

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY
16th March Second Sunday in Lent

HYMNS: 71 385 98 80

INTROIT: Psalm 91:1-13

Answer me when I call, O my righteous God! You have made wide room for me in my distress. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer! O sons of man, how long will my glory be disgraced? How long will you love what is empty and search for what is a lie? Know that the LORD has singled out for Himself the one who is devout. The LORD will hear when I call to Him.

Tremble and do not sin! Tell this to yourselves on your beds and be silent!

Offer righteous sacrifices and trust in the LORD!

Many are saying, "Who will show us anything good?" Lift up the light of Your face on us, O LORD!

You have put more joy in my heart than people have when their grain and their new wine have increased.

Let me at once lie down in peace and sleep! For You alone, O LORD, will make me dwell in safety.

COLLECT: O God, You see that of ourselves we have no strength. By Your mighty power, defend us from all adversities that may happen to the body and from all evil thoughts that may assault and hurt the soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

Welcome to all worshipping with us today!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

READINGS: Jeremiah 26:8-15 Jeremiah threatened with death.

Philippians 3:17-4:1 Many live as enemies of the cross of Christ.

Luke 13:31-35 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you murder and stone those sent to you.

Jeremiah 26:8-15

⁸ When Jeremiah had finished speaking everything that the LORD had commanded him to speak to all the people, the priests, the prophets and all the

people took hold of him and said, “You will certainly die! ⁹ Why have you been prophesying in the name of the LORD, saying, ‘This Temple will be like Shiloh, and this city will be desolate, with no one living in it?’”

Then all the people gathered around Jeremiah in the Temple of the LORD.

¹⁰ When the officials of Judah heard about these things, they came up from the king’s palace to the Temple of the LORD and sat down at the entrance of the New Gate of the Temple of the LORD. ¹¹ Then the priests and the prophets told the officials and all the people, “This man should be condemned to death because he has been prophesying against this city, as you have heard!”

¹² Then Jeremiah told all the officials and all the people: “The LORD has sent me to prophesy against this Temple and against this city all the Words that you have heard. ¹³ Now therefore, reform your ways and your deeds and listen to the voice of the LORD, your God, that the LORD may relent about the calamity that He has pronounced against you! ¹⁴ However, as for me, look! I am in your hands. Do to me what you think is good and right! ¹⁵ Only you should know for certain that, if you put me to death, you will certainly make yourselves, this city and those who live in it responsible for killing an innocent person. For in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these Words in your hearing.”

Philippians 3:17-4:1

¹⁷ My fellow-Christians, keep on imitating me and taking note of those who live according to the example we are giving you! ¹⁸ For I have often told you and now tell you with tears, that many live as the enemies of the cross of Christ.

¹⁹ In the end they will be destroyed. Their own feelings are their god. They glory in their shame, and their minds are on earthly things. ²⁰ For we are citizens of heaven and look for the Lord Jesus Christ to come from heaven as the Saviour.

²¹ He will change our humble bodies and make them like His glorified body, because He has the power by which He can make everything subordinate to Himself.

^{4:1} So, my dearly loved fellow-Christians, for whom I long, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord!

Luke 13:31-35

³¹ Right at that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and told Him, “Leave here and go away! For Herod wants to kill You.”

³² He answered them, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Look! Today and tomorrow I am driving out demons and working healings and on the third day I shall be perfected!’ ³³ Nevertheless I must be on My way today, tomorrow and the next

day, because it is impossible that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem.
³⁴ “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one that kills the prophets and stones those who have been sent to it! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, but you have not been willing!
³⁵ Look! **Your house is abandoned** to your disadvantage. I also tell you, you certainly will not see Me until the time comes when you say, ‘**Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!**’”

THE GOOD NEWS THAT WE HAVE A SAVIOUR WHO CONQUERS ALL EVIL

Sermon for the 2nd Sunday in Lent 2025

Genesis 3:14-15

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

The text for our sermon today is Genesis 3:14-15: **Then the LORD God told the snake: “Because you have done this, you are cursed, more than any domestic animal and any wild animal. You will crawl on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life. ¹⁵ I shall make you and the woman hostile to each other and shall make your descendants and her Descendant hostile to each other. He will crush your head and you will crush His heel.”**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

While World War I was being fought, it was sometimes called “the war to end all wars.” Now, we can appreciate how that would have been an inspiring hope and an appealing dream. But it wasn’t long before people learned that *that hope* had been misplaced and *that dream* would not be coming true, as *that war* was followed by another—and another—and so on, right down to today. Jesus’ words of wars and rumours of wars still ring true today.¹

That does not mean, though, that the dream has to die or that we should give up all hope of a “war to end all wars.” In fact, from our text for today from Genesis, our Lord gives us the good news of the *real* “war to end all wars.” This

¹ Matthew 24:6

Good News from the beginning is that that war has indeed been fought—and the outcome is certain because the decisive victory has already been won. Jesus Christ has won the victory over all our enemies for us.

