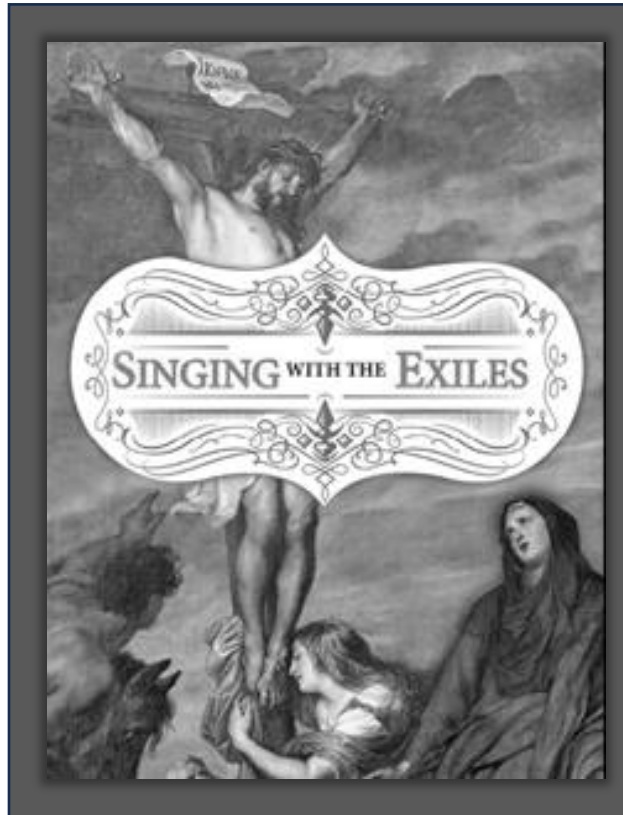


The Order of Worship for **MIDWEEK LENT 4**

“Breaking Down the Gates”
March 26, 2025



Judean exiles in Babylon were weary! They were stuck with sights and sounds that were so different. How they longed to be free! Enter Cyrus, a Persian king, whom God calls His “anointed one” (Isaiah 45:1). When we feel as though the devil has locked the gate and thrown away the key, God sends us Jesus, who is the Anointed One! During His earthly ministry, He opened eyes and ears and hearts—He even opened graves! At one point Jesus promised, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE CROSS-LCMS

*Welcoming all to walk together
toward abundant life in Christ.*

SINGING WITH THE EXILES

Gathered by the waters of Babylon, Judean exiles wistfully wondered: Is God for real? If so, does He really care about us? What does our future hold? Will this ever change? God's people had watched their world shatter into a million pieces. They were demoralized and disillusioned. Their disaster looked terminal.

Do you feel this way? Does it look as though your current problems are more than you can bear? Do you find yourself asking: Why did this happen? Why did God allow it? Is there any order in the world? Will God really deliver on what He said?

Isaiah answers these questions in chapters 40–55 of his book. He announces that just when Israel's history seemed closed and controlled by hopeless Babylonian imperial policy, to the shock and surprise of everyone the Lord will stir up a king named Cyrus and a new exodus will explode in the desert! A Servant will be wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. And barren Zion will be given so many children that, like the old woman in the shoe, she won't know what to do! Standing behind these marvelous promises is God's almighty Word. "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever" (Isaiah 40:8). The exiles are going home!

That's why we are "Singing with the Exiles" as they are restored to their home.

This Lent, Isaiah 40–55 will shape us through...

<i>Lent Five</i>	"Get Out!"	(Isaiah 48:17–22)
<i>Lent Six</i>	"One Little Word Can Felt Him"	(Isaiah 49:1–6)
<i>Maundy Thursday</i>	"He Prepares a Table"	(Isaiah 49:7–13)
<i>Good Friday</i>	"All"	(Isaiah 52:13–53:12)
<i>Easter</i>	"We Are Going Home"	(Isaiah 55:6–13)

This Lent, our Call to Worship/Confession and Absolution, is drawn from the Seven Penitential Psalms, so named by Cassiodorus (c. AD 485–c. AD 585) in the sixth century AD. For centuries, Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, and 143 have served as a source of prayer and reflection during Lent. Their honest confessions invite us to turn to our Lord with the same candor and humility.

PRE-SERVICE MUSIC & RINGING OF THE BELL

INVOCATION

- P The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. (2 Corinthians 13:14)
- C **Amen.**

OPENING HYMN

In the Cross of Christ I Glory

LSB 427 sts. 1–3

1. In the cross of Christ I glory,
Tow'ring o'er the wrecks of time.
All the light of sacred story
Gathers round its head sublime.
2. When the woes of life o'ertake me,
Hopes deceive, and fears annoy,
Never shall the cross forsake me;
Lo, it glows with peace and joy.

3. When the sun of bliss is beaming
Light and love upon my way,
From the cross the radiance
streaming
Adds more luster to the day.

Text: John Bowring, 1792–1872
Text: Public domain

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

Psalm 51

P Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

C **Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.**

P For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

C **Against You, You only, have I sinned and done what is evil in Your sight, so that You are proved right when You speak and justified when You judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.**

P Surely You desire truth in the inner parts; You teach me wisdom in the inmost place.

C **Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.**

P Hide Your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.

C **Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me.**

P Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

C **You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.**

P The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, You will not despise.

C **And so we come to You, O God, with broken spirits and contrite hearts, trusting only in the merits of Jesus to cleanse, heal and forgive us.**

Silence for private confession of sins

P Upon this your confession, I by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word proclaim the grace of God to all of you and in the stead and by the command of our Lord Jesus Christ I announce to you the full and complete pardon for all your sins; in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

C **Amen.**

RESPONSE

In The Cross Of Christ I Glory

LSB 427 st. 4

4 Bane and blessing, pain and pleasure
By the cross are sanctified;
Peace is there that knows no measure,
Joys that through all time abide.

Text: John Bowring, 1792–1872

Text: Public domain



PRAYER OF THE DAY

P The Lord be with you,

C **And also with you.**

P Let us pray. O almighty God, merciful Father, You opened a way for your ancient people Israel to return from Babylon to the Promised Land and through Your Son, Jesus, You open up for us the way to everlasting life. Free us from the chains that bind us so that we follow where You lead, all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C **Amen**

THE SCRIPTURE LESSONS HAVE AS THEIR THEME “GOD’S GIFT OF FREEDOM”

OLD TESTAMENT

Isaiah 45:1–8

¹ Thus says the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed: ² “I will go before you and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ³ I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who call you by your name. ⁴ For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, I call you by your name, I name you, though you do not know me. ⁵ I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, ⁶ that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. ⁷ I form light and create darkness; I make well-being and create calamity; I am the LORD, who does all these things. ⁸ “Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

EPISTLE

Hebrews 6:13–20

¹³ For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴ saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” ¹⁵ And thus Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. ¹⁶ For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷ So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, ¹⁸ so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. ¹⁹ We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, ²⁰ where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C **Thanks be to God.**

THE GOSPEL LESSON

Matthew 9:27–34

²⁷ And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed him, crying aloud, “Have mercy on us, Son of David.” ²⁸ When he entered the house, the blind men came to him, and Jesus said to them, “Do you believe that I am able to do this?” They said to him, “Yes, Lord.” ²⁹ Then he touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith be it done to you.” ³⁰ And their eyes were opened. And Jesus sternly warned them, “See that no one knows about it.” ³¹ But they went away and spread his fame through all that district. ³² As they were going away, behold, a demon-oppressed man who was mute was brought to him. ³³ And when the demon had been cast out, the mute man spoke. And the crowds marveled, saying, “Never was anything like this seen in Israel.” ³⁴ But the Pharisees said, “He casts out demons by the prince of demons.”

P This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

APOSTLES’ CREED

C 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.

1. Jesus, refuge of the weary,
Blest Redeemer, whom we love,
Fountain in life's desert dreary,
Savior from the world above:
Often have Your eyes, offended,
Gazed upon the sinner's fall;
Yet upon the cross extended,
You have borne the pain of all.
2. Do we pass that cross unheeding,
Breathing no repentant vow,
Though we see You wounded,
bleeding,
See Your thorn-encircled brow?
Yet Your sinless death has brought us
Life eternal, peace, and rest;
Only what Your grace has taught us
Calms the sinner's deep distress.

3. Jesus, may our hearts be burning
With more fervent love for You;
May our eyes be ever turning
To behold Your cross anew
Till in glory, parted never
From the blessed Savior's side,
Graven in our hearts forever,
Dwell the cross, the Crucified.

Text: Girolamo Savonarola, 1452–98; tr. Jane F. Wilde, 1826–96, alt.
Text: Public domain



SERMON

“Breaking Down the Gates”

Pastor Menk

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

(1 Timothy 2:1-4)

- P Lord God, Almighty Father, when guilt stands in our way, You promise,
C **“Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.”**
(Isaiah 1:18)
- P Father, when gloom and doom stand in our way, You say,
C **“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.”** (Isaiah 9:2)
- P Lord, when dryness and deadness stand in our way, You transform
C **“The desert into pools of water, and the parched ground into springs.”**
(Isaiah 35:7)
- P O God, when huge obstacles stand in our way, You make the solemn pledge,
C **“Every valley shall be raised up, every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain.”** (Isaiah 40:3)

- P And when blindness and captivity and bondage stand in our way, Your Servant comes to
- C **“Open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.” Your rescue is greater than we imagine, more than we deserve. (Isaiah 42:7)**

P Hear us, loving Father, as we pray the family prayer, “Our Father . . . ”

BENEDICTION

- 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 T give you peace.
- C **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds *LSB 524 sts. 1–4*

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer’s ear!
It soothes our sorrows, heals our
wounds,
And drives away our fear. | 3. Dear name! The rock on which I
build,
My shield and hiding place;
My never-failing treasury filled
With boundless stores of grace. |
| 2. It makes the wounded spirit whole
And calms the heart’s unrest;
’Tis manna to the hungry soul
And to the weary, rest. | 4. O Jesus, shepherd, guardian, friend,
My Prophet, Priest, and King,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end,
Accept the praise I bring. |

Text: John Newton, 1725–1807, alt.

Text: Public domain

SILENT PRAYER

Lord Jesus, we thank You that we are not locked in with no way out. We are free! Amen.

POSTLUDE

Acknowledgments

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For next week read Isaiah 48:17–22 and answer these questions:

1. In Isaiah 48:20, the Lord calls His people to leave Babylon. What sin is God calling you to leave today?
2. When God led His people out of Egypt, what did He provide for them (Isaiah 48:21)? How will He provide for you?
3. What do we forfeit if we refuse to believe God’s promises (Isaiah 48:22)?

SERMON NOTES

“Breaking Down the Gates”

“This is what the LORD says to His messiah, to Cyrus, ‘I will go before you and break down the gates of bronze.’” (Isaiah 45:1)

You are locked _____ with no way _____.

“I will raise up Cyrus in My righteousness: He will set My exiles free.” (Isaiah 45:13; cf. Isaiah 44:28)

CYRUS IS _____ BREAKER

GOD’S RESCUE: _____ THAN WE IMAGINE, _____ THAN WE
DESERVE

“I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members.”
(Romans 7:23)

“I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.” (Romans 7:14)

“I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.”
(Romans 7:21)

JESUS IS GOD’S _____ BREAKER