



*With the birth of Jesus in our hearts
We carry light and love to the world.*

March 11, 2026

STRETCHED: Growing Through Challenge



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.



RECONCILING IN CHRIST

WELCOME

Tonight we name the places where God is stretching us toward courage and compassion.

Please stand.

We gather in the name of the + Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

OPENING HYMN *Jesus Calls Us O'er the Tumult* 696



1 Je - sus calls us; o'er the tu - mult of our
2 As of old Saint An - drew heard it by the
3 Je - sus calls us from the wor - ship of the
4 In our joys and in our sor - rows, days of
5 Je - sus calls us! By your mer - cy, Sav - ior,



life's wild, rest - less sea, day by day his clear voice
Gal - i - le - an lake, turned from home and toil and
vain world's gold - en store, from each i - dol that would
toil and hours of ease, still he calls, in cares and
may we hear your call, give our hearts to your o -



sound - ing, say - ing, "Chris - tian, fol - low me":
kin - dred, leav - ing all for Je - sus' sake.
keep us, say - ing, "Chris - tian, love me more?"
plea - sures, "Chris - tian, love me more than these."
be - dience, serve and love you best of all.

OPENING PRAYER

Let us pray. God of strength, meet us in our struggles with your steady and compassionate presence. **Hold us when we feel overwhelmed, and remind us that even in our hardest moments, we are not alone.** Stretch us toward new life: toward growth we cannot yet see, toward courage we did not know we had, toward hope that rises again and again. **Shape our hearts to trust the work You are doing within us, and lead us into the fullness of who we are becoming. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

Please be seated.

HOLY SCRIPTURE

A READING FROM THE GOSPEL OF MARK

8:31-38

Reader: Vicki Page

³¹ Jesus began telling his disciples what would happen to him. He said, "The nation's leaders, the chief priests, and the teachers of the Law of Moses will make the Son of Man suffer terribly. He will be rejected and killed, but three days later he will rise to life." ³² Then Jesus explained clearly what he meant. Peter took Jesus aside and told him to stop talking like that. ³³ But when Jesus turned and saw the disciples, he corrected Peter. He said to him, "Satan, get away from me! You are thinking like everyone else and not like God." ³⁴ Jesus then told the crowd and the disciples to come closer, and he said: If any of you want to be my followers, you must forget about yourself. You must take up your

cross and follow me. ³⁵ If you want to save your life, you will destroy it. But if you give up your life for me and for the good news, you will save it. ³⁶ What will you gain, if you own the whole world but destroy yourself? ³⁷ What could you give to get back your soul? ³⁸ Don't be ashamed of me and my message among these unfaithful and sinful people! If you are, the Son of Man will be ashamed of you when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.

A READING FROM THE SECOND LETTER OF PAUL TO THE CORINTHIANS

12:7b-10

Reader: Vicki Page

One of Satan's angels was sent to make me suffer terribly, so that I would not feel too proud. ⁸ Three times I begged the Lord to make this suffering go away. ⁹ But he replied, "My gift of undeserved grace is all you need. My power is strongest when you are weak." So if Christ keeps giving me his power, I will gladly brag about how weak I am. ¹⁰ Yes, I am glad to be weak or insulted or mistreated or to have troubles and sufferings, if it is for Christ. Because when I am weak, I am strong.

REFLECTION

Reflection Questions:

- Where is God inviting me to grow beyond my comfort?
- What "cross" in my life might become a place of grace rather than defeat?
- What fear or resistance do I need to name?
- Where is Jesus inviting me to loosen my grip and trust more deeply?

Liturgical Silence

Ritual Action: Feel the tension in the twine. Let it remind you that God strengthens us in our stretching.

Please stand.

HYMN

What Wondrous Love Is This

666

1 What won-drous love is this, O my soul, O my soul! What
2 When I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when
3 To God and to the Lamb I will sing, I will sing; to
4 And when from death I'm free, I'll sing on, I'll sing on; and

won - drous love is this, O my soul! What won-drous love is this
I was sink - ing down, sink - ing down, when I was sink - ing down
God and to the Lamb I will sing; to God and to the Lamb,
when from death I'm free, I'll sing on; and when from death I'm free,

that caused the Lord of bliss to bear the dread-ful curse for my
be - neath God's righ-teous frown, Christ laid a - side his crown for my
who is the great I AM, while mil - lions join the theme, I will
I'll sing God's love for me, and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing

soul, for my soul, to bear the dread-ful curse for my soul?
soul, for my soul, Christ laid a - side his crown for my soul.
sing, I will sing, while mil - lions join the theme, I will sing.
on, I'll sing on; and through e - ter - ni - ty I'll sing on.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

Strengthen us, O Christ, to walk the path of transformation with courage and steadiness. **Shape our hearts to release what no longer gives life and to welcome the new work You are forming within us.** When the journey feels uncertain, steady our steps with your wisdom and grace. When we grow weary, renew our spirits with your hope. **Lead us ever closer to the fullness of who You call us to become. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.**

BLESSING

Receive the blessing of the Holy Trinity: God, who calls all things into existence, Jesus Christ, who redeems us, and the Holy Spirit, whose breath sustains creation, ✝ bless you now and always. **Amen.**

HYMN

Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus

802

1 Let us ev - er walk with Je - sus, fol - low his ex - am - ple pure,
 2 Let us suf - fer here with Je - sus, and with pa - tience bear our cross.
 3 Let us glad - ly die with Je - sus. Since by death he con - quered death,
 4 Let us al - so live with Je - sus. He has ris - en from the dead

through a world that would de - ceive us and to sin our spir - its lure.
 Joy will fol - low all our sad - ness; where he is there is no loss.
 he will free us from de - struc - tion, give to us im - mor - tal breath.
 that to life we may a - wak - en. Je - sus, you are now our head,

On - ward in his foot - steps tread - ing, trav - 'lers here, our home a - bove,
 Though to - day we sow no laugh - ter, we shall reap ce - les - tial joy:
 Let us mor - ti - fy all pas - sion that would lead us in - to sin;
 we are your own liv - ing mem - bers; where you live, there we shall be

full of faith and hope and love, let us do our Sav - ior's bid - ding.
 all dis - com - forts that an - noy shall give way to mirth here - af - ter.
 and the grave that shuts us in shall but prove the gate of heav - en.
 in your pres - ence con - stant - ly, liv - ing there with you for - ev - er.

Faith - ful Lord, with me a - bide; I shall fol - low where you guide.
 Je - sus, here I share your woe; help me there your joy to know.
 Je - sus, here with you I die, there to live with you on high.
 Je - sus, let me faith - ful be; life e - ter - nal grant to me.

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Believe the good news. **Thanks be to God!**

You may leave in silence.

Offering

You may leave your offering in the basket on your way out.

You may also donate on-line at <https://www.nlcww.org>, or on our Facebook page. You may contribute using Venmo or Zelle if you have an account, or use the QR code below:



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Vicki Page

Donna Olsen

Art Alt

*Nativity Lutheran Church, 6363 Commercial Way, Weeki Wachee FL 34613
352-597-1456, nlcww.org, nativitylutheran63@gmail.com*