The war began in heaven when one of the angels whom God had created good and holy was not content to remain in the blessed condition God had given him. Instead, he rose up in rebellion against God, and, as a result, he and his fellow rebels were cast out of heaven. The war between good and evil had begun—not because God wanted it, but because the war had been brought to Him.

The fallen angel who had led that rebellion, known as Satan, then expanded the war to another front by bringing it to earth. Up to that time, everything in this creation had been “very good” and perfect. Adam and Eve, the first of mankind, had been at peace with each other and enjoyed the perfect peace of unobstructed fellowship with the Lord their God. But evil could not stand to see such love and peace, so Satan invaded God’s good creation.

Concealing himself in the form of a snake, Satan came to the garden and took aim *directly* at Adam and Eve’s relationship with the Lord. Through his subtle questions, suggestions, and lies, he invited them to question whether they could believe what God had said to them and, therefore, to question God’s love for them. He led them to believe that God did not care for them but was holding them back. If they were to eat of the one tree of which God had told them not to eat, the snake said, they would not die as God had warned; instead, *they would then be just like God themselves.*

As soon as the woman and her husband who was with her followed Satan into doubt and discontent, their battle with him was already lost. As they ate the forbidden fruit, their eyes were opened, and they saw that this was no longer the paradise they had known. The peace there had been between Adam and Eve and between God and mankind was no more.

The war that had begun in heaven had come to earth. God’s good creation, which He had intended to be a paradise for us to enjoy, had by our sin been turned into a battlefield.

With that battle lost, it may have appeared that the tide of the war between good and evil had turned, but Satan had very little time to savour the moment before his celebration was cut short. Having confronted Adam and Eve with their sin, the Lord then turned to Satan and addressed him.

The Lord’s first words were directed to the snake that had served as Satan’s mouthpiece. He said, “**Because you have done this, you are cursed, more than**

any domestic animal and any wild animal. You will crawl on your belly and eat dust all the days of your life.”

Though spoken to the snake Satan had used, those words were also a message to Satan himself. From that time on, the low status of a snake would serve as a stark depiction of Satan’s low status, and the picture of a snake eating dust would serve as a preview of Satan’s eventual defeat.

Next, the Lord spoke more specifically about Satan’s defeat as He gave an overview of the course this war would take. The Lord said to Satan, **“I shall make you and the woman hostile to each other and shall make your descendants and her Descendant hostile to each other. He will crush your head and you will crush His heel.”** Here the Lord promises the coming Christ and His victory over Satan. In the Bible, we see three phases in God’s gracious work that culminate in this victory.

First, God would make Satan and the woman hostile to each other. Satan had led Eve away from the Lord, but the Lord would graciously draw her back to His side. In this way, the Lord would begin His work of reversing the damage Satan had done.

Completing that work would take time, though. In the second phase of the conflict described by the Lord, He would make Satan’s offspring and the woman’s offspring hostile to each other. All these offspring would be physically descended from Eve. Some, in their opposition to the Lord, would actually bear more resemblance to Satan, and so they could be figuratively described as his offspring. Others, though, would share Eve’s faith and so would be her offspring not only by descent but in a spiritual sense as well. Satan’s offspring (all unbelievers down through time) would oppose the faithful offspring of Eve (all believers down through time), but the Lord would at all times preserve on earth a faithful remnant of believers.

And from that faithful remnant would eventually come one specific offspring, a **“Descendant,”** in whom the third and climactic phase of conflict would be fulfilled. That one specific Offspring of the woman would engage Satan directly in battle. He would crush Satan’s head, and Satan would crush His heel. Though it would come at a painful cost, that promised Offspring—the promised Descendant—would emerge victorious. Satan would go down in defeat, and the war would be over.

Exactly as the Lord promised this war would go, it has gone.

First, the Lord did establish hostility between Satan and Eve by drawing her to

faith. That faith shines through in the fourth chapter of Genesis, as Eve gives birth to her firstborn son and gratefully glorifies God for that gift, saying, “*I have acquired a man, the LORD*” (4:1). Martin Luther and others have pointed out that those words from Eve could be seen as Eve expressing hope that *her first son would already be the promised Saviour*.

