

Sermon for Divinity Wednesday Lenten Service on March 4, 2026

Theme: In Community with All the Saints

Texts:

Psalm 133

¹ How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!

² **It is like the precious oil on the head, running down upon the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down over the collar of his robes.**

³ It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion. For there the LORD ordained his blessing, life forevermore.

Mark 9:2–8

9:2. Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, ³ and his clothes became dazzling bright, such as no one on earth could brighten them. ⁴ And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. ⁵ Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us set up three tents: one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” ⁶ He did not know what to say, for they were terrified.

⁷ Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” ⁸ Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.

The Gospel of the Lord

Sermon

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Amen.

This evening, as we continue our Lenten journey, we gather under the theme: “*In community with all the saints.*” Now Lent is often described as a solitary season, a time of personal repentance, personal reflection, personal prayer. And there is certainly truth in that. Yet the Scriptures appointed for us this evening remind us that we never walk this road alone.

The psalmist sings in Psalm 133: “How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!” And in the Gospel of Mark, we hear of Jesus leading Peter, James, and John up a high mountain, where He is transfigured before them, and where Moses and Elijah appear, speaking with Him.

Both texts pull back the curtain so to speak. Both show us something holy about community, about unity, and not just among the living, but among all the saints: past, present, and those yet to come.

Psalm 133 is brief, just three verses, but it overflows with richness. Unity, the psalmist says, is like precious oil poured on Aaron's head, running down his beard and onto his robes. It is like the dew of Hermon falling on the mountains of Zion. It is abundant. It is excessive even. It flows downward. It covers all.

Unity, in other words, is not something we manufacture. It is something poured out. It is something given, and received.

That is a profoundly Lutheran confession to me. We do not create the Church by our agreement or sustain it by our goodwill. The unity of the saints is a gift, given from above. It flows from Christ, our great High Priest, like oil running down over His body.

And what is that body? That body is the Church.

When we confess in the Apostles Creed that we believe in “the communion of saints,” we are confessing something astonishing: that we are knit together in community not only with those sitting beside you in these pews this evening, but with believers across the world and across the centuries.

Unity is not merely social harmony. It is shared life in Christ.

And where does that life come from? To Psalm 133 we look first where it says: “For there the LORD ordained his blessing, life forevermore” See where the Lord gathers his people, he gives life.

Now consider the scene on the mountain in Mark 9.

Jesus takes Peter, James, and John and is transfigured before their very eyes. His clothes become dazzling white and suddenly, there they are: Moses and Elijah.

Moses, the giver of the Law. Elijah, the great prophet. Representatives of a thousand years of God’s faithfulness. Saints long departed from earthly life.

And yet they are not gone. They are alive. They’re standing right there, they’re speaking with Jesus.

This is no campfire story folks; This, is a revelation. The kingdom of God is larger than what our eyes can see. The community of the saints stretches even beyond death.

On that mountain, time seems to fold in on itself. The past meets the present. The Law and the Prophets stand with the Son. Heaven and earth, they touch.

Peter, understandably, is overwhelmed by it all. Terrified he suggests building three tents. He wants to capture the moment, to institutionalize the glory if you will. But before he can finish, a cloud overshadows them and a voice speaks: “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!”

And suddenly, they see no one but Jesus. Standing there seemingly alone again.

That right there, is the heart of our unity.

Not Moses. Not Elijah. Not Peter’s nervous enthusiasm. Not even the mountaintop experience itself. It’s just Jesus. It’s always just Jesus.

The communion of saints is not nostalgia for the faithful of the past. It’s not admiration for heroes of the faith. It is life centered on Christ.

Here in Lent we are reminded of our mortality. We hear that we are dust, and to dust we shall return. We confront sin, and we walk toward the cross.

But we do not walk alone do we.

When we kneel in confession, when we recite the creeds, we join our voices with Christians around the world and throughout the millennia who confess the same Lord. When we sing the Kyrie week after week, we echo the cries of saints through the ages: “Lord, have mercy.” When we receive the Lord’s Supper, we gather at a table that stretches beyond

this sanctuary, beyond time and place, all the way back to that table of 13. This sanctuary becomes our very own “upper room”.

Before receiving Holy Communion each week, the Pastor will say something along the lines of: “Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven...” That is not poetic flourish mind you. It is theological reality.

We are in community with all of the saints.

The saints who endured persecution in the early Church.

The saints who reformed and confessed the Gospel in the days of Martin Luther and the reformation.

The saints who built this very congregation.

The saints we have loved and lost.

They are not separated from us by an un-crossable gulf. In Christ, they live. In Christ, we are one body.

And this unity is not fragile. It doesn't depend on our perfect agreement or flawless love. It depends on Jesus. Just Jesus.

On the mountain the Father says, “Listen to Him.” That is the call for every generation of saints. Not “admire one another.” Not “build monuments.” Not “huddle together on this mountain.” But “listen to Him!”

And this whole event happens just after Jesus foretells His own suffering and death. The glory of that mountaintop is given to sustain the disciples for the darkness of the cross that is yet to come.

Likewise, Psalm 133's vision of unity, is sung in the context of pilgrimage, of traveling together toward the place where the Lord has promised His presence.

Unity is not the absence of hardship. It is the gift that carries us through it.

In this congregation, as in any community, there are burdens. Illness. Grief. Conflict. Fatigue. Repentance that must be spoken. Forgiveness that must be given.

Yet through it all we are bound together in Christ.

When one member suffers, all suffer. When one rejoices, all rejoice. When one falters, others uphold. That is the communion of saints, lived out in real time.

And even when death separates us for a time, it does not sever us from Christ, or from one another.

Moses and Elijah stood on that mountain as living testimony: God is not the God of the dead, but of the living, and it ends with a simple, powerful sentence: “They saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus.”

That is the heart of Lent is it not? As distractions fall away, as illusions fade, as we confront our sin and mortality, we are left with only one thing, only Jesus.

And that is enough

In Him, we are forgiven.

In Him, we are baptized into one body.

In Him, we are joined to all the saints on earth and in heaven.

In Him, we have life forevermore.

Now just a short while after the transfiguration, on an entirely different mountain, one called “the place of the skull”, the Son of Man would stretch out His arms and pour out not oil, but His own blood. And that blood marks us. That blood binds us. That blood makes us one.

So tonight, as we continue this Lenten journey, take comfort and know, that;

You do not repent alone.

You do not pray alone.

You do not suffer alone.

You do not believe alone.

You are in community with all the saints! Moses, Elijah, the apostles and reformers, the martyrs and the missionaries, the grandparents and children and the everyday believer sitting right next to you! Because you are in Christ!

And one day, when the veil of this world is lifted, the unity we now know and can feel by our faith, will be seen in its glory. And we will behold our Lord, not transfigured for a moment, but reigning with the Father forever.

Until that day, we walk together, in community with all the saints, and we listen to Him.

Amen.