We Welcome Our Visitors who are with us this morning. We hope that you are uplifted by the Gospel at our worship service. We invite you to join us every Sunday. Please sign our guestbook in the entry.

† Preparation for Worship: Read Psalm 19 (Lutheran Service Book or Pew Bible) †

Conducting Our Liturgy Today: BJ Lillo – President, St. Stephen Lutheran Church

Opening Hymn: 450 O Sacred Head, Now Wounded

SERVICE OF THE WORD
(Worship Supplement, p. 12)

Invocation
We invoke ("call upon") the name of the one true God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

† In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.
Confession and Absolution

We come before our Holy God recognizing that we are sinful and daily need His forgiveness.

We have come into the presence of God, who created us to love and serve Him as His dear children. But we have disobeyed Him and deserve only His wrath and punishment. Therefore, let us confess our sins to Him and plead for His mercy.

Merciful Father in heaven, I am altogether sinful from birth. In countless ways I have sinned against You and do not deserve to be called Your child. But trusting in Jesus, my Savior, I pray: Have mercy upon me according to Your unfailing love. Cleanse me from my sin, and take away my guilt.

God our heavenly Father, has forgiven all your sins. By the perfect life and innocent death of our Lord Jesus Christ, He has removed your guilt forever. Through faith in Him, which was created in you by the Holy Spirit, you are His own dear child. May God give you strength to live according to His will.

Amen.

Kyrie  Latin for “O Lord.” We approach our Lord with a cry for help in all the needs of our earthly life.  

Lord have mercy on us. Christ have mercy on us. Lord have mercy on us.

Gloria in Excelsis  Latin for “Glory to God in the highest.”

Glory to God, we give You thanks and praise; Of heav’nlly joy and peace on earth we sing. We worship You, to You our hearts we raise, Lord God, almighty Father, heav’nlly King.

Lord Jesus Christ, the Father’s only Son, 
You bore for us the load of this world’s sin. 
O Lamb of God, Your glorious vict’ry won, Receive our prayer, grant us Your peace within.

Alone, O Christ, You only are the Lord, 
At God’s right hand in majesty most high: 
Who with the Spirit worshiped and adored, 
With all the heav’nlly host we glorify.
Prayer of the Day

We pray:
O God, whose glory it is always to have mercy, be gracious to all who have gone astray from Your ways and bring them again with repentant hearts and steadfast faith to embrace and hold fast the unchangeable truth of Your Word. We pray this through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

Scripture Reading

THE PASSION HISTORY OF CHRIST - Part 4
(See booklet, “The Passion History of Our Lord Jesus Christ According to the Four Gospels”)

Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it!

Alleluia and Verse

When God speaks to us in His Word it is natural for us to respond. We sing “Alleluiah!”—meaning, “Praise the Lord!”

♫ Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!
These words are written that we may believe
That Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.
Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

Apostles' Creed

We boldly confess what we believe.

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 there 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.

Hymn of the Day: 543 *What Wondrous Love is This*  

Sermon Text: John 18:33-19:1 (EHV)

33 Pilate went back into the Praetorium and summoned Jesus. He asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” 34 Jesus answered, “Are you saying this on your own, or did others tell you about me?” 35 Pilate answered, “Am I a Jew? Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What have you done?” 36 Jesus replied, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight so that I would not be handed over to the Jews. But now my kingdom is not from here.” 37 “You are a king then?” Pilate asked. Jesus answered, “I am, as you say, a king. For this reason I was born, and for this reason I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.” 38 “What is truth?” Pilate said to him. After he said this, he went out again to the Jews and told them, “I find no basis for a charge against him. 39 But you have a custom that I release one prisoner to you at the Passover. So do you want me to release the King of the Jews for you?” 40 Then they shouted back, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” (Now Barabbas was a rebel.) 19:1 Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged.

Sermon Theme: *Behold the Hidden Glory of the Cross*  
– It is Hidden in the Savior’s Rejection By The World

Preaching Today: Chris Holt – Elder, St. Stephen Lutheran Church
Offertory

🎵 Create in me a clean heart, O God,
And renew a right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from Your presence,
Take not Your Holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of Your salvation.
Uphold with Your Spirit free.

Offering  We offer our gifts to the Lord, remembering that He has first given to us that we might have to give to Him.

Sermon Hymn: 439 v. 1-5  O Dearest Jesus, What Law...

Prayer of the Church / Prayer Requests  We bring our prayers to God.

Lord’s Prayer

C 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.

Benediction  The blessing given by God for the blessing of His people (Numbers 6:24-26).

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you.
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you peace.

C A-men, a-men, a - men.

