

**March 10, 2024**  
**HYMNS FOR FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT**  
**WOV #734 “Softly and Tenderly”**  
**“In the Garden” (Insert)**  
**“Just a Closer Walk with Thee” (Insert)**

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

P O God, rich in mercy, by the humiliation of your Son you lifted up this fallen world and rescued us from the hopelessness of death. Lead us into your light, that all our deeds may reflect your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**C Amen.**

**FIRST READING: Numbers 21:4-9**

*Though God provides food and water for the Israelites in the wilderness, they whine and grumble. They forget about the salvation they experienced in the exodus. God punishes them for their sin, but when they repent God also provides a means of healing: a bronze serpent lifted up on a pole.*

<sup>4</sup>From Mount Hor [the Israelites] set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. <sup>5</sup>The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.” <sup>6</sup>Then the Lord sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup>The people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord to take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>And the Lord said to Moses, “Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live.” <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of

**PSALM: Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22**

*R You deliver your people from their distress. (Ps. 107:19)*

<sup>1</sup>Give thanks to the Lord, for the Lord is good,  
for God’s mercy endures forever.

<sup>2</sup>**Let the redeemed of the Lord proclaim**

**that God redeemed them from the hand of the foe,**

<sup>3</sup>gathering them in from the lands;

from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

<sup>17</sup>**Some were fools and took rebellious paths;**

**through their sins they were afflicted.**

<sup>18</sup>They loathed all manner of food

and drew near to death's door.

<sup>19</sup>**Then in their trouble they cried to the Lord**

**and you delivered them from <sup>1</sup> their distress. R**

<sup>20</sup>You sent forth your word and healed them

and rescued them from the grave.

<sup>21</sup>**Let them give thanks to you, Lord, for your steadfast love**

**and your wonderful works for all people.**

<sup>22</sup>Let them offer sacrifices of thanksgiving

and tell of your deeds with shouts of joy. R

## **SECOND READING: Ephesians 2:1-10**

*While we were dead in our sinfulness, God acted to make us alive as a gift of grace in Christ Jesus. We are saved not by what we do but by grace through faith. Thus our good works are really a reflection of God's grace at work in our lives.*

<sup>1</sup>You were dead through the trespasses and sins <sup>2</sup>in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup>All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. <sup>4</sup>But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us <sup>5</sup>even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup>and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup>so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup>For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup>not the result of works, so that no one may boast. <sup>10</sup>For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

## **GOSPEL: John 3:14-21**

*To explain the salvation of God to the religious leader, Nicodemus, Jesus refers to the scripture passage quoted in today's first reading. Just as those who*

*looked upon the bronze serpent were healed, so people will be saved when they behold Christ lifted up on the cross.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>14</sup>“Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup>that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

<sup>16</sup>“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.

<sup>17</sup>“Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. <sup>18</sup>Those who believe in him are not condemned; but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the name of the only Son of God. <sup>19</sup>And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup>For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. <sup>21</sup>But those who do what is true come to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God.”

## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

P 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.*

A Gracious God, your love unites. Give vision to the global church and foster cooperation in mission. Increase inter-religious understanding and ecumenical dialog. Make your church a sanctuary for all fleeing persecution, disaster, and war (*areas in crisis may be named*). Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Creating God, your love enlivens. Restore balance to the earth’s fragile habitats. Preserve wilderness lands, rainforests, and wildlife. Cleanse oceans and rivers (*local water sources may be named*). Make us good stewards of the earth. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Righteous God, your love liberates. We give thanks for those who courageously witness to your liberating love (*especially Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, renewers of society, whom we commemorate today*). Free all people from the evils of racism, religious strife, and hatred. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Merciful God, your love heals. Care tenderly for all whose loved ones perished from pandemic disease in every nation. Strengthen health care workers, first responders, and caregivers. Relieve all who live with chronic illness and pain. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

A Incarnate God, your love enlightens. Open our hearts and minds to fresh understandings of our faith. Deepen our love for you and for one another. Teach us to pray for our enemies. Hear us, O God.

**C Your mercy is great.**

*Here other intercessions may be offered.*

A Abiding God, your love saves. Those who died in the faith are made alive in Christ. We give thanks for your promise that we also will be raised to newness of life. Hear us, O God.

**C 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.**



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