

February 22, 2026

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

Join the Struggle

From the very beginning there is a struggle between good and evil. The serpent tempts Adam and Eve to eat from the forbidden tree. The story reveals our human desire to transcend our limitations and to become like God. It may be the story of Adam and Eve, but the Hebrew word for humanity, *adam*, hints that it is also the story of every man and woman.

We face the same temptation as our ancestors in the garden. We are tempted to do whatever we want, avoid responsibility, and forget the rest of the world. We are tempted to deny our mortality and place the blame on anyone but ourselves--even God.

It is always tempting to point to the evil outside ourselves; to believe that another person, group, or nation is evil but that we are full of good. There is the ever-present danger, too, that we will counter evil with evil and become the very thing we claim to hate. Here our theological tradition sheds light: we are both saint and sinner at the same time. We are created in God's image, and we share in the brokenness of creation.

In their wilderness struggle, the tempter entices Jesus with three things that can make us believe we don't need God: self-sufficiency, pride, and power. Our baptism joins us to this struggle. In our baptism we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from the love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayer, and the works of love are Lenten disciplines that help us wage our spiritual warfare.

The battle between good and evil isn't just "out there" somewhere. It lives in all of us, in our nation, in our churches, in our hearts. Lent reminds us to be honest and to wrestle with our temptations, addictions, compulsions, and selfishness. It reminds us, too, that Jesus will be with us in the struggle.

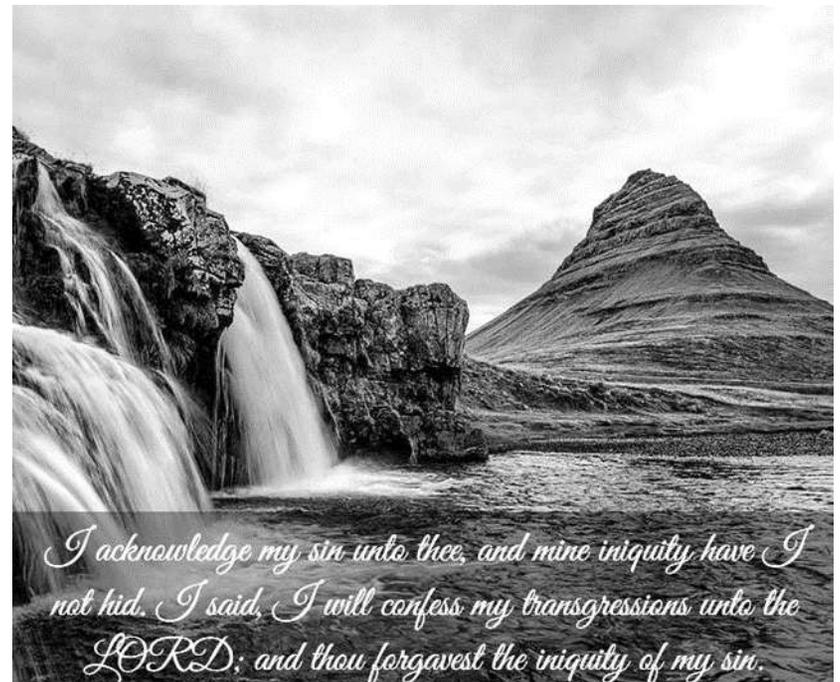
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Dr. Anthony Pattin, Church Musician
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Cheri Sergent, Bell Choir, Director
Jessica Miller, Office Manager



Called through faith; Gathered in worship; Serving the community

February 22, 2026 - 10:30 am

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First Sunday in Lent

Welcome to First St. John Lutheran Church! We offer two services with Sunday School for youth and adults and catechism (starting soon). Our regular Sunday schedule is:

8:00 am	Early Worship
9:15 am	JAM Sunday School
9:15 am	Adult Sunday School
10:30 am	Late Worship
2:00 pm	Chapel Communion

(2nd Sunday of the month)

LIVESTREAM AND RECORDED WORSHIP: We livestream the service on our church website at www.firststjohn.com. Also, the service will be recorded and published to the website

SMILE! YOU'RE ON CAMERA: Please remember you may be on camera during the livestream and the recording of the service.

IMPORTANT REMINDER: Please remember to silence your cell phone before church begins. Thanks!

