



March 20, 2024
In Community With Christ, Vespers Service
6:30 p.m.

St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, ELCA

Reverend Maggie Westaby
5304 N 44th Ave

Wausau, Wisconsin 54401

Web Address: stjohnwausau.org

E-mail: pastor.maggie.westaby@gmail.com

Email: stjohnwausau@msn.com

Office: (715) 675-6950

WELCOME

CALL TO WORSHIP

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

OPENING DIALOGUE

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.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

God desires truth in our inward being, receiving us as we are, broken and flawed. Seeking God's mercy, let us confess our sins before God.

Gracious God,

Have mercy on us. We confess that we have turned away from you,

knowingly and unknowingly. We have wandered from your abundant life. We have strayed from your love for all people. Turn us back to you. Give us new hearts and right spirits, that we may find what is pleasing to you, and dwell in your house forever. Amen.

Receive this good news: God turns to you in love. Your sins are forgiven in the name of † Jesus Christ.

Thanks be to God.

All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night

The musical score is written for a single voice part in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system has four measures, each with a number above it: 1*, 2, 3, and 4. The second system has four measures. The lyrics are printed below the notes. The music is a canon, with the melody repeating in the bass clef.

1* 2 3 4

1 All praise to thee, my God, this night for all the bless-ings of the light.
2 For - give me, Lord, for thy dear Son, the ill that I this day have done;
3 Teach me to live, that I may dread the grave as lit - tle as my bed.
4 Oh, may my soul in thee re - pose, and may sweet sleep mine eye-lids close,
5 Praise God, from whom all bless-ings flow; praise God, all crea-tures here be - low;

Keep me, oh, keep me, King of kings, be - neath thine own al - might - y wings.
that with the world, my - self, and thee, I, ere I sleep, at peace may be.
Teach me to die, that so I may rise glo - rious at the awe - some day.
sleep that shall me more vig - rous make to serve my God when I a - wake!
praise God a - bove, ye heav' n - ly host; praise Fa - ther, Son, and Ho - ly Ghost.

* May be sung in canon.

Text: Thomas Ken, 1637–1711, alt.
Music: TALLIS' CANON, Thomas Tallis, 1505–1585

PRAYER

Mysterious One,

In Jesus, you redeem us and invite all people to a place in your glory. Draw us closer to you, and in so doing, draw us closer to one another, that we may be strengthened to follow in the way of Jesus' cross and resurrection. **Amen.**

GOSPEL: Mark 10:32-45

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

³² And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; and they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, ³³ saying, “Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man will be delivered to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles; ³⁴ and they will mock him, and spit upon him, and scourge him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise.”

³⁵ And James and John, the sons of Zeb'edee, came forward to him, and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” ³⁶ And he said to them, “What do you want me to do for you?” ³⁷ And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” ³⁸ But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?” ³⁹ And they said to him, “We are able.” And Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; ⁴⁰ but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” ⁴¹ And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. ⁴² And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

The Gospel of The Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

What Wondrous Love Is This

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 musical score consists of four systems, each with a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment line (bass clef). The first system contains the first four lines of the hymn. The second system contains the next four lines. The third system contains the next four lines. The fourth system contains the final four lines. The piano accompaniment features chords and moving lines in the bass clef, with some measures containing a 'B' time signature.

Text: North American folk hymn, 19th cent., alt.
Music: WONDROUS LOVE, W. Walker, *Southern Harmony*, 1835; arr. Paul J. Christiansen, 1914-1997, alt.
Arr. © 1955 Augsburg Publishing House, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

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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.

INVITATION TO THE OFFERING

Because the kingdom of God has come near in Jesus Christ, we are called to respond in tangible ways. By doing acts of justice and compassion, and by sharing our resources, we bear witness to the good news of the gospel.

Let the Vineyards Be Fruitful

Offering Song

Let the vine-yards be fruit-ful, Lord, and fill to the brim our cup of
bless-ing. Gath-er a har-vest from the seeds that were sown, that
we may be fed with the bread of life. Gath-er the hopes and dreams of
all; u-nite them with the prayers we of-fer. Grace our ta-ble
with your pres-ence, and give us a fore-taste of the feast to come.

The musical score is written on five staves in a single system. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The melody is written in a soprano clef. The lyrics are placed below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The piece concludes with a double bar line.

Text: John W. Arthur, 1922-1980

Music: Ronald A. Nelson, b. 1927

Text and music © 1978 *Lutheran Book of Worship*, admin. Augsburg Fortress.

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OFFERING PRAYER & LORD'S 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. Gather us together and teach us to pray as Jesus taught.

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.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

Watch, O Lord

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.

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:

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:

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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BLESSING

May God wrap you in love each night, providing you peace and rest,
And while you sleep may God weave strength & courage into every breath.
May you meet the morning with resilient vigor, ready for come what may,
And may the light of Christ fill your heart with joy every single day.
May the Spirit shine on you with favor, love, and never-ending grace
And may the Three In ✠ One, bless you on this Lenten journey,
And in every single place.

Amen.

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

1 O God, our help in a - ges past, our hope for years to come,
 2 Un - der the shad - ow of your throne your saints have dwelt se - cure;
 3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood or earth re - ceived its frame,
 4 A thou - sand a - ges in your sight are like an eve - ning gone,

our shel - ter from the storm - y blast, and our e - ter - nal home:
 suf - fi - cient is your arm a - lone, and our de - fense is sure.
 from ev - er - last - ing you are God, to end - less years the same.
 short as the watch that ends the night be - fore the ris - ing sun.