If that was Eve’s hope for her first son, she would be sorely disappointed. Instead, in that son, Cain, we see the beginning of the second stage of conflict foretold by the Lord. As Cain murdered his faithful brother Abel, the conflict between Satan’s offspring and Eve’s offspring was clearly underway—a conflict that then continued generation after generation.

Finally, and most importantly, the third and climactic phase of conflict foretold by the Lord also came to fulfillment. One who was born of a woman went head-to-head in battle against Satan.

This promised One was Jesus Christ—true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary. This promised Son came to redeem us—to set us free from the powers of sin, death, and Satan. In John’s First Letter, he puts it this way: “*The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil*” (1 John 3:8).

And how did he destroy Satan’s work and set us free? By redeeming us with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, Jesus secured our freedom. By paying for our sins in full and reconciling us to the Father, Jesus took away Satan’s right to lay any claim on us. He destroyed his power. The writer of Hebrews reminds us how Jesus came and shared in our humanity when he writes, “*that through death (Jesus) might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the Devil, and that He might release all those who were subjected to slavery all their lives by fear of death*” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

As the Lord had said would happen, that victory did come at a tremendous cost to our Redeemer, as that snake Satan struck Him a cruel, painful, and deadly blow. But in His very death, Jesus, the promised Descendant, utterly defeated Satan by saving all of us from Him. He crushed the snake’s head. He proclaimed that victory to the defeated powers of darkness in His descent to hell, and He publicly demonstrated that victory in His victorious resurrection from the dead.

That does, though, raise some significant questions. If Jesus has already won the victory over the devil for us, why do we still see the influence of the devil in this world, and why does God call on us in Scripture still to be sober-minded and watchful, resisting the devil who prowls around like a roaring lion looking

for someone to devour?² Why does it feel like the war is not over, and why does it often feel like we're not faring so well in the battles we face daily in our hearts and lives?

Often, we forget that by His death and resurrection, Christ has *already* dealt Satan the decisive, fatal blow that guarantees the outcome of the war. But the war won't come to its *final completion* until Judgment Day, when Christ's victory will be complete. Meanwhile, we live in the gap between the "already" and the "not yet"—that period when the decisive battle has already been won, but the fighting is not yet over; Satan and his forces will fight until the bitter end.

As we wait, we do so with full assurance of the final result. Though life can feel like a battle as we continue struggling against Satan, the world, and our own sinful nature, we know how it all ends. We know that, in the end, we win because Christ has won the victory for us and shared His victory with us. By God's grace, through faith in Christ Jesus, victory is ours.

Looking back to the victory Christ won for us on the cross, we see the Good News that Christ has overcome all our enemies in the true "war to end all wars"—and that because of Him, a life without war is not just a dream, but an assured reality that we shall experience someday—all because of the victorious Christ. With Paul, we say, "*Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" (1 Cor. 15:57). Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we praise You for Your marvellous grace to sinful people. You dwell in a light that no one can approach, but You have now shown Yourself to us in Your Son Jesus Christ. Through Him we approach You confidently as Your dear children. You are the Creator and Ruler of this vast universe, yet You are concerned for the happiness and good of each one of us. Accept our humble worship and praise, and grant that we may continue in our gracious fellowship with You through Jesus Christ.

We thank You, Father, that You have chosen us not to suffer Your anger, but to receive Your forgiveness, and to possess salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

² 1 Peter 5:8-9

who died and rose again for us. Move us to hear and obey Your Son through whom You have spoken to us. Move us to follow the example that Jesus has given us. Open our hearts, that Jesus may continue to live in them. Grant that we may cling to Jesus as the only way through which people may come into Your glorious presence. Move us, both by the way in which You shape our lives, and through Your promises in the Gospel, to make our own commitment to You, in love, praise, and adoration.

Grant that we may walk in obedience to Your commandments, test all things by Your Word, cling to what is good, and have nothing to do with any kind of evil. Make us holy by Your Spirit to live the life of holiness, to which Christ has called us, and keep us free of all fault until His coming.

Father, since You desire all people to be saved and to come to know the truth, give us opportunities to proclaim Your Gospel to the ends of the earth. Inspire us to work, pray, and give for the salvation of people who as yet do not know You.

Grant that all in authority in our country may respect Your holy will. Protect from harm those who are in danger. Give peace and harmony to the nations on earth. Be with all who have been affected by the recent floods in SE Queensland and Northern New South Wales. We thank You for the emergency services that have worked through this period to help those who were affected, and we pray that people will recover from this weather event.

Make our homes harmonious places where the Holy Spirit is present with His power and wisdom. Give spiritual insight to all mothers. Grant all fathers godly leadership. Give all children an obedient spirit.

