

MIDWEEK OF LENT 4

EMPTY WORDS

You are daily assailed by empty words: idle small talk, advertising slogans, and news reports that play on your fears. Political and business leaders spew cant, clichés, and spin. Perhaps even your friends and family get in on the act, betraying you with flattery and falsehoods. King David was only too familiar with such afflictions: “When one comes to see me,” he said, “he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad” (Psalm 41:6). Our Lord’s powerful Word was David’s refuge from vain and malicious talk. It is your refuge too. In Baptism, Jesus Christ has lifted you out of the verbal cesspool and placed you firmly on the rock of His Word. That Word is never empty, but it shall accomplish that which He purposes for you.

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

HYMN

“On My Heart Imprint Your Image” (*LSB* 422)

- 1 On my heart imprint Your image,
Blessèd Jesus, King of grace,
That life’s riches, cares, and pleasures
Never may Your work erase;
Let the clear inscription be:
Jesus, crucified for me,
Is my life, my hope’s foundation,
And my glory and salvation!

Text: Thomas Hansen Kingo, 1634–1703; tr. Peer O. Strømme, 1856–1921, alt.
Text: Public domain

- P** In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, ✠ and of the Holy Spirit
C Amen.

+ PSALMODY +

PSALM

Psalms 41

- P** Blessed is the one who considers the poor!
C In the day of trouble the LORD delivers him;
P the LORD protects him and keeps him alive; he is called blessed in the land;
C You do not give him up to the will of his enemies.
P The LORD sustains him on his sickbed; in his illness You restore him to full health.
C As for me, I said, “O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against You!”
P My enemies say of me in malice, “When will he die and his name perish?”

- C** And when one comes to see me, he utters empty words, while his heart gathers iniquity; when he goes out, he tells it abroad.
- P** All who hate me whisper together about me; they imagine the worst for me.
- C** They say, “A deadly thing is poured out on him; he will not rise again from where he lies.”
- P** Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.
- C** But You, O LORD, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may repay them!
- P** By this I know that You delight in me: my enemy will not shout in triumph over me.
- C** But You have upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in Your presence forever.

Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

PRAYER

- P** O pitying Lord Jesus, grant us of Your gentleness and forbearance, of Your compassion and love, and of Your tenderheartedness, that filled with Your grace we may always find fitting and salutary words to speak and willingly forgive the wrongs and evils done us. This we ask in Your precious and mighty name.
- C** Amen.

+ READINGS +

READING

Psalms 52:1–9

- P** A reading from Psalms, the fifty-second chapter.

¹Why do you boast of evil, O mighty man?
The steadfast love of God endures all the day.

²Your tongue plots destruction,
like a sharp razor, you worker of deceit.

³You love evil more than good,
and lying more than speaking what is right.

⁴You love all words that devour,
O deceitful tongue.

⁵But God will break you down forever;
He will snatch and tear you from your tent;
He will uproot you from the land of the living.

⁶The righteous shall see and fear,
and shall laugh at him, saying,

⁷“See the man who would not make
God his refuge,
but trusted in the abundance of his riches

and sought refuge in his own destruction!”
⁸But I am like a green olive tree
in the house of God.
I trust in the steadfast love of God
forever and ever.
⁹I will thank You forever,
because You have done it.
I will wait for Your name, for it is good,
in the presence of the godly.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

READING

James 3:1–10

P A reading from James, the third chapter.

¹Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. ²For we all stumble in many ways, and if anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle his whole body. ³If we put bits into the mouths of horses so that they obey us, we guide their whole bodies as well. ⁴Look at the ships also: though they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. ⁵So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great things.

How great a forest is set ablaze by such a small fire! ⁶And the tongue is a fire, a world of unrighteousness. The tongue is set among our members, staining the whole body, setting on fire the entire course of life, and set on fire by hell. ⁷For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by mankind, ⁸but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. ⁹With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse people who are made in the likeness of God. ¹⁰From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so.

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

READING

Matthew 26:57–62

P A reading from St. Matthew, the twenty-sixth chapter.

