



**March 15, 2023
6:30 p.m.
Vespers Lenten Service**

St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, ELCA

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Wednesday, March 15th 2023
Vespers Lenten Service
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WELCOME

Blessed be the Holy Trinity † one God, who journeys with us these forty days,
and sustains us with the gift of grace.

Amen.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Behold, unveiled the vesper skies: the evening has begun.

Let prayer and praise like incense rise as sets the golden sun.

How blest are you, all loving God, who weaves both day and night.

A starry mantle for our road, the shadow and the light.

Stay with us, Christ, our rest prepare as labor ebbs with night.

And holy dreams woven with prayer till dawns the splendid light.

PRAYER

Loving God,

As winter days grow longer, drawing short the hours of night, may your presence
be our comfort, and may Christ become our light. As we journey through this
season, pilgrims through a thirsty land, quench us with your living presence, and
guide us with your loving hand.

Amen.

OPENING HYMN

God, Who Made the Earth and Heaven

1 God, who made the earth and heav-en, dark-ness and light:
 2 And when morn a-gain shall call us to run life's way,
 3 Guard us wak-ing, guard us sleep-ing, and, when we die,
 4 Ho-ly Fa-ther, throned in heav-en, all-ho-ly Son,

you the day for work have giv-en, for rest the night.
 may we still, what-e'er be-fall us, your will o-bey,
 may we in your might-y keep-ing all peace-ful lie.
 Ho-ly Spir-it, free-ly giv-en, blest Three in One:

May your an-gel guards de-fend us, slum-ber sweet your mer-cy send us,
 From the pow'r of e-vil hide us, in the nar-row path-way guide us,
 When the last dread call shall wake us, then, O Lord, do not for-sake us,
 grant us grace, we now im-plore you, till we lay our crowns be-fore you

ho-ly dreams and hopes at-tend us all through the night.
 nev-er be your smile de-nied us all through the day.
 but to reign in glo-ry take us with you on high,
 and in wor-thier strains a-dore you while a-ges run.

Text: Reginald Heber, 1783–1826, st. 1, alt.; William Mercer, 1811–1873, sts. 2, 4, alt.; Richard Whately, 1787–1863, st. 3, alt.
 Music: AR HYD Y NOS, Welsh traditional; arr. Ralph Vaughan Williams, 1872–1958.
 Outside USA: Arr. from *The English Hymnal*, © Oxford University Press 1906.

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A Blessing for When It's Too Much To Handle
(From *Bless the Lent We Actually Have*)

God, our bodies remember the sleepless
nights and cold sweats and unrelenting stress.
Show us how to process all that we suffer.

*“How frail is humanity!
How short is life, How full of trouble!”*
—Job 14:1, NLT

Blessed are we, when we decide
to make room for all of it,
the fear and the gratitude,
the complexity and the suffering.

Blessed are we who pour out to you
the whole of it—
unedited, all the terrible truths
and fears and what-ifs.

The gratitude for those beautiful hearts
in action who came willingly,
into the strange and awkward space
that is my need.

Blessed are we, learning as humans together
that pain is inevitable,
nurses are wonderful, hospitals are loud,
people are brave,
and we grow and we hurt and we heal,
and then we will do it all over again.
Because this beautiful paradox
is what it means to be human.
Amen.

JEREMIAH 18:1-11

The word that came to Jeremiah from God: ²“Come, go down to the potter’s house, and there I will let you hear my words.” ³So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. ⁴The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him. ⁵Then the word of God came to me: ⁶Can I not do with you, O house of Israel, just as this potter has done? Just like the clay in the potter’s hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel. ⁷At one moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will pluck up and break down and destroy it, ⁸but if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turns from its evil, I will change my mind about the disaster that I intended to bring on it. ⁹And at another moment I may declare concerning a nation or a kingdom that I will build and plant it, ¹⁰but if it does evil in my sight, not listening to my voice, then I will change my mind about the good that I had intended to do to it. ¹¹Now, therefore, say to the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: Thus says God: Look, I am a potter shaping evil against you and devising a plan against you. Turn now, all of you, from your evil way, and amend your ways and your doings.