Have mercy on all who have gathered here today. Support the weak; correct the disobedient. Comfort us whenever we are troubled in body, mind, or spirit. We ask these things, and everything else we need, in the name of Your Son Jesus, who gave His life as a ransom for us all. Amen.

Weekly Article: What is Worship? Part 1

“It’s time for church!” From infancy, I have attended church regularly. As a child, going to church was a time to learn more about Jesus and to sing hymns. I saw baptisms performed. I watched my parents during Communion, particularly as they returned from the altar. Going to church always meant a sermon, a main feature of the service. It was why we went to church: to hear about God’s love for us in Jesus.

What do Lutherans mean by *worship*? Most often, it refers to Sunday church services, and worship is indeed what happens on Sundays. Yet the concept of worship goes beyond an hour’s activity on Sunday (or any other day of the week, for that matter).

Lutherans understand worship as something more than what occurs on one day of the week. *It is a matter of God's gracious gift of faith and the resulting activities that flow from that gift.* Such faith-based activity is most evident in Sunday services as we gather as God's guests to receive from Him and to express our thanks and praise to Him.

The concept of worship for Lutherans is multi-dimensional. Though many have tried, there is no one way to express the fullness of the concept of worship in a single word or equivalent concept. This is true when we study the biblical ideas and our historical heritage and reflect on present Lutheran worship practices. **Worship is God's service to us** as His gathered guests and our "faith-full" response to Him in Christ. Worship is also an opportunity to grow and develop as a community and for the community to be empowered to go out into the world. Therefore, Lutheran worship can be described as being downward, upward, inward, and outward - or, to put it another way, Lutheran worship is *encounter, expression, education, and evangelism*.

The first dimension of Lutheran worship is *encounter*.

In her services of corporate worship, the Christian Church presents the eternal realities of God's holy and infallible Word, exhorts high regard for Christian doctrine and the application of Biblical teaching, receives the benefits of the blessed Sacraments, and enjoys fellowship that has its roots in the Gospel of Christ Jesus.

Lutherans understand worship as a profound encounter with God and His manifold gifts to His people. God comes to His gathered guests with numerous blessings from on high. We **encounter our triune God**—our faith relationship with Him is what worship is all about. Encountering God and His gifts draws believers together so that true Christian worship has been described as "centripetal worship." This means Christian worship is a centripetal force pulling us into the centre. At the centre of Christian worship, we encounter the Trinity and, even more, Christ crucified and risen again for us. This merciful God stands at the centre of our worship, and our liturgy, with its prayers and proclamation, its sacraments and song, cannot point to itself, much less force us to find that centre somewhere else in life, but instead witnesses and draws the worshipping assembly to that very centre.

Worship is an encounter with the grace-revealing God, who is most clearly known in His Son, Jesus, who sends us His faith-strengthening Spirit. This encounter is central to all worship and is the vital element of whatever else occurs in the Divine Service.

Second, worship is also an *expression* of our faith or a response to what God has done for us in Christ.

Psalm 96 (particularly vv. 7-9) captures the essence of this dimension of worship in a most engaging manner. The psalmist writes:

⁷ *Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!*

⁸ *Ascribe to the LORD the glory due His name;
bring an offering, and come into His courts!*

⁹ *Worship the LORD in the splendour of holiness;
tremble before Him, all the earth!*

Psalms are written in a Hebrew poetic style characterised by parallelism - a second line repeats or parallels a thought from the first line. The parallelism in these particular verses from Psalm 96 draws the thoughts together and develops an idea that focuses on the key theme. The psalmist directs us to an understanding of true worship. The first line of the first verse is not a clear or complete thought because it does not tell the “*families of the peoples*” what should be ascribed. The second line of the verse completes the thought: God deserves our ascription of praise because of His awesome glory and omnipotent strength. The next verse becomes more focused. We are not to ascribe just any glory to God; instead, we are to ascribe the unique glory reflected in His name. Included in that ascription of praise are physical activities that express the worshippers’ self-recognition as creatures of the great Creator. Offerings, whether monetary or material, are integral to authentic biblical worship. Finally, the idea of worship is expressed, but not any worship; rather, it is worship that reflects God’s holiness, His uniqueness, and His utter “otherness.” Notice that as the psalmist expands and expounds on ascribing to God His worthiness, he culminates with an expression of awe and reverence before the gracious Almighty One. This is the essence of worship as a response.

Third, worship is also *education or edification*.

