | you, O LORD,  
I lift | up my soul.

<sup>2</sup>**My God, I put my trust in you; let me not be | put to shame,  
nor let my enemies triumph | over me.**

<sup>3</sup>Let none who look to you be | put to shame;  
rather let those be put to shame | who are treacherous.

<sup>4</sup>**Show me your | ways, O LORD,  
and teach | me your paths.**

<sup>5</sup>Lead me in your | truth and teach me,  
for you are the God of my salvation; in you have I trusted all | the day long.

<sup>6</sup>**Remember, O LORD, your compas- | sion and love,  
for they are from | everlasting.**

<sup>7</sup>Remember not the sins of my youth and | my transgressions;  
remember me according to your steadfast love and for the sake of your good- | ness,

O LORD.

<sup>8</sup>**You are gracious and up- | right, O LORD;  
therefore you teach sinners | in your way.**

<sup>9</sup>You lead the low- | ly in justice  
and teach the low- | ly your way.

<sup>10</sup>**All your paths, O LORD, are steadfast | love and faithfulness  
to those who keep your covenant and your | testimonies.**

## Second Reading: 1 Peter 3:18-22

<sup>18</sup>Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, <sup>19</sup>in which also he went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison, <sup>20</sup>who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. <sup>21</sup>And baptism, which this prefigured, now saves you—not as a removal of dirt from the body, but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup>who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers made subject to him.

## Gospel: Mark 1:9-15

<sup>9</sup>In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. <sup>10</sup>And just as he was coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens torn apart and the Spirit descending like a dove on him. <sup>11</sup>And a voice came from heaven, “You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.”

<sup>12</sup>And the Spirit immediately drove him out into the wilderness. <sup>13</sup>He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts; and the angels waited on him.

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

Prayers and introductions from  
[SundaysAndSeasons.com](http://SundaysAndSeasons.com)

## Prayers of Intercession

Trusting in God's promise to reconcile all things, let us pray for the church, the well-being of creation, and a world in need.

*A brief silence.*

God our truth, the ark of your church has room for many expressions of faith. We give thanks for voices that challenge and awaken your people (*especially that of Martin Luther, renewer of the church, whom we commemorate today*). Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our maker, you remember your covenant with the earth and its inhabitants. Rescue communities and creatures hurting from natural disasters. Preserve species and habitats endangered by human carelessness and disregard. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our light, you know our weakness. Free all who govern from the temptations of power. Sustain all who work for human rights in every nation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our help, you care for your beloved children. Comfort all who are grieving, ill, afraid, in pain, or in despair. Feed hungry people living in food deserts. Protect any at risk from exploitation and abuse. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our home, you gather your people. Grant us health and safety as we assemble. Keep us mindful of any who are homebound, hospitalized, convalescing, or traveling. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God our hope, you promise eternal life to your beloved children. We remember with gratitude those who have lived and died in faith. Grant that we may also dwell with you in everlasting peace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Accompany us on our journey, God of grace, and receive the prayers of our hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **A reflection for this First Sunday in Lent**

### **The Power of Water**

Water is an integral part of the created order. Water sustains and fosters life; too little or too much water can end it. A glance at the news headlines points out the destructive power of water's presence or absence: In the United States alone, 2011 saw severe droughts afflict several parts of the country. On the opposite end of the spectrum, floods ravaged the Plains states in the spring and summer, displacing from their homes many people who live near rivers and streams. For those dwelling on or near the Eastern Seaboard, hurricane season is a tense time every year. Yet we need water as much or more than we need food, shelter, or the other "staples" of human life. Since ancient times we have established our communities near sources of water. We cannot survive long without it.

The tension between the saving and destructive powers of water fills today's lectionary readings. The waters of the flood overwhelmed the world in the days of Noah, yet 1 Peter reminds us that God delivered Noah and his family from death. The Holy Spirit descends on Jesus only after his baptism by John, yet the Spirit immediately drives Jesus into the desert—a place defined by its lack of water. Through water and the word, in baptism our old, sinful self is put to death, and we are reborn as children of God. But the current that flows through these paradoxes is this: in death and life, in flood and drought, God remains faithful. As the psalmist reminds us, God's mercy and steadfast love "are from everlasting."



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