Closing Hymn: 439 v. 7-8, 12, 15  O Wondrous Love... (please stand for last verse)
Announcements

This Week:

**Monday** – No School at SSLS

**Women’s Auxiliary** (Meet at Mark & Barb Gullerud’s) – 7pm

**Thursday** – Elder’s Meeting – 6:30pm / Church Council – 7pm

Next Sunday:

**St. Stephen – West** (Mt. View): Bible Class – 9:15am

Worship – 10am

**St. Stephen – East Bay** (Hayward): Worship – 1pm

Bible Class – 2pm

**March Elder & Usher:** Chris Holt (Elder) & Brenton Horrillo (Usher)

**Thank You!** – to BJ Lillo for conducting the liturgy, and to Chris Holt for preaching the sermon for our worship service today. Pastor Luke is in Wisconsin helping chaperone and coach at the CLC Grade School Tournament in Eau Claire, WI this weekend. He and our school’s principal, Kirsten Gullerud, will be returning, Lord willing, later on tonight.

**St. Stephen Teacher Call News** – At our call meeting last Sunday the voters of St. Stephen called Claire Abbas, of Gethsemane Lutheran School, Spokane Valley, WA to be the 2nd teacher at our school. Should the Lord lead her to accept our call she would be the primary upper grade teacher. Rebecca Lillo would continue to serve as lower grade teacher and would become the new principal.

Claire received her training at Immanuel Lutheran College in Eau Claire, WI. She previously taught at Peace Thru Christ, Middleton, WI (2013-17) and is currently one of the two full-time teachers at Gethsemane Lutheran School in Spokane Valley, WA. Please pray for the Lord to give her clarity, and if it is His will, that she would accept the call to serve our school.

**CLC News** – Pastor Sam Rodebaugh, Immanuel, Winter Haven, FL has been called by Living Savior, Eden Prairie, MN. <> Teacher Joshua Ohlmann has returned the call extended to him by Redeemer, Cheyenne, WY to be their Principal/Teacher.
The Office of the Keys and Confession

Because God’s Word is based on absolute truth, which applies the same to all people; and because we are fallen sinners, there will be times when our witness of God’s Word is uncomfortable to give and to receive. In our culture, we’re used to hearing responses to God’s Word such as, “Who are you to judge me?” or “I’m free to do what I want, you can’t tell me what to do!” If you’ve been on the receiving end of such a response then you’ve probably contemplated if you have the right to speak or not.

The reality of being a believer in Christ is that we have the pressing duty of sharing parts of His Word that people do not want to hear. Perhaps the most ardent of opponents that come to mind in this regard are those who reject God’s Word. But, even Christians should know what the sting of God’s moral law feels like to a conscience burdened by sin — we wrestle with the same thing!

When you face situations where people are resistant to God’s Word, it’s easy to feel embarrassed, surprised, or ashamed. The knee-jerk reaction is to slink back into your confessional shell and keep your faith to yourself. The world’s demand of, “What gives you the right?” echoes in your mind. You might think — maybe they’re right.

It’s critical for our witness of Jesus not to get caught off-guard in these moments. Rejection comes with the territory of being a Christian who is standing for Christ. Jesus Himself, who also was rejected by many, said this, “A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also (John 15:20).”

We don’t have to be afraid or ashamed of rejection because we know how a sinner thinks and feels when confronted with God’s truth. But even more importantly, we have authority from Jesus to speak on His behalf. Who gives you the right? Jesus does!

This what we call the Office of the Keys; it’s the privilege that Jesus gives believers to speak the law (message of judgment and sin) and the gospel (message of salvation in Christ). You might think “That’s nice and all, but I’d rather not,” or “I’m just not qualified or skilled at witnessing.” Sorry to say, God doesn’t want your excuses. Giving up or ignoring this privilege is not an option. You see, this is what the Christian life is all about — proclaiming God’s power,
glory, and grace in Christ to the world. If you’re a Christian, this is what you’re supposed to be doing. It’s part of why Jesus suffered and died in your place - to earn this right for you.

This doesn’t mean that preaching or standing in front of a crowd is the only way to exercise the Office of the Keys. It’s also important to remember the rest of the title — ...and Confession. This blessed work of the believer also takes place each time sinners are directed to confess before the Lord and receive forgiveness (often called Absolution). Regular confession and assurance of forgiveness in this way is the life of the Christian’s faith. This practice is not based on our outstanding ability to achieve what God commands, but rather on the precious Gospel proclamation of full and free pardon of sins in Christ’s name. Wherever this gift is being practiced by Christians, faith is begun and sustained.

Indeed, confession may be seen on Sunday at church. But, let it also be present in our homes, between husband and wife, among relatives and coworkers, and even on the playground. A healthy and functioning faith, no matter what your vocation is, will lead you to “proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9).”

Imagine what the world would be like without Jesus. That’s what’s at stake when we shrink back from declaring and defending His Word today. You are blessed to have the right to speak for the eternal and almighty God of heaven and earth! Don’t allow any mere human to make you doubt that. It is your right, duty, and blessed privilege in Jesus’ name.

**Read More About This Topic**

Isaiah 6:1-8  
Hebrews 10:19-25

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**Catechism Evangelism**

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The Committee of Domestic Fields is a subcommittee of the CLC Mission Board. “The purpose of the Committee on Domestic Fields (CDF) is to make outreach ideas and material available to CLC congregations and to encourage them in carrying out the Great Commission of our Savior, Jesus Christ.”