SUNDAY SCHOOL & CATECHISM JAM Sunday School (church basement) and Adult Sunday School (lounge) meet each Sunday at 9:15 am. First year catechism will start soon! If you have a child in 6-7th grade interested please let Pastor Rayl know.

NURSERY is in the church basement and is now available during 2nd Service each week; you are welcome to sit with your child as well. A diaper changing table is available in the ladies restroom in the basement of the church.

RESTROOMS are in the church basement. Go to the Narthex (lobby) and take either set of steps to the basement hallway. The ladies room is at one end, and the men's room is at the other.

FLOWERS: If you would like to sign up for altar flowers, there is a book in the lounge. Or, you can call the church office during the week to check on availability.

MEMORIALS: If you wish to give a memorial in honor or memory of a loved one, you may mail it in or pick up a memorial card in the church office.

2026 EASTER FLOWER SALE

SPONSORED BY THE ALTAR GUILD



It's time to order the flowers that will decorate the church on Easter morning, April 5th. The price is \$15.00 per plant. You can choose a lily, daffodil, hyacinth, or tulip. Fill out the order blank below and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church office. The final Sunday to order will be March 22nd. Payment must accompany your order. Make checks out to: **First St. John Lutheran.**

Deadline for placing orders is Sunday, March 22nd.

Number of plants @ \$15.00 each _____

Enclosed: \$ _____

Type of plant: _____
(lily, daffodil, hyacinth, tulip)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

In Loving Memory of (Deceased) _____

In Honor of (Living) _____

The Communion *(distribution will be continuous)*

All baptized Christians, believing that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, bringing to us the gift of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life, are welcome to gather at the Lord's table. Infants, children and others who have not been baptized are welcome to come to receive a blessing; please make an X with your arms across your chest."

If you wish to receive apple juice instead of wine, place your hand over your shoulder as you approach the person distributing the wine.

(After all have received communion, please stand.)

Prayer after Communion

P: Let us pray. God our redeemer, you have fed us at this table with gifts of grace, truth, and life. As you have gathered us in joy, send us forth as messengers of your peace. Make us shine with the good news of your glory, born to us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing

P: May the triune God, who has put a new song in your mouth and tuned your heart for praise (✚) bless you now and forever.

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn

"In Thee is Gladness"

No. 867

Dismissal

P: Go in peace. Do justice. Love mercy.

C: Thanks be to God.

Postlude

Nancy Russell

PARTICIPANTS IN TODAY'S SERVICE

ELDERS

Kevin Ruedy
Mike Winslow

READER

Susie Purewal

SOUND BOARD

Beth Huguely

ORDER OF WORSHIP—10:30 am

Prelude

Nancy Russell

Ringling of the Bell

Opening Hymn

"Cold December Flies Away"

No. 299

Invocation

All may make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism, as the presiding minister begins.

P: Blessed be the holy Trinity, (+) one God, Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Savior, Prince of Peace.

C: Amen.

Confession and Forgiveness

P: Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin.

Silence for reflection and self-examination.

P: Mighty God, lover of justice,

C: you call us to life in community, but we have served our own interests at the expense of our neighbors. We have sown deceit where honesty was needed. We say the right words, but our hearts are far from you. Turn us to seek your face. Knit us together and give us the mind of Christ, that we may do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.

P: The former things have passed away, and new things God now declares: Like a spring of water that never fails, God covers you in the righteousness of Christ, and forgives your sin in ✚ Jesus' name. May the Spirit give you strength to live for others, and bless you with the gift of peace.

C: Amen.

P: The peace of the Lord be with you all.

C: And also with you.

P: Let us share the peace of the Lord.

The congregation may greet one another by shaking hands, fist bumping, or any other form of greeting with the words, "Peace be with you." We conclude the sharing of the peace by singing:

**Grant us grace to see thee, Lord,
 present in thy holy word;
 grace to imitate thee now
 and be pure, as pure art thou;
 that we might become like thee
 at thy great epiphany,
 and may praise thee, ever blest,
 God in flesh made manifest.**

- Songs of Thankfulness and Praise ELW 310 (verse 4)

Prayer of the Day

P: Let us pray. Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C: Amen.