The Word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SERMON

HYMN OF THE DAY

How Great Thou Art

1 O Lord my God, when I in awe-some won-der con-sid-er
 2 When through the woods and for-est glades I wan-der, I hear the
 3 But when I think that God, his Son not spar-ing, sent him to
 4 When Christ shall come, with shout of ac-cla-ma-tion, and take me

all the works thy hand hath made, I see the stars, I hear the night-y
 birds sing sweet-ly in the trees; when I look down from loft-y moun-tain
 die, I scarce can take it in, that on the cross my bur-den glad-ly
 home, what joy shall fill my heart! Then I shall bow in hum-ble ad-o-

thun-der, thy pow'r through-out the u-ni-verse dis-played;
 gran-deur and hear the brook and feel the gen-tle breeze;
 bear-ing he bled and died to take a-way my sin;
 ra-tion and there pro-claim, "My God, how great thou art!"

Alto
 Then sings my soul, my Sav-ior God, to thee, how great thou

art! How great thou art! Then sings my soul, my Sav-ior God, to

thee, how great thou art! How great thou art!

Text: Carl G. Boberg, 1850-1940; it and adapt. Stuart K. Hine, 1896-1989
 Music: O SFORE GUD, Swedish folk (text); adapt. Stuart K. Hine
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PRAYER

God of the Universe,

We give thanks that your promises are true, and that you are faithful. May we find joy through giving and delight in our offering. Prepare our hearts to give freely and cheerfully. Breathe life into the seeds we sow, allowing them to grow into well-watered, fruitful trees of life. Bless us and keep us, make your face shine upon us. Turn your face towards us and give us peace. Through Jesus Christ we pray.

Amen.

OFFERING

OFFERING PRAYER

Gracious God,

Our treasures come only from you. It is only through your goodness, that we have received so much. We came into this life with nothing, and we leave the same way. Guide us, and inspire us, to share ourselves and the resources we have. May these offerings be used for the goodness of your creation.

Amen.

Watch, O Lord

Refrain – All

Watch, O Lord, with all those a - wake this night,
 watch, O Lord, with all those who weep; give your
 an - gels and saints charge o - ver all who sleep.

Leader *All*

1 Tend your ail - ing ones:
 2 Soothe your suf - f'ring ones: in your love, Lord.
 3 Hold your griev - ing ones:
 4 Guard your lit - tle ones:

Leader *All*

Rest your wea - ry ones:
 Heal af - flict - ed ones: in your love, Lord.
 Raise your fall - en ones:
 Guide your search - ing ones:

Leader *All* *Refrain*

Bless your dy - ing ones:
 Shield your joy - ous ones: in your love, O Lord of all.
 Mend your bro - ken ones:
 Grant us all your peace:

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950, based on a prayer attributed to Augustine

Music: WATCH, O LORD, Marty Haugen

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LORD'S PRAYER

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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BLESSING

May God, the giver of love, provide you with strength.

May Christ, the resurrection and the life, provide you with hope.

May the Holy Spirit, the source of rebirth, provide you with renewal.

And may the Three In † One, bless you in this Lenten journey.

Amen.

SENDING SONG

Be Thou My Vision



1 Be thou my vi - sion, O Lord of my heart;
2 Be thou my wis - dom, and thou my true word;
3 Rich - es I heed not, nor vain, emp - ty praise,
4 Light of my soul, af - ter vic - to - ry won,



naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
I ev - er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
thou mine in - her - i - tance, now and al - ways:
may I reach heav - en's joys, O heav - en's Sun!



thou my best thought both by day and by night,
Thou my soul's shel - ter, and thou my high tow'r,
thou and thou on - ly, the first in my heart,
Heart of my own heart, what - ev - er be - fall,



wak - ing or sleep - ing, thy pres - ence my light.
raise thou me heav'n - ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.
great God of heav - en, my trea - sure thou art.
still be my vi - sion, O Rul - er of all.

Text: Irish, 8th cent.; vers. Eleanor H. Hull, 1860-1935, alt.; tr. Mary E. Byrne, 1880-1931
Music: SLANE, Irish traditional

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve in love.

Thanks be to God.

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