⁵⁷Then those who had seized Jesus led Him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. ⁵⁸And Peter was following Him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. ⁵⁹Now the chief priests and the whole Council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put Him to death, ⁶⁰but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward ⁶¹and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’” ⁶²And the high priest

stood up and said, “Have You no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?”

P O Lord, have mercy on us.

C Thanks be to God.

HYMN

“Jesus Christ, My Sure Defense” (*LSB* 741)

SERMON

Psalms 41:6

OFFERING

+ PRAYER +

THE LITANY

L O Lord,

C have mercy.

L O Christ,

C have mercy.

L O Lord,

C have mercy.

L O Christ,

C hear us.

L God the Father in heaven,

C have mercy.

L God the Son, Redeemer of the world,

C have mercy.

L God the Holy Spirit,

C have mercy.

L Be gracious to us.

C Spare us, good Lord.

L Be gracious to us.

C Help us, good Lord.

L From all sin, from all error, from all evil;

From the crafts and assaults of the devil; from sudden and evil death;

From pestilence and famine; from war and bloodshed; from sedition and from rebellion;

From lightning and tempest; from all calamity by fire and water; and from everlasting death:

C Good Lord, deliver us.

L By the mystery of Your holy incarnation; by Your holy nativity;

By Your baptism, fasting, and temptation; by Your agony and bloody sweat; by Your cross and passion; by Your precious death and burial;

By Your glorious resurrection and ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter:

C Help us, good Lord.

L In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our prosperity; in the hour of death; and in the day of judgment:

C Help us, good Lord.

L We poor sinners implore You

C to hear us, O Lord.

L To rule and govern Your holy Christian Church; to preserve all pastors and ministers of Your Church in the true knowledge and understanding of Your wholesome Word and to sustain them in holy living;

To put an end to all schisms and causes of offense; to bring into the way of truth all who have erred and are deceived;

To beat down Satan under our feet; to send faithful laborers into Your harvest; and to accompany Your Word with Your grace and Spirit:

C We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

L To raise those who fall and to strengthen those who stand; and to comfort and help the weakhearted and the distressed:

C We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

L To give to all peoples concord and peace; to preserve our land from discord and strife; to give our country Your protection in every time of need;

To direct and defend our [president/queen/king] and all in authority; to bless and protect our magistrates and all our people;

To watch over and help all who are in danger, necessity, and tribulation; to protect and guide all who travel;

To grant all women with child, and all mothers with infant children, increasing happiness in their blessings; to defend all orphans and widows and provide for them;

To strengthen and keep all sick persons and young children; to free those in bondage; and to have mercy on us all:

C We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

L To forgive our enemies, persecutors, and slanderers and to turn their hearts; to give and preserve for our use the kindly fruits of the earth; and graciously to hear our prayers:

C We implore You to hear us, good Lord.

L Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God,

C we implore You to hear us.

L Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C have mercy.

L Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C have mercy.

L Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world,

C grant us Your peace.

L O Christ,

C hear us.

L O Lord,

C have mercy.

L O Christ,

C have mercy.

L O Lord,

C have mercy. Amen.

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

P The grace of our Lord ✠ Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

C Amen.

HYMN

“Now Rest Beneath Night’s Shadow” (*LSB* 880)

- 1 Now rest beneath night’s shadow
The woodland, field, and meadow;
The world in slumber lies.
But you, my heart, awaking
And prayer and music making,
Let praise to your Creator rise.
- 2 The radiant sun has vanished,
Its golden rays are banished
From dark’ning skies of night;
But Christ, the Sun of gladness,
Dispelling all our sadness,
Shines down on us in warmest light.
- 3 Now all the heav’nly splendor
Breaks forth in starlight tender
From myriad worlds unknown;
And we, this marvel seeing,
Forget our selfish being
For joy of beauty not our own.
- 4 Lord Jesus, since You love me,
Now spread Your wings above me
And shield me from alarm.
Though Satan would devour me,
Let angel guards sing o’er me:
This child of God shall meet no harm.
- 5 My loved ones, rest securely,
For God this night will surely
From peril guard your heads.
Sweet slumbers may He send you
And bid His hosts attend you
And through the night watch o’er your beds.

Text: Paul Gerhardt, 1607–76; tr. The Lutheran Hymnal, 1941, alt.
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