(Please be seated)

Announcements

Special Music “He’s Got the Whole World” FSJ, Bell Choir
 Cheri Sergent, Director

Introduction

Today’s gospel tells of Jesus’ temptation in the desert. His forty-day fast becomes the basis of our Lenten pilgrimage. In the early church Lent was a time of intense preparation for those to be baptized at the Easter Vigil. This catechetical focus on the meaning of faith is at the heart of our Lenten journey to the baptismal waters of Easter. Hungry for God’s mercy, we receive the bread of life to nourish us for the days ahead.

FIRST READING: Genesis 2:15-17, 3:1-7

Human beings were formed with great care, to be in relationship with the creator, creation, and one another. The serpent’s promise to the first couple that their eyes would be opened led, ironically, to the discovery only that they were naked.

¹⁵ The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶ And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden, ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

¹ Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” ² The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
 heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
 san - na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
 comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

P: In the night in which He was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

P: Again, after supper, He took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. For as often as we eat of this bread and drink from this cup, we proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

C: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

P: Lord remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray:

The Lord’s Prayer *(prayed by all)*

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
 thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread;
 And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us;
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power,
 and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

Invitation to Communion

P: Glory to God in the highest, Come to the table of peace.

C: We come at our Lord’s command.

(Please be seated)

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer (Each petition concludes with this response)

P: Hear us, O Lord,

C: **your mercy is great.**

The Offering

Offering Prayer

P: Let us pray. God of majesty, no eye has seen, no ear has heard what you have prepared for those who love you, yet in this meal you reveal the wideness of your mercy. Use what we have gathered to feed us with the reign of God come near, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

C: **Amen.**

The Great Thanksgiving

P: The Lord be with you.

C: **And also with you.**

P: Lift up your hearts.

C: **We lift them to the Lord.**

P: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

C: **It is good to give our thanks and praise.**

P: It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, O Lord, holy Father, through Christ our Lord; who on the tree of the cross gave salvation to all, that, where death began, there life might be restored, and that he, who by a tree once overcame, might by a tree be overcome. And so, with the Church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

fruit of the trees in the garden,³ but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.'"⁴ But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die,⁵ for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."⁶ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was a delight to the eyes and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate.⁷ Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM: Psalm 32

Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.

**2 Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.**

3 While I kept silent, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.

**4 For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.**

5 Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;

I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin. *Selah*

**6 Therefore let all who are faithful
offer prayer to you;
at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters
shall not reach them.**

7 You are a hiding place for me;
you preserve me from trouble;
you surround me with glad cries of deliverance. *Selah*

**8 I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go;
I will counsel you with my eye upon you.**

9 Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding,
whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle,
else it will not stay near you.

**10 Many are the torments of the wicked,
but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.**

11 Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous,
and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

SECOND READING: 5 Romans 5:12-19

Through Adam's disobedience, humanity came under bondage to sin and death, from which we cannot free ourselves. In Christ's obedient death, God graciously showers on us the free gift of liberation and life.

¹² Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned ¹³ for sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴ Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who did not sin in the likeness of Adam, who is a pattern of the one who was to come.

¹⁵ But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man's trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶ And the gift is not like the effect of the one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷ If, because of the one man's trespass, death reigned through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ.

¹⁸ Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all. ¹⁹ For just as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so through the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

Reader: Word of God. Word of Life.

C: Thanks be to God.

(Please stand)

Lenten Verse (sung in unison)

S 142b

Re - turn to the Lord, your God, for he is gra - cious and
 mer - ci - ful, slow to an - ger, and a - bound - ing in
 stead - fast love, and a - bound - ing in stead - fast love.

Gospel Announcement

P: The Gospel according to St. Matthew, Chapter 4.

C: Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus experiences anew the temptations that Israel faced in the wilderness. As the Son of God, he endures the testing of the evil one.

¹ Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil. ² He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterward he was famished. ³ The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." ⁴ But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" ⁵ Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, ⁶ saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" ⁷ Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" ⁸ Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, ⁹ and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" ¹¹ Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

Gospel Response

P: This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C: Praise to you, O Christ.

(Please be seated)

SERMON

Pastor Rayl

Sermon Hymn

"Beautiful Savior"

No. 838

(Please stand)

Apostles' Creed

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
 creator of heaven and earth.
 I believe in Jesus Christ, God's 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 to the dead.
 On the third day he rose again;
 He ascended into heaven,
 and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
 He will come again to judge the living and the dead.