5 Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
 bears all our years away;
 we fly forgotten, as a dream
 dies at the op'ning day.

6 O God, our help in ages past,
 our hope for years to come,
 still be our guard while troubles last
 and our eternal home!

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674–1748, alt.
 Music: ST. ANNE, William Croft, 1678–1727

DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Serve in love.

Thanks be to God.

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Lenten Devotional, from ELCA World Hunger (taken from)

https://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/ELCA_World_Hunger_Lent_Study_2024.pdf

Resurrection

This week's recommended readings: Jeremiah 31:31-34; Psalm 51:1-12; Hebrews 5:5-10; John 12:20-33

“In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard.” —Hebrews 5:7

Thus far in our Lenten journey, we have considered what it means to encounter God in experiences of reconciliation, transfiguration, crucifixion and restoration. In this last session, coming just before the season ends and Holy Week begins, we look ahead to our encounter with God in the experience of resurrection, when God brings life out of death.

We have a long way to go before we get to that joyous event on Easter Sunday, though. As Catholic theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar reminds us, we cannot move too quickly from the crucifixion to the resurrection. We need to hang in that space between. That space between is where hunger ministry finds its identity and meaning.

At a recent ELCA World Hunger meeting, someone lamented that the images and stories the ministry routinely shares are too “happy.” People are always smiling and easygoing, and the projects supported always work out the way they were intended. No challenge is too difficult to overcome.

We know, though, that the reality of ministry in the world is sometimes far from easy. Not all projects work out the way a community hopes. Costs can increase suddenly, disasters can wipe away progress, or, as we witnessed a few years ago, a pandemic can put the brakes on work that had been progressing steadily.

As we learned in the session on crucifixion in Week 3 of this study, authentic ministry is honest ministry. It doesn't allow us to hide ourselves from the realities of hunger or injustice or to move too quickly to the hope and joy of the resurrection. Ministry in response to hunger is ministry in response to some of our deepest pain and longing. It is ministry with and among Indigenous communities confronting systemic injustices that have continued for generations (Week 1). It is ministry with and among migrant children as they face abuse at borders (Week 2). It is ministry with and among people struggling to feed themselves and their families (Week 3). It is ministry with and among orphans and families ostracized because of their health status (Week 4). It is ministry that embodies the tension between the crucifixion and the resurrection.

The readings for this week remind us of this tension. In the Gospel of John, Jesus describes how a grain of wheat must fall into the earth and die before it can bear fruit (12:24). Yet this is no simplistic aphorism about all life involving death. There is a tension between the way Jesus describes death and the way he describes life (in this reading, “the cross” and “the glory”). Jesus doesn’t ignore death. As the writer of Hebrews describes, Jesus prayed with “loud cries and tears” (5:7). The Gospel of John softens this at times, but still Jesus says, “My soul is troubled” (12:27).

In many church services the presider will invite the congregation to pray “as Jesus taught us” before beginning the rather formal convention of the Lord’s Prayer. Certainly that is the prayer Jesus taught his disciples. But to pray “as Jesus taught us” in the readings for this week is to pray with a troubled soul, with “loud cries and tears” in mourning for our own pain and for the distance our world must travel to the future God has promised.

To grieve with Ahmed as he encounters abuse at the border (Week 2), to protest with kilombolas seeking full justice (Week 1), to cry out with every hungry person who has ever been told they don’t belong or haven’t worked hard enough, to grit our teeth in anger as political leaders and pundits manipulate statistics to justify budget cuts to anti-hunger or anti-poverty programs — these are prayers, too, the prayers of troubled souls that shout in “loud cries and tears.” These are Lenten prayers appropriate for this season of repentance, grief and memory. And they are prayers in which Christ joins us.

The readings also remind us that our encounter with God does not end here. God responds to Jesus’ prayers not by rescuing him from the cross but by conquering it in the resurrection. The resurrection reveals that death and pain will not have the final word, that God is even now moving us toward a time when new life will spring forth. That doesn’t let us ignore the crucifixion. The cries and tears of our prayers are not forgotten, nor are they ended yet. To encounter God in resurrection is to live in that tension between grief and hope, between holy anger and peace. As much as we are called to cross-shaped ministry (Week 3), so too are we called to resurrection ministry.

In doing ministry in the world, ministering to one another and accepting the ministry of our neighbors, we bear witness to the resurrection hope inspired by the Holy Spirit moving within us.

Perhaps the pictures are too happy. Perhaps the stories are too clean and simple. Or perhaps the pictures, the stories and the projects they represent are exactly what they are called to be — testaments to resurrection hope birthed out of the tension between life and death. Perhaps that is what our ministry and our lives are called to be — investments in the future we know is coming and protests against the present we know falls short.

To encounter God in experiences of resurrection is to see new life springing forth amid death and longing. It is to live in that holy tension between Good Friday and Easter Sunday, knowing in our very hearts, where God has written a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:33), that it is possible to both grieve and celebrate, to both look around us with honesty and look forward with hope.

As this season comes to a close, let us pray that God will give each of us the courage, honesty and faith to live more fully in that tension. That's where authentic ministry happens, and that's where we are called to be.

Reflection questions:

- How do you long for your community? What experiences within your community inspire your prayers of “loud cries and tears”?
- What does it mean to live in the tension between crucifixion and resurrection?
- How might your ministry change if it were viewed as a witness to resurrection?
- What tension in your life do you wish the church would “live into” with you?