Early Christians, for example, used the account of Jesus’ Last Supper both for liturgical and educational purposes. Luther recognised this dimension of worship early in the Reformation. He exhorted the Livonians to “consider the edification of the lay folk” as he helped them reform their worship practices.³ A year later, in his *German Mass*, Luther explained the purpose of carefully conducted liturgical worship practices: “They are essential, especially for the immature and the young who must be *trained and educated* in the Scripture and God’s Word daily so that they may become familiar with the Bible, grounded, well versed, and skilled in it, ready to defend their faith and in due time to teach others and to increase the kingdom of Christ.”⁴ Luther saw the abuse of worship practices in his day. Yet, he also recognised the profound ability of good liturgical worship to maintain the faith in the face of false “prophets” who proclaimed rigid adherence to a mechanical form of worship or who advocated total freedom from any constraints in the area of liturgy.

As education, worship teaches the faith and nurtures the faithful because it is Word-oriented. Worship is a safe learning environment because the Word of God has a primary place in this gathering. The fellowship of believers gathered in the name of Jesus fosters the work of the Spirit. Lutheran worship is Word-centred worship. Sermons based on the readings of the day and the use of liturgical texts are rooted in the divine biblical revelation. The Sacrament of the Altar is administered according to Christ’s intent and institution. In such a context, **God becomes the teacher of His gathered guests.**

³ “Christian Exhortation to the Livonians,” AE 53:47.

⁴ “German Mass and Order of Service (1526),” AE 53:62.

Children’s Message:

Do you like sports? What is an athlete? An athlete is one who plays sports, like cricket, football, tennis, or many other sports. But did you know that there is another form of athlete that the Bible talks about? In several places in the Bible books that Paul wrote, he talks about being Christian athletes. Right before our Second Reading in Philippians today, he talks about reaching the goal—like scoring a goal in soccer or crossing the goal line in football. When you were baptised, God made you each a Christian athlete. What do you think that means?



Well, Paul says to “*stand firm in the Lord!*” (Phil. 4:1). That is, we are to “stand firm” in our Christian faith. We don’t normally think of athletes standing, do we? Athletes aren’t usually standing still; they’re running. But standing firm doesn’t really mean just standing around. It means standing strong, really being all in for something, even working hard to win.

Do you become a good football player if you don’t practice? No. Do you become a good soccer player if you’re afraid of working hard? No. Do you become a good football player if you can’t handle contact and suffering? No.

That’s what it means to be a Christian athlete. Like a good football player, we practice, but we practice being kind and forgiving and giving and thoughtful. Like a good soccer player, we work to develop our skills, but our skill is in understanding God’s Word, understanding all the things Jesus has taught us and done for us—above all, dying on the cross to forgive our sins and make us God’s children again. Like a good football player, we are very willing to suffer in order to win, but that means standing firm in the Christian faith even when people don’t like us for what we believe. We won’t give in or give up until we make it to the final goal—the goal line of everlasting life in heaven with Jesus.

Are you willing to practice, to develop your skills as a Christian, and to suffer, if necessary, to win the prize of heaven? Then you really are Christian athletes!

Dear Jesus, help me train to be a good Christian by always reading and listening to Your Word, and trusting in You alone for my salvation. Amen.

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

23 March 3 Lent	30 March 4 Lent	6 April 5 Lent
8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am MARBURG LR (Matthew Sippel to lead)	10.00am TMBA HC AELC service and Parish AGM.	8.30am OAK LR (Matthew Sippel) 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR
Sunday, 23 March		
READINGS: Ezekiel 33:7-20; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Luke 13:1-9		
HYMNS: 51 358 831 [tune 324] (333 839) 79		
Sunday, 30 March		
READINGS: Isaiah 12:1-6; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Luke 15:1-3, 11-32		
HYMNS: 53 305 57 (part 1) (LSB: 619 LSB: 622) 159		

Saturday, 29 March, 7:00pm, Young Adults & Youth (YAY) is on at Aubigny, with the hall open from 6:30pm. Please bring your Bible, and a plate to share, for an evening of fun, games, food, and a devotion. Any questions, please contact Matthew at matthewsippelaclc@gmail.com.

MID-WEEK of LENT 3 SERVICES

Down's Members – Wednesday, 19 March, Bethlehem Toowoomba, 7.30pm.

Our hymns for our mid-week services will be taken from the *Lutheran Service Book*. If you have a copy, please bring it along. Printed hymn sheets will be provided for those who don't.

HYMNS: 745 657 665

Lowood/Marburg Members – Thurs, 20 March, Our Saviour Lowood, 10.00am.
Matins Service and Bible Study, followed by a